REVIEW OF *DANS UN QUARTIER DE PARIS*

Title:	*Dans un quartier de Paris*
Authors:	Gilberte Furstenberg (principal author)
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Program Information:	http://www.yale.edu/yup/books/furstenbergS99.html
Program Website:	http://web.mit.edu/fll/www/projects/Quartier.html
System Requirements:	Macintosh: 68040 or Power PC OS 7.0+ 2X CD-ROM drive 6 MB free RAM 11 MB hard disk space
Price:	CD-ROM Package: $125.00 (includes teacherÌs guide) Teacher's Guide alone: $37.50 Student Activities Workbook: $17.50 (also available online in PDF format at no charge: http://www.yale.edu/yup/books/furstenbergsaw.html)
Target Audience:	For learners from low-intermediate to advanced levels

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OVERVIEW

The CD-ROM package *Dans un quartier de Paris* is an interactive "multimedia documentary" which provides a unique opportunity for students to explore a cultural space, the Parisian *quartier* of Marais. In this neighborhood, located in the heart of Paris, students meet the locals, get a taste of French public life in cafés, restaurants, and shops, and explore historical sites. Throughout their virtual explorations of the *quartier,* students have the opportunity to reflect on concepts such as work, lifestyle, and the relationship between people and the space in which they live.

In addition to the CD-ROM, the package includes a teacher's guide and a student workbook (available online in PDF format at no charge, or in printed form for $17.50). The package allows users to explore the *quartier* either on their own or through a more structured approach. Over 25 activities are provided to guide students in deepening their understanding of the cultural space. Marketed as a "multidisciplinary program," *Dans un quartier* links language, literature, history, culture, and art. It may be used as a stand-alone program or as part of a course.

DESCRIPTION

The teacher's guide and student workbook offer structured activities to be completed with the CD-ROM. The teacher's guide also provides lesson objectives and appropriate proficiency level (*1* for Intermediate levels or *2* for Upper-Intermediate levels). There are two sets of activities: one set encourages students to reflect on the neighborhood from an outsider's point of view while the other guides students in understanding the *quartier* from the locals' perspective. Activities include: a) preliminary tasks to be prepared individually at home or in the computer lab; b) a combination of in-class discussion and group tasks; and c) suggestions for in-class group activities and synthesis activities. In addition, follow-up exercises, alternate activities, and supplementary information are included with selected lessons in order to further students' comprehension (these activities can be used at the discretion of the instructor). The teacher's guide clearly articulates goals for each lesson, allowing students to engage in inventive and purposeful exploration. The teacher's guide also includes a transcription of the interviews (line by line transcription is also available on the CD-ROM).

The student workbook includes objectives for each activity, task descriptions, indications for effective CD-ROM use (i.e., where to find information on the CD-ROM), and charts to be completed. Most activities are designed with the assumption that students are able to work independently with ideas and structures in French and require at least a low-intermediate level of French. Activities focus on analyzing observations (of objects, people, and places) and ideas (e.g., synthesizing interviews). Nonetheless, certain activities requiring simple observation and basic comprehension could be performed satisfactorily at beginning levels (e.g., "numbers, letters and colors" and "treasure hunt"). Since the program is arranged thematically, the same material is covered in different sections, each focusing on a particular theme and presented from that perspective. For example, students may have to discuss a particular aspect of the neighborhood from their own perspective, and also may present a Parisian's view of the same topic.

Both the student workbook and teacher's guide provide users with clear step-by-step information (and screen shots) for installation and use of the package. The "how to use" section is an essential component of the program and should be examined carefully by both teachers and students before beginning. It would be extremely difficult to use the program without a thorough knowledge of its basic functions; a brief review of the CD-ROM's contents before each activity is highly recommended so the teacher can tailor activities to the students' learning needs. The entire program is in French; English appears only in the installation procedures and the section on how to use the package.

