**The Black Musketeer:**

**Celebrating Alexandre Dumas as a Symbol of *la Francophonie***

*Eric Martone*

**Unit Overview:** Alexandre Dumas, author of *The Three Musketeers*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and *The Man in the Iron Mask*, is arguably the most famous French novelist of the nineteenth century. In 2002, Dumas was posthumously interred in the Panthéon, a mausoleum reserved for the greatest French citizens, amidst much national hype. Contemporary France, struggling with the legacies of colonialism and increasing diversity, has transformed Dumas, the grandson of a Norman aristocrat and a black slave from Haiti, into a symbol of the colonies and the larger Francophone, or French-speaking, world in an attempt to integrate its immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa to improve race relations and give a suitable signal to the whole Francophone community. Dumas, long ignored by French scholars, is now enjoying new status as a representative of la Francophonie in popular culture. The solidification of this image over the past decade resulted in controversy in February 2010 when the film *L’Autre Dumas*, which focused on the writer’s relationship with his collaborator Auguste Maquet, debuted with Gerard Depardieu in the lead role rather than an actor of biracial descent.

Many American students still interpret “European” as being synonymous with “white.” Europe, however, has had a long-standing presence of individuals from Africa and the Caribbean. By combating the imagined notion of a white Europe historically comprised of “pure” nation states that has depicted Western culture inaccurately as the exclusive product of white Europeans, and perceiving that European interactions with other continents was pushing Europe into a “global age” long before the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we can see how blacks have contributed to the advancement of Europe for centuries. Dumas, whom many of the students know from either having read or watched a film version of one of his works, is largely familiar to them. Yet most, if not all, are unaware of his black ancestry and colonial connections. Teaching in contemporary multicultural classrooms, issues such as diversity, integration, and the ability to succeed are particularly significant to our teaching agenda.

This unit uses Dumas to explore answers to the following complex questions: How do democratic states unify a diverse citizenry of increasingly varied origins? How are national histories and the cultural heritage re-imagined to reflect the inclusion of minority citizens? This challenge is complicated in the particular French republican context since “difference” is not recognized officially. This unit is comprised of seven to eight 46 minute lessons and can be used in various levels of high school European and World history classes, French classes, or as an interdisciplinary unit between language and history classes to complement discussions about contemporary Europe and globalization.

**National Standards:** This unit meets the national standards for both Social Studies and Foreign Languages.

NCSS National Curriculum Standards Addressed

*Strand 1: Culture* - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity; Strand 2: Time, Continuity, and Change - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over time; *Strand 4: Individual Development and Identity* - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity; Strand 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions; Strand 6: Power, Authority, and Governance - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance; Strand 9: Global Connections - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence; Strand 10: Civic Ideals and Practices - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

ACTFL National Curriculum Standards Addressed

*Standard 2: Cultures* - Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures; *Standard 3: Connections* - Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information; *Standard 4: Comparisons* - Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture

**Lesson One**

**Length:** 46 minutes

**Objectives:**

The students will acquire knowledge of the basic facts regarding the life of Dumas.

The students will define the concept of racism.

The students will analyze evidence to formulate conclusions on whether Dumas experienced racism.

**Focus:** The first lesson focuses on Dumas during his lifetime. Although Dumas was successful and there were no official barriers to his advancement, did Dumas suffer from racial discrimination? How did Dumas’s contemporaries perceive him? How did he perceive himself?

**Materials**: News article on the film *L’Autre Dumas*; handout or powerpoint presentation providing a brief bio of Dumas; Pondering Points handouts

**Initiation:** The controversy over the 2010 film *L’Autre Dumas* will be used to initiate students to the topic. Why was it a so controversial for Depardieu, a white actor, to play the role of Dumas? While the debate initially appeared in French newspapers, it quickly spread internationally. As a result, French classes adapting this unit might wish to use articles on the event from the French press, such as the one in *Le Parisien:* (

<http://www.leparisien.fr/loisirs-et-spectacles/alexandre-dumas-trop-blanc-10-02-2010-810240.php)>

History classes should use articles from the British or Canadian press:

(<http://www.cbc.ca/arts/film/story/2010/02/19/depardieu-dumas-racism-controversy.html>) The English language article provides a comment from Patrick Lozes, President of the Council of Black Associations of France, asking how Americans would act if President Obama or Martin Luther King Jr. were played in a film by white actors. Posing this question to the students should provide a starting point for a class discussion. Students will likely come to the conclusion that such actions are racist.

**Lesson Development:**

I. Students should next explore the concept of racism. What is “racism”? How would you define it? Lead a brainstorming session with students, taking note of their responses. The students should be guided to develop a definition similar to one provided from Answers.com (http://www.answers.com/topic/racism):

1. The belief that race accounts for differences in human character or ability and that a particular race is superior to others.
2. Discrimination or prejudice based on race.

Students will apply their definition of racism to Dumas’s experiences in nineteenth-century France by examining comments from both him and his contemporaries. First, however, students need a brief biography of Dumas to provide contextualization. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as a handout or a powerpoint presentation. For convenience, a handout is provided in both an English and French version (see handout on “The Life of Alexandre Dumas”).

II. The students should be reminded that during Dumas’s lifetime, slavery was legal in the United States and therefore Dumas would not have been able to have had the type of success that he did in France. But did Dumas suffer from racism in nineteenth-century France despite such success? Students are to assume the role of “detectives” to investigate this question. They should be divided into five groups. Each group will receive a series of “Pondering Points” – evidence collected from Dumas himself and his contemporaries. Each group should review each of the statements on their handouts and discuss whether or not they reflect French racism or, if the statements come from Dumas, whether they reflect being affected by racism. One student in each group should record the group’s main reasons for their conclusions.

**Closure:** In a brief class discussion, summarize the results of the group investigations and conclude whether or not Dumas experienced racism in nineteenth-century France. Encourage students to look beyond comparing France and the US (i.e. whether France was “less racist” than the US) to relate the two (i.e. how were the two similar and therefore why racism is wrong). How does it make those who suffer racism feel? What harm does racism do to a society?

**Evaluation:** As students leave, they should submit a completed “exit card” answering the following: List three facts about Dumas’s life. List three ways racism negatively impacts a society. Based on today’s lesson, list two things that you would like to know more about.

**Handout (English): The Life of Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870)**

Alexandre Dumas was a French Romantic novelist, dramatist, poet, and journalist. He was born in Villers-Cotterêts in 1802 to Thomas-Alexandre Dumas, the son of a Caribbean slave woman and a French aristocrat, and Marie-Louise Elisabeth Labouret. Dumas’s father renounced his aristocratic surname of Davy de la Pailleterie and participated in the French Revolution (1789-99) alongside the revolutionaries, later serving in Egypt with Napoléon Bonaparte. General Dumas was captured on his return to France and held prisoner in Southern Italy while his family attempted to survive on their own. After his release, General Dumas returned to his family a broken man, dying in 1806.

Dumas’s remarkable penmanship landed him a position in Paris as clerk to the Duc d’Orléans. Dumas attempted to establish himself as a dramatist in the Romantic style along with contemporaries Victor Hugo and Honoré de Balzac. He soon found success with *Henri III and His Court* (1829). Other notable plays include *Christine* (1830), *Antony* (1831), *Charles VII at the Home of His Great Vassals* (1831), *Tower of Nesle* (1832), *Kean* (1836), and *Caligula* (1837). Following his success as a dramatist, Dumas turned toward novels. He often worked with collaborators, most notably Auguste Maquet. The two collaborated on several works during the 1840s, including Dumas’s most celebrated works: *The Three Musketeers* (1844), *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1845-46), *The Man in the Iron Mask* (1848-50), *Queen Margot* (1845), *The Black Tulip* (1850), and *The Corsican Brothers* (1844). Dumas also wrote poems, a successful series of travel books, his memoirs, a cookbook, and founded several journals, most notably *Le Mousquetaire* (1853-57). Dumas was a prodigious writer, his complete works filling over 300 volumes. Although he married Ida Ferrier, an actress, for a short time, Dumas carried on numerous affairs with different women, fathering at least three illegitimate children.

