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HOW ARE CHILDREN'S BOOKS USED TO TEACH FRANCE'S CORE REPUBLICAN
VALUE OF EQUALITY IN MIDDLE SCHOOL?

By
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis will evaluate how the French government uses literature in schools to teach the French republican value of equality. The thesis will analyze five works of literature and their authors that are taught in French middle schools. I will analyze how these texts are taught focusing on the theme of equality, and I will look at the lesson plans distributed to schools and their teachers corresponding to each piece of literature.

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Introduction:

The topic of this thesis is to evaluate the research question “how is literature used to teach France’s core Republican value of equality in middle school?” Before this question can be evaluated, I will give a basic overview of the French education system, explain the different redesigns that have taken place in French schools over the years, and explain why this topic is important to evaluate in light of current French laws placed on citizens.

The French education system is divided into three stages: primary, secondary, and higher. In primary and secondary education, the majority of schools follow a curriculum that has been developed by the Ministry of Education or *Ministère l’Education Nationale*. Because the majority of primary and secondary schools are public, the standardized curriculum means that most students in France are taught the same material in their early years. The purpose of a standardized curriculum is to clarify what content students are expected to know and what skills they are expected to learn through their academic endeavors. This thesis will look specifically at secondary education, which is divided into two parts: *collège*—the United States’ equivalent to middle school—and *lycée*—the United States’ equivalent to high school. In *collège*, which consists of four years or cycles, students are in the age range of 11 to 15 years old.

The curriculum covered in the years of *collège* is important to look at because these years are filled with new developments and impressions in an adolescent’s life. Even so, the importance of these years is often overlooked. It is in these years that children learn and refine their curiosity, study habits, personality traits, and decision-making skills. According to Molly Mee, the head of the Middle School Education Department at Towson University, “It is such a critical time for learning...What a student does in these three years can change so much in their future.” (Paterson, Jim. “Middle Matters.” *Middle Matters- The Middle School Years Are*

Important and There's Tools to Help | *Education World*, Education World, 2019.). From a physiological perspective, the middle school years are a critical time for learning because during this time the brain of a human grows faster, bigger and more complex by the day. This time period is, also, a critical time for emotional development. During these years, peer pressure starts to influence children's decisions. Thus, *collège* is the perfect time to instill core values, to have the idea of equality ingrained in a child.

According to a study from the U.S. National Library of Medicine, "schooling occurs in the context of society at large; therefore, its academic and normative functions are not independent of other societal institutions." (Epps, Edgar G, and Sylvia F Smith. "School and Children: The Middle Childhood Years." *Development During Middle Childhood: The Years From Six to Twelve.*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 1 Jan. 1984.). This quote is interesting because it shows that schooling is impacted by the society a student lives in. Because of this, it makes sense that the French government would use its schools to teach their societal values.

France has a history of redesigning their education system as the needs of society changes. An influential redesign was due to the Jules Ferry (a lawyer who held the office of Minister of Public Instruction during this time) laws in the 1880s. The Jules Ferry Laws established free, mandatory, and secular education. With these laws, state schools and teachers replaced church schools and officials. During the 1800s, France created primary and secondary education. After the Revolution and during the Third Republic, the government recognized the need for a secular system of education to bring French citizens together. The centralized education system allowed the French government to promote the values of the Republic. The most recent redesign to the French education system was released in August 2021 by the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports and implemented into schools starting in

September 2021. The objective for this redesign was for the consolidation of the principles of the Republic in schools, much like the Jules Ferry Laws did. The website for the *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale* states the reasons for this new redesign. One reason for the redesign was that “*Notre maison commune promeut et transmet les valeurs de la culture humaniste que nous avons en partage. L'année 2021-2022 sera ainsi marquée par une grande campagne autour de la laïcité, pour rappeler le sens de ce principe fondateur qui garantit la liberté de chacun et qui se vit tous les jours à l'École. Cette campagne viendra aussi s'inscrire dans le cadre des commémorations de la disparition du professeur Samuel Paty, le 16 octobre dernier.*” (Blanquer, Jean-Michel. “L'École De La République : Année Scolaire 2021-2022.” *Ministère De L'Éducation Nationale De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports*, Ministre De l'Éducation Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, <https://www.education.gouv.fr/l-ecole-de-la-republique-annee-scolaire-2021-2022-324650>). To paraphrase this quote, because school is central to the French Republic, its mission is to teach their students the principles and values of the Republic, specifically that French students will become free, enlightened and equal citizens. One measure adopted in September 2021 was that

“À la rentrée 2021, toutes les écoles, tous les collèges et tous les lycées recevront un coffret réunissant trois ouvrages : • le vademecum La Laïcité à l'École, dans une version actualisée et augmentée ; • L'Idée républicaine, un recueil d'études, de textes et de principes juridiques fondamentaux établi par le Conseil des sages de la laïcité et des valeurs de la République ; • La République à l'École, somme pédagogique identifiant dans chaque champ disciplinaire enseigné depuis l'école jusqu'au lycée la manière dont les valeurs de la République peuvent y être transmises” (Blanquer, Jean-Michel. “L'École De La République : Année Scolaire 2021-2022.” *Ministère De L'Éducation Nationale De*

La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, Ministre De l'Éducation Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, pp. 8. <https://www.education.gouv.fr/l-ecole-de-la-republique-annee-scolaire-2021-2022-324650>).

This statement says that at the start of the 2021 school year, all middle schools and high schools will receive three books on secularism and republican values which schools were expected to incorporate into their lesson plans. The box of books included the *Vademecum Laïcité à l'École* and *L'Idée Républicaine*. *Laïcité à l'École* is the updated and expanded version, and *L'Idée Républicaine* is a collection of studies, texts and fundamental legal principles drawn up by the Council of Elders of Secularism and the Values of the Republic. Another measure adopted in the 2021 education revision was that

“Rentrée 2021 : institution d'un « carré » régalien » dans chaque rectorat Dans chaque rectorat, une organisation des ressources est mise en place sous l'appellation de « carré régalien » pour améliorer la réponse publique dans quatre domaines stratégiques : protection et promotion des valeurs de la République, lutte contre les communautarismes, lutte contre les violences scolaires et lutte contre le harcèlement/cyberharcèlement. Dans chacun de ces domaines, une équipe dédiée assurera un suivi attentif des signalements et apportera une réponse rapide à toute initiation de conflit.” (Blanquer, Jean-Michel. “L'École De La République : Année Scolaire 2021-2022.” *Ministère De L'Education Nationale De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports*, Ministre De l'Éducation Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, pp. 10.).

This statement says that at the return of school in 2021, an institution of a “regular square” in each rectorate will be set up. It then says that each rectorate, which is an organization of

resources, will be set up under the name of “regular square” to improve the public response in four strategic areas. These areas are protection of the values of the Republic, promotions of the values of the Republic, fight against school violence, and combating bullying/cyberbullying. These areas each have a team which will carefully monitor reports and provide a rapid response to any initiation of conflict. Finally, the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sport released another statement and plan to fight bullying in schools. The reason and objective behind the plan is that “*Parce que l'École offre à chaque élève un cadre lui permettant de s'épanouir et de progresser, elle ne peut accepter ni le racisme, ni l'antisémitisme, ni les violences scolaires ou sexistes, ni les LGBTphobies. L'engagement de l'institution est donc entier et permanent.*” (Blanquer, Jean-Michel. “L'École De La République : Année Scolaire 2021-2022.” *Ministère De L'Education Nationale De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports*, Ministre De l'Éducation Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, pp. 16.) or because the school offers each student a framework allowing them to open up and progress, the school cannot accept racism, anti-Semitism, school-based or sexist-based violence, or LGBT-phobia. The statement then says that the institution's commitment to making sure students adhere to these principles is complete and without exception. Because of this statement, the pHARe program was put into all schools. The pHARe program is “*un programme global de prévention du harcèlement*” (Blanquer, Jean-Michel. “L'École De La République : Année Scolaire 2021-2022.” *Ministère De L'Education Nationale De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports*, Ministre De l'Éducation Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, pp. 16.) Essentially, it is a global harassment prevention program.