Upon launching the CD-ROM, a map of Paris appears on the screen with two navigational buttons, as well as the option of viewing a short video clip (see Figure 1). One can enter the program by clicking on the Enter button (*Entrer),* or view the credits by clicking on the Credits button (*Générique).* The video provides a glimpse of the sights (the Saint Gervais church, an artisan at work, and people on the banks of the Seine river) and sounds (car horns and people walking by) of the *quartier.*

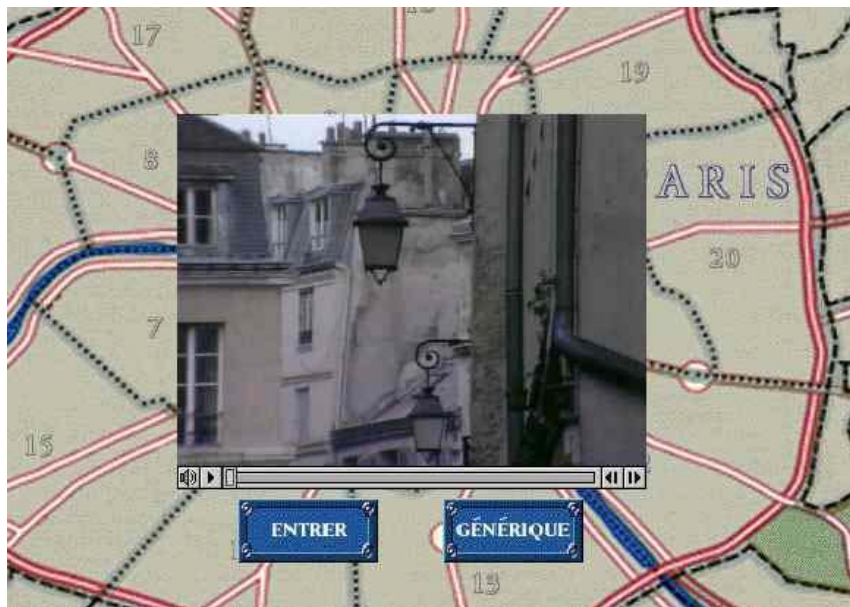Figure 1. Opening Menu

After clicking on Enter, the Map *(Plan)* of the neighborhood appears in the background. Once inside, users have two options: they use the Map to visit the *quartier* on their own, or they can use the Guide *(Guide)* (see Figure 2). In the first option, which is unstructured and open-ended, learners find their own way around by clicking on the small circles on the Map. Each circle corresponds to a different subsection, such as Meeting People *(Rencontres)* or La Tartine Restaurant *(La Tartine).*
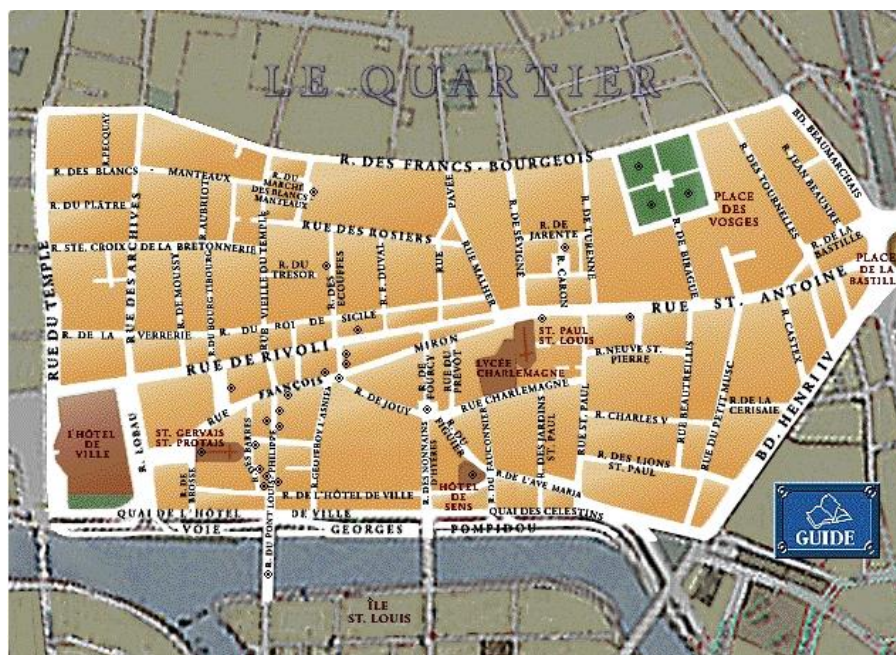
Figure 2. The *Quartier*

If users choose to use the Guide for a more structured exploration of the area, a book pops up and presents them with several options: People *(Gens),* Places *(Lieux),* Words *(Paroles),* and Perspectives