Through his role as editor of the journal *Le Sylphe* (1827-30), Dumas became associated with criticism of the July Ordinances, which sparked the Revolution of 1830, overthrowing King Charles X and replacing him with the Duc d’Orléans, Dumas’s former employer, who ruled as King Louis Philippe. Dumas was an active participant in the Revolution of 1830 and documented his role in his memoirs. Although an ardent republican, Dumas socialized with many members of the aristocracy and enjoyed their patronage. Following the Revolution of 1848, which overthrew Louis Philippe and established the Second Republic, Dumas launched a short-lived political career and founded the journals *Le France Nouvelle* (1848) and *Le Mois* (1848-50) to express his political views. Dumas was not looked upon favorably by the new government under president Charles Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, nephew of Napoléon I, who maneuvered himself into the position of emperor in 1852 as Napoléon III. In 1851, Dumas fled to Belgium, later traveling to Russia.

In 1860, Dumas toured northern Italy under a pass signed by Giuseppe Garibaldi, the Italian patriot. Dumas had written on Garibaldi in his journals and pamphlet, *A New Troy* (1850), praising Garibaldi’s actions as a revolutionary in Latin America. Dumas went to Turin to meet Garibaldi for the first time. The two became friends and Dumas wrote an autobiography of Garibaldi drawn from his personal papers and interviews, published in 1860. Dumas joined Garibaldi in his invasion of Sicily to serve the cause of Italian unity.

Although he made several fortunes, Dumas, a frivolous spender, was usually in debt. He died poor in the care of his son, Alexandre Dumas fils, in 1870. In 2002, Dumas was interred in the Panthéon of Paris, a mausoleum reserved for the greatest citizens of France.

**Further Reading**

Bell, A. Craig. *Alexandre Dumas: A Biography and Study*. London: Cassell, 1950.

Hemmings, F. W. J. *Alexandre Dumas: The King of Romance*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1979.

Schopp, Claude. *Alexandre Dumas: Genius of Life*. Trans. A. J. Koch. New York: Franklin Watts, 1988.

**Handout (French): La vie d’Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870)**

Alexandre Dumas fut un romancier Romantique, un auteur dramatique, un poète, et un journaliste. Il fut né en Villers-Cotterêts en 1802 à Thomas-Alexandre Dumas, le fils de une femme esclave de la Caraïbe et un aristocrate français, et Marie-louise Elisabeth Labouret. Le père de Dumas répudia son nom aristocratique de Davy de la Pailleterie et prend part à la Révolution française (1789-99) le long de les révolutionnaires, plus tard sert dans l'armée en Egypte avec Napoléon Bonaparte. Général Dumas fut capturé sur son retour en France et retint comme prisonnier en l’Italie du sud pendant que sa famille tentèrent survivre à leur propre. Après sa libération, Général Dumas revint à sa famille un homme santé délabrée, mourait en 1806.

L’écriture remarquable de Dumas le obtint une position en Paris comme un employé de bureau à le Duc d’Orléans. Dumas tentent à s'établir si un auteur dramatique en le style Romantique avec les contemporains Victor Hugo et Honoré de Balzac. Dumas bientôt fonda le succès avec *Henri III et sa cour* (1829). Autre drames notables inclure *Christine* (1830), *Antony* (1831), *Charles VII chez ses grands vassaux* (1831), *La Tour de Nesle* (1832), *Kean* (1836), et *Caligula* (1837). Suivant son succès si un auteur dramatique, Dumas tourna pour les romans. Il travailla fréquemment avec les collaborateurs, en particulier Auguste Maquet. Les deux collabora des œuvres plusieurs pendant les 1840s, compris les œuvres célèbre de Dumas: *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (1844), *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* (1845-46), *L’Homme du Masque de Fer* (1848-50), *La Reine Margot* (1845), *Le Tulipe Noire* (1850), et *Les Frères Corses* (1844). Dumas aussi écrivit les poèmes, une collection heureux de livres voyages, son mémoires, un livre de cuisine, et établit les journaux plusieurs, plus notamment *Le Mousquetaire* (1853-57). Dumas fut un auteur prodigieux, son oeuvres complet occupe plus de 300 volumes. Bien qu’il maria Ida Ferrier, une actrice, pour un temps bref, Dumas eut las amoureuse nombreux avec les femmes différent, engendrait au moins trois l’enfants illégitime.

À travers son rôle tant que l’éditeur du journal *Le Sylphe* (1827-30), Dumas devint associait à la critique de las Ordonnances juillet, que provoqua la Révolution de 1830, renversa le Roi, Charles X, et le replace avec le Duc d’Orléans, le patron précédent de Dumas, qui régna aussi Louis Philippe, le roi de la français. Dumas fut une participant actif en la Révolution de 1830 et documenta son rôle en ses mémoires. Bien que un républicain ardent, Dumas associait à plus de membres de la aristocratie et aima leurs patronages. Suivant la Révolution de 1848, que renversa Louis Philippe et établit le République Deuxième, Dumas lança un bref carrière politique et établit les journaux *Le France Nouvelle* (1848) et *Le Mois* (1848-50) à exprimer son vues politique. Dumas ne fut regarda à favorablement par le gouvernement nouveau sous le président Charles Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, le neveu de Napoléon I, qui se manœuvra dans la position du empereur en 1852 tant que Napoléon III. En 1851, Dumas fuira à la Belgique, plus tard il a voyagé en Russie.

En 1860, Dumas voyagea à l’Italie du nord sous une autorisation signa par Giuseppe Garibaldi, le patriote italien. Dumas a écrit de Garibaldi en son journaux et une brochure, *Un Nouvelle Troie* (1850), fait l'éloge de las actions de Garibaldi comme un révolutionnaire en L’Amérique latine. Dumas passa de Turin à rencontrer Garibaldi pour le temps premier. Les deux devint las amis et Dumas écrivit une autobiographie de Garibaldi de ses papiers privés et les entrevues, publia en 1860. Dumas joignit Garibaldi en son invasion de Sicile à servir la cause de la unité italienne.

Bien qu’il fit las fortunes, Dumas, un dépensier frivole, eut d'ordinaire des dettes. Il mourut pauvre en aux bons soins de son fils son, Alexandre Dumas fils, en 1870. En 2002, Dumas eut enterré en la Panthéon de Paris, un mausolée réserva pour les citoyens grands de France.

**Further Reading**

Bell, A. Craig. *Alexandre Dumas: A Biography and Study*. London: Cassell, 1950.

Hemmings, F. W. J. *Alexandre Dumas: The King of Romance*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1979.

Schopp, Claude. *Alexandre Dumas: Genius of Life*. Trans. A. J. Koch. New York: Franklin Watts, 1988.

**Pondering Points One: Dumas’s Contemporaries**

Contemporaries almost always noted Dumas’s “African” physical appearance.