The importance of these additions to the education system is that it relates to a bill--*loi confortant le respect des principes de la République*--passed on April 13, 2021 as part of President Macron's program to fight terrorism, a program Macron undertook in response to the

killing of French schoolteacher Samuel Paty in 2020. Paty was killed by an Islamist militant for showing students cartoons of Mohammed in a freedom of expression class. The bill aimed to counter separatism in French society, but it received a lot of backlash stating that the bill targeted specific religious groups, namely Muslims. One critic of the bill, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a French politician in the National Assembly and part of *La France Insoumise* political party, called the bill “the “anti-Republican law,” which he said was “anti-Muslim”” (24, FRANCE. "France's Lower House APPROVES Anti-separatism Bill to Battle Islamist Extremism." *France 24*. France 24, 23 July 2021. Web. 19 Sept. 2021.) because it goes against the Republican value of equality. Critics say that the bill creates inequality because it discourages citizens from “behavior seeking to impose religious viewpoints in the public sphere.” (Griffin, Cailey. “Why Has France's Islamist Separatism Bill Caused Such Controversy?” *Foreign Policy*, Foreign Policy, 23 Feb. 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/02/23/why-france-islamist-separatism-bill-controversy-extremism/>.) The bill forbids civil servants from sharing or showing representations of their religion. The bill also makes it so associations that receive public funding must demonstrate their devotion to the principles of liberty, fraternity, and equality. Macron insists the bill was created solely to reinforce Republican values and to fight inequality and prejudice.

Because there is debate about what it means to be French, what Republican values are or should be, and what role education should play in promoting those values, this thesis will evaluate the literary lesson plans given to schools by the French government and will not take a position regarding the debate mentioned above. I chose to evaluate the literary lesson plans given to schools because I thought it would add an extra dimension to my analysis of the literary works chosen to support the lessons. The introduction of the lesson plans states that they are “*un outil au service des apprentissages*” (“Notices Des Ouvrages De La Liste De Référence 2018.”

Education.fr, Ministère De l'Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, 2018. pp. 2) or a tool for learning. These lesson plans also have key words which “*permettent d'objectiver l'intérêt didactique des oeuvres et d'en donner un aperçu synthétique*” (Ministère De l'Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, pp. 2) or that the lesson plans provided will make it possible to objectify the didactic interest of the works and give a synthetic overview of the government's expected outcome. From the book of literary lesson plans distributed to French middle school teachers, I have selected to review the works of three included authors: Praline Gay-Para, Hans Christian Andersen, and Béatrice Tanaka. All three authors were born outside of France although Tanaka and Gay-Para moved to France and have strong connections to the country. All three authors' works discuss inequality and equality. In each chapter of this thesis, I will examine how each text treats different kinds of inequality as well as the lesson plans proposed by the *Ministère l'Education Nationale* which suggest using these texts to teach the Republican value of equality. Each lesson plan, also, includes questions related to images from each text. Because each lesson plan includes the images, I thought it was important to put some of the images analyzed. I do not own the copyright to the images in this thesis. They belong to the publishers, Didier-Jeunesse and Kanjil Éditeur. My thesis meets the conditions of fair use.

Chapter One : *Sous la peau d'un homme*

The first author this thesis will evaluate is Praline Gay-Para. Praline Gay-Para was born in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, in 1956 to a lower-middle class family. Her parents were French and Middle Eastern, making her French Lebanese. When Gay-Para was nineteen, the Lebanese Civil War had just begun. And with the Civil War, Lebanon was split into two based on religion. North Beirut was predominantly Christian while South Beirut was predominantly Muslim. Gay-Para's parents felt that leaving the country was the best decision for their daughter, so they sent her to Paris. In Paris, Gay-Para went to university and studied anthropology and linguistics. After receiving her PhD, Gay-Para decided that instead of writing about tales, she wanted to write the tales herself. Thus began her writing career.

Although not French-born, Gay-Para considers herself from Paris. She often says, "I'm from Paris- I've been living there for 35 years." (Gatti, Tom. "Tales from Here, There and Everywhere." *The Times.co.uk*, The Times (London), 2007.), omitting the fact that she spent 19 years in Lebanon. Gay-Para is known to "*écrire pour questionner le monde*" ("Biographie – Praline Gay." *Para*, Compagnie Pavé Volubile, 28, July, 2021.). She writes to inspire people to question the world around them. The fact that Gay-Para writes to have the world ask questions makes it important that the French government chose to include her writing in classrooms of younger students. By using her works, the French government, in turn, teaches their students to question the world around them. Students learn to think for themselves. Gay-Para's stories are combinations of other people's stories and her own stories, and she follows an interesting process to get to her end product. First, she "collects" other people's stories by sharing her own story, hoping to receive a story in return. If someone chooses to tell her a story, she records and later transcribes their stories. Once the stories are transcribed, she weaves them together to create

a larger, more intricate, piece. When she finishes a story, she shares the finished product with the original people who shared their story.

In 2007, Gay-Para's *album*, or picture book, *Sous la peau d'un homme* was published by Didier Jeunesse. This piece of work is freely adapted from the North African tale *Tête de veau* by Jeanne Scelles-Mille. Both stories have a strong female protagonist, an arrogant prince, and family members with similar personalities. *Sous la peau d'un homme* is about a young girl and her adventure to prove that she is of equal value and standing as her male cousins. In *Sous la peau d'un homme*, twenty years after the story starts, an eldest daughter goes to work with her father. On the way to work, she and her father meet her uncle. Greetings are exchanged, and the girl becomes offended by what her uncle says. Because of this offense, the girl and her uncle make a bet to see whether she or her male cousin is more worthy of respect. . The bet lasts 366 days. After the first day, the girl's cousin is left in the woods, and the girl goes to a prince's castle wearing her male cousin's clothing. Because she is thought to be a man the young girl is allowed to stay at the castle. The girl stays at the castle for some time overcoming bizarre tests and inquiry. But in the end, she decides to leave and go home. Her decision to return home addresses inequality between men and women because she was never able to live without someone questioning her.

In a book of lesson plans given to teachers by the *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports*, the section on Gay-Para's *Sous la peau d'un homme*'s gives the key concepts, or *les mots-clés*, to be covered: "*conte , esthétique, débat, lecture mise en voix, relations humaines - vie sociale (préjugés, droits : égalité filles-garçons, figure de la belle*" ("Notices Des Ouvrages De La Liste De Référence 2018." *Education.fr*, Ministère De l'Éducation Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, 2018. pp. 132.) or genre, aesthetics,

debate, expressive reading aloud, human relations – social life (prejudices, rights: equality between girls and boys), figure of the beautiful. Of this list, the key concept that stands out is equality between girls and boys. Equality is one of France’s three core values. The lesson plan under the *pertinence et intérêt de l’ouvrage*, or the pertinence and interest of the book, section states that “*Il bouscule les préjugés sexistes en interrogeant quelques opinions masculines sur la nature des relations entre sexes, en posant la question de l’égalité filles-garçons*” (“Notices Des Ouvrages De La Liste De Référence 2018.” *Education.fr*, Ministère De l’Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, 2018. pp. 132.). This line says that the piece shakes up sexist prejudice by questioning male opinions of equality between boys and girls. The importance of this statement is that the French government knows that this piece addresses prejudice and proves prejudice against the women of this picture book wrong.

The same portion of the lesson plan also prompts the teacher to ask students their opinions on the title *Sous la peau d’un homme*. In English, the title translates to under the skin of a man. Students might give their opinion on who the “man” in the title is. Students might believe the “man” is mankind, but they might also believe the “man” is a man. Students might believe the “man” is not referring to a woman. The illustration on the cover of the book shows a person, but it is unclear of the person’s sex. The person on the cover wears a long gray coat with the hood up, so the students do not see any hair. This might indicate to students that the “man” in the title is a man. But the person has rosy cheeks which might indicate that the “man” in the title is a woman. The combination of conventional masculine and feminine features shows that the “man” the title refers to could refer to either a man or a woman. The use of the word “man” tricks students into thinking the person on the cover is a man, but upon closer inspection, students will

see that the person on the cover has soft facial features and curves. This contrast, only, reinforces the mystery of the “man” in the title.