(Perspectives) (see Figure 3). The Map and the Guide give users access to the same information, but through different paths. Instructors should combine free exploration with specific goal-oriented activities so that students are able to benefit fully from the rich content offered in the CD-ROM. Students shouldn't be left to explore without specific goals in mind. In other words, tasks will be most beneficial when they are designed to require learners to obtain information and use it for specific purposes (Lee & VanPatten, 1995).
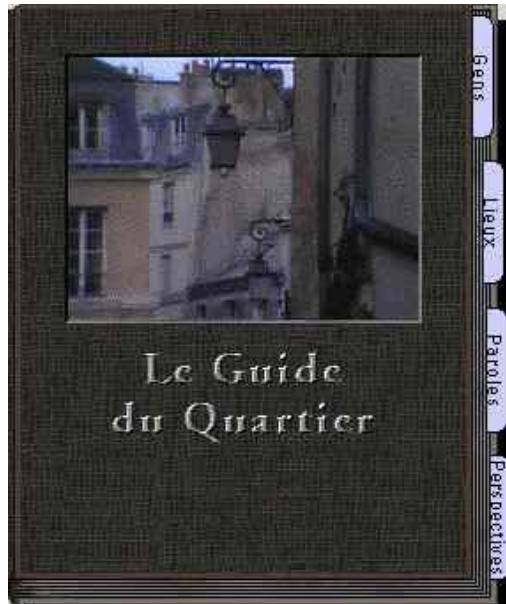

Figure 3. The Guide

The section entitled People introduces students to 22 individuals who work or live in the Marais area -- people whom students would likely encounter during a visit to the real *quartier* (see Figure 4). Most activities are targeted for intermediate and advanced level students but there are also a few activities for high beginners/low intermediate learners. Video clips in the People section range from brief introductions (accessible to high beginners/low intermediate students) to more substantial interviews (requiring high intermediate to advanced level). Students have the opportunity to "meet" recent immigrants to Marais, people who have lived in the *quartier* since World War II, local artisans and merchants, an artist, and a monk, among others. By clicking on the picture of a person, the reader is presented with a short description of that person and his/her role in the *quartier,* as well as two options for viewing the video: First Impressions *(Premier aperçu)* and A Closer Look *(Aller voir)* (see Figure 5). If they click on First Impressions, students see excerpts of the video containing key sentences from the interview. By clicking on A Closer Look, students have access to the full interview. In some cases, the corner is turned up at the bottom of a page, indicating that the page can be turned to access additional information.
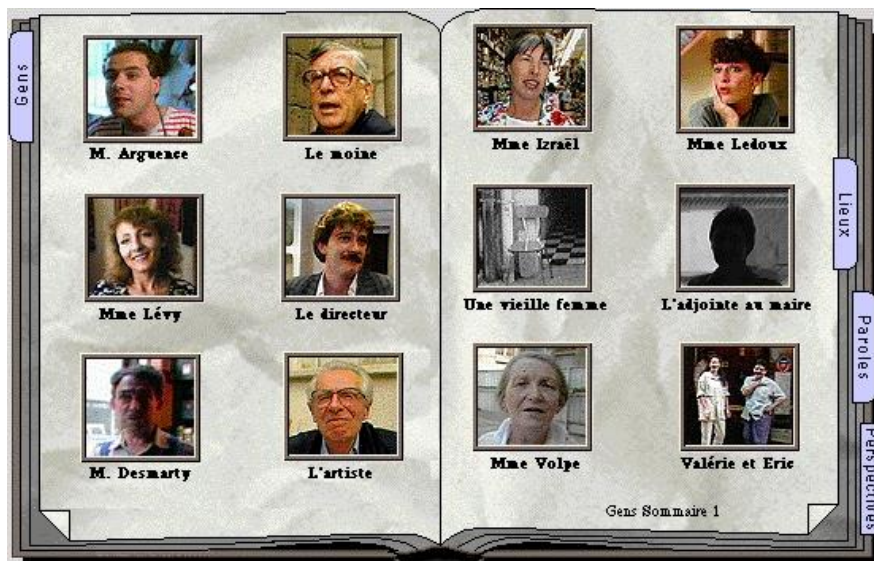
Figure 4. People

Figure 5. People - description

The section entitled Places introduces students to all of the locations on the CD-ROM. These include the streets, shops, hotels, restaurants, and monuments of Marais. By clicking on any place, the users have immediate access to an image and a brief description. The option Go There *(Aller sur place)* allows users to see a video clip and additional images. We did encounter an occasional technical problem. For example, when trying to go to the *place du marché Saint Catherine,* we received a message that it was not accessible.

