



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

FRENCH TEACHERS' RESOURCES

TEACHING FILM AND LITERATURE FOR AS AND A2

STUDYING:

LE GONE DU CHAËBA
AZOUZ BEGAG

KIFFE KIFFE DEMAIN
FAÏZA GUÈNE

LE DERNIER MÉTRO
DIRECTED BY
FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT

INTOUCHABLES
DIRECTED BY
OLIVER NAKACHE AND ÉRIC TOLANDO

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INTRODUCTION AND RESOURCE RATIONALE

These resources have been developed in response to changes in the content of the AS/A2 curricula for modern foreign languages (French, Spanish and German), which are effective from September 2016. They have been designed to give support and guidance to MFL teachers in selecting and teaching the film and literature content of the curricula.

There are five sections to this resource:

1. Why teach this text?

This section explains the relevance and benefits of teaching this text/film for teachers and their students. It also describes how the text/film fits in to the A-level as a whole, as well as its links with other A-level subjects.

2. Ways to read this text

This section briefly describes the different critical lenses for reading a text/film, as well as outlining different themes. This section will be particularly useful for the A2 exam questions, which are theme-based. Topics from previous exam questions have been integrated into this section.

3. Students

This section suggests how this text/film can appeal to certain students, according to interests, studies and background. For example this film will appeal to students who may be interested in studying social policy.

4. Useful passages/sequences

This section highlights specific sequences/passages from the film/text that are especially rich and point towards the ways in which these can be used for teaching.

a. Characters

This sub-section highlights a passage which would be useful in the teaching of characterisation and character relationships in the text/film. This sub-section is particularly useful for the AS exam questions, which focus on character analysis.

b. Themes

This sub-section highlights a passage which would be useful in the teaching of a major theme in the context of the whole text/film. This selected sequence/passage is normally an effective inroad for the discussion of the wider concerns/themes of the text/film. This sub-section is particularly useful for the A2 exam question, which is based on wider analysis of themes/context.

c. Language

This sub-section highlights a linguistically rich and/or interesting passage/sequence in terms of grammar, style, tone, genre, register, dialect, pronunciation etc. This sub-section is not exam-focused but teachers may find it useful for other focuses i.e. themes, characterisation, genre.

d. Cinematography/form and genre

The cinematography sub-section focuses on directorial and cinematographic technique in films. It aims to guide teachers who may not be familiar with teaching film. This sub-section is particularly useful for AS and A2 exam questions that deal with colour, sound, directorial technique, etc.

The form and genre sub-section focuses on the structure, form and genre of literary texts in order to guide the teaching of certain kinds of texts (novels and plays).

5. Further reading

This section provides links to websites, useful sources, articles and online books in English and each target language that can be used as pedagogic resources and/or preparatory material.

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LE GONE DU CHAÂBA
AZOUZ BEGAG, 1986

LE GONE DU CHAÂBA, AZOUZ BEGAG (ÉDITIONS DU SEUIL 1986)

Azouz Begag is an author, politician and sociologist at the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* at the Sorbonne. *Le Gone du Chaâba* is Begag's first novel, a semi-autobiographical *Bildungsroman* detailing his childhood in Lyon as the son of Algerian migrants. The title of the novel attests to the author's hybrid background: *gone* is a Lyonnais term for *enfant* and *Chaâba* is the name of the Algerian shantytown where the protagonist (also 'Azouz') learns to live and navigates his dual French-Algerian heritage.

Why teach this text?

Le Gone du Chaâba touches on many of the themes and topics across the French AS and A-level, in particular those that fall under the rubric multicultural France but also issues pertaining to family and relationships, education and the history of French colonialism and post-1945 migration into France.

Although set in the 1960s, this novel deals with some of the themes and issues that are also relevant to the contemporary social issues on the French A-level: wealth and poverty; law and order; racism in the education system; and the alienation of migrant communities in France. For example, Begag's depiction of the bidonville recalls images of the so-called 'Jungle' in Calais with which many students may be familiar. In Lyon, Roma shantytowns have been established not far from the site of *Begag's Chaâba* reminding us that questions of racism, exclusion, housing and poverty are still key issues in France in the 21st century.¹

Ways to read this text

A 'postcolonial' reading would emphasise the themes of migration, racism and multiculturalism in France. What does the novel have to say about the issue of 'integration' – in what ways were Algerian migrants excluded from French society? How does the teacher treat the 'Arab' children differently from the French children? At a linguistic level, the narrative also mixes French, Lyonnais terminology and slang with Algerian Arabic terms highlighting the theme of multicultural cultures.

Childhood and family life are central themes in the novel. We see the world of *le Chaâba* through the eyes of little Azouz. The perspective of a child looking out at the adult world offers a kind of objectivity and underlying humour about the challenges that he, his friends and his family face on a daily basis: family politics; domestic tasks; hygiene; sexuality; school; and work.

Students

The novel's clear historical, sociological and geo-political themes will particularly appeal to students of the humanities. However, the universal themes of childhood, family life and education would also appeal to students whose other studies fall outside of the humanities. The study of childhood, the education system and the alienation of migrant communities in Europe would appeal to those interested in health care, social work, psychology, education, or social policy.

Useful passages

1. Themes

Page 90 – page 103. 'Lorsque nous arrivons devant l'école ...' to 'Nous sommes rentrés aux baraques tranquillement, comme d'habitude.'

