

**A CONVERSATIONAL
FRENCH READER
FOR BEGINNERS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649036325

A Conversational French Reader for Beginners by Henry Bierman & Colman Dudley Frank

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ALLYN AND BACON

Boston

New York

Chicago

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HENRY BERMAN AND
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Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

Stacks
Gift
John R. Effinger
and
Margaret E. Hayward
6-26-1933

PREFACE

THIS book is based on long classroom experience and on a careful study of student psychology. Both reveal the fact that the pupil does best what he likes best to do; the material of this Conversational Reader, therefore, has been chosen primarily to interest and entertain. The stories are of the twentieth century, up-to-the-minute in interest, and told in the tongue of the French people of to-day.

The short story has been chosen in preference to the longer text because it forms one coherent unit of expression for a single day's lesson. It makes the pupil thrill with the joy of accomplishment, for he can reach the point of the story. The subjects treated are of the home, the streets, the daily life, incidents near to the pupil's environment and well within his ken.

The book embodies the best features of direct methods as applied with the greatest success in our American schools. Each anecdote is provided (1) with a questionnaire in French, so built as to encourage the maximum of conversational drill; (2) with English sentences to be translated into French in order to secure accuracy in writing and speaking; and (3) with drill on interesting and frequently recurring forms. Thus the combination of the short tale for reading, of the questions and answers for aural and oral training, and of the sentences

and grammar drill for visual training, forms one connected assignment for a single day's lesson.

The material has been carefully graded. Difficult grammatical constructions and infrequent idioms have been eliminated and the language of the book made simple and practical, so that it may aid in furthering conversational fluency. The tenses have been introduced gradually and progressively. Throughout the first thirty exercises the Present tense alone is used and plenty of drill upon it is provided. The Past Indefinite is next introduced, then the Imperfect, the Future, and the Conditional. The Past Definite, little used in conversation, is relegated to the last half of the book, and the Subjunctive tenses occur only in the later pages.

In the *Pratiques de Grammaire* will be found a variety of suggestions for effective treatment of the material. The devices suggested under one lesson may be successfully carried over to other lessons. All tend to encourage the pupil to find his models in the text itself and to accompany the spoken word by the action.

Dramatizing the story has been frequently emphasized, because the child of high school age has an innate love for acting. There is no better way of making him interested in his work and proud of it than by utilizing this talent. These stories lend themselves admirably to this end in humor of anecdote, in terseness of dialogue, in simplicity of scene. This use of dramatization bears out the basic plan of the book, namely, to throw the linguistic burden upon the pupil, for the teacher must remember that a teacher who is always telling is not always a telling teacher.

In putting the emphasis on the spoken word it is by no means intended that written work should be neglected. In learning a modern language the ear should precede the eye, but the eye must reinforce the ear. Most people have visual memories; they remember what they have seen; hence, it is urged that all *Traductions* and most of the *Pratiques de Grammaire* be done in writing.

Special attention is called to certain features of the book which are calculated to increase the efficiency of the recitation.

1. An unusually complete list of classroom expressions precedes the reading matter, so that from the beginning work may be conducted in French.

2. The first four reading lessons are built entirely upon cognates, so that reading may be begun at the very outset of the first term.

3. As an aid to pronunciation, throughout the first twenty exercises, liaison has been marked by a sign \cup ; final pronounced consonants are printed in heavy type; and nasal sounds have been indicated by italic *n* or *m*.

4. The notes, few in number, are placed upon the very page where the reference occurs, so that even the laziest and most indifferent pupil cannot avoid reading them.

5. The regular verbs are arranged in four parallel columns in order to facilitate comparison and the study of terminations.

6. The more common irregular verbs are arranged in a newly planned list according to the derivation of the tenses. In the vocabulary these verbs bear a reference number corresponding to their place in the list.

7. The rules and nomenclature are given both in French

and in English, so that either may be used in the classroom and each may help the learning of the other.

8. There is frequent repetition of words, and while the vocabulary of the book is slight in quantity, it is eminently valuable for practical purposes.

9. There have been inserted a variety of jingles, proverbs, verses, and happy anecdotes, intended for memory work. The fourteen-year-old will find them easy to learn and worth his while, as they give him a standard of pronunciation and a vocabulary.

Typographically, the book has been prepared with care — that it might not be merely a dull, cheerless textbook. It is the hope of the authors that in form and in content it may radiate something of that delicacy of technique and artistic touch which are characteristically Gallic.

In expressing the customary thanks for favors shown, the authors make acknowledgment to their colleagues — both in the DeWitt Clinton High School and out of it — who helped in the task of marshaling the material; also to Messrs. Merrill and Company, New York City, for the right to reprint some of the stories. Especially the authors' gratitude goes out to a happy and joyous world which has preserved these anecdotes to us by word of mouth and printed page, — a heritage of gayety for the youth of all time.

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COLMAN DUDLEY FRANK.

DEWITT CLINTON HIGH SCHOOL,
NEW YORK CITY,
September, 1915.

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