

LESSON NOTES

Lower Intermediate S2 #1

Travelling Through Time in France!

CONTENTS

- Dialogue - French
 - Main
 - English
- Vocabulary
- Sample sentences
- Vocabulary phrase usage
- Grammar
- Cultural insight

#1

DIALOGUE - FRENCH

MAIN

1. Marc : Ce matin, avec la classe, nous sommes allés visiter les grottes de Lascaux.
2. Laure : Comment c'était ? Ca t'a plu ?
3. Marc : C'était chouette ! On a vu des peintures préhistoriques, et ensuite, on a mangé des plateaux-repas dans le parc. C'était une bonne journée !
4. Laure : Je vois ça, tu as sali ton pantalon !
5. Marc : Mais il y avait de la terre partout...

ENGLISH

1. Marc : This morning, with the class, we went to visit the Lascaux caves.
2. Laure : How was it? Did you enjoy it?
3. Marc : It was great! We saw prehistoric paintings. Then we ate tray meals in the park. It was a great day!
4. Laure : I reckon—your pants are dirty.
5. Marc : But there was dirt everywhere...

VOCABULARY

French	English	Class	Gender
terre	soil, dirt	noun	feminine
c'était chouette!	It was cool!	expression	NA
plateau-repas	tray meal, TV dinner	noun	masculine
préhistorique	prehistoric	adjective	NA
grotte	cave	noun	feminine
classe	class	noun	feminine
saler	to dirty	verb	NA
plaire	to like, to enjoy	verb	

SAMPLE SENTENCES

Au zoo, le bébé éléphant joue avec la terre. "The baby elephant is playing with dirt in a zoo."	Il est assis par terre. "He is seated on the floor."
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C'était plutôt chouette comme film ! "This movie was pretty cool!"	J'aime manger un plateau-repas devant le télé. "I enjoy eating TV dinners."
C'est le Français Yves Coppens qui a découvert Lucy, une femme préhistorique. "It was Yves Coppens, a Frenchman, who discovered Lucy, a prehistoric woman."	Les véritables grottes de Lascaux sont fermées au public. "The real Lascaux Caves are closed to the public."
Les élèves de cette classe ont l'air de s'ennuyer à mourir. "The students of this class seem to be bored to death."	Le professeur a instauré de nouvelles règles en classe. "The teacher established new rules in the classroom."
Le chien est rentré après la pluie et a sali toute la maison. "The dog came in after the rain and dirtied the whole house."	J'ai acheté cette jupe en ligne. Elle te plaît? "I bought this skirt online. Do you like it?"

VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

C'était chouette !

This expression is a very common one, usually used by young people, especially children. Here, *chouette* means "cool, great." There is a homophone that means "owl." For adults and adolescents, this expression isn't used and usually replaced by:

1. *C'était cool !*
"It was cool!"
2. *C'était énorme !*
"It was great!" or "Awesome!"
3. *Ça déchire !*
"It rocks!" (lit. "It's tearing up!")

Be careful with the last two, because they're only used amongst young people and friends.

Plateau-repas

Plateau-repas is made up of two common words: *plateau* ("tray") and *repas* ("meal"). French use it for both TV dinners and anywhere else we would bring food (train, etc). Note that we don't usually use it for picnics, but it might happen. Recently, we tend to also use *bento* (from Japanese) or "lunchbox."

For example:

1. *Je mange souvent un plateau-repas en regardant des séries.*
"I often eat TV dinners while watching TV shows."
2. *Je mange un bento tous les midi.*
"I eat a bento for lunch every day."

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson is a Review of the Past Tenses and Their Use

Ce matin, avec la classe, nous sommes allés visiter les grottes de Lascaux !

"This morning, with the class, we went to visit the Lascaux caves!"

In the first series you learned about two tenses from the mood *indicatif*: the compound past and imperfect tenses. Before going further, let's have quick review of these two tenses.

The Use of *Passé Composé* (compound past)

Le passé composé is used to express a punctual event or action done in the past.

The action or event has already ended at the time the speaker is talking about it.

Note that in literature, the simple past is used instead of *passé composé*, but we will see this point in lesson 10.

1. *Je suis allée prendre un café chez mes amis.*

"I had a coffee at my friend's house."

2. *Les enfants sont allés se balader en forêt.*

"The children went for a walk in the woods."

Examples from this dialogue:

1. *On a vu des peintures préhistoriques, et ensuite, on a mangé des plateaux-repas dans le parc.*

"We saw prehistoric paintings, then we ate tray meals in the park."

Sample Sentences:

1. *Elle a mangé tous les gâteaux préparés par Mamie.*

"She ate all the cookies baked by Granny."

2. *Ils sont arrivés en retard à notre soirée d'anniversaire.*

"They were late for our birthday party."

The Use of *l'imparfait* (the imperfect tense)

L'imparfait is used to indicate the circumstances of an event or habit of something that used to be.

This is used when something had not ended yet in the past.

1. *A 17h, je prenais un café chez mes amis.*
"At 5 pm, I was having a coffee at my friend's house."

2. *J'allais à la piscine quand j'étais enfant.*
"I used to go to the swimming pool when I was a child."

Examples from this dialogue:

1. *C'était une bonne journée !*
"It was a great day!"

Sample Sentences:

1. *Quand j'étais étudiant, j'allais souvent prendre le café avec les professeurs.*
"When I was a student, I often had coffee with the professors."

2. *Nous allions au parc quand nous étions enfants.*
"We used to go to the park when we were children."

Disambiguation

It's quite complicated to tell the difference between these two tenses, so let's compare two given examples: (1) is in *passé composé*, (2) is in *imparfait*.

For example:

1. *Je suis allée prendre un café chez mes amis.*
"I had a coffee at my friend's house."

2. *A 17h, je prenais un café chez mes amis.*
"At 5 pm, I was having a coffee at my friend's house"

The difference is that, for the imperfect tense, the action was still happening in the past. There is an idea of duration in the past.

In the first sentence, the action is done, everyone understands you went there today, but you're already back home. If you want to be precise, or if someone is asking about what you were doing at a certain time, you will use the imperfect tense.

CULTURAL INSIGHT

The Lascaux Caves

The Lascaux caves are located in the hills of the Vézère Valley, in Dordogne, near Bordeaux. They are 18,600 years old and really famous for their prehistoric mural paintings. They were discovered by young hikers and their dog in 1940 and were studied afterwards by Henri Breuil, a historian.

These caves are quite famous in France because of their numerous wonderful paintings. One of the most appreciated friezes is the "Black Horses Frieze." For a long time, no one could say why these caves were painted, but now, specialists think that the animals are a metaphor of the seasons. For example, horses would stand for spring. These caves have been World Heritage listed since 1979.