©2007 Didier-Jeunesse

Gay-Para differentiates between sexes by using unjust prejudices that work their way through the story. The story starts with an introduction of two brothers and how they interact with each other when they are grown men. Each day, the brothers pass each other on their way to work. The younger brother greets the older with “*journée de biefaites, père de sept lumières!*” (Gay-Para.1-2). The older responds with “*bonjour, père des sept misères!*” (Gay-Para. 1-2.). The the younger brother greets the older brother as “father of seven lights” in reference to the older brother’s seven sons. The older brother greets the younger brother as “father of seven misfortunes” in reference to the younger brother’s seven daughters. These lines are brought up in the lesson plan given to teachers. It asks “*a quoi renvoie l’opposition « père des sept lumières », « père des sept misères » ? Que penser de l’affirmation sur les femmes « Elles sont inutiles. La meilleure d’entre elles est sotté » ?*” (Ministrère De l’Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et

Des Sports, 2018. pp. 132.). The first part of the quote asks what message the juxtaposition between “father of seven lights” and “father of seven misfortunes” sends to the reader. The second part of the quote asks what statement the two lines make about women. Gay-Para uses both “light” and “misfortune” to describe the children. Traditionally, “light” describes something good, while “misfortune” is bad. This comparison between the seven boys and the seven girls shows the opinion that men are placed in higher regard than women. This sexist prejudice shows the need for equality between the two sexes. There should be no thought of men being better than women. The lesson plan answers the second question by saying that the contrast in greetings makes the statement that women are useless, and the best of women are stupid.

The stereotype of women as useless and unintelligent is not only seen in the greetings between the brothers. It is also seen when the prince and the young girl play chess one night. The prince thinks to himself “*il aborde les problèmes de pouvoir, de justice de fiscalité comme seul un homme doué d’une immense dextérité sait montrer.*” (Gay-Para. 15-16). He thinks that his guest- the young girl- talks of topics like power, justice, and taxation like a man would. This statement shows the sexist stereotype of women being unintelligent. In the prince’s mind, only a man can have such profound comments on power, justice and taxation as seen above with “*seul un homme.*” Historically, women were thought to not have opinions on those topics because they did not understand them. But because the prince says that his guest, the young girl, understands the topics shows that women do understand the topics men do. The prince represents the historical opinion of women. This portion of the story is ironic, as well, because the reader knows the young girl helps her father from time to time with the problems the prince lists, so the young girl is familiar with the issues and can speak to them in an intelligent and thoughtful way.

While Gay-Para shows female stereotypes through dialogue, the illustrations accompanying the dialogue shows male stereotypes.



©2007 Didier-Jeunesse

The illustration on the bottom right corner on pages 15 and 16 shows the young girl dressed as a man. She wears blue, brown and purple clothing. She has gray cheeks and a serious expression on her face. She symbolizes the male stereotype of authority. Her face is serious and lacks emotion which gives the reader the impression of power. She looks almost as if she is bored with the people around her. But her size also gives the impression of authority because she is the largest character on the page. Blue often symbolizes authority. For example, police uniforms are thought to be navy blue.

Another male stereotype that is implied through the same illustration is that a man must be tough. The stereotype of toughness is shown by the color choices. The majority of the page is gray, blue, purple, and green. The cooler colors symbolize reservation, which goes back to the stereotype of male masculinity because it is expected for men to show little emotion. Cooler colors tend to be less vibrant, which also ties into masculinity because the colors are not as loud

as warmer colors. The young girl in all gray and blue clothing could also symbolize her intelligence. The very color of her contradicts the female stereotype of females being less intelligent or less able than men. If I were to take on the role of a student and answer the questions “*A quoi renvoie l’opposition « père des sept lumières », « père des sept misères » ? Que penser de l’affirmation sur les femmes « Elles sont inutiles. La meilleure d’entre elles est sotte » ?*” (Ministère De l’Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports. 132.) or what message the opposing images of the “father of seven lights” and “father of seven misfortunes” sends about women is, I would respond as follows. The use of the words “lights” and “misfortunes” is yet one more choice that shows prejudice against women. “Misfortunes” shows that women are not advantageous to families. This contrast between the two words reflects the differences in historical beliefs about men and women. It shows that the young girl is her extreme stereotype, but she is also shown as a strength. The strength she has is shown with the use of misfortune. Misfortune is the uncontrollable which is exactly what the young girl is. The other illustration of the young girl shows her on a red horse in all gray. The horse symbolizes the young girl's courage. For example, she stood up to her uncle showing her courage.

Gay-Para uses the comparison between the cousins to break gender stereotypes. The first comparison between the two cousins is made on the first day of their trip. Gay-para writes, “*le cousin défait son sac. Il mange et boit goulûment.*” (Gay-Para. 7-8) and then writes, “*la jeune fille, elle, mange quelques olives, un morceau de pain et boit avec parcimonie l’eau de sa gourde.*” (Gay-Para. 7-8). These lines are saying that the cousin eats and drinks greedily, while the young girl eats with caution or care. Gay-Para’s comparison between the cousins shows the difference in smarts. *La jeune fille* knows she must save her supplies and use them sparingly, while her cousin eats and drinks quickly without thinking about the future. This portion of the

story defies the stereotype that women are less intelligent than men. Later the cousin has to ask *la jeune fille* for water. *La jeune fille* responds by saying “*je te donnerai de l’eau en échange de ton manteau*” (Gay-Para, Praline, and Aurélia Fronty. “Dans la vie, il faut des années pour que les enfants grandissent, dans les contes, il suffit de deux mots !” *Sous La Peau D’un Homme*, Didier Jeunesse, Paris, 2021, pp. 7-8). Here she is saying yes but he has to give her his jacket and eventually his horse. In this portion of the text the stereotype of men being smarter is proven wrong. Gay-Para achieves this by having the young girl save her supplies, but she has the young girl trade her supplies for a man’s coat. After completing the trade with her cousin, the young girl goes to the prince’s castle looking like a man. The fact that the young girl goes to the castle wearing men’s clothing shows her bravery and intelligence. She knows the prince detests women, but she also knows she must prove her uncle wrong. By wearing men’s clothing, she was able to get into the palace undetected.

The young girl’s spirit is shown again on the way to her father’s work; she and her father pass the older brother. The two brothers say their usual greeting, but this time the young girl decides to comment on her uncle’s greeting to her father. The young girl says, “*Si tu veux savoir qui de ton fils aîné ou de moi est la misère, retrouvons-nous demain, ici, à la même heure. Nous partions de par le monde pendant un an et un jour et celui de nous deux qui reviendra en ayant le mieux tiré profit de son voyage te montrera qui est la vraie misère !*” (Gay-Para. 3-4). The daughter says to her uncle that if he wants to know which child is the misfortune, he should meet them at the same place at the same time the next day. She says that they will leave on a trip and after this trip they will find out who the true misfortune is. This piece of dialogue shows the strength and spirit women possess. The young girl stands up to her uncle after her father wouldn’t for all these years. The young girl wishes to prove her worth, while proving her uncle

wrong. She is as worthy of her uncle's respect as her male cousin is worthy of his uncle's respect. The bet in itself shows the belief she has in herself and her sex. She knows she will beat her cousin. She knows that she is the stronger more intelligent of the two. But the bet also shows her courage because she- a woman- stands up to a man. The young girl's courage is also seen later in the story after her final test. She, for the third time, is declared a man, but she has grown sick of the questioning and decides to head home. On her way home she writes on a wall "*tête de mulet ou tête de boeuf tu ne sauras jamais distinguer un canif d'un œuf!*" (Gay-Para. 34-35).

The young girl says, "head of mule or head of ox you will never be able to distinguish a penknife from an egg." Gay-Para, once again, gives the young girl her voice. She stands up for herself and refuses to allow the prince- a man of higher rank than she- to win. Whether she is a man or woman he will never know. This phrase is so powerful. It is her final stance to men. The prince will only know her sex if she tells him. She holds the power in this situation. It is up to her whether or not he finds her sex out. At the same time, she phrases the line is a way for the prince to find out that she is female. It is brave of her to let the prince figure out her sex because of his known hatred towards women. Gay-Para teaches her readers that your sex or status does not matter because everyone deserves a voice. Everyone deserves to be heard. Everyone is worth it.