**Source 1:** General Thiébault, who had served briefly under Dumas’s father, described the writer in 1834 as a young man “with skin like a *métis*, frizzy and thick hair like a *nègre*, [and] African lips.” [Fernand Calmettes, ed. *Memoires de Baron General Thiébault*, 5 vols. (Paris: E. Plon, 1893-1895), II: 32]

**Source 2:** In 1837, writer Jules Lecomte described Dumas as having a “brown” face and “frizzy hair.” He argued that Dumas’s “physical appearance…infinitely recalls the characteristics of *nègres*.” [Jules Lecomte, *Lettres de Van Engelgom*, reprint ed. (Paris: Boissard, 1925), 111]

**Source 3:** Benjamin Pifteau, a writer, described Dumas as “exotic” in appearance with “a broad face, long limbs, frizzy hair, a prominent jaw-line, and bronze skin.” [Benjamin Pifteau, *Alexandre Dumas en manches de chemise* (Montreal: Éditions Le Joyeux Roger, 2009), 20]

**Source 4:** The daughter of the famous Orientalist Charles Schoebel, a friend of Dumas, later recalled her childhood fascination with Dumas’s appearance: “I would plunge my small hands through the bushy mane that crowned Dumas’s head. It was amusing to me to slip my fingers through this almost tropical mess,” the frizziness of which was a “souvenir of Africa.” [In *Alexandre Dumas en bras de chemise*, ed. Claude Schopp(Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2002), 225]

**Source 5:** Dumas recounted an episode in *Adventures with My Pets* in which he took an anonymous ride with an “amusing” cabriolet driver. During the drive, the two happened to discuss the department of Aisne (where Dumas was born) and the driver listed several famous men from there. However, he did not mention Dumas. Dumas asked him why not. The driver replied that it was impossible for Dumas to be from Villers-Cotterets in Aisne . When Dumas asked why, the driver replied “Alexandre Dumas is not from Villers-Cotterets…[for Dumas] is a *nègre*!” As a result, he had to be from the Congo or Senegal. [Alexandre Dumas, *Histoire de mes bêtes*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1868), 76-81]

**Pondering Points Two: Dumas’s Contemporaries**

**Source 1:** In December 1844, the French writer Honoré de Balzac expressed publicly his contempt for the “*nègre*” Dumas after the former’s poorly-selling serial novel *Paysans* was replaced with the latter’s *Reine Margot*. [Philibert Audebrand, *Alexandre Dumas à la Maison d’or: souvenirs de la vie littéraire*, (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1888), 49]

**Source 2:** The writer Mirecourt wrote a pamphlet that attacked Dumas’s reputation. Mirecourt blatantly used the French word *nègre*’s double meaning (at the time, itmeant both a black slave from the colonies and a ghostwriter) to attack Dumas professionally and personally: “Dumas’s physique is well known: he has the stature of a drum-major, Herculean limbs at full stretch, protruding lips, an African nose, kinky hair, and a bronze face. His origin is written all over him; but it reveals itself even more in his character. Scratch the surface of Dumas and you will find the savage. There are elements of both the *nègre* and the marquis in him. However, the marquis is only skin deep. Remove some of the makeup, tear off the loose costume… [and under] the civilized surface, the *nègre* soon bears his teeth at you. The marquis plays his role in public, while the *nègre* betrays himself in private.” [Eugène de Mirecourt, *Fabrique de Romans, Maison Alexandre Dumas et compagnie* (Paris: Hauquelin et Bautruche, 1845),7]

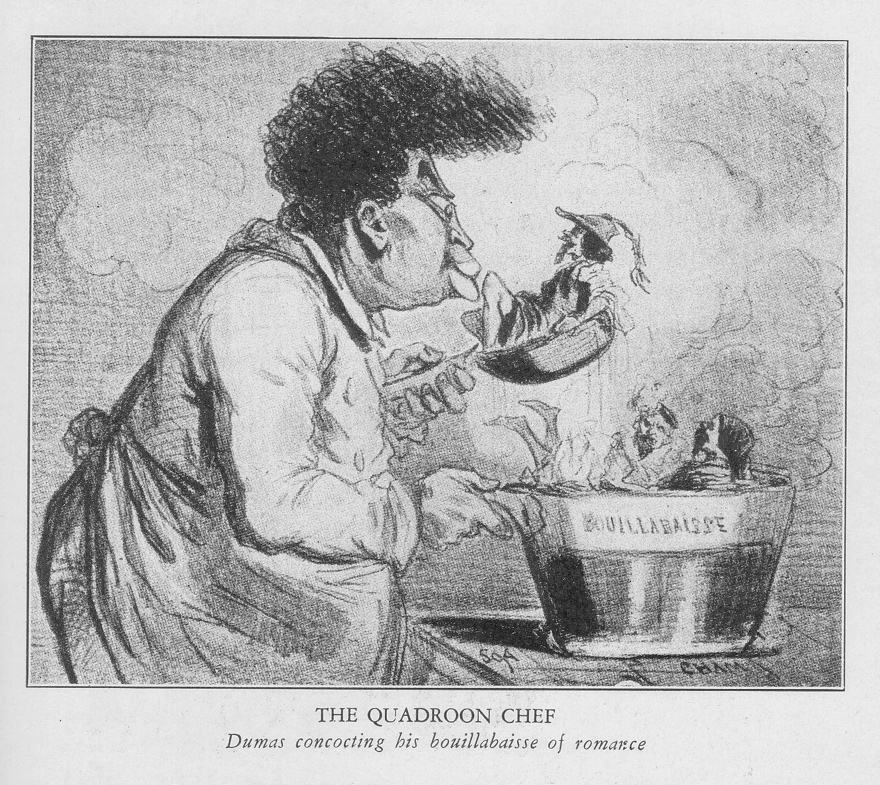
**Source 3:** Mirecourt further indicated Dumas’s backward, or primitive, nature in his pamphlet: “His garments inconvenience him, he strips and works in picturesque undress of our first ancestors. He stretches out on the floor like a dog from the New World; he lunches on potatoes taken burning hot from the ashes of the hearth and devours them without removing the skins – *nègre*!... Like tribal chiefs, whom explorers persuade with baubles, Dumas loves everything that glistens, everything that shimmers. He has ribbons from various orders…he pins his decorations on his chest. The toys seduce him… – *nègre*!” [Eugène de Mirecourt, *Fabrique de Romans, Maison Alexandre Dumas et compagnie* (Paris: Hauquelin et Bautruche, 1845),7-8]

**Source 4:** The poet Paul Verlaine labeled an older Dumas “Uncle Tom” in a triolet he wrote after risqué photos of the writer with his mistress, the American actress Adah Menken, appeared in 1866. Dumas and Adah were compared to the white girl, Eva, and the old black slave, Tom, in American abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe’s popular novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. [The poem is quoted in Bernard Falk, *The Naked Lady* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1952), 182]

**Source 5:** One periodical argued that “he displayed the Ethiopian’s fondness for bright colors and dress-eccentricities.” [*Every Saturday*, January 28, 1871]

**Pondering Points Three: Dumas’s Contemporaries**

**Source 1:** The cartoonists Cham and Nadar regularly drew Dumas as a grotesque figure and emphasized his “African features.” Cham has the most famous cartoon depicting Dumas as an African cannibal stirring a pot.



(http://www.cadytech.com/dumas/galerie.php)

**Source 2:** The classic actress Mlle. Mars, who performed in many of Dumas’s early plays, disliked him because he was a Romantic as well as his skin color. She demanded that the windows be opened after Dumas left a room because she claimed he left an offensive *nègre* smell. [Charles Maurice, *Histoire anecdotique du théâtre, de la littérature et de diverses impressions contemporaines*, 2 vols.(Paris: H. Plon, 1856), I: 428]

**Source 3:** Charles Nodier, a fellow writer and mentor to Dumas, commented to him, “you Negroes are all the same; you love glass beads and toys.” [André Maurois, *The Titans: A Three-Generation Biography of the Dumas*, trans. Gerard Hopkins (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 80]

**Source 4:** Contemporaries debated about how to classify Dumas. Some described the “racial wars” fought within Dumas’s own person. Intellectual Victor Pavie, for example, argued that “the refinements of an exuberant civilization have not been able to tame” Dumas’s black blood. [In *Alexandre Dumas en bras de chemise*, ed. Claude Schopp(Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2002), 56]

**Pondering Points Four: Dumas’s Comments**

**Source 1:** In his memoirs, Dumas discussed his failed attempt to win the heart of actress Marie Dorval, who chose to be with his literary friend and rival, Alfred de Vigny. Dumas doubted that he ever had a chance, for, as he wrote, “Vigny is a poet of immense talent…[and] a true gentleman. That is better than me, for I am a *mulâtre*.” [Alexandre Dumas, *My Memoirs*, trans. E.M. Waller, 6 vols. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1907-1909), II: 257]