This passage demonstrates the difficulties that Azouz has in balancing his life in the shantytown and expectations and prejudices in French society. The classroom becomes a metaphor for the question of 'integration' of marginalised peoples into the notion of a homogenously 'French' society. He wants to succeed academically, but he understands this success in terms of becoming 'more French'. In his class, the children of *le Chaâba* sit at the back of the classroom and receive the lowest grades. However, he succeeds and is ranked second in class behind Jean-Marc, a French boy. How is Jean-Marc characterised in comparison to Moussaoui, who bullies him? Why does Moussaoui say to Azouz 'T'es pas un Arabe, toi!' (91) and accuse him of being 'un fayot' (92)? Why is Azouz so conflicted when he is asked to sit in the front row, next to Jean-Marc (93)?

The next day, Moussaoui corners Azouz and repeats his accusation: 'Non, t'es pas un Arabe, je t'dis' (91). He gives Azouz an ultimatum; he has to choose between being either French or Algerian. For Moussaoui, it is impossible to be both. The following scene is a turning point in the novel. During M. Grand's *leçon de morale*, Azouz answers a question with words in Arabic, not realising that they would not be understood by his teacher (95). The tension builds in class between the French and 'Arabe' children until Moussaoui has an outburst and accuses M. Grand of being racist and a 'pédé' (97). Why does Moussaoui react so violently? How does M. Grand's *leçon de morale* contradict his treatment of Moussaoui and what role is played by Azouz in this scene? Why does Azouz feel such shame at the end of this passage? What does this say

¹<http://www.rue89lyon.fr/2016/01/12/roms-a-lyon-expulsions-programme-insertion/>

about *égalité* in French society in the 1960s? How does this passage deal with the theme of education? What does the *leçon de morale* really teach the children?

2. Language

Page 7– page 11, until '[...] elles ne gagneront rien à semer la discorde entre les hommes.'

This is the opening passage of the novel which describes with childish bemusement a fight between Azouz's aunt, Zidouma, and the other women from the Chaâba over her use of the sole water pump in the shantytown. As an opening scene, Begag establishes a strong sense of time and place making this passage a particularly good example for exploring the establishment of narrative voice, even though it is clear he is not quite sure what is going on. The present tense places the reader in the moment of action as the reader is invited to observe the fight unfold: 'Et la voisine patiente toujours, elle pati ... non, elle ne patiente plus' (8).

It is a violent scene, but described with a sense of humour and with a rich range of vocabulary. Why does Begag choose to use words like 'clans' (8), 'classement', 'théâtre' (9), 'l'hystérie totale', 'bataille des nerfs', 'cérémonie', 'actrice', 'jeu' (10) to describe the fight? How do we imagine Azouz's mother, and her 'solide ossature', when he says 'On ne retient pas un rhinocéros en mouvement' (8)? The language in this novel is particularly diverse throughout, sometimes mixing local Lyonnais dialect with Algerian Arabic. In this passage we come across the words 'l'bomba' (la pompe)', 'saboune d'Marseille' (7), and 'binouars' (10), *binouar* referring to an Algerian dress.

While this linguistic mix may appear intimidating for some students, this is in fact a fascinating way to explore the flexibility of everyday French language and a glossary at the end of the novel (1986 edition) guides the reader with helpful translations. This glossary could be the basis of a simple reading comprehension or fill-in-the-gap exercise. In mixing both Lyonnais, Algerian Arabic and standard French language, Begag highlights the narrator's mixed sense of identity – language is a way to claim belonging to all these cultures.

3. Characters

Page 204 – page 209. '– Azouz! Vouz savez comment on dit « le Maroc » en arabe?' until '[...] il vaut mieux ne pas discuter trop longtemps avec Bouzid.'

Azouz's family have moved from *la Chaâba* to *les pentes de la Croix Rousse* of central Lyon. In this passage, it is Azouz's first day at school and he meets his new teacher, to whom he instantly warms. It soon turns out that M. Loubon is a *pied-noir*, a European settler from Algeria who, since Algerian independence in 1962, was repatriated in France. He is nostalgic for a lost Algeria and,

after discovering Azouz's heritage, he focuses on him in class, often asking pointed questions about their 'shared' historical trajectories:

Eh bien vous voyez : moi je suis français et je suis né en Algérie, et vous, vous êtes né à Lyon mais vous êtes algérien. (202)

The characterisation of M. Loubon as a sympathetic (perhaps over-sympathetic) *pied-noir*, and therefore semi-compatriot to Azouz, is important since it demonstrates the complexity of national, racial and religious belonging. Azouz remains sceptical in the face of the not-so-modest teacher, who is 'en train de m'expliquer mes origines' (206). In this way, this passage also helps to develop our sense of Azouz's character, as well as introduce a new one. In what ways does this passage highlight the differences, as well as the similarities, between M. Loubon and Azouz? Why does Azouz react with some scepticism to M. Loubon's good will? What is the significance of the book *Les Chevaux du Soleil* by Jules Roy in this passage? How does M. Loubon contrast with Azouz's previous teachers?

4. Form and genre

Page 211– page 218. 'Cette humiliation, je ne peux pas l'oublier [...]' until 'Puis il a éclaté de rire.'