The lesson plan asks another series of questions for teachers to ask their students. The questions are "*pourquoi le prince est-il si troublé par trois fois par le contact physique et le parfum du cavalier ? Comment expliquer son erreur et le dénouement ?*" ("Notices Des Ouvrages De La Liste De Référence 2018." *Education.fr*, Ministère De l'Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, 2018. pp. 132). The questions ask why the prince is troubled three times by the physical contact and the scent of the rider and how to explain his error and the outcome. The story earlier states that the prince "*n'a que dédain et mépris pour les filles d'Ève*"

(Gay-Para. 9-10.) or “only has disdain and contempt for the daughters of Eve.” Going back to the first question, the prince is so troubled by the rider’s scent and touch because he thinks the rider is a woman...the very thing he despises. The illustration that goes with this page also gives the reader a clue as to how the prince feels about women. The page has a big white palace and a large picture of the prince in it. Going up to the palace is the young girl or the rider. She is very small in comparison to the prince’s picture and his palace. The size difference is the clue about his dislike of women because the woman in the picture is small. To answer the second question asked, the prince later realizes his error. He realizes his error of testing whether or not the young girl is a man or a woman when he realizes she has left. When the prince sees her writing saying “*tête de mulet ou tête de boeuf tu ne sauras jamais distinguer un canif d’un œuf!*” (Gay-Para. 34-35.) or “head of mule or head of ox you will never be able to distinguish a penknife from an egg,” he realizes that she is a woman. After figuring out the rider is a woman, the prince continues to go after her. The journey to find the young girl shows the destruction of sexist prejudice. After all, the prince symbolizes the historical prejudice against women. The prince going after her shows that he (and historical female prejudice) has changed. He cannot live without his confidant...his chess partner...his friend. This is when the reader sees that the prince has broken the cycle of prejudice against women. He has changed one of his core beliefs.

The lesson plan for Gay-para’s story focuses on colors. It says “*Les oppositions de couleurs, la chaleur des images, l’esthétique et les lignes de force des tableaux soulignent les antagonismes ou magnifient le texte et les personnages. Elles culminent dans l’image finale du pont rétabli entre l’homme et la femme qui paraissaient si loin l’un de l’autre. L’observation et l’analyse de ces peintures comme leur rapport avec le texte enrichira la réception de l’œuvre.*” (“Notices Des Ouvrages De La Liste De Référence 2018.” *Education.fr*, Ministère De

l'Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, 2018. pp. 132). Here the lesson plan is saying that the opposition of colors, the warmth of the images, the aesthetics and the lines of force underline the antagonisms or magnify the text and the characters. It then talks about the bridge in the final image and being restored between the man and woman; and finally, it says that the observation and analysis of the paintings and their relationship with the text will enrich the reception of the work. The illustrations that go with this story are powerful and enhance the meaning of each word read. The main theme throughout the story is inequality. In the illustrations whenever the characters are equal, the characters and the pictures are mainly drawn in cooler colors. This is important because cooler colors having a calming effect which makes the reader feel that everything is alright. An example of this is on the first night the young girl is at the palace. The illustration mainly uses blue and green. The fact that the reader sees the young girl in blue soothes the reader's worry about the prince finding out she is a woman. In the same picture, the prince is the only character who wears a different color. The prince wears different shade of red which shows his power because the reader's eye is draw to him first. The chair that the young girl sits in is also red. This also draws attention to her and her secret, that the two are not equal based off of their sex. An example of the pictures being painted mainly using red is when the prince tests the young girl for a third time. The page is full of red, orange and yellow. The colors, here, represent the change of the prince's mind that the young girl might be a woman. The colors worry the reader. But one the next page, the young girl wears blue which shows the reader that the prince is calmed by the results of the test. The restoration of the bridge shows the prince's acceptance of the young girl. It is a powerful image because we see the acceptance the prince has for the young girl. This acceptance shows the reader that the two characters are equal. The characters also wear white or beige and navy blue. The hues of these

colors are so close to black and white that it reminds the reader of ying and yang. Neither is more important. Their different strengths make the two characters equal halves.

What made the French government choose to have teachers teach *Sous la peau d'un homme*? There are several reasons. The French government chose to include Gay-Para's story in their curriculum. The first thing Gay-Para chooses to shine a light on is gender stereotypes. A typical stereotype seen throughout the story is that men are smarter. But Gay-Para, also, shows that men and women are equal in intelligence. For example, the young girl trades her supplies for her cousins' supplies and tricks her way into the palace. Intelligence is also seen when the Prince and the young girl play their chess games at night. Another gender stereotype that Gay-Para proves wrong is that women are weaker than men. The young girl chooses to stand up to several of the male characters throughout the story. The men of the story show their feelings throughout the story, which contradicts the male stereotype that men hide their feelings. The prejudice of women being unlucky is also put to question. The young girl and her sisters are called "misfortunes", but the young girl proves that to be wrong when she wins the bet against her uncle. Another prejudice seen against women is that they should or do not have a voice, meaning that women should not share their opinions. This is proven to be wrong when the Prince accepts the young girl as a woman at the end. All of these ideas show that men and women are equal. It is important that the French government teaches equality between men and women through this story because this story questions whether or not the genders are equal. This story makes the reader think about what is right, and in the end, it shows that no matter how different people are, they are all equal.

Chapter Two: Hans Christian Andersen

Similarly, to *Sous la peau d'un homme* by Praline Gay-Para, many of Hans Christian Andersen's works explore the idea of inequality. Unlike Praline Gay-Para, though, Hans Christian Andersen has no connection to France. Andersen was born in Odense, a city near Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1805. When Andersen was eleven, his father died leaving his family barely able to support themselves. To earn money to help the family, Andersen was sent to work in a factory, but he only lasted there several days.

Fortunately for Andersen, he was born during a time of radical change in Denmark. In 1814, Denmark introduced universal primary education, which was beneficial to the lower classes. Andersen's family fell into this category, but that did not stop Andersen from pursuing his education beyond what was offered for free. In 1819, Andersen left home, determined to join the Royal Theater in Copenhagen where he was turned down for not having enough education. But even after rejection, Andersen did not give up. Eventually, he found himself at the house of Giuseppe Siboni where Andersen met Christoph Weyse.

Weyse decided to help fund Andersen's education. During school, Andersen struggled with hunger and poverty, but it was these years from which Andersen drew some inspiration for one of his most well-known stories, *The Little Mermaid*. While in school, Andersen never gave up his dream of performing on the stage even when faced with much rejection. After some time, Andersen switched to writing plays instead of performing them, which is where Andersen met Jonas Collins. Collins helped Andersen receive funding from the King of Denmark to further his studies. The funding sent Andersen to a grammar school in Slagelse, but after writing a poem and being severely punished, Andersen was pulled out of the grammar school. He returned to Copenhagen and received private tutoring. Collins and his family became Andersen's second

family, but Andersen never felt like he completely belonged. He later went to the University of Copenhagen and in 1829 received his first recognition. He won a grant from the king to travel and develop his works. And in 1835, Andersen began writing his fairy tales.

Andersen's inspiration for many of his fairy tales came while he was traveling. He was greatly inspired by Scandinavian, German, and Greek stories, but Andersen also found inspiration from fables, natural phenomena, and his personal life. For example, Andersen often felt like he was looking into the lives of people rather than experiencing his life with them. An example of this feeling of observing a life from the outside is seen in *La petite marchande d'allumettes* or *The Little Matchgirl*. Like Andersen, the little girl is from a lower social class and looks in on upper social class households. *La petite sirène* or *The Little Mermaid* also refers to Andersen's life as an outsider living amongst the upper class. Both Andersen and the little mermaid try to change themselves so they will be accepted into a society to which they were not born into. *The Emperor's New Clothes* references the fact that Andersen was able to live among the upper class because the main character is an emperor. (citation?)

The French government chose to include *La petite sirène*, *les habits neufs de l'empereur*, and *la petite marchande d'allumettes* by Hans Christian Andersen in its prescribed curriculum. I will explore *why* the French government chose to include these stories. Secondly, I will analyze *how* *La petite sirène* and *Les habits neufs de l'empereur* and *La petite marchande d'allumettes* are used to teach French students. Thirdly, I will analyze *what* these tales teach French students.