**Source 2:** In his memoirs, Dumas described himself as “never…good-looking” because he “had large brown eyes, with a dark complexion.” In addition, he noted that his hair “was frizzy” and when it became too long, “it formed a grotesque aureole round my head.” Dumas also described his “impulsive character” reflective of what he perceived as his lack of intellectual capacity because of his “tropical” ancestry. [Alexandre Dumas, *My Memoirs*, trans. E.M. Waller, 6 vols. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1907-1909), IV: 41, II: 220]

**Source 3:** Biographer André Maurois wrote that Dumas “needed… to feel self-confident, to know at every moment that he was as good as, and better than, [his detractors].” Therefore, Dumas had to proved to his “own satisfaction” that he was “worth as much as, and more than, other men.” [André Maurois, *The Titans: A Three-Generation Biography of the Dumas*, trans. Gerard Hopkins (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 12]

**Source 4:** Dumas wrote a letter to Cyril Bissette, a biracial abolitionist leader from Martinique. Dumas was angered over the pro-slavery *Revue coloniale*’s false claim that some of his poetry was to appear in its pages. Dumas hoped that Bissette would correct this error in his abolitionist journal, for “all my sympathies are instinctively and nationally for the opponents of the principles that these gentlemen defend.” It was his intention to make this position clearly known “not only in France, but everywhere I can count my brothers in race and friends of color.” [In *Cahiers de la Société des Amis d’Alexandre Dumas* 29 (2002), 74-75]

**Pondering Points Five: Dumas’s Comments**

**Source 1:** In 1864, Dumas received a letter from President Abraham Lincoln asking for an autographed picture to be sold at a June fair in Pittsburg for the benefit of sick and wounded Union soldiers located there. As Lincoln wrote, “We know that we do not make our appeal in vain to you, whose heart and pen have always been in the service of humanity, kindness, and charity.” In addition, he requested “a small donation,” which would be received “with gratitude.” Dumas responded that he was “extremely sensitive to the honor” that had been shown him and instead of sending one autograph, sent 100. He even made “unfruitful” efforts with the French press, publishing several public pleas “for opening a subscription in favor of the Pittsburg fair. I can only ask you to accept my particular offering of ten dollars [fifty francs].” [In *Cahiers de la Société des Amis d’Alexandre Dumas* 29 (2002), 307-308]

**Source 2:** In August 1838, Dumas wrote a letter to his “compatriots” in Haiti about raising funds through subscription to erect in France a statue in honor of his father. He perceived the erection of the statue as a pan-African endeavor. Dumas proposed “a subscription of one franc available to men of color only, from whichever part of the world in which they reside.” Dumas cited his father’s bravery and depicted him as evidence that the Haitians had “something to teach old Europe , so proud of its antiquity and its civilization,” in particular that the Haitians and the people of the French Antilles “have furnished their share to the glory of France.” [In *Cahiers de la Société des Amis d’Alexandre Dumas* 29 (2002), 75-76]

**Source 3:** In *Adventures with My Pets*, Dumas confessed: “I like solitude. For those who can appreciate her charms, solitude is the most loving of mistresses.” [Alexandre Dumas, *Adventures with My Pets*, trans. and ed. A. Craig Bell (Philadelphia and New York: Chilton, 1960), 6]

**Source 4:** Dumas attended a party in which the topic of blacks came under discussion. A guest asked him his opinion on the subject, for “If I am not mistaken, you have something of the negro blood in your veins.” Dumas replied, “You are not mistaken at all, monsieur. My father was a mulatto, my grandfather was a negro, and my great-grandfather a monkey. You see, Monsieur, my pedigree begins where yours ends!” [Cited in A. Craig Bell, *Alexandre Dumas: A Biography and Study* (London: Cassell, 1950), 6]

**Lesson Two**

**Length:** 46 minutes

**Objectives:**

The students will analyze art as a cultural artifact.

The students will examine how “European” and “white” became generally synonymous during the course of modern European history.

Students will probe how the conception of a white Europe excluded people perceived as non-white from being considered “European.”

Students will explore how colonialism and demographic shifts since the Second World War have resulted in a multiracial France.

**Materials**: Images of the Four Continents; Colonial Comments Handout; Demographic charts; Perspective Writing Rubric

**Focus:** In the closing discussion of the previous lesson, students should have answered that one of the effects of racism on its victims is to make them feel alienated, or that they do not belong to the larger society, because of their race. Picking up on this point, this lesson will explore, in part, how “European” is often perceived as the same as “white.” However, in a global era, how has globalization changed the make up of European nation-states? What changes have occurred in France in particular since the Second World War?

**Initiation:** Present the students with a version of the “Four Continents” art motif depicting “the four corners of the world.” This popular motif of Europe, Asia, America, and Africa depicted in physical female form was popular in Western art from the sixteenth-century onward. Europe is depicted as white with imagery representing her as the disseminator of knowledge and the epitome of civilization. Africa is often (although not always) depicted as having black skin. She is usually accompanied with imagery representing savageness, primitiveness, and lack of development. Later depictions presented Africa with a pair of shackles to denote slavery. The following questions can be used to guide students in analyzing the works: By looking at the imagery in the works, why do you think the artist chose to include what he did? What can you tell about the way in which the artist saw the world and Europe’s/Africa’s place in the world? What did Europeans see as important, and what did they consider to be positive qualities? How might these images reflect how Europeans perceived themselves? Why might it be difficult for Europeans accustomed to such images to accept people with dark skin as equals?

**Lesson Development:**

I. Such motifs as the Four Continents helped justify (white) European superiority and the need for colonization (to “civilize” untamed parts of the world). Students will examine a collection of documents to assess how French colonial explorers and administrators perceived France’s “civilizing mission” (see “Colonial Comments” handout). It should be emphasized that the French generally sought to turn the people it colonized into Frenchmen. Students should imagine that they are colonial administrators and create a list of reasons to justify French control of colonies. Within the context of the lesson’s earlier analysis of the Four Continents, what problems might people in Europe have with accepting Africans and other non-white individuals as “French/European”?

II. The second part of the lesson will explore how these difficulties became exacerbated as a result of the departmentalization of the French Antillean and Indian Ocean territories, and increased immigration to France from people from North and Sub-Saharan Africa after the Second World War. A mini-lecture should be given on both of these topics.

The 1946 incorporation of Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyana, and Reunion as official departmental regions formally transformed France into a global (or transcontinental) nation-state comprised of 26 equal administrative regions (22 in the metrople). A comparison to the United States might be helpful for students: both Hawaii and Alaska are official states but they are not connected to the continental US like the overseas French departments are not connected to metropolitan France. Information on the overseas departments can be found at: (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overseas\_depart-ments\_and\_territories\_of\_France)

The people in the overseas regions are full French citizens. Many travel to the metropole for work and school. What difficulties might they face in being treated as equal French citizens? How might this create problems for national unity?

In addition, France hace become the site for increasing immigration from Africa. It is illegal for the French state to collect data on ethnicity and race. This law’s origins date to the French Revolution and was reaffirmed in the 1958 Constitution. Nevertheless, estimates on France’s immigrant population have been made. Some of these statistics are available online: (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\_of\_France)

The children and grandchildren of these immigrants often become French citizens. What difficulties might they face in being treated as equal French citizens? How might this create problems for national unity?

**Closure:** Discuss with students the following quote from French Caribbean intellectual Frantz Fanon: “There is no black problem… I am French. I am interested in French culture, French civilization, and the French…We refuse to be treated as outsiders; we are well and truly part of French history and its drama...I take a personal interest in the destiny of France, the French nation, and its values.” [Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 13, 179] What Fanon objected to was the limitation of Frenchness through whiteness. Why did being French require one to also be perceived as white? As a result, being black should not pose a problem to being considered French.

Students should imagine that they are overseas French citizens attending school in metropolitan France. Each student should write a letter from this perspective to a friend back in the overseas department about their feelings on how he or she is alienated from French society because of their skin color and perceived “foreign” appearance.