Throughout the novel, the narrative emerges through the *focalisation interne* of the Azouz's perspective. For example, in this passage we follow intimately the ups and downs of Azouz's emotional journey as he tries to complete a writing task for his new class. The theme of writing and reading are very important throughout the novel, in particular because Azouz's parents are illiterate and Azouz's mastering of the written language is seen to be a way of proving his worth in a mistrustful French society (213). However, in this passage, he realises that he can also write about his *own* life, his *own* experiences and, above all, '[I]e racism. C'est du racisme qu'il fallait que je parle dans ma rédaction' (214). The narrative then switches to the third person: 'Il était une fois à Lyon. L'enfant ne s'était pas encore fait le moindre ami [...]'. This change in narrative voice draws attention to the theme of writing but also to the genre of the novel. Like a lot of so-called *beur* literature (fiction written in French by Maghrebi migrants or their children) it is highly autobiographical, and this passage demonstrates the author's process of writing himself into a fictionalised narrative. Ultimately in the novel, Azouz's literary strategy is a success and he is marked top of the class. We might wonder why this passage ends with a triumphant Azouz celebrating with his father? What does this passage say in terms of the difference between autobiography and fiction? Is there much of a difference?

Further reading

- See Ricochet-Jeunes for a brief biography and bibliography of Begag's books for children:
<http://www.ricochet-jeunes.org/auteurs/recherche/1587-azouz-begag>
- Dr Jim House is a historian and expert in French-Algerian relations at the University of Leeds. His article explores and contextualises the history of Algerian Migration in France:
<http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migration/articles/house.html>
- Shelia Rogers 'Begag: *Le Gone du Chaâba*' for Glasgow Introductory Guides to French Literature (2008), is a particularly useful guide to the text for A-level students.
- L'Université de Lyon 2 have put together a site which contextualises the local history of the bidonvilles around Lyon:
http://perso.univ-lyon2.fr/~mollon/M1FLES/09_10/gone-Chaaba/index/index.html
- Series of questionnaires based on the novel which are particularly useful for testing knowledge of the novel and reading comprehension of specific passages:
<http://france.clg.ac-amiens.fr/quadriphonie/spip.php?article222>
- Detailed *dossier pédagogique* from the Institut français de Hambourg:
https://institutfrancais.de/cinefete/IMG/pdf/Dossier_Le_gone.pdf
- Blog post on the importance of dialect and the lexical specificity of *Le Gone du Chaâba*. This would be a useful resource to use in conjunction with the glossary found at the end of the 1986 edition.:
<http://lucolles.canalblog.com/archives/2014/07/01/30172844.html>
- *Le Gone du Chaâba* is also a 1997 film by Christophe Ruggia based on the novel by Begag. Various clips can be found on YouTube, although the film is a mix of Arabic and French with varying subtitles:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBXrM42vwro>
- Guide for a lesson on the transition of the book to film:
<http://www.ac-grenoble.fr/disciplines/lettres-hg-lp/file/gonintegrall.doc>



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KIFFE KIFFE DEMAIN
FAÏZA GUÈNE, 2004

KIFFE KIFFE DEMAIN, FAÏZA GUÈNE (HACHETTE LITTÉRATURES, PARIS: 2004)

Kiffe kiffe demain is narrated with a sharp, witty wryness by 15-year-old Doria as she searches for ways to survive the poverty, systemic racism and sexism in a Parisian *banlieue*. She lives alone with her mother after her father abandons them for a young wife in Morocco. The main action of the novel follows the rhythms of Doria's daily life: looking after her depressed mother; irreverently putting up with her alcoholic psychologist and the stuck-up *assistante de service sociale*; hanging out with her pot-dealing friend, Hamoudi; and watching her beloved TV shows.

Why teach this text?

Written when Faïza Guène was only 19 years old, the novel is short but will enrich students' perspectives of social problems in French urban areas. Despite these serious subjects, the novel is also very humorous. The language is particularly fun to explore, with lots of slang, *verlan* and swearing, although this does not detract from the literary value of this critically acclaimed book. The text deals with a wide range of issues which can be easily tied into other areas of the French A-level: the 2005 riots; depictions of the *banlieue* in film and on TV; French schooling; questions of *laïcité*; poverty; stereotyping; TV and popular culture.

Ways to read this text

A 'postcolonial' reading would emphasise the role of migration, racism and multiculturalism in France. While Doria is born in France, her parents are from Morocco – a former French colony. The culturally diverse environment of her *cit * is reflected in the language Doria uses – a rich mixture of *verlan*, slang and some Arabic. The novel also poses questions on the ways the French state has (or has not) dealt with issues of multiculturalism and addresses the exploitation of migrant workforces.

A feminist reading is particularly appropriate for this novel. The novel gives a nuanced and interesting insight into the ways patriarchy works within any family structure, but focuses in particular on the experiences of women and girls in North African-French families.

Media representation of the *banlieue* is also a key issue in the novel. Doria compares her first-hand experience of solidarity and community within her *cit * with the news reports she watches on TV, and the film *La Haine* which paints a violent picture of life in the *HLM*. How does the media represent violence? Is this always representative?

Students

The relative similarity in age between the novel's protagonist and that of A-level students will be particularly appealing and make for interesting stimuli in class discussion. It is an interesting alternative to some of the more traditional texts on the curriculum. The themes of the novel would interest students pursuing careers in media, social work, or education but in general would interest students of literature, history, geography and politics. A useful comparison for students of the English Literature A-level would be Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*.

Useful passages

1. Themes

Page 25– page 28. 'On a re u des coupons de la CAF'

This passage is full of references to some of the major themes of the novel, primarily poverty, class stigma in France, education and life in the *cit *.