The Little Mermaid is about a young and curious mermaid. Her sisters and grandmother tell her stories of the human world, and she is fascinated by the human world and its culture. She longs for the day when she can swim to the surface of the ocean and experience the beautiful world beyond the sea, but she must wait until her 15th year. On her 15th birthday, the little

mermaid rises to the surface and sees a ship, the ship where she first sees the prince. She falls in love instantly. Unfortunately, a storm comes and sinks the ship, but the little mermaid saves the prince's life. Although she wishes to stay with the prince, she fears he will not love her in return, so she goes to the sea witch for help. The sea witch helps, but in return the little mermaid has to give up her voice. Agreeing to the terms of the arrangement, she becomes human. When she arrives on land, she finds the prince with the hopes of earning his undying love and a soul for herself. Unfortunately, she does not succeed and the little mermaid turns into sea foam.

In a book of lesson plans given to teachers by the *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports*, there is a section which has keywords which tell teachers what the ultimate goal of the lesson is. *La petite sirène* lesson plan states that the key concepts to be learned are “*œuvre patrimoniale, conte merveilleux, quête • intertextualité : texte source • débat délibératif, débat interprétatif • construction de soi • sirène*” (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports*. 119) or heritage work, marvelous tale, quest, intertextuality: source text, deliberative debate, interpretive debate, self-construction, mermaid. One of the key concepts defines *la petite sirène* as a marvelous tale because of its use of magic, fantasy, and marvelous worlds, but it also says “*Cependant il est en décalage avec les normes du genre et son personnage principal s'oppose diamétralement au mythe de la sirène*” (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports*. 119) meaning the story is a step out of the normality of the mythological tales of mermaids, or sirens. In Greek myths, sirens would sing to sailors who would then crash their ships and drown which shows hatred between cultures of the sea and earth. The sea was dangerous and deadly. But, in *la petite sirène*, the youngest mermaid falls in love with a human and his culture. Although she loves the prince, the prince does not feel the same even after the little mermaid changes herself. The story sheds light on inequality among

different cultures. Unfortunately, today's society is still similar to Andersen's. The culture a person is born into oftentimes defines how that person is viewed by people of other cultures.

The lesson plan says, “ *la compréhension de certains passages clés (l'explication de la grand-mère à propos de la mort, de l'âme immortelle et du mariage, la rencontre avec la sorcière, le discours des filles de l'air etc.) seraient à assurer*” (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, *de la Jeunesse et des Sports*. 119) or the understanding of certain key passages (the grandmother's explanation about death, immortal soul and marriage, meeting the witch, speaking to the girls of the air, etc.) would be assured. Although this lesson plan is vague in comparison to some of the other plans provided by the French government, it gives students the ability to talk a little more freely about their own interpretation of the text. In the passage where the sea witch is introduced, Andersen describes the witch's home and garden. The description of the garden includes strange half-creature, half-plants. Andersen writes,

“She saw that they all held in their grasp something they had seized with their numerous little arms, which were as strong as iron bands. Tightly grasped in their clinging arms were white skeletons of human beings who had perished at sea and had sunk down into the deep waters; skeletons of land animals; And oars rudders and chests of ships. There was even a Little Mermaid whom they had caught and strangled, and this seemed the most shocking of all to the little Princess.” (Andersen, Hans C. “Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales (the Complete ... - Amazon.com.” *Kindle Cloud Reader*, 8092.

<https://www.amazon.com/Andersens-Fairy-Tales-Complete-Collection-ebook/dp/B007HTKT8U>).

These lines describe how death is the same for everyone; humans of one culture die like those of another culture. This is seen by stating “human beings” and “a little mermaid” because humans

represent one culture (above water) and mermaids represent another culture (below water). Both humans and mermaids die from the inability to breathe; both end up trapped by something they cannot control. A couple of lines after the sea witch is first seen. She sat “allowing a toad to eat from her mouth just as people sometimes feed a canary with pieces of sugar” (Andersen. 8099.) Here the reader sees the comparison between the culture above the water and the culture below the water. This comparison shows that each culture does the same action but with different characters. Because the cultures do the same actions this shows that neither culture is better or more evolved than the other. The passage where the little mermaid talks with the girls of the air reads,

“The little mermaid perceived that she had a body like theirs and that she continued to rise higher and higher out of the foam. “Where am I?” asked she, and her voice sounded ethereal, like the voices of those who were with her. No earthly music could imitate it. “Among the daughters of the air,” answered one of them. “A mermaid has not an immortal soul, nor can she obtain one unless she wins the love of a human being. On the will of another hangs her eternal destiny. But the daughters of the air, although they do not possess an immortal soul, can, by their good deeds, procure one for themselves. We fly to warm countries and cool the sultry air that destroys mankind with pestilence. We carry the perfume of the flowers to spread health and restoration. After we have striven for three hundred years to do all the good in our power, we receive an immortal soul and take part in the happiness of mankind. You, poor little mermaid, have tried with your whole heart to do as we are doing. You have suffered and endured, and raised yourself to the spirit world by your good deeds, and now, by striving for three hundred years in the same way, you may obtain an immortal soul.” (Andersen. 8260-8270).

These lines describe immortality. They describe how kindness breaks the barrier between cultures. The little mermaid sacrifices herself for the prince. By sacrificing herself, the little mermaid is able to overcome cultural inequalities. She is able to do this because she becomes part of a new culture who can get an immortal soul like the human culture as explained when the girls in the air say, “the daughters of the air, although they do not possess an immortal soul, can, by their good deeds, procure one for themselves” (Andersen. 8260-8270.). These passages also discuss the inequality between men and women. The only women talked about either do not have souls or earn souls, while the men of the story have souls. The females of the story are the mermaids and the woman who marries the prince. It is assumed that the woman, who marries the prince, has a soul because she is human. But she is, also, the only woman of the story who marries. By doing this, the woman still gains a soul because she marries a man who has a soul. The little mermaid earns the chance to win a soul after she saves the prince’s life and becomes part of the girls of the air world.

Hans Christian Andersen’s *Little Match Girl* is taught across France. *The Little Match Girl* or *The Little Match Seller* is about a poor little girl who walks around barefoot in the cold trying to sell matches on New Year’s Eve while people pass by in a hurry. Although she is cold, she fears her father’s reaction if she returns home with no money. In need of warmth, the little girl lights a match and sees a vision, which comforts her. In the end, the little girl dies and is reunited with her grandmother. The lesson plan for *The Little Match Girl* states that the key concepts to be learned are “*oeuvre patrimoniale, conte merveilleux • registre : tragique • lecture symbolique • relations humaines - vie sociale • fille*” (Ministère de l’Education Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports. 123) or heritage work, marvelous tale, register: tragic, symbolic human-social life, girl. The key concepts to be learned are about social life. The lesson plan comments

on how the “le froid et l’indifférence emportent la petite marchande d’allumettes” (*Ministrère de l’Education Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports*. 123) or the cold and indifference take away the little girl. The cold Andersen talks about references the idea of hostility towards people who are of a poorer socioeconomic status than they, but the cold is also literal. A harsh climate surrounds the little girl throughout the story. The harsh setting of the story comments on the inequality between people of different statuses. Andersen writes about the little girl’s slippers; one slipper is lost while the “other had been laid hold of by an urchin, and off he ran with it” (Andersen. 7809.). Here Andersen comments on the inequality between men and women. The boy, who is also poor, takes the girl’s slipper. The male takes advantage of the female. Andersen goes even further by describing the little girl as the “very picture of sorrow” (Andersen. 7816.). The inequality between people of different socioeconomic standing is brought up again when Andersen describes a homelife where “from her father she would certainly get blows, and at home it was cold too, for above her she had only the roof, through which the wind whistled” (Andersen. 7824.) and then she talks about the houses that she can see into from the street where she is selling matches where “the wall [that] became transparent like a veil, so that she could see into the room. On the table was spread a snow-white tablecloth; upon it was a splendid porcelain service, and roast goose was steaming” (Andersen. 7830.). The contrast between the description of her home and the homes of the rich is drastically different. The people of lower status live with the elements: the cold and wind come into their houses. The people better off use tablecloths that resemble the snow.