**Evaluation:** The students’ letters can be collected or checked to evaluate the effectiveness of the lesson as well as participation in class discussions.

**Colonial Comments Handout**

Politician Léon Blum declared in 1924: “We are too imbued with love of our country to disavow the expansion of French thought and civilisation…We recognise the right and even the duty of superior races to draw unto them those who have not yet arrived at the same level of culture.” [Quoted in Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 115]

In a 1902 colonial dispatch, Léon Pacquier described the “Negro spirit” as “something like the spirit of our first ancestors. It is unpolished and crude, but its freshness is without comparison. In coming into contact with it, one feels humble but also immersed in the very sources of human sensitivity.” [Léon Pacquier, “Sur l’âme noire,” Dépêche coloniale, 3 June 1902, quoted in Raymond F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914*, new ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 82]

Gabriel Hanotaux wrote in 1902: “it is a question of extending overseas to regions only yesterday barbarian the principles of a civilization of which one of the oldest nations of the world has the right to be proud. It is a question of creating near us and far away from us so many new Frances…in face of furious competition from other races, all marching along the same routes.” [Quoted in Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914*, 29]

In the 1880s, Senator Isaac declared: “France is not only a race, but especially a *patrie*…she possesses that eminently colonial capacity of absorbing... the peoples to whom she transports civilization.” [Quoted in Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 102]

A nineteenth-century textbook depicted Algeria in North Africa as a place “previously inhospitable and barbarous,” but it was now “an extension of France.” Colonialism was a battle “against cruel people without faith, without purpose of religion, and without the laws of humanity.” [Quoted in Pascal Blanchard and Sandrine Lemaire, *Culture Coloniale: La France conquise par son Empire, 1871-1931* (Paris: Autrement, 2003), 96]

Perspective Writing Rubric

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** | **Points** |
| *Content* | Content reflects a vast amount of knowledge about the historical period | Content reflects above satisfactory  knowledge about the historical period | Content reflects a satisfactory amount of knowledge about the historical period | Content reflects limited  knowledge about the historical period |  |
| *Point of View* | Insightful understanding of how point of view affects interpretation of events | Very good  understanding of how point of view affects interpretation of events | Good understanding of how point of view affects interpretation of events | Limited understanding of how point of view affects interpretation of events |  |
| *Fluency* | Excellent fluency | Very good fluency | Somewhat disjointed | Disjointed |  |
| *Grammar and Usage* | Up to three  grammatical errors and proper word usage | More than three grammatical errors and proper word usage | Less than three grammatical errors but improper word usage | More than three grammatical errors and improper word usage |  |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | /16 |

**Lesson Three**

**Length:** 46 minutes

**Objectives:**

Students will explore how history helps create a sense of national consciousness.

Students will probe how history creates a story of how the present came to be.

Students will investigate how history is not fixed but rather in flux.

Students will contemplate how history creates a sense of who is a member of the nation and who is not.

**Focus:** The third lesson will focus on how nations are constructed through a common history. National histories create a sense of who belongs and who does not. French history has long ignored the contributions to national development of extra-European immigrants and former colonial subjects. What effects does this cause, particularly as their numbers are increasing? How does it prevent national integration?

**Initiation:** Instruct students to write an outline of the major events in their lives that enabled them to get to where they are now (i.e. in their academic careers, athletic careers, music careers, etc.). From this endpoint, students will construct an origin and a series of 10 events that will lead to the present. Pair the students up to discuss their outlines. The students will take turns asking each other the following questions: Why did you select the events that you did? How do they connect to the present? How did the process of creating an outline of your life by starting at the end influence the events that you selected?

Alternative initiation activity: Students will write a reverse story. The first student writes the end of the story at the bottom of the page (i.e. “Robert and Maria lived happily ever after”). The next students will write what happened before that on the line above (i.e. “They were married in a lovely garden.”). This process repeats until all the students have written one line of the story and the page is filled. The teacher will read the story to the class and then ask the students: How did the process of creating a story by starting at the end influence the events that you came up with?

**Lesson Development:**

I. In several European languages (such as French), the words for “history” and “story” are the same. National histories should be viewed as the story of how the nation came to be.

Nation’s histories, or stories, are concerned with introducing and shaping characters and events to reflect some type of narrative leading to the endpoint of the present. In other words, history creates a story of how the present (or the endpoint) came to be. Brainstorm with students on how the endpoint of their story in the initiation activity and that of a country’s national history are similar in regard to how they impact the construction of which events in the past are significant. What are some of the drawbacks to constructing a narrative this way? What are the benefits?

II. Now, ask students what happens when the present (endpoint) changes? The students should be guided to reach the conclusion that as this endpoint changes, the narrative needs to be amended. The greater the changes, the greater the revisions. In other words, as the endpoint changes, so does history (or the events in the past deemed significant leading to that endpoint). Obviously, the past cannot be changed, but new events and figures are added, others are omitted or modified, to create a revised narrative, or story. (This process in regard to national histories will be explored in more detail in the next two lessons. The point to make here is that history is not fixed but is constantly changing as the present constantly changes. Students’ generally perceive history as something immutable.) To emphasize this point, it might help to fall back to the initiation activity. If the students created the outline of the major 10 events in their lives that enabled them to get to where they are now at a later point in time, would their outlines be the same? How might they be different? Alternative activity: Redo the alternate initiation activity by adding a new “present” (i.e. Maria died after a long illness and Robert was left alone – now reconstruct a past using the same events from the earlier story but in the same amount of lines). The story will be similar but different to meet the new endpoint.

**Closure:** As contemporary French society changes, its history needs to be changed as well. Thinking about the previous lesson, brainstorm with students about what changes have been occurring in France since the Second World War that would require a change in the story of how the nation was formed? What would such changes be needed? If certain groups with a country are not included in the nation’s (his)story, how would it make those groups feel? How might other people in the nation view these groups? Is this good for creating national cohesion (or fostering the idea that diverse people all belong to the same nation)?

**Evaluation:** Class discussions; students’ ability to recall prior information

**Lesson Four**

**Length:** 46 minutes

**Objectives:**

Students will examine how national histories create a sense of who is a member of the nation and who is not.

Students will investigate how minorities, particularly African Americans, were once regularly omitted from standard accounts of US history.

Students will explore how minority groups sought a “rewriting” of American history to allow greater inclusion.

**Materials**: Langston Hughes’s poem “I, Too”; African Americans and History Handout; Black History Month Handout

**Focus:** The fourth and fifth lessons involve a comparison to the US. Many students will be unaware that women, Native Americans, Latinos, and African Americans were once regularly omitted or radically marginalized in standard accounts of US history since most current textbooks have increased their coverage of minority contributions. So, they will read some articles that will relay this information. Black History Month and other types of activities can be mentioned.

**Initiation:** Since US history textbooks in the past two decades have increasingly included minority history within the larger history of the US, students are likely familiar with several famous African Americans (like Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, etc.) and African American contributions to America’s (his)story. Have them brainstorm to provide some examples.

Until World War II, however, African Americans were largely excluded from official US history. Not in the sense that they went unmentioned – history still mentioned slavery, abolitionism, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. However, African Americans were discussed as passive objects rather than agents involved in making history, as primitives, and whose presence was either a misfortune or tragedy. They were frequently depicted as making no substantial contributions to American society. In this context, students should read and discuss “I, Too” written in 1924 by African American poet Langston Hughes (http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15615)

I, too, sing America.  
I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.  
Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,

“Eat in the kitchen,”  
Then.  
Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed –  
I, too, am America.

How does it seem that Africans Americans are treated? How does this make Hughes feel? What does Hughes mean when he describes himself as “the darker brother”? Whose “darker brothers” are African Americans? What does Hughes mean when he states that he is also “America”? Why does Hughes feel the need to assert this position? If a particular group is not portrayed as contributing to the development of America, do their descendants have the right to be considered Americans in the present?

**Lesson Development:**

I. Students will examine a collection of primary source excerpts documenting African Americans’ struggle to rewrite American history in order to integrate present American society. Each document is accompanied by questions for the students to answer.

