

2006 PRE-CONVENTION CINEMA WORKSHOP

Prior to the AATF convention in Milwaukee, twenty-two French teachers representing diverse areas of the U.S. (from Oregon to Florida) and diverse institutions (private schools, public

schools, high schools, and universities) came together at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to participate in the week-long pre-convention workshop, "Enseigner le FLE avec des films français," led by Jean-Noël Rey. Since participants were lodged together in residence hall suites, camaraderie quickly developed among those in attendance.

The intensive daily schedule included two three-hour sessions, followed by a marathon evening viewing of the films to be discussed the next day. Meal times provided additional opportunities to continue discussions started in class and to network with colleagues to share best practices and common concerns. Over the course of five days, we worked with sequences from more than ten French films relating to the theme of childhood and adolescence to enhance our skills in "reading" a film. This method of analyzing a film is similar to using an *explication de texte* to analyze a literary passage.

Jean-Noël Rey, *Centre de Liaison de l'Enseignement et des Moyens d'Information (CLEMI)* at the French Ministry of Education, was a knowledgeable instructor, generously sharing his expertise and skillfully guiding the discussions for maximum insight into the film.

He began by discussing the difference between *l'histoire*, what the story is about, and *le récit*, how the story is told. As we worked with the films, we constantly kept in mind these three questions:

- What does the director want me to see?
- What does he want me to hear?
- What does he want me to know?

We also learned the terminology essential for analyzing film, such as the various types of shots, camera angles and camera movement and how they are used to produce different effects. We then "read" se-



lected sequences from the target films using these essential notions of film analysis. As was proved time and time again over the course of the workshop, a two-minute film sequence provides enough material for over an hour of class discussion. The following list includes ways of working with films which we practiced during the workshop and which could be used with students in the FLE classroom:

- turn off the sound and have students imagine the dialog;
- play the soundtrack without showing the images and have students imagine the visual universe (what do the characters look like, where are they?);
- analyze just the first minute of the film;
- have students use a storyboard to reconstruct the story of the film;
- stop the sequence before the end and have students predict what will happen;
- compare the first and last sequences of the film (i.e., the first and last sequence of *Les 400 coups*);
- have students imagine a different ending and discuss why the director chose the ending he did (i.e., the family accepts the girl at the end of *Jeux interdits*);
- do a shot by shot analysis of the film.

Other points of interest from Jean-Noël's lectures included an explanation of how a *documentaire d'auteur* (i.e., *Être et avoir*) is made and how a film moves through the production process in France, going from the original idea through the writing, financing, producing, editing, and distribution phases. Participants also learned about the important role that the *Centre national du Cinéma* (CNC) plays in supporting the French film industry. This is probably one of the reasons why France is the second pro-

ducer of films in the world after the U.S. and why film is considered an *objet d'art* rather than an *objet d'achat*.

Some of the other highlights of the workshop included a preview of Karen Sullivan's (Queens College, NY)

session on *Ressources humaines*, a visit from AATF President Margot Steinhart, as well as numerous visits from Larry Kuiper, UWM, who made sure everything was running smoothly. Larry was the consummate host, facilitating all of our requests (even arranging for us to have access to the multimedia room until 10:00 p.m. every night.).

During the workshop, I discovered some new films and rediscovered others that I had not seen in a while. Most importantly, I gained a deeper appreciation of all of them thanks to my newly learned skill of "reading" a film. Since the workshop, I find myself watching films with a new attentiveness to the techniques that the director has used to create his *récit*. As Elizabeth Ziffer (Oak Hall School, FL) explains: "Our eyes were opened on how to teach with film. Most of us were used to 'using' movies to show aspects of the target culture, or, we were accustomed to isolating notable expressions of sentence structure to reinforce vocabulary or grammar lessons from the textbook. Jean-Noël inspired me to go beyond—film is an art unto itself that needs to be understood and that can, with specific tools, be critiqued—even by informed novices such as newly trained teachers and our students!" I think that all of the participants would agree that the cinema workshop was a fabulous experience!

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Pictured: Row 1 (front L to R): Kristen Little, Mary Theis, Brenda Crosby, Ferna Fetterman, Maria Park Bobcroff, Beth Bertolotto, Leila Stewart Falt
Row 2 (L to R): Julie Ann Rose, Elizabeth Ziffer, Cathy Kendrigan, Jannette Bayles, Karen Sullivan, Elizabeth Caspari, Rikki Alrutz, Madeline Bishop, Larry Kuiper
Row 3 (back L to R): Christopher Johnson, Jean-Noël Rey, Mary Moermond, Barbara Englebert, Lisa Signori, Rosemary Clark, Cindy McNow.