The Emperor’s New Clothes is a story about an emperor who loves the finer things in life such as clothing. One day the emperor hires two men to make him new clothing with the “power” of visibility to only intelligent people. The two men pretend to make the new clothes for

the emperor. No one in the palace saw the new clothing, but out of fear no one said anything about not seeing the clothes. The emperor decides to wear his new clothes to the parade, but he is actually naked. Everyone pretends to be in awe of his new clothes, but for one brave child who tells the emperor that the emperor has nothing on. Everyone then understood what had happened, and the emperor continued the parade wearing no clothes.

For *the Emperor's New Clothes*, the lesson plan states that the key concepts to be learned are “*œuvre patrimoniale, récit de ruse • registre: comique • débat délibératif • relations humaines - vie sociale • escroc*” (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports. 121) or heritage work, cunning story, register: comic, deliberative debate, human relations- social life, crook. All three of Andersen's works focus on the inequality between people of different status. But while *The Little Match Girl* focuses on people of lower status, *The Emperor's New Clothes* focuses on people of higher status. The emperor holds the highest status, but that does not stop people from taking advantage of him. For example, Andersen writes, “the Emperor was accordingly undressed, and the rogues pretended to array him in his new suit; the Emperor turning round, from side to side, before the looking glass.” (Andersen. 2969.) Andersen shows people taking advantage of the emperor by using the word “pretended.” Here pretend shows that, although of lower social standing, the people who trick the emperor think that they are smarter which is the case in the story. But this shows that even if someone is more well off, they have qualities that make them equal to those in a higher class. The Emperor has power, but the con-artists have higher intelligence. Another part that teaches students about the equality of humans is when the child says, “but the emperor has nothing at all on!” (Andersen. 2990.) Andersen's choice to use a child to point out the emperor's lack of clothes shows that, although younger, children have as much or more power than those around them.

Finally, the French government shows the importance of illustrations in the lesson plans. For example, the lesson plan for *la petite sirène* says “Enfin, l’exposition virtuelle de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France Mer, terreurs et fascination (Monstres marins, les sirènes) permet d’explorer plus en détail le personnage de la sirène et ses diverses représentations dans l’histoire des arts : <http://expositions.bnf.fr/lamer/bornes/feuilletoirs/sirenes/01.htm>” (*Ministère de l’Education Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports*. 120). This talks about a virtual exhibition from the National Library of France that helps students explore in greater detail the character of the mermaid and its representation throughout history. In the fourth image of the exhibition, there are three boats, each filled with men, and mermaids below the boats. This image further solidifies the idea of inequality between cultures. For example, the mermaids are placed below the humans. They physically show the lower regard one culture imposes on another. Secondly, the mermaids all look up to the humans. This has two meanings. The first is that this culture puts another culture in higher regards than their own and tries to mimic the other culture. The second meaning is the mermaids look up to this culture meaning they value their opinion and materials. The value the mermaids put on the humans is seen with the mermaids touching the boats and reaching for the boats. The humans are placed above the mermaids which shows that some cultures are thought to be better than another culture. The humans, also, look down into the water at the mermaids, which shows that this culture thinks they are better than the mermaids.

The French government chose to teach these three different tales by Hans Christian Andersen. Each tale was chosen specifically because each discusses inequality, and the effects inequality has on people. *The Little Mermaid* talks about inequality between different cultures, but it also shows how the two cultures are the same. Inequality is shown by the fact that the little mermaid feels like she has to change for the prince to love her. She switches cultures, but in the

end, she is still an outsider; she cannot talk; and it feels like she is stepping on knives every time she walks. This shows students what the results of a culture thinking they are better than another culture. In today's society this discussion is still relevant. Oftentimes we cannot understand a culture due to a language barrier like the little mermaid's inability to speak. Because of this, the mermaid is thought to be of lower intelligence because she cannot speak. In today's terms, this is similar to western countries going into third world countries to try and help. Like the little mermaid, third world countries do not have the resources as the western countries who impose their views.

The Little Match Girl and *The Emperor's New Clothes* talk about the inequality between people of different statuses. *The Little Match Girl* compares the life of a poor family with the life of a wealthy family. The contrast between the little girl's life of starvation and the prolonged feeling of coldness and the home the little girl looks into is vastly different. The house the little girl looks into is bright, warm, and full of food while her house is dark, cold, and lacks food. This inequality's outcome is also shown at the end of the tale. The little girl dies from hypothermia and is seen by people passing by, but no one stops. This social commentary on wealthier people back then. But people of better standing in today's world also overlook the poor or homeless. A lot of the time these people are thought to be drug addicts or worthless, which is far from the truth.

The Emperor's New Clothes discusses the life of a high-status person. In this tale, the emperor is tricked into thinking he has magical clothing that only intelligent people can see. This story shows the inequality between people of higher power because no one of a lower status will speak out against them which causes people of higher status to develop an unhealthy superiority complex like the emperor. He developed this complex because only a child ever spoke out

against him. The reason Andersen uses a child to finally speak against the emperor is because children have different rules in a society. Children live to less strict rules. There are fewer consequences if they break a rule. This is still relevant and seen with celebrities and even presidents who do not act well towards critics. An example of this could be when Donald Trump lost the presidency. He could not handle the fact that he lost and because of this superiority complex he called the election rigged. Although Andersen wrote these tales a long time ago, the tales are still relevant. We see the same issues that occurred in the past today. The French government chose to teach the three of Andersen's texts because they shed light on the issue of inequality. By seeing these issues of inequality and the effects on people, students can learn from these mistakes and make sure everyone is equal.

Chapter Three: *Contes Afro-Brésiliens*

Contes or tales play very important roles in today's society. They are seen in places such as festivals or schools. Unfortunately, in a school setting, when a tale was taught for a longer period of time, it was seen as “*un objet d'analyse*” (Gay-Para, Praline. “Praline Gay-Para Histoire Buissonnière. - Apple-Paille.” *Apple-Paille.com*, <http://www.apple-paille.com/contepourenfants/gayparacontealecole.pdf>.) or an object of analysis rather than as the fluid piece it was meant to be as Gay-Para refers to the term tale. Gay-Para means that the tale is to be read through without any pauses or questions that would interrupt its telling or reading. In schools, reading is often stopped by the teacher asking students questions along the way to check their understanding. Gay-Para wants the read continuously from beginning to end. This way the student can listen to or read the tale without worrying about upcoming questions; this allows the student to fully understand the piece of writing. Previously, tales were taught by reading the tale and either questioning the students during the reading or after the reading, but French schools have changed the way tales are taught. After reading the lesson plans given to teachers by the *Ministère de l'Education Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports*, the teaching of tales has switched to mainly student led discussions and debates.

Béatrice Tanaka was born in 1932 in Cernauti, Romania, which is today's Chernivtsi, Ukraine. She grew up in a German speaking Jewish household. While growing up in Cernauti, Tanaka's childhood was full of many different customs and beliefs. It is also where she was exposed to eight languages. Her life was vibrant and full of wonder, but that all changed when Cernauti was taken and controlled by Romanian, Nazi, and Soviet forces during World War II. In 1944, Tanaka's family decided to leave Cernauti and moved to Palestine. She stayed for three years until she decided to leave Palestine for Brazil. She loved Brazil and stayed there for several

long periods of time. While in Brazil, she chose to study design, modern languages and pedagogy. Later, she studied theater at the Sorbonne and the University of the Theater of Nations. She also studied scenography at the Atelier des Décorateurs Modeltistes and graphic art at the Paul School Collins in Paris.

Tanaka began her career in 1955 designing sets and costumes for theaters in France and Brazil. She started writing articles, stories and short stories for magazines the *Puffin Post* and *Jeunes Années* in 1961. She also organized many exhibitions of popular art and toys. Ever since her childhood, she loved learning about and sharing and living in other cultures. She started with Vietnamese culture, which gave way for her first book titled *The Treasure of Mon: tales and images of Viet Nam* published in 1971. Since 1971, she has written over 40 children's books. After a great and long career, Tanaka died in 2016, but her thought provoking works live on.