II. Students will read the Black History Month handout. The students should have a teacher-moderated discussion based on the following questions: Have you ever heard of Black History Month before? Have you ever done any Black History Month activities in your previous classes? What types of activities did you do? Why do you think we have Black History Month? Thinking back to our earlier discussions, what purpose does Black History Month serve?

**Closure:** Students should write a journal entry reflecting on the lesson. A suitable prompt would be: What type of American society was Du Bois and other African Americans trying to promote? Students should develop the idea that they were trying to promote a multicultural or pluralist American society that could accommodate people of different races, ethnicities, and cultures.

**Evaluation:** Answers to the questions on the African Americans and History Handout; Class discussions; Journal

**African Americans and History Handout**

By documenting black contributions to America’s development in the past, African Americans hoped to legitimize their right to be considered full members of the America of the present.

**One:** 1841 - Former slave J.W.C. Pennington publishes [*A Textbook of the Origin and History of the Colored People*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B0008AN6W6/americanherit-20)

1855 – The black abolitionist William C. Neill publishes [*The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0405018320/americanherit-20)

1860s to 1870s – Former slave William Wells Brown publishes [*The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0836985168/americanherit-20)(1863), [*The Negro in the American Rebellion: His Heroism and His Fidelity*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/082141528X/americanherit-20) (1867), and [*The Rising Son; or The Antecedents and Advancement of the Colored Race*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0837128560/americanherit-20) (1874).

1. What did these works seek to achieve?
2. Why was it important to document African American contributions to American society?

**Two:** African American historian Arthur Schomburg (1925): “The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future… For him, a group tradition must supply compensation for persecution, and pride of race the antidote for prejudice. History must restore what slavery took away, for it is the social damage of slavery that the present generations must repair and offset. So…we find the Negro thinking more collectively, more retrospectively.” [Arthur A. Schomburg, “The Negro Digs Up His Past,” in *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 231]

1. What does Schomburg mean when he states that the “American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future”?
2. What reason is given to account for African Americans’ exclusion from history?
3. How had slavery contributed to a negative assessment of African Americans?

**Three:** African American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois (1935): “With sufficient … agreement among the dominant classes, the truth of history may be utterly distorted…to any convenient fairy tale that the masters of men wish.” [W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (1935; reprint, New York, The Free Press: 1998), 725-726]

1. Does Du Bois depict history as something fixed or as something changeable?
2. In 1935, what is the “distorted” history that Du Bois is referring to? Why is it “distorted”?

**Four:** African American historian Arthur Schomburg (1925): “By virtue of their being regarded as something ‘exceptional’ … [earlier individuals of achievement who were of black descent were] unfairly disassociated from the group, and group credit lost accordingly…[Consequently] the first true writing of Negro history [which had been in progress since the late nineteenth century] is the rewriting of…our common American history [to represent] historical truth.” [Schomberg, “The Negro Digs Up His Past,” 232]

1. Earlier figures of black descent were perceived as “anomalies,” or not the norm, since people of black descent were not considered capable of the same achievements as white Americans. Such figures of achievement were often part white and it was rationalized that their success was a result of their white ancestry. How did perceiving such black individuals as “white” marginalize African Americans from history?
2. Although Schomberg wishes to document an African American past and African American contributions to history, what is his ultimate, or end, goal?

**Five:** African American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois (1903): “[I hope] to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without… the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.” [W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin, 1989), 5]

1. Although Du Bois wishes to maintain his identity as a black American, what is it that he hopes to achieve? How does Du Bois’s conception of “America” differ from those commonly held in the early 1900s?

**Black History Month**

Black History Month is a month-long initiative to celebrate the history and societal contributions of members of the African Diaspora in America.

Black History Month owes its origins to initiatives by several African Americans during the early twentieth century, particularly African American Harvard graduate, Carter Woodson. In 1926, Woodson, director of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and founder of the Journal of Negro History, launched Negro History Week. The idea may have been inspired in part by the efforts of Mary Church Terrell and the African-American fraternity Omega Phi Psi, which had established a local celebration of the birthday of Frederick Douglass, a former slave and early African-American leader, on February 14, and established a Negro Achievement Week in 1924. At that time, the study and acknowledgement of African-American history and societal contributions were mostly absent from the mainstream media and school curriculums. The initiative, which Carter hoped would be temporary, was to foster national exposure of African-American history in order for it to become integrated fully into school curriculums and the media. Ultimately, such educational efforts would improve race relations. Woodson selected the second week of February for Negro History Week to honor the birthdays of Frederick Douglass, and President Abraham Lincoln, who issued the Emancipation Proclamation abolishing slavery in the United States.

At first, Negro History Week was celebrated mostly by African Americans. However, the celebration expanded amongst white society, gaining support in the North, which sought to support the initiative to foster racial harmony. By the 1950s, the celebration was an established cultural institution. In 1976, the celebration was extended to one month upon the initiative of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History.

Adapted from Eric Martone, “Black History Month,” in *Encyclopedia of Blacks in European History and Culture*, ed. Eric Martone (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009).

**Lesson Five**

**Length:** 46 minutes

**Objectives:**

Students will investigate how minorities, particularly former colonial subjects, are generally omitted or marginalized from standard accounts of French history.

Students will explore how minority groups are seeking a “rewriting” of French history to allow greater inclusion.

Students will compare the American and French struggles to widen the historical narrative to include all citizens.

Students will compare and contrast cultural plurality and singularity in terms of their effectiveness at integration.

**Materials**: Contemporary France Handout; May 10 Holiday Handout

**Focus:** Students will compare the American struggles to widen the historical narrative to include all citizens with French efforts to do so. Complicating matters, however, is American emphasis on plurality and the French emphasis on singularity. Rather than pass judgment, however, students are to think of the benefits and drawbacks to each and how such views impact the writing or rewriting of national history.

**Initiation:** In the closing activity in the previous lesson, students should have developed the idea that African American intellectuals promoted a multicultural or pluralist American society. This conception of “America” is dominant today. However, students will now examine the French conception of “France.” To introduce students to the general idea of France as a unicultural entity, read and discuss these excerpts from French intellectual and politician Régis Debray: The French Republic “is composed of citizens, not of communities. Individuals have their particularities; not citizens.” The French Republic is unitary, inheriting “a centralist culture” from its monarchical tradition. A population “is the assembly of people who live in France.” This differs from “the people,” which is “not a conglomerate of ethnicities...it is the nation in its entirety.” While one can have regional Breton or Corsican populations, there is only one French people. During the Revolution, France defined itself as “an elective nation, a heritage freely consented, a community of citizens who opposed ethnic tribes, communities of blood and race.” Thus citizenship involves “explicit consent.” The “capacity for integration is not unlimited.” Immigrants “naturally group themselves by ethnicities or regions of origin,” which goes against the “French” conceptions of “the people” and creates a system like segregation in the United States. [Régis Debray, *La République expliquée à ma fille* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998), 7, 9, 25, 26, 29]

Does the Republic depicted by Debray accept “differences” amongst its citizens?

What does Debray mean when he says that France has “a centralist culture”?

What is the purpose of having “a centralist culture”? What does it hope to achieve?

What is the difference between the French “population” and the French “people”?

What potential danger(s) does Debray see immigrants as posing to France?

Does the notion of “one French people” lend itself to accommodating immigrants of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds?

In such a Republic, can minority groups express a desire for equal treatment as a group?

So, Americans emphasis plurality, while the French emphasis singularity. What are the benefits and drawbacks to each and how do you think such views impact the writing or rewriting of national history?