Doria is relieved that she and her mother have received support from the CAF (*Caisse d'allocations familiales*) that month, which means they will not have to go to the *Secours populaire* – a charity providing emergency help, like clothes, food or even housing to those living in *precarit * (the hand-to-mouth existence of living near or below the poverty line). Doria's interior monologue recalls bumping into their neighbour 'Nac ra la sorci re' who, Doria suspects, takes pleasure in seeing her mother in difficult situations. Students could consider the differences between the representation of Nac ra and Doria's mother.

The chatty narrative then turns to M. Werbert, her schoolteacher, who is also condescending towards Doria. She imagines him also boasting to his friends about his charitable actions and 'comme c'est difficile d'enseigner en banlieue. Beurk' (26). The use of indirect speech (i.e. the way she integrates others' speech into her narrative without quotation) adds a thick layer of irony to all of Doria's observations. How does Doria's sense of humour inform the novel's representation of social inequality and the state's apparatus for dealing with people living below, or very close to, the poverty line?

She is far less cynical when talking about her mother and her friend, Hamoudi. Her mother sometimes refuses to take donations from the *Secours populaire* – an action Doria recognises as a sign of dignity. Hamoudi's dignity derives from his ability to recite poems by Arthur Rimbaud, despite smoking pot and hanging out in the *cit * all day. Being Doria's only friend and a brother/father figure, she is upset to see him badly treated by the police when they pass by: 'je me dis que ces types, ils connaissent rien   la po sie' (28). How does this passage portray the difficulties of growing up in Doria's *banlieue*?

2. Language

Page 103– page 106. 'Lundi, chez Mme Burlaud, on a fait un nouveau truc, comme un jeu.'

Kiffe kiffe demain is written entirely in the Doria's vernacular speech and thus adopts an informal, spoken register. This is a stimulating area to explore for A-level

students and exposes them to the everyday reality of the rapidly shifting landscape of spoken French. This highlighted passage includes *verlan*, slang and swearing. The narrator continually drops the 'ne' of the negative and over-relies on the pronoun 'ça'. A useful exercise in language may be to encourage the students to highlight the grammatical 'faults' or slang in this text and compare it to the register they are taught in class. There is also an example of a reading comprehension based on this text in the further reading section.

3. Characters

Page 67– page 70 'La semaine dernière, Mme Dutruc, l'assistante sociale de la mairie, elle est revenue à la maison.'

Page 79 – page 81 'Maman s'est enfin cassée de ce putain d'hôtel pourri où elle tirait la chasse d'eau derrière les riches ...'

These two passages show some of the character progression of Doria's mother and specifically highlight the lives of some of the women in Doria's life. In the first passage, Doria's mother is humorously contrasted with the social worker Mme Dutruc (also known as Mme Dumachin and Mme Dubidule), who snubs the mint tea offered to her and angers Doria with her overall condescension. How does Doria's mother react to these injustices? Why is it significant that this scene ends with some devastating news from Tante Zohra?

In the second passage, students could consider how Doria's mother gains more agency – she has left her exploitative cleaning job and has taken up an opportunity to train and learn French. How does Doria react to discovering that her mother has her own, autonomous personality?

4. Form and genre

Page 71 – page 74 'Ça fait déjà plusieurs nuits [...] until [...] cours de miss Baker en sixième'.

This short novel is divided into unmarked and brief 'chapters'. These vignettes are snapshots into Doria's adolescence in the *cité*. Written entirely from her point of view in a continual interior monologue, we feel like we are 'listening' to her voice rather than reading a story. In this passage, we 'hear' Doria tell us about a recurring dream of flying out through the window of her *HLM* flat, and a fantasy she has of escaping the *banlieue* through the pages of her atlas. The fantasy then crash-lands when she recalls an embarrassing memory from school.

This novel is often categorised as *littérature beur*. While this term is problematic in itself, it may offer a useful framework to introduce something of the generic features of the text to A-level students. Brinda J. Mehta defines *littérature beur* as an example of socially engaged literature:

Preoccupied with questions of identity, racism, ghettoization within decrepit housing projects, and the social location of France's postcolonial *beur* generation, this literature has also focused on the tensions within immigrant North African or Maghrebi communities in terms of cultural adaptation, gender ideologies, and interfamilial relationships. As *beur* literature engages with the sociological and political reality of Arabs in France, it is impossible to separate literature from the social text. Literature and sociology intersect in these works to provide a complex and creative socio-political document of lived experience. This literature thereby poses important questions about the multi-ethnic identity of France, the positionality of Arab-Muslims, and the French Republic's tenuous negotiations of cultural plurality amid this diversity, while affirming the place of *beur* literature in the canon of contemporary French writing. (2010: 174)

In light of this analysis, students might consider the ways in which this text is not just a novel, but also a social document. Although fiction, the novel can be considered as an authoritative study of life in the *banlieue* in the early 2000s.

Further reading

- Brief biography of Faiza Guène and a list of radio interviews and appearances of Faiza Guène on France Inter (may be useful for listening exercises):
<http://www.franceinter.fr/personne-faiza-guene>
- MEHTA, Brinda J (2010) 'Negotiating Arab-Muslim identity, contested citizenship, and gender ideologies in the Parisian housing projects: Faiza Guène's *Kiffe Kiffe Demain*' in *Research in African Literatures* 41(2), pp.173-202. Can be accessed here:
<http://peuplesmonde.net/2011/09/26/negotiating-arab-muslim-identity-contested-citizenship-and-gender-ideologies-in-the-parisian-housing-projects-faiza-guenes-kiffe-kiffe-demain/>
- Analysis of the representations of girlhood in Arab-French communities, and the genre of the *beur* novel which became

popular in France from the 1980s onwards in Rebecca E Léal, 'Française de deuxième génération: Constructions of Girlhood in Banlieue Literature' in *Girls in French and Francophone Literature and Film* (2015) Leiden, Boston: Brill Rodopi, pp. 135–48. Available on Google Books.

