

Soul of Senegal

THEME:	CULTURAL IDENTITIES						
LANGUAGE:	FRENCH						
STANDARD(S):	COMMUNICATION		CULTURES		CONNECTIONS	COMPARISONS	
	1.1	1.2	1.3	2.1	2.2	3.2	4.2

Time Frame:

Two or three 50-minute sessions

Materials Needed:

- Excerpt of the poem “Souffles” by Birago Diop (provided)
- Cassette recording of the poem being read (optional)
- Paper and markers
- Handouts for information-gap activity (provided)
- Rubric for assessment (provided)

Description of Task:

The activity entitled “Senegal by Numbers” (in the “Negotiated Interaction” section of the *Handbook*) serves as an introduction to Senegal using demography and would serve as a nice precursor for this lesson, as well.

Pre-reading

As a class, students will brainstorm words associated with “*ancêtres*” in the following categories: funerals, people, religion, and traditions, all of which have been written on the board (or butcher paper).

In groups of three, each having one director (or task facilitator, whose job is to keep the group focused), one recorder, and one reporter, the students will discuss what happens when a person dies in the United States and what we think of our ancestors. Reconvene the class and share results, asking each group to share their two most common responses and recording these on the board or a flip chart/butcher paper. Each group

Level:

Intermediate-Mid

Purpose:

To understand aspects of Senegalese culture relating to ancestors, death and nature; to understand the critical role of the “griot” in Senegalese culture; to read for comprehension, to exchange information orally

Communicative Function(s):

Personal: Expressing one’s thoughts and ideas

Referential: Summarizing

Imaginative: Discussing a poem

Language Structure(s):

“qui” and “que,” present tense

Cultural Aspects:

View of ancestors, role of “griots”

Modalities:

Reading

Speaking

Listening

NOTES

should, if at all possible, share information that has not already been shared by a previous group. The teacher may suggest that students take note of some of the traditions for a future assignment.

Reading

Hand out the poem “*Souffles*” (Attachment 1). In groups of three (as above, but rotating roles) as they read the text, students list words representing things (trees, water, bushes, etc.) The teacher elicits the lists from the groups and writes them on the board. Assessment of vocabulary comprehension can quickly be made as students recite their contributions to the list.

This time, in the same groups, students list the actions represented. As a whole class, the teacher lists the actions on the board next to the appropriate object (e.g., *l’arbre...frémit*). Discuss as a class: “What impressions do you have from this list of actions, especially as they relate to the things you mentioned in the previous activity?” The teacher should direct their attention to the present tense formation of the verbs, making sure that students use the endings appropriately as they recite the actions.

In the same groups, students discuss the following questions and create a group response. The groups should be instructed to support their answers/ opinions with examples from the poem. [Having students listen to the cassette recording of the poem (Valdman et al., 1990) may help them to derive the meaning of *souffles*.]

- What are “*souffles*”?
- What “*souffles*” are they talking about?
- What is the view of ancestors as reflected in the poem?
- What kind of society is this?
- How is this represented in the poem?
- What role does nature play in this society?

The students will share their answers in class (group reports), citing examples from the poem to support their ideas. Students should be expected to use the present tense correctly as they report their answers to the class. [The discussion should include the following ideas: this is an agricultural society, the people depend on nature and have developed a harmony with its forces, and this is reflected in their rituals, beliefs and actions (Galanti, 1984). The teacher may have to help with some of these assumptions.]

Ask the class what connecting words they can find in the poem that might be new to them (*qui*, *que*). The teacher should elicit examples from the poem and provide other examples (e.g., *Un griot est une personne qui raconte l'histoire d'un meurtre africain. L'ananas est un fruit qu'on mange en Afrique de l'Ouest.*). What observations can they make about how the words are used? What kind of word follows these two words? (*Qui* is followed by a verb, while *que* is followed by a noun.) Have students find all instances in the poem where these connecting words appear.

Post reading

The teacher distributes the information-gap activity on “griots” (Attachments 2A and 2B). Students do the activity in pairs, then, working together if they wish or individually, they write a short response to the question listed and a brief paragraph that summarizes the relationship of “griots” to the poem *Souffles*. Students are to use “*qui*” and “*que*” correctly in their written responses.

Assessment:

The teacher will be able to assess the students’ understanding of the poem upon hearing responses from the various groups and listening to the discussion. Students’ use of the present tense can also be assessed during the group reporting and class discussion. Students can be asked to hand in the information-gap handouts with the written responses to the questions posed. In addition, their written summaries and responses to the question at the end of the information-gap activity can be assessed with a simple rubric (example provided).

Extensions:

Suggestions for adapting the task for various levels:

For beginning levels:

- Discussion of the various cultural aspects could be conducted in English.
- Students could do a cloze activity as they listen to the tape of the poem.
- The poem can be used to introduce or review the present tense.

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For advanced levels:

- Students can imagine themselves as “griots” and write and present orally what he/she might say about them, using “*qui*” and/or “*que*” in their presentations.
- Students, also in the role of “griot,” can write and present orally a story about a family member.
- They could write their own short story showing comprehension of the themes represented in the poem.

Other extensions:

Have students explore the “griots” in more depth.