In the People and Places sections, the user has the opportunity to engage in more in-depth exploration. In both sections, the reader is presented with several choices: a) Sounds and Images *(Sons et images),* b) Photographs *(Photos),* c) Face-to-Face *(Tête-à-tête),* which provides access to the full interview, and d) Potpourri, which offers something extra, such as an interesting detail (for instance, in the *luthier* shop, the user can hear the *vielle,* a musical instrument from the 19th century). All four options are not included for every item, but usually two or more are available (see Figure 6).
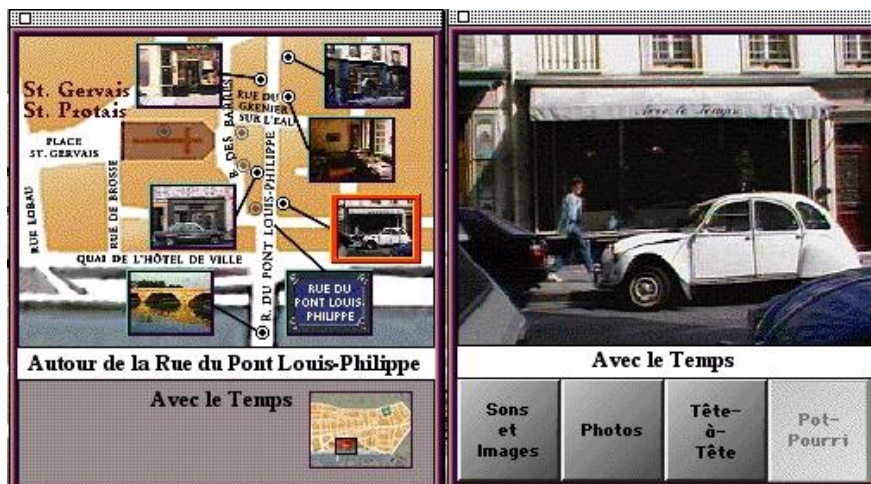
Figure 6. Sound and images, photographs, face-to-face, and potpourri

For Face-to-Face segments, users can choose to view the video with a) no transcription, b) partial transcription (key words and phrases), or c) full transcription. In addition, they have the option of activating the glossary. If they do so, glossed words are underlined and learners can click on these words to access definitions in French (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Face-to-face

Words is another way to access the interviews available in the People and Places sections. Here, excerpts are arranged according to theme, rather than organized by person or location. Themes include Life *(Vivre/vie),* Getting Settled *(S'installer),* Work *(Travailler/travail),* Shopping *(Commerces/commerçants),*

and so forth. After hearing what these concepts mean to different people in the *quartier,* students should be able to appropriate the terms and construct their own definitions.

Perspectives focuses on personal stories and perspectives offered by the people in the neighborhood. According to the student guide, this section explores "how people see themselves and define themselves vis-à-vis their environment, vis-à-vis their *quartier"* (p.19). The reader can choose among themes such as Personal Space *(Espace personnel),* Oneself and Others *(Soi et les autres),* Stories *(Histoires),* and Thoughts *(Pensées).*

EVALUATION

One of the strengths of *Dans un quartier* is its continuous use of genuine spoken French. It is obvious that the locals who were interviewed were not provided with a tapescript to follow: they speak with a variety of accents, and occasionally use non-standard grammatical structures (e.g., *"si j'aurais"*) and casual phrasings that are common in spoken French. Both written and spoken standard forms are clearly indicated in the transcript which students can access easily. Focusing on themes, places and people, activities are well designed and varied for different levels of proficiency. They encourage students to interact and collaborate with each other, and promote the development of cultural knowledge and critical thinking through the use of French. Throughout the entire package, language is seen as a tool, not as an end in itself. This focus makes the CD-ROM's accompanying activities particularly useful for the development of higher order skills. Another strength of the package is its rich content. Discovering a *quartier,* as designed by the CD-ROM's authors, is an engaging experience for students that allows them to simulate interaction with real French people and to explore issues that are relevant to their everyday lives. Students view interviews with locals and visitors, and experience the sights, and sounds of a *quartier.* Thus, the students are virtually immersed in the neighborhood and get as close as possible to meeting inhabitants without actually being there.