- A simple reading comprehension based on an extract from the novel: Kimberly Jansma and Margaret Kassen (2003) 'Les Jeunes face à l'avenir' *Motifs: An Introduction to French*, Cengage Learning, p. 374. Available on Google Books.
- Online Word Document of slang glossary:
<http://faculty.washington.edu/helenev/Kiffekiffedemain.doc>
- Even more extensive vocabulary list:
<http://madameap.weebly.com/uploads/6/9/6/3/6963815/kkd-vocab-list.pdf>
- Online Powerpoint contextualising *Kiffe Kiffe Demain* in Maghreb to France migration and French education system. It has a particularly useful slide on ways of understanding the title:
<http://blogs.spsk12.net/1003/files/2011/09/Kiffe-Kiffe-Demain-Powerpoint-anglais.pdf>
- A French document focused on reading comprehension and writing summaries. Sections 3 and 4 may be useful for A-level students but they are probably a bit dry:
<https://lebaobabbleu.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/kiffe-kiffe-demain1.pdf>
- Summary in French featuring press critiques of the novel:
http://lettres.lem.free.fr/lectures/guene_faiza_kiffe%20kiffe%20demain_dounia_b.pdf



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LE DERNIER MÉTRO
DIRECTED BY
FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT, 1980

LE DERNIER MÉTRO, DIR. FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT (1980)

It is 1942 and Paris is occupied by German forces. The right-wing, anti-Semitic Vichy regime has banned Jewish actors and theatre directors from performing to the public. Actress Marion Steiner (Catherine Deneuve) is sheltering her Jewish husband, the famed theatre director Lucas Steiner (Heinz Bennent), in the basement of their famous Montmartre theatre. Throughout the course of the film the theatre group faces growing hostility and censorship from the Vichy authorities who threaten to shut them down.

Why teach this text?

François Truffaut's most financially successful film is a complex intrigue of collaboration, *Résistance*, forbidden love, betrayal, and the impending horror of the concentration camps. The variety of themes, generic styles and perspectives in this film makes it a particularly rich text to watch, study, and teach.

Ways to read the film

The most obvious way to read this film is through a historical lens. The film provides a detailed perspective on the daily life of Parisians in occupied France, who grapple with censorship, rationing, blackouts, nightly curfews and, of course, anti-Semitism.

The horrors of deportation and the concentration camps linger in the background of the film, as Lucas Steiner must flee the threat of the anti-Semitic authorities. The virulently anti-Semitic theatre critic, Daxiat, from the Vichy newspaper 'Je suis partout' (based on the real life Lucien Rebatet) is a particularly foreboding presence in the film.

The film also deals with the issues of performing under duress – how can the arts resist racist and fascist censorship? What place was there for the theatre in some of the darkest years of French history?

A feminist perspective would emphasise the ways in which the theatre's direction falls into the hands of Marion Steiner (Catherine Deneuve). At a time when women still did not have the right to vote, and despite the very real threat from Vichy spies, she deftly takes control of the theatre with authority. Sexuality is also a central theme, with openly lesbian and gay characters (which was unusual for a depiction of the 1940s) and a blossoming love triangle between Marion, her fugitive husband and the new actor, Bernard (Gérard Depardieu).

Students

The film will interest students who study a range of subjects in the humanities, in particular history, film, and theatre studies. However, with its fairly orthodox cinematography (inspired as Truffaut was by Hollywood directors like Hitchcock) and themes of love and oppression in wartime, it is also accessible to students who do not have a background in the humanities or perhaps struggle with more stylised, unfamiliar films.

Useful sequences

1. Themes

00:00 – 5.00 La vie sous l'occupation

The opening sequence of *Le Dernier Métro* establishes the main themes of the film; the history of the German occupation; daily life in Paris; sexuality; the arts; and popular culture. The opening credits begin in bright-red bravado, accompanied by the wistful 1942 song *Mon Amant de St. Jean* by Lucienne Delyle. The song tells the story of a young woman, seduced by the men and the music of the *musette*. This immediately introduces the theme of love, seduction and conflicted desire which will later play out in the love triangle between Marion, Lucas and Bernard (this can be compared to Truffaut's other film *Jules et Jim* which is also about a love triangle). The song's lyrics may serve as a short listening or comprehension exercise, and can be found in the further reading section.

The film's prologue presents images from the historical archive of Paris under German occupation: Swastikas, Parisian boulevards renamed in German, rationing, and division. A *voix-off* in the style of a news reporter narrates the images we are shown, taking care to mention that Parisians pass their evenings in the warmth of the cinema or theatre but must rush to catch *le dernier métro* in order to avoid curfew – a *clin d'œil* to the film's title. We are finally introduced to Lucas Steiner, director of the Theatre Montmartre who, we are told, has fled the country. How does the mixed-media prologue suggest historical authority?