The seven tales of Tanaka's *Contes Afro-Brésiliens* each tell separate tales of characters who play important roles in Brazilian mythology. The tales focused on in this chapter tell the stories of animals who help different cultures and groups discover and fix inequality among the groups and cultures. *La tortue devin* is a sweet tale, which shows the evolution of equality between men and women of a village. The villagers start with the outdated belief that women are in the world to care for the home, while men are in the world to be the protectors and providers. Sick of this belief, the women of the village decide they wish to do the tasks their male counterparts do. The men of the village disagree, so the women leave the village to find a place where they can do what the men of their village do. When the men find out the village is deserted, they go on a journey to find everyone. This is where the men meet several animals who help them find their women and children. Eventually they seek the advice and help of a tortoise who helps the men and women of a village. *Le singe Séraphin* is a story about a little monkey

who loved to play pranks. Séraphin's mother sent him out into the world. While on his own, he meets many people. But when he's hungry he goes back to the people asking to cash in a favor; he wants food. Finally, he speaks with a blind man who realizes the monkey has no friends, and the blind man gives the little monkey a guitar for company. The lesson plan summarizes these two tales saying "*Deux autres contes sont centrés sur des animaux : une tortue qui défend la cause des femmes en Afrique (La tortue devin) ; l'insupportable singe Séraphin qui s'en va de par le monde avec un plat de haricots qu'il échange contre des biens successifs.*" ("Notices Des Ouvrages De La Liste De Référence 2018." *Education.fr*, Ministère De l'Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, 2018. pp. 165.) or two other tales are centered around animals: a tortoise who defends the cause of women in Africa, and an insufferable monkey Séraphin who goes around the world with a plate of beans that he exchanges for successive goods. These two tales differ greatly. One focuses on a gain of wisdom, while the other focuses on cultural inequality. So why did the French government decide to teach *Contes Afro-Brésiliens*? According to the lesson plans given to teachers by the *Ministère de l'Education Nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports*, the selection of Tanaka's *Contes Afro-Brésiliens* will intrigue students as seen here in "*la sélection retenue par Béatrice Tanaka intriguera les élèves.*" ("Notices Des Ouvrages De La Liste De Référence 2018." *Education.fr*, Ministère De l'Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, 2018. pp. 165.). The stories also cause students to question human behavior. The goal of the French government to have their students read *Contes Afro-Brésiliens* is to get students asking questions which will lead to further discussions in class. The French government wishes to have a more open-minded thinking society, and by reading about different cultures, like the cultures in *Contes Afro-Brésiliens*, students are shown other cultural perspectives.

When looking through *La littérature à l'école, Contes Afro- Brésiliens*' lesson plan one notices a slight difference in the book. The book is a collection of fables and or fairy tales much like Andersen's work, but *Contes Afro- Brésiliens* focuses a selection of different values. *Contes Afro- Brésiliens*' lesson plan's key concepts are as follows "*conte, personnages, archétypaux : divinités, interculturalité, débat sur les valeurs (éthique), peuples et pays du monde (folklore)*" ("Notices Des Ouvrages De La Liste De Référence 2018." *Education.fr*, Ministère De l'Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports, 2018. pp. 165.) or tale, archetypal characters : divinities, interculturality, debate on values (ethics), peoples and countries of the world. In *La tortue devin*, the archetypal characters shown are the sage, the outlaw, and the explorer. The animals are archetypes of the sage because the other characters in the story go to them to ask for information. The animals know everything that goes on. For example, the men of the village go to the *grand devin* who tells the men that they are too late; he cannot help the men find their women. But *le grand devin* later says, "*Peut-être un animal, répondit le devin. Les animaux voyagent beaucoup.*" (Tanaka Béatrice. *Contes Afro-brésiliens : Au Pays Du Saci*. Kanjil, 2015. 22.). This dialogue is saying that maybe an animal can because they travel a lot. Heeding this advice, the men of the village go to the animals for insight on where their women have gone. They ask several animals, and in the end the tortoise is the true sage with answers for the men. The women of the village are the outlaws and the explorers. The women are the rebels of society. For example, the women state, "*nous aussi aimerions aller à la chasse, courir les bois, diriger la barque sur le grand fleuve*" (Tanaka. 19.). They say that they would like to go hunting, to run the woods, to steer the boat on the large river as well. But the men respond by laughing at their statement. The women push the limits and strive to change the roles in the village. The women want to go against what the men say and wish to be of equal value in the

village. The rebel and the explorer archetypes push societal norms; they are the cause of change in a society. These archetypes are so important because students are able to connect to the tale. Every student knows someone they can go to for advice whether that person is a parent, a grandparent, a teacher, or even a friend. Everyone knows someone who questions how the world is whether that person is a friend, a local, or even oneself. This connection to the tales allows students to connect with the characters; once students become invested, they ask questions which leads to learning.

One of the main ideas talked about in the lesson plan given is the interculturality seen in *Le singe Séraphin*. Interculturality is the relationship between culturally diverse groups in a society. In this tale, students see two different cultures interacting with one another in the form of interactions between humans and animals. Both cultures are vastly different from one another. The difference between the two cultures is seen whenever Séraphin interacts with a human. For example, Séraphin encounters a laundry woman or a *blanchisseuse* washing her clothes in ash, and Séraphin says “*le savon lave bien mieux que la cendre! En veux-tu?*” (Tanaka. 70.) or soap washes much better than ashes and offers the woman soap. The laundry woman gladly takes the soap and offers Séraphin nothing in return. Séraphin, next, encounters a baker who carries his bread on a board. He asks the baker if he would like a sack instead by saying “*ta planchet n’est pas pratique. Veux- tu un sac?*” (Tanaka. 71.). Again, Séraphin is offered nothing in return. These two examples show an important difference in the two cultures. The culture Séraphin comes from offers help to those in need. The culture of the humans does not offer help for those in need unless they are given something in return. This contrast also shows a superiority complex between cultures. The culture humans come from believes they deserve anything and everything

without giving something in return. These lines show the inequality between different cultures like students see in *The Little Mermaid* by Hans Christian Andersen.

While looking through *La littérature à l'école, Contes Afro- Brésiliens'* lesson plan states that “*chaque histoire incitera les élèves à questionner des comportements et des travers humains*” (Ministère De l'Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports. 165.) or each story will encourage students to question human behavior and failings. As an example of one of the behaviors and failings of humans, the lesson plan states “*respect de la parole donnée, inhumanité des villes*” (Ministère De l'Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports. 165.) or respect for a given word or a promise and the inhumanity of cities. The first part of these examples given (respect of a promise) has students question the “word given” in *La tortue devin*, that is what women are told they can and cannot do and what men are told to do when they visit *les animals*. The women of the village are told that their place is in the home or “*la place des femmes est à la maison.*” (Tanaka. 20.). Most children are told that they must respect or do what someone older or of greater position than they says. That is a child must do what their parents say. A student must follow their teacher's instructions. But Tanaka's tale, *La tortue devin*, makes students question if they really have to do what someone tells them. The tale does this by having the women leave their village because the men tell them their place is to stay in their village and take care of the home. The tale shows children that everyone- whether they are young, old, female, male- has a right to do as they please. The tale shows that it is a natural human behavior to question what someone is told. But as the women in the village show it must be done with respect. The women voice their opinions respectfully and do not argue. Instead, they leave the village. The second part of the examples given (the inhumanity of towns) has students question whether or not the human world or the natural world has more power. *La tortue devin* shows that

in order for the human world to survive and thrive it must work with the natural world. For example, students see that the men of the village ask the animals for help finding the women when reading “*le singe déclara*” (Tanaka. 23.) or the monkey declared, “*le boeuf maugréa*” (Tanaka. 23.) or the ox mumbled, “*le bouc dit*” (Tanaka. 23.) or the billy goat said, and “*le conseil du crocodile*” (Tanaka. 25.) or the advice of the crocodile. These statements show that the animals respond to the men’s questions. When the men, eventually, talk with *la tortue* she has the men while the men “*donner au moins un sac de gombos*” (Tanaka. 25.) or give no less than a sack of okra to her while she “*retrouvera vos femmes*” (Tanaka. 25.) and “*vous les ramènera*” (Tanaka. 25.) or will find and bring their wives back. Here *la tortue* makes a deal with the men. This deal is a deal between the human and natural worlds. The human world will make sure the natural world has nutriture, while the natural will save the human world. The “inhumanity of the town” is shown because half its population leaves in search of a better life. It is only the humane world (nature) that can save the inhumane world (town). The tale shows that the natural world has more power and must be respected by the human world. Students learn that the human world (who isolates itself from the natural world) often forgets the power of the natural world, and someday the human world will need the natural world.