**Lesson Development:**

I. Students should think back to earlier class discussions about Frantz Fanon and the idea that being accepted as French implied being white: “There is no black problem… I am French. I am interested in French culture, French civilization, and the French…We refuse to be treated as outsiders; we are well and truly part of French history and its drama...I take a personal interest in the destiny of France, the French nation, and its values.” The French focus on cultural unity and the implication that being French implied the exclusion of “foreigners.” But were people with dark skin necessarily “foreign”? How did the conception that people with dark skin were not French suggest a limited view of what it meant to be French? How did such a view prevent the formulation of a unitary culture uniting all French citizens? Students will examine a collection of primary source excerpts documenting former colonial subjects struggle to rewrite French history in order to integrate the former colonies now formally part of France. The documents are accompanied by questions for the students to answer.

II. Students will read the May 10 Holiday handout. The students should have a teacher-moderated discussion based on the following questions: What is the purpose of the May 10 holiday? Why is the French government trying to apologize for acts like slavery? How do such efforts seek to create a new common history? Policy makers thought that the Mekachera Law would help integrating former colonial subjects into larger French society. Why do you think they thought that this would happen? Why did I not work? How is the May 10 holiday similar to Black History month? How is it different?

**Closure:** Students should make a graphic organizer comparing American and French society. The chart should look like this:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Tradition of cultural plurality or cultural singularity | Benefits of its cultural tradition | Drawbacks of its cultural tradition | Major Group(s) alienated from larger society | Reasons for the groups’ alienation | Reason for “rewriting” history | Success(es)? |
| US |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| France |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Evaluation:** Class discussions; Answers to handout questions; Graphic organizer

**Contemporary France Handout**

African Prince Kojo Tovalou Houenou argued in a colonial petition that colonials, crying for “justice,” wished for “complete assimilation without frontier – without distinction of race…since the label of [French] nationality has been attached to us….We wish that you recognize our rights to citizenship – the elementary rights of man – and that…we might be called to share your destiny.” [Prince Kojo Tovalou Houenou, “The Problem of Negroes in French Colonial Africa,” *Opportunity*, July 1924, 203-206]

1. What does Prince Kojo hope for former colonial subjects?
2. What does his wish imply about the treatment of former colonial subjects?
3. What is Prince Kojo’s attitude toward “France”?

French Caribbean intellectual Frantz Fanon asserted that a black Frenchman who spoke French well was often greeted with surprise and the question, “How long have you lived in France? You speak such good French!”[Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 18, 121]

4) How does Fanon’s anecdote demonstrate how metropolitan French had difficulty perceiving blacks as “French”?

5) Why does the question of surprise posed the metropolitan Frenchman assume about blacks?

French Caribbean writer Paulette Nardal argued in 1932: “the uprooting and the ensuing estrangement they [blacks] felt [in the metropole]… had given them a real Negro soul, in spite of their Latin [French] education.” [“Awakening of Race Consciousness,” *The Review of the Black World*, April 1932, 25]

6) What does Nardal suggest that former colonial subjects felt in the face of

alienation from French society?

7) How might these feelings weaken French cultural singularity?

French Caribbean intellectual Aimé Césaire, a founder of *Négritude*, described the French language as “a tool…to use in developing a new means of expression. I wanted to create an Antillean French, a black French that, while still being French, had a black character.”[René Depestre, “Interview with Aimé Césaire (1967),” trans. Maro Riofrancos, in Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 83]

8) Césaire hoped to assert a black identity for what purpose?

9) How was this purpose similar to African American intellectuals’ endeavors?

10) How is Césaire’s idea of being French different?

Georges Mauco (1977): “The word *racism* tends to assume such an extension that it is applied to every conflictual situation. There ends up being talk about anti-youth or anti-elderly racism, racism between bourgeois and proletarians, between religious sects, and between political parties – such that *the word racism today expresses less the reality of a race than the intolerance of a foreigner*, of that which is different, inferior, or threatening with regard to the specificity of the group or even the egoism of the individual.” [Georges Mauco, *Les Etrangers en France et le problème du racisme* (Paris: La Pensée Universelle, 1977), 192]

11) According to Mauco, what does “racism” mean in France?

12) How is this usage different than the American usage?

13) How does it reflect French singularity?

French Caribbean intellectual Édouard Glissant has argued that a collective memory, erased as a result of the brutal dislocation of caused by the slave trade that created “non-history,’ is needed to assert an Antillean identity. The history of Martinique, for example, is often a reflection of French history. The temporary abolition of slavery in 1794, the end of slavery in 1848, the granting of adult male suffrage in 1877, and departmentalization in 1946 are all the results of historical events in the metropole. As a result, there is “a real discontinuity beneath the apparent continuity of our history. The apparent continuity is the periodization of French history...The real discontinuity is that in the emergence of the periods we have defined, the decisive catalyst of change is not secreted by the circumstances but externally determined in relation to another history.” [Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. M. Dash (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), 61-62., 88-92]

14) What does Glissant mean by “non-history”?

15) Why are blacks in the Caribbean marginalized from French history?

16) How does subordinating Martinican history to metropolitan history

marginalize colonial history?

17) How would transforming former colonial subjects into agents rather than

objects of historical change integrated them into wider French history and hence the French nation?

18) How does Glissant’s vision for history allow for greater inclusiveness?

Glissant has asserted that a primary characteristic of globalization is Creolization, or the decline of boundaries and essentialist identities. “Creolization as an idea is not primarily the glorification of the composite nature of a people: indeed, no people has been spared the cross-cultural process. The idea… demonstrates that henceforth it is no longer valid to glorify ‘unique’ origins that the race safeguards and prolongs.” [Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, 140]

19) What does Glissant mean by “Creolization”?

20) How does Glissant’s view of being French allow for greater inclusiveness?

**May 10 Holiday Handout**

May 10 has been designated a national holiday in France since 2006 to commemorate the 1848 abolition of slavery in France and its colonies. The holiday, the first of its kind in Europe, comes as France increasingly debates its colonial past and the role of immigrants from France’s former colonies in French society.

French president Jacques Chirac announced the holiday in January 2006 at a reception held in honor of the Committee for the Memory of Slavery. According to a January 30 press release from the French government, Chirac shared his desire that beginning in 2006, “Metropolitan France should honor the memory of the victims of slavery and commemorate its abolition.” Furthermore, in his speech, Chirac expressed that, “in human history, slavery is a wound, a tragedy which has caused enormous suffering on every continent.” He further presented the idea that democracy is incompatible with slavery and all that it represents, and that “slavery must be given its rightful place in primary and secondary school curricula.”

May 10 was chosen as the date for the holiday since it was on that day in 2001 that the French Senate adopted a law recognizing slavery and the slave trade as crimes against humanity. The law was the first of its kind in Europe. However, France continues to face difficulties finding a course to deal with diversity. The bulk of France’s immigrants hail from its former colonies, particularly those in the Caribbean and Africa. While Chirac was president, his conservative government had often adopted strict immigration legislation and supported controversial legislation concerning how colonialism should be taught in schools. For example, the Mekachera Law in 2005 made it mandatory to teach the history of colonialism in a positive light in terms of the advances brought to the colonized peoples. The law provoked wide protest from French intellectuals. Further troubles arose due to high unemployment rates, particularly amongst the young, and poor living conditions for immigrants. Race riots in Paris in 2005, orchestrated by many black and Arab youths, also caused concern.

During the first annual celebration of the holiday in 2006, Chirac inaugurated a temporary piece of art in Paris featuring a bamboo arch with photographs of culturally diverse individuals. The Panthéon, which holds the remains of France’s greatest citizens, provided free entry to the tombs of those individuals significant to the abolition of slavery. The Louvre Museum and the National Library in Paris gave special tours highlighting pieces of art and manuscripts pertinent to slavery and the slave trade. The city of Nantes, which occupied a prominent role in the French slave trade, held a moment of silence. Other cities throughout France held ceremonies, readings, concerts, and other events to celebrate cultural diversity and commemorate the French abolition of slavery.

Adapted from Eric Martone, “May 10 Holiday,” in *Encyclopedia of Blacks in European History and Culture*, ed. Eric Martone (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009).

**Lesson Six**

**Length:** 46 minutes

**Objectives:**

Students will analyze the interment of Dumas into the Panthéon.