The next scene introduces us to the streets of Paris themselves where we witness Bernard failing to get the number of Arlette who, we will soon learn, works in the Theatre. Arlette is gay and dismisses his approaches with wit and dignity. The film's major themes of love, sexuality and secrets are thus foregrounded from the very beginning. The shot then cuts to another part of the street where a young boy loiters, waiting for his mother, *la concierge du théâtre*. A passing German soldier playfully tussles his hair. The boy's mother, angered by this action, grabs her son by the arm declaring that 'on rentre à la maison, on va se laver la tête'. Students could consider how this opening scene in the exterior world of war-time Paris (the interaction with the German soldier, the austere décor of the Parisian street, pasted with Vichy propaganda posters) sets up the scene for our introduction to the interior world of the theatre.

2. Language

35:05 – 38:00. La menace d'antisémitisme.

There is a lot of dialogue of varying registers throughout this film, as Truffaut tries to show a cross-section of society in this highly politicised period. This passage includes a particularly rich range of different kinds of language for A-level students. The scene opens with Daxiat passionately delivering an anti-Semitic speech for the radio, in which he employs a political rhetoric that students could deconstruct and critique. This contrasts strongly with the next scene which cuts to Marion in her office turning off the radio. Arlette enters the office and introduces Marion to little Rosette, a young Jewish girl who provides fabrics for the theatre's costumes. This short passage employs a variety of tenses: *présent*, *passé composé*, *imparfait* and *futur simple*. As Arlette describes Rosette's troubled family life she frequently uses sayings like, 'ça coûte les yeux de la tête', which may also serve as a useful exercise. (A fill-in-the-gap exercise based on this passage can be found in the further reading section).

3. Character(s)

24:13 – 28:51 Théâtre de secrets

This scene is all about secrets: Bernard's entry into the *Résistance*; Marion's night-time movements; and the audience's discovery that Lucas is not abroad in exile, but is secretly living in the basement underneath the stage of the theatre. The scene begins with Bernard huddled in a café with his contact in the *Résistance* as they try to establish a network. Bernard is a physical presence, tall and muscular. In his flat-cap, he looks like the ideal *Résistance* hero. Bernard's clandestine entry into the *Résistance* is compared with Marion's own secretive behaviour. Why does he remark 'Elle n'est pas nette, cette femme' ?

The camera then focuses on beautiful, but enigmatic, Marion. We follow her slow, careful movements as she sneaks back into the empty, pitch-black theatre. The

mise-en-scène of this long, slow scene, dimly light with gas lamps, presents Marion as a woman with a dark secret.

The next shot cuts to a close-up of Lucas's face, filling the screen. The editing cuts between close-ups of Marion and Lucas – they are not immediately shown together stressing the fact that they are a married couple but separated by the terror of the Occupation. However, when they are brought together we see they have a playful, loving relationship. Lucas flirts with his wife in a constant stream of dialogue, only pausing to take in the view from the stage of his beloved theatre – it is clear that the only thing that is keeping him sane in his captivity is his love for the theatre. What is Truffaut suggesting about Lucas's relation with his theatre and his wife?

4. Cinematography

1:42:28 – 1:47:55 La guerre est un théâtre

This short scene is the most explicit reference to the *Résistance* and the ongoing war in France. Bernard enters a church to meet his contact in the *Résistance*, Christian. The cinematography here is important as it builds an atmosphere of extreme tension in the seemingly peaceful setting of the church, but also plays on the film's theme of watching (as an audience watching a film) and being watched (surveillance and espionage in wartime) – the church becomes an unspoken battleground. Bernard enters the candle-lit church to the sound of a boys' choir singing 'Pitié mon Dieu' – a hymn for a broken France. Other than the sounds of the choir, there is no spoken dialogue in this scene. The students could consider the following questions: What is the role of diegetic sound in this scene? How do the characters, in particular Bernard and Christian communicate without sound? It will be worth pointing out how the camera angle repeatedly cuts from frames of Bernard alone to Christian being followed by the man in a dark suit. The camera angle highlights a sense of entrapment in this scene, closing in on Christian as he is arrested by the Gestapo. In other words, how is the *mise-en-scène* crafted to create an atmosphere of tension?

Further reading

- There are many biographies based on the life of Truffaut, but a simple place to start would be the short one available on allociné:
<http://www.allocine.fr/personne/fichepersonne-629/biographie/>
- There is also a full length film based on the works of Truffaut available for free on YouTube 'François Truffaut: une autobiographie' (Arte/INA, 2004):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdLW7dXEbxM>
- Lucienne Delyle – *Mon Amant de St. Jean*.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93_pv-XWHpQ
- A detailed *dossier pédagogique* and analysis in French of the film for teachers and students from the *Institut Français* in Germany – including an exercise based on the Scene 2 (discussed above):
https://www.institutfrancais.de/cinefete/IMG/pdf/Cinefete10_LeDernierMetro.pdf

- The *Centre national de documentation pédagogique* in France have created a slightly shorter summary but it includes a very helpful scene analysis:
https://julianwhiting.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/french-gudie-teledoc_lederniermetro.pdf
- Long *analyse de séquence* by DODprod on youtube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYMEpH6oW0c>
- Kenneth Krauss 'Catching *The Last Metro*: François Truffaut's Portrayal of Occupation Drama and Sexuality' in *The Drama of Fallen France: Reading la Comedie sans Tickets* (2004 New York: SUNY Press, pp. 191–206) is partially available on Google books:
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=zGrhdEbj2OUC&dq=le+dernier+metro&source=gbs_navlinks_s
- See Diane Holmes and Robert Ingram's *François Truffaut* (Manchester: Manchester Univeristy Press, 1998) for an overview of Truffaut's work, including *Le Dernier Métro*.
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=lk5G9TF2n5EC&dq=diane+holmes+robert+ingram&source=gbs_navlinks_s