Cultural extensions:

- Students can listen to a short explanation of Senegalese funeral rites as taken from *Une si longue lettre* by Mariama Bâ (1979).
- Using the list of words that students mapped in one of the pre-reading exercises, have them make a comparison of Senegalese views and rituals with American ones. They should use “*qui*” and/or “*que*” in their presentation. Class time could be allowed for small group or class discussion of necessary vocabulary, phrases or concepts.

References and Resources:

Bâ, M. (1979). *Une si longue lettre*. Senegal: Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines.

Galanti, M. (1984). *En mouvement*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath.

Valdman, A., LaVergne, M., Gahala, E., Knop, C., & Carreté, M. (1990). *Viens Voir*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Valdman, A., LaVergne, M., Gahala, E., Knop, C., & Carreté, M. (1990). *Viens Voir*. Cassette number nine. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Reflections:

Soul of Senegal—Attachment 1

Souffles*

Ecoute plus souvent
les choses que les êtres.¹
La voix du feu s'entend,²
entends la voix de l'eau
écoute dans le vent
le buisson³ en sanglots.⁴
C'est le souffle des ancêtres...
Ceux qui sont morts ne sont jamais partis
ils sont dans l'ombre⁵ qui s'éclaire⁶
et dans l'ombre qui s'épaissit,⁷
les morts ne sont pas sous la terre:
ils sont dans l'arbre que frémit,⁸
ils sont dans le bois⁹ qui gémit,¹⁰
ils sont dans l'eau qui coule,¹¹
ils sont dans l'eau qui dort,
ils sont dans la cave, ils sont dans la foule:
les morts ne sont pas morts.
Ecoute plus souvent
les choses que les êtres.
La voix du feu s'entend,
entends la voix de l'eau
écoute dans le vent
le buisson en sanglots.
C'est le souffle des ancêtres,
le souffle des ancêtres morts,
qui ne sont pas partis,
qui ne sont pas sous terre,
qui ne sont pas morts.

¹ les êtres =	les gens	⁷ s'épaissir	<i>to deepen</i>
² s'entendre	<i>to be heard</i>	⁸ frémir	<i>to rustle</i>
³ le buisson	<i>bush</i>	⁹ le bois	<i>wood</i>
⁴ en sanglots	<i>sobbing</i>	¹⁰ gémir	<i>to groan</i>
⁵ l'ombre (f.)	<i>shadow</i>	¹¹ couler	<i>to flow</i>
⁶ s'éclairer	<i>to grow bright</i>		

*Adapted from reprint (in Valdman et al., 1990) of excerpt from *Souffles* by Birago Diop from *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre*. Presses Universitaires de France.

Soul of Senegal—Attachment 2A Information-Gap Activity

Nom _____

Tu as des questions et un paragraphe ci-dessous. Ton partenaire a aussi des questions et un paragraphe. Pour savoir de quoi on parle il faut lire le petit paragraphe et répondre aux questions de ton partenaire. Ton partenaire va écrire tes réponses. Après avoir fini, on va changer de rôles.

1. Qui transmet l'histoire des Africains?
2. A quoi est-ce qu'ils s'attachent?
3. Est-ce qu'ils transmettent la vraie histoire?
4. Au passé, de quoi est-ce qu'ils parlaient?

Des gens ne pouvaient pas lire, ainsi il y avait une tradition orale pour transmettre l'histoire des Africains. Aux réunions et aux fêtes l'histoire des ancêtres était racontée. C'est une histoire parlante, une sommaire des peuples noirs. Autrefois, l'histoire était celle du village, les relations entre des tribus, le rôle de l'individu, et en fait, l'enseignement des jeunes.

Après avoir fini cette activité, explique, en écrivant, le rapport entre le “griot” et le poème *Souffles*. Il faut employer “qui” et/ou “que” dans ton résumé.

Avec ton partenaire, explique la phrase: “Quand un vieux meurt en Afrique, c'est une bibliothèque qui brûle.”

Soul of Senegal—Attachment 2B Information-Gap Activity

Nom _____

Tu as des questions et un paragraphe ci-dessous. Ton partenaire a aussi des questions et un paragraphe. Pour savoir de quoi on parle il faut lire le petit paragraphe et répondre aux questions de ton partenaire. Ton partenaire va écrire tes réponses. Après avoir fini, on va changer de rôles.

1. Comment est-ce qu'on transmettait l'histoire des Africains?
2. Où est-ce qu'on l'a transmise?
3. Comment est-ce qu'on appelle cette histoire?
4. En quoi consiste cette histoire?

En Afrique il y a des griots qui raconte l'histoire des Africains. Chaque griot est attaché à une famille. Parfois des griots embellit l'histoire. Au temps passé ils parlaient de la création du monde et du tribu, des lois sociales, des croyances religieuses, etc.

Après avoir fini cette activité, explique, en écrivant, le rapport entre le “griot” et le poème *Souffles*. Il faut employer “qui” et/ou “que” dans ton résumé.

Avec ton partenaire, explique la phrase: “Quand un vieux meurt en Afrique, c'est une bibliothèque qui brûle.”

Rubric for Evaluating “Soul of Senegal” Summaries and Responses

Name: _____

N = needs improvement
S = satisfactory
E = outstanding/excellent

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Content of the summary reflects an understanding of the relationship between the “griots” and the poem <i>Souffles</i> .	N S E	
Written response to the phrase shows an understanding of the analogy between the “griot” and a library.	N S E	
The summary contains consistently accurate use of “qui” and/or “que.”	N S E	

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