The only disappointing feature of the program is the glossary, which offers textual glosses consisting primarily of definitions of words in French. Recent research has suggested that glossing should extend beyond textual definitions (Chun & Plass, 1996; Davis & Lyman-Hager, 1997; Lomicka, 1998; Lyman-Hager, Davis, Burnett, & Chennault, 1993; Martínez-Lage, 1997; Roby, 1999). Although one to three definitions in French are provided for each entry, not all important words and cultural references are included in the glossary. For example, *alimentation,*[1] *l'Occupation,*[2] and *pain de campagne*[3] were not glossed. It would seem appropriate to provide a historical gloss for *l'Occupation. Pain de campagne* could easily be portrayed with an image gloss. *Cacherisées* (koshered), explained initially by a definition, later on reappears for the picture of a *boucherie casher* (kosher butcher). Unfortunately, there is no definition provided for *casher* (kosher).

Apparently it is assumed that students will have looked at each photo or video as well as the corresponding description. For example, a definition that appears once may not be shown again in a later picture. Students might benefit if definitions were hyperlinked within related concepts. Such an approach would link corresponding words and expressions, allowing students to make connections. The authors may assume too much prior knowledge for students at the intermediate level when they omit certain concepts from the glossary. Other words in the glossary require some additional information for students to thoroughly understand the cultural importance and history of specific places or terms. For example, *the rue des rosiers* may be understood literally as "Rosebush Street" when it is often used as a synecdoche for the most famous Jewish neighborhood in Paris. Such information is only available if the user goes first to Places in the Guide.

We also encountered minor technical problems in the glossary. For instance, when visiting the La Tartine Restaurant and searching for a definition of *quoi* (what), we received the following message: "Can't find card." Another small problem relates to the quality of a few of the images. For example, the image of

l'adjointe au maire (the woman who holds the second highest ranking elected official in this Parisian district's governing body) in the People section is blurry, dark, and difficult to see. In addition, the book covers presented with the bookstore are illegible, making them and their description seem unrelated to the topics they are intended to illustrate.

SUMMARY

This documentary is particularly innovative in that it allows students to explore the *quartier* on their own, choosing their own routes of discovery. In *Dans un quartier,* learning is not grammar-driven. Instead, it is based on the use of language as a means to achieve an end. The goal of this program is to immerse students in a French neighborhood by granting them access to people and places, and by replicating day-to-day situations that they might encounter if actually in France. They experience the sounds, sights, and architecture of the *quartier,* which is presented as both a social space and a historical place. Thus, students are placed in an authentic context without actually setting foot in a francophone country. In fact, without the student and teacher guides, it is easy to feel like a lost tourist in another country. For this reason, it is crucial to use *Dans un quartier* within a pedagogical framework that promotes productive work through the use of specific tasks and activities. Fortunately, both the student workbook and teacher's guide provide ample activities designed to help students move from the etic, or outsider's perspective, to the emic, or insider's perspective. In addition, these activities provide opportunities for the integration of ideas, words and structures in a setting that allows students to express themselves and to discuss their reactions what they have seen, heard and experienced.

Dans un quartier is an excellent investment for learners of French. While the package is somewhat costly, it offers users the opportunity to embark on an impressive cultural adventure. Although it is marketed for students at all levels of French, we recommend that users have a basic understanding of French before making the investment. When used as part of a course, the teacher has the freedom to decide how to integrate *Dans un quartier* into a class. *Dans un quartier* makes learning French an integrated cultural experience for the student where grammar and linguistic structures are not the main focus, but rather a means to access and expand cultural knowledge.

NOTES

1. Literally this means "what one can/must eat." However, it can also represent the small neighborhood shops that sell various food items. These small shops are disappearing with the prevalence of supermarkets and are presented in that context.

2. *L'Occupation* refers to the 1940-1944 period when France was occupied by Nazi Germany. Also called the "black years" because of ominous Nazi presence, the Occupation stirs up controversial memories between those who collaborated with the enemy, those who resisted, those who did nothing, those who were victims of the Nazis or of the French militia, and finally those who denounced neighbors to the militia. The term carries significant meaning in French and evokes particular memories for those living in the Marais neighborhood where many people were deported.

3. Literally meaning "country bread," this word is used to describe a large round or oblong loaf of crusty, wheat bread dusted with flour. It has been chosen in a recent survey as the favorite bread by mostly city-dweller French people, who link it to their country roots and to age-old traditions.

ABOUT THE REVIEWERS

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