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

INTOUCHABLES
DIRECTED BY
OLIVIER NAKACHE AND
ÉRIC TOLEDANO, 2011

INTOUCHABLES (2011) DIRS. OLIVIER NAKACHE AND ÉRIC TOLEDANO

Intouchables is a comedy-drama based on the true story of a mismatched friendship that grows between two men from very different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds: Driss (Omar Sy), an unemployed resident of the *banlieue* of Senegalese origin, who comes to work as the full-time carer for Philippe (François Cluzet), an immensely rich, white Tetraplegic. Their irreverent sense of humour brings them together despite the seemingly impassable differences. Each one helps the other with the limitations placed upon them by life; for Driss, the harshness of his upbringing and criminal record, and for Philippe, a life condemned to a wheelchair following a paragliding accident.

Why teach this text?

This was a wildly successful film in both France and abroad. In 2012, it surpassed *Amélie* as the most widely watched French film outside France, and in 2013 became the most successful non-English language film on the international market since records began. In this respect, this accessible film can serve as a gateway into contemporary Francophone film and culture. The text ties into wider elements of the French A-Level concerning contemporary France: immigration; multiculturalism; social marginalization in the *banlieue*; wealth; poverty; lifestyle and health.

Ways to read the film

Humour and disability are major themes of the film. In light of his paralysis and the death of his wife, Philippe is depressed and cannot see a future beyond the confines of his wheelchair. Driss, however, often overlooks Philippe's disability, and treats him with humorous irreverence. With the help of Driss's sense of humour, Philippe finds ways to confront the social and sexual isolation brought on by his disability (although this problem is eased by Philippe's seemingly endless wealth). Humour is often conveyed through music, which is also portrayed as a uniting force despite socio-economic and cultural differences.

The division between wealth and poverty in Paris is another major theme of the film. Driss and Philippe represent the two faces of a France divided by economic class – Driss comes from the *banlieue* on the periphery of the French capital and is isolated from the socio-economic benefits of the centre, whereas Philippe lives in an elaborately decorated, aristocratic Parisian mansion.

Students

This film will interest a wide range of students, who may already be familiar with Omar Sy who has since starred in Hollywood blockbusters like *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (2014) and *Jurassic World* (2015). The themes of humour, music and performance will interest students of the humanities and the performing arts. On the other hand, issues of inequality and disability may also interest students who are interested in social sciences, psychology, politics, history and health care.

Useful sequences

1. Themes

39:16 – 46:27 De l'air!

This sequence develops the themes of disability in this film. Philippe has an attack of *douleurs phantoms* in the middle of the night. It is the first time that Driss is confronted with some of the more shocking symptoms of Philippe's paralysis. Driss takes him out to walk him round Paris at night. The move from the claustrophobic confines of his bed to wider spaces along the banks of the Seine symbolises the liberation that Philippe experiences through his contact with Driss. Driss offers Philippe a joint, calming him during a passing fit. These unorthodox methods of medication are juxtaposed with the inefficacy of Philippe's drugs to keep him from feeling pain. The medical treatment afforded by Philippe's wealth ostensibly cannot compare with the spiritual healing brought on by his burgeoning friendship with Driss.

Now a little high, Driss and Philippe find themselves in a café in the early hours and discuss how Philippe copes with sex and relationships now he paralysed from the neck down ('Il faut s'adapter'). This irreverent and frank exchange breaks the ice between Driss and Philippe as they begin to demystify the topic of disability and they begin to share more intimate details of their past. Students might consider the following questions in relation to this sequence: Why does the film mix humour with the serious topic of disability? What is it trying to say about the power of humour to cross boundaries of class, race and disability? Is it ethical to find humour in these grave situations?

2. Language

48:34 – 51:51 Les mots doux

In this passage, Philippe is in the middle of dictating a love letter to his epistolary lover, Éleonore, who lives in Dunkirk. The high register of Philippe's love letter, evoking the myths common to French neo-classical writing, contrast with the vocabulary employed by Driss – mostly to express his boredom and shock that Philippe has never met, nor even spoken to, Éleonore ('Quelle tête elle a ? C'est peut-être un thon!'). A listening comprehension based on this extract would develop a student's understanding of different registers (poetic language, but also everyday slang) but also the use of imperatives, question inversion and vocabulary for using the phone.

3. Characters

07:55 – 12:34 L'Entretien

Whereas the opening of the film begins in *medias res* with Philippe and Driss fleeing the police in a sports car, the following scene is the 'true' chronological start that explains to the audience how these two main characters, who are so different, came to meet. Classical piano music plays in the background and the words 'Based on a true story ...' appear on a black screen. This claim to veracity adds weight to the impact of this fictionalised version of the story. The scene opens on a close-up of a row of polished men's shoes, panning left to right until stopping at the scruffy white trainers whose owner, we learn, is Driss. Driss is introduced in stark contrast to his peers who are also waiting to be interviewed for the job of *auxillaire de vie* (Philippe's full time carer). Indeed, the *mise-en-scène* portrays Driss as out-of-sync with everything around him: he is the only black man in a room full of white men, while the other men wear suits and briefcases and are visibly bored, Driss is very casually dressed and fidgets constantly. We follow his gaze as he observes the clearly extremely expensive interior design of the waiting room to a row of several *fabergé* eggs displayed directly opposite him. These symbols of excessive wealth juxtapose strongly with Driss's own informal dress.