Le singe Séraphin also shows the “*inhumanité des villes*” (Ministère De l’Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports. 165.) or inhumanity of towns seen in the lesson plan. When Séraphin talks with the baker he asks for bread because he is starving and wishes for it in return for the sack. The baker replies with “*tu es fou à lier, petit singe ! Tu m’as fait Cadeau de ce sac!*” (Tanaka. 72.) or you are mad little monkey and says that the sack was a gift. This shows the difficulties a town has to help someone from the outside. The baker calls the monkey crazy which shows the hostility towards someone from a different culture than he. The baker treats

Séraphin poorly, and if mistreatment is how people in the town welcome newcomers, then the town is inhumane.

The lesson plan also focuses on “*les illustrations luxuriantes de Béatrice Tanaka*” (Ministère De l’Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports. 165.) or the luxuriant illustrations of Béatrice Tanaka. Like in the other works discussed, illustrations are important tools that reinforce the themes and ideas taught throughout tales or picture books. The lesson plan says that the illustrations affirm themselves in a strong correspondence with folklore and the Afro-Brazilian culture or “*s’affirment en forte correspondance avec le folklore et la culture afro-brésilienne*” (Ministère De l’Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports. 165.). It later states that the collection can therefore allow students to open up to other cultures or “*le recueil peut donc permettre aux élèves de s’ouvrir à d’autres cultures*” (Ministère De l’Education Nationale, De La Jeunesse Et Des Sports. 165.). The illustration on page 21 of *Contes Afro-Brésilien* shows the women and children of the village leaving.



©Kanjil – Lise Bourquin Mercadé, 2015

The women carry food and supplies for their journey. The women wear blue, red, purple, and yellow while the children wear green. Green often symbolizes growth and rebirth, so the fact that the new generation wear green shows that their society is growing and being reborn. They leave their old culture and make a new one. The women wearing blue symbolizes the intelligence they bring with them into their new culture, but they also symbolize the trust that they have in themselves. The women wearing red symbolize passion. These women follow what they believe is right. They fight for what they believe even if it means leaving their homes. The women wearing purple symbolize the mystery and uncertainty of the future. Purple mixes both warm and cool colors- both red and blue- which also shows uncertainty because the color has elements of both cool and warm colors. In this illustration all of the women face east which is symbolic of new beginning. Like the sun rising in the east brings a new day.



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Page 27 shows the women and children following *la tortue* back to the men.

Every character in this illustration faces west which is symbolic of the men's journey from ignorance of the importance of women to the realization of the importance of women.

The illustrations of *le singe Séraphin* allow students to open up to other cultures. The images in this tale showcase vibrant African cultures. The colors used throughout the tale are bright and stand out against the white background. The fact that each image is surrounded by white, instead of taking up the whole page, shows the difference in cultures. The white represents a new culture growing around an older culture. The colorful image represents the older wiser culture which is the basis of the newer culture. On page 73 of *Contes Afro-Brésilien*, there is an illustration. The illustration is surrounded by the white of the page and a green boarder. The green boarder of the image shows the growth of both culture because there are characters from each culture shown. The old blind man shown in blue represents the knowledge that both cultures need to coexist and accept on another. Séraphin and his culture are always drawn in brown which shows the strength and reliability of this culture. The humans and their world are drawn in green which, again, symbolizes the growth of this culture.

The French government chose to teach the *contes* from Béatrice Tanaka because they discuss the inequality between different cultures as well as the inequality in a culture. *La tortue devin*, talks about inequality in a specific culture and inequality between two different cultures. The inequality discussed in a culture is the inequality between men and women. In this tale, men are the ones who can leave the village while the women are stuck inside the village. The men in this case have all the power. But after the women leave the village, the power shifts and becomes more equal. That is at the end the women are allowed to do what they please. This power shift

demonstrates the past point of view- that women can't do what men can- to the present point of view- that women can do what men do and even do it better. This tale also shows the inequality between animals and humans. That is humans believe they are better than animals, but when in need they are forced to go outside their village and ask for the help of another culture (the animals). The act of asking the animals for help shows the shift in mind set that sometimes a culture must ask another for help. *Le singe Séraphin* talks about inequality between two different cultures. In this story, there is a monkey who helps humans. The humans take the monkey's help for granted, and when the monkey asks for help in return, they question why they have to help him. This teaches students that, a lot of the time, there is a culture who believes they are better than another. After reading all of this, it is clear why the French government chose to teach this text to teach their students about equality. The texts show students that no one is above another and that everyone is equal when it comes down to it.

Conclusion:

Inequality is the phenomenon of unequal distribution of opportunities and or resources between members of a society. There are many types of inequality, but the French government, specifically, focuses on informing students about cultural inequality, natural inequality, gender inequality and social inequality. The French government has used literature in schools to instill its republican core value of equality from the start of free public education in France. During this time, France was trying to create a centralized French identity. To teach and engrain France's unified identity, the Minister of Public Instruction, Jules Ferry, created several laws- known as the Jules Ferry Laws- to do so. Fast forward to today and France recently passed another law to counter separatism. This law has created several changes in the French curriculum which now includes works which talk about these issues and, again, work to unify French society.

Cultural inequality refers to a difference in treatment among different groups' practices and beliefs. The French government chose to show the idea of cultural inequality in *La petite sirène* by Hans Christian Andersen and *le singe Séraphin* by Béatrice Tanaka. In these two tales, the main character is treated differently because of his or her culture. In *le singe Séraphin*, Séraphin makes trades with the humans in the human society. Séraphin trades goods for goods, but each human encountered does not hold his or her end of the trade until Séraphin says something. Séraphin points out the unfairness of them not holding up their end of the bargain thinking they will get away with not completing the transaction. In *La petite sirène*, the little mermaid, also, faces cultural inequality. When she goes above the sea to try and marry the prince, she faces the new world without a voice. Her lack of voice shows the cultural inequality because even though she looks the same as the rest of the world she had to give up her voice. This is similar to a tourist traveling to a foreign country without knowledge of the language. The

cultural inequality is that because of the cultural and language difference, the person is unable to have the same experiences from those around him or her. He or she is also looked at differently and sometimes treated differently like the little mermaid being thought of as unintelligent because of her inability to communicate.

Natural inequality refers to inequalities caused by differences in the environment around them. The French government chose to show the idea of natural inequality in *le singe Séraphin*. *Le singe Séraphin* the inequality here is that one character has what the other character needs because of the environment they live in. Séraphin has the board, the bag, and the soap the humans of the story need. The humans have access to what Séraphin needs. What the humans need has a less dire consequence if they do not get the item, but Séraphin needs food and company. Both food and company are necessities for Séraphin who gets sad with nothing around and who is hungry. The environment the humans are from have more people around compared to Séraphin's environment which has no one. The human environment also has access to food, while Séraphin is unable to get food and proper nourishment.

Gender inequality refers to inequality between males and females. The French government chose to teach this inequality by using *Sous la peau d'un homme* by Praline Gay-Para and *La tortue devin* by Béatrice Tanaka. In *Sous la peau d'un homme*, the young girl and the men of the story show gender inequality. The young girl faces many prejudices against her, but she continues to fight and prove the prejudices wrong. The women of the village in *la tortue devin* face inequalities the men of the village put into place. The women are not allowed to leave the village to help the men with their jobs, so one day they decide to leave. This causes the men to change their opinions and make the women equal in the society.

Social inequality refers to the inequality between people in a society because of unequal resources and opportunities. The French government chose to show this inequality in *The Little Match Girl* by Hans Christian Andersen. The little girl- the main character- must go out and make money for her family selling matches. In the end she sees inside a house at the end. She sees warmth, food, and a family; she has none of this. She sits on a cold street with no food and one shoe. This contradiction shows students the inequality between social classes. It brings students' attention to the hardships people with fewer things in life go through.

The French government recognizes the importance of identifying these types of inequalities. By informing their students of these types of inequality at a young age allows them in turn to recognize when something in society is unequal. If the citizens know something is unequal, they are more likely to go and work to correct the inequality which creates a unified French society.

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