Students will explore how Dumas was reimagined in the past to reflect the France of the present.

**Materials**: Presentation of images from Dumas’s interment in the Panthéon; Speeches Handout; Perspective Writing Rubric

**Focus:** The sixth lesson will examine Dumas’s interment in the Panthéon. How was Dumas re-imagined (drawing back to lesson) from his own era to fit contemporary France? For what purpose were these alterations made? How does this process show history and a nation-building tool? How does it show that history is more subjective than they might think?

**Initiation:** Ask students if they have ever heard of the famous motto from *The Three Musketeers*: “All for One and One for All.” Ask students to brainstorm what they think the motto means. Next, inform students that the musketeer slogan was written on a cloak covering the casket bearing Dumas’s remains, which was escorted by musketeers down the streets of Paris, during his interment in the Panthéon in 2002. How might such a motto be transformed into one for French national integration?

**Lesson Development:**

I. Students should then be presented with a powerpoint presentation of photos from Dumas’s interment in the Panthéon to provide them with a sense of the pomp and pageantry that surrounding the event.

(See the website of the Société des Amis d’Alexandre Dumas for several images of the ceremonies: http://www.dumaspere.com/pages/pantheon/sommaire.html)

How do such ceremonies encourage a sense of French patriotism? Based on the photos, what image of France is being celebrated?

II. The lesson should next turn to the speeches given at the event. A handout is provided with excerpts from three key speeches. Students should discuss the excerpts in relation to the following questions:

What is the image of Dumas presented in the speeches?

How was Dumas re-imagined from his own era to fit contemporary France?

For what purpose were these alterations made?

Why was the government so interested in presenting this image of Dumas?

How does this process show history and a nation-building tool?

How does it show that history is more subjective than you might have thought?

How is incorporating French overseas departments and immigrants important for national cohesion?

Why was it important to include speeches from a variety of people (intellectuals from the French Caribbean, metropolitan French intellectuals, government officials)?

**Closure:** Students should imagine that it is 2002 and they have been invited to give a speech at Dumas’s interment in the Panthéon. They could be a government official, a metropolitan French intellectual, or a French intellectual from an overseas department. The speech should describe how Dumas exemplified in the past contemporary French values and sense of what it means to be French. Students should draw on material from previous lessons in their speech.

Students could give their speeches in the following lesson. In this alternative lesson seven, the class would hold a mock interment ceremony for Dumas and recite the speeches that they prepared.

**Evaluation:** Class discussions; Speech

**Speeches Handout**

Interment in the Panthéon is the highest honor that can be conferred by the French state to one of its citizens. Dumas became the first writer of black descent and first descendant of African slaves placed in the Panthéon. During the commemorations leading to his interment, intellectuals routinely praised Dumas’s “genius” and mentioned him with Victor Hugo and Émile Zola, the only other nineteenth-century writers then in the Panthéon (and who now share Dumas’s chamber), as a defender of the Republic and one of the greatest writers in French literature. Dumas was also presented as a victim of past French racism and the institution of slavery, suggesting that his celebration was an act of “national healing.”

**Speech one:** President Jacques Chirac declared that France was honoring Dumas’s “genius,” but also “repairing an injustice,” the racism that “marked Dumas at childhood just as shackles previously marked his slave ancestors.”

**Speech two:** French Caribbean writer and intellectual Claude Ribbe declared that “years later, do we have a good idea about what to say about [slavery]?…The whipping, the raping, the humiliation, the torture, the mutilations, the death. And after death, forgetfulness.” He declared that the Dumas being celebrated must be thought of as “a writer of color,” a “black Romancier,” and an “Antillean author,” for “one must speak of his creoleness, Africaness, blackness, and black blood.” The “truth,” Ribbe declared, is that Dumas “was of African origin and that France is proud of him.”

**Speech three:** Christian Poncelet, Senate President, argued that “in evoking Dumas…we can not miss to think of [French politician] Victor Schœlcher…with his victorious battle for the abolition of slavery [in 1848].” Poncelet also connected Dumas to the colonies and even the twentieth-century *Négritude* movement, stating that Dumas “had an acute conscience of his *négritude* [blackness] before the concept was invented by [French African intellectual] Léopold Senghor.” The “universal Republic,” he declared, “draws its radiance from its capacity for integration” and “makes amends for the horrific crimes” of racism and slavery of past generations.

[Speech of the President of the Republic; Claude Ribbe and Christian Poncelet, Speeches at the Senate, 30 November 2002, in *Alexandre Dumas: Deux siècles de littérature*, available: <http://www.dumaspere.com/pages/pantheon/sommaire.html>]

Perspective Writing Rubric

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** | **Points** |
| *Content* | Content reflects a vast amount of knowledge about the historical period | Content reflects above satisfactory  knowledge about the historical period | Content reflects a satisfactory amount of knowledge about the historical period | Content reflects limited  knowledge about the historical period |  |
| *Point of View* | Insightful understanding of how point of view affects interpretation of events | Very good  understanding of how point of view affects interpretation of events | Good understanding of how point of view affects interpretation of events | Limited understanding of how point of view affects interpretation of events |  |
| *Fluency* | Excellent fluency | Very good fluency | Somewhat disjointed | Disjointed |  |
| *Grammar and Usage* | Up to three  grammatical errors and proper word usage | More than three grammatical errors and proper word usage | Less than three grammatical errors but improper word usage | More than three grammatical errors and improper word usage |  |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | /16 |

**Lesson Seven**

**Length:** 46 minutes

**Objectives:**

Students will continue to examine *L’Autre Dumas* within the context of national identity.

Students will develop a final project.

**Materials**: Rubric for Interpreting Sources Essay

**Focus:** The seventh lesson returns to the *L’Autre Dumas* controversy and helps the students create a culminating project.

**Initiation:** Building on the last lesson, in which students examined how Dumas was celebrated in 2002, students should revisit the controversy surrounding *L’Autre Dumas* and have a discussion based on the following questions: How did the image of Dumas in the film differ from the image portrayed during the interment ceremonies in 2002? Way might people from the former French colonies and overseas departments and immigrants oppose this alteration? What is at stake?

**Lesson Development:**

Students should develop a final project for the unit. Option A is a traditional essay that should include references to our class discussions, activities, and material in the handouts while addressing the following: How do democratic states unify a diverse citizenry of increasingly varied origins? How are national histories and the cultural heritage re-imagined to reflect the inclusion of minority citizens? (A rubric is provided.)

Option B is flexible and allows students to experiment at the discretion of the teacher. Students could create a song, a poem, a speech, artwork, a presentation, etc. instead of an essay. However, it should still address the issues highlighted in the Option A essay question.

**Closure:** Ask students to write down what they intend to do as a final project and submit it at the end of class for the teacher’s approval.

**Evaluation:** Final project

Rubric for Interpreting Sources Essay

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** | **Points** |
| *Grammar and Usage* | Up to three  grammatical errors and proper word usage | More than three grammatical errors and proper word usage | Less than three grammatical errors but improper word usage | More than three grammatical errors and improper word usage |  |
| *Fluency* | Excellent fluency | Very good fluency | Somewhat disjointed | Disjointed |  |
| *Content* | Content reflects a vast amount of knowledge about the historical period | Content reflects above satisfactory  knowledge about the historical period | Content reflects a satisfactory amount of knowledge about the historical period | Content reflects limited  knowledge about the historical period |  |
| *Thesis* | Clear and easily identifiable thesis statement | Thesis statement is not clear but easily identifiable | Thesis statement is unclear and difficult to identify | No identifiable thesis statement |  |
| *Thesis Support* | The student’s thesis is well supported | The student’s thesis is supported at a satisfactory level | The student’s thesis is backed by a few points but needs more support | Insufficient support |  |
| *Sources* | The student has made reference to seven or more sources from the handouts | The student has made reference to more than three sources but less than seven | The student has made reference to three or less sources from the handouts | The student has made no reference to any sources from the handouts |  |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  | /24 |