The scene then cuts to the room next door where Philippe and his assistant, Magalie, sit silently as they listen to the insipid and often offensive answers by the other interviewees ('J'aime beaucoup les gens diminués'). The shot cuts from one face to another, until they all blend into one, highlighting the tedium of the process.

Driss breaks the regulated monotony of the interviews. He insists on barging into the room before his turn, just to get his form signed so that he can claim unemployment benefits – although, it is suggested by his nervousness that he is intimidated by his surroundings and would rather not try for the job than fail the interview stage. When asked for references, he offers the song 'Earth, Wind, Fire' by Kool and the Gang. When they do not understand

him, he claims 'Si vous en connaissez pas c'est car vous connaissez rien en musique'. Philippe retorts 'Et vous, vous connaissez Chopin, Schubert ou Berlioz?'. Driss only knows Berlioz the housing estate, not the 19th century classical composer. It seems that Driss and Philippe have come to an impasse, the interview cannot be saved. These are two men from two different worlds who do not speak the same language.

However, thanks to the opening scene, the audience know that Driss does get the job. In that respect, the scene is imbued with dramatic irony – the audience know the fate of the characters before they do. With this in mind, students could speculate what it is about Driss's boisterous and flirtatious personality and irreverence to Philippe's condition that earns him the job?

4. Cinematography

57:15 – 1.00 Montage

In this sequence, the directors choose to portray the passing of time in a condescended space through the use of montage. This montage shows a sequence of snap shots into the everyday life of Philippe and Driss; physical therapy; assisting Philippe in the shower; a trip to the park. In addition, the clip shows the ways in which Driss encourages Philippe to go beyond the confines of his wheelchair in small but significant ways. Driss hires a 'masseur' to massage his ears for sexual pleasure; in a snowy park Driss and Philippe have a one-sided snow fight to Philippe's disadvantage; Driss gets Philippe's wheelchair altered in a garage allowing it to speed past tourists on Segways; he takes Philippe to have his ear pierced with an expensive diamond earring. These vignettes (or short sequence pertaining to a bigger part) flash across the screen to the sound of Terry Callier's *You Goin' Miss Your Candyman*. Students might consider why the directors have chosen to use montage here? What is the comic effect of this montage in terms of juxtaposition? How have the directors used diegetic (dialogue) and non-diegetic sound (music)?

Further reading

- Article in English in which the directors briefly explaining the process of making the film: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eric-toledano-and-olivier-nakache/an-intouchable-world_b_1497787.html
- Philippe Pozzo di Borgo has written about his relationship with Abdel Sellou, upon which the film is based in *Le Second souffle* (Paris : Bayard, 2011). Abdel Sellou has also written his own account called *Tu as changé ma vie ...* (Michel Lafon : 2012).
- An excellent *dossier* designed for A-level students by Tyneside cinema. Exercises on vocabulary and scene analysis: <https://www.tynesidecinema.co.uk/documents/view/5294b61d7cbb88d01d001d27>
- *Fiche pédagogique* based on the Film for learners of French by the Centre International d'Antibes. The exercises include general comprehension, character analysis, themes of the *banlieue* and the *quartier* as well as reading and writing comprehension. http://www.cia-france.com/francais-et-vous/sous_le_platane/51-filmintouchables-deuxieme-partie.html

- The French Review's *dossier pédagogique for Intouchables*, this has several fill in the gap listening exercises and a very useful list of vocabulary:
<http://frenchreview.frenchteachers.org/Documents/ArchivesAndCurrentIssue/Intouchables%20-%20Boudraa.pdf>
- Review of the film on *Le Monde* (28.03.2012) which considers the film as a metaphor for 'la Veille France paralysé sur ses privilèges et la force vitale de la jeunesse issue de l'immigration'
http://www.lemonde.fr/cinema/article/2011/11/01/intouchables-derriere-la-comedie-populaire-une-metaphore-sociale-generouse_1596827_3476.html
- Review on rue89 takes a critical view of the reality of French society behind 'la conte de fée' of the film:
<http://rue89.nouvelobs.com/2011/11/10/intouchables-un-monde-irreel-pour-une-france-fatiguee-226367>
- In this article from Variety magazine, the author accuses the film of flinging 'about the kind of Uncle Tom racism one hopes has permanently exited American screens':
<http://variety.com/2011/film/reviews/untouchable-1117946269/>
- In *Cinema and the Republic: Filming on the Margins in Contemporary France* (University of Wales Press, 2013) Jonathan Ervine has argued the following about *Intouchables* and *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis*, the two most successful films in France to date:

The success of these two films could, on the one hand, been seen as encouraging as it provides largely positive representations of characters from the often-stigmatised Parisian *banlieues* or the supposedly bleak north of France. However, there is also the danger that their referencing of so many recognizable clichés reinforces prejudices and falls short of providing a meaningful exploration of social, racial or regional difference in France. The fact that the vast audiences *Intouchables* and *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* so greatly exceed those of any of the generally much more nuanced films analysed in this book suggest that French audiences are prepared to embrace difference when it is presented in a glossy, well-packaged and unthreatening manner. (p.15).