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HVL LESSON TITLE:

THE LIBERATION OF FRANCE: A FRENCH LESSON

DEVELOPED BY: ERIN COGGINS

THE LIBERATION OF FRANCE

GUIDING QUESTION:

**How would the French describe
the Liberation of France?**

OVERVIEW:

When Paris was liberated from the Nazis on August 25, 1944, citizens filled the streets to welcome Allied troops and to celebrate their freedom after four years of occupation. This lesson will allow students to use their French language skills to describe what it might have been like to be present in Paris on that glorious day.



SUBJECT(S):
French



WWII Veteran:
George Mills



DURATION:
60 minutes

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“When we liberated Paris-the Champs Elysees Boulevard-it’s a big, wide street-that’s where they wanted to have the parade, and have the viewing stands for officers. And we marched 24 abreast from the Arc de Triomphe to the Notre Dame church.”

WWII Veteran George Mills

OVERVIEW:

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

In June 1940, the Germans marched openly into the City of Light taking it hostage for the next four years. During the occupation, French citizens were prisoners to Hitler’s regime.

When the liberation of France began on June 4, 1944, the citizens of Paris waited in hope for the liberation of the city. Although Hitler ordered that the city be destroyed on retreat of the German forces, German commander Dietrich von Choltitz defied those orders.

OBJECTIVES:

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to

- Understand the importance of the Liberation of France.
- Read a primary source for historical information.
- Utilize French vocabulary and writing skills to construct a paragraph.

STANDARDS:

Present information on a wide variety of both familiar and new topics using varied vocabulary and

more complex sentence structure in various time frames and moods.

- a. Present information about personal and social events, experiences, and activities.
- b. Present information on a topic studied or researched.
- c. Present points of view and provide reasons to support them.

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MATERIALS & DOCUMENTS

[Memoirs of WWII: George Mills Video](#)

Liberating France by Ernie Pyle (Doc A)

Saying it in French Worksheet (Doc B)

Teacher Key (Doc C).

PROCEDURES

ACTIVITY 01

- Inform students that they will watch [Memoirs of WWII Veteran George Mills video](#).
- Instruct students to write down the descriptive words Mills uses to describe his experiences.

ACTIVITY 02

- Distribute “Liberating France” by Ernie Pyle. Instruct students to read to themselves or follow along as you play the audio clip.
NOTE: See link on Doc A.
- As students read or follow along, instruct them to underline descriptive words and phrases.
- Discuss how the descriptive words and phrases contribute to creating a vivid picture of that day in 1944.

ACTIVITY 03

- Distribute Worksheet (Doc B). **NOTE:** Teachers can determine how they want to proceed with the worksheet: complete it together as a class, individual completion, etc.
- Before instructing students to complete the writing task, you may go over the answers to the worksheet.
- Read the directions to the writing task aloud. Instruct students to complete the writing task.

THE LIBERATION OF PARIS

ERNIE PYLE COLUMN

DOC A



Liberating the City of Light by Ernie Pyle

<https://erniepyle.iu.edu/wartime-columns/city-of-light.html>

PARIS, August 28, 1944 – I had thought that for me there could never again be any elation in war. But I had reckoned without the liberation of Paris – I had reckoned without remembering that I might be a part of this richly historic day.

We are in Paris – on the first day – one of the great days of all time. This is being written, as other correspondents are writing their pieces, under an emotional tension, a pent-up semi-delirium.

Our approach to Paris was hectic. We had waited for three days in a nearby town while hourly our reports on what was going on in Paris changed and contradicted themselves. Of a morning it would look as though we were about to break through the German ring around Paris and come to the aid of the brave French Forces of the Interior who were holding parts of the city. By afternoon it would seem the enemy had reinforced until another Stalingrad was developing. We could not bear to think of the destruction of Paris, and yet at times it seemed desperately inevitable.

That was the situation this morning when we left Rambouillet and decided to feel our way timidly toward the very outskirts of Paris. And then, when we were within about eight miles, rumors began to circulate that the French 2nd Armored Division was in the city. We argued for half an hour at a cross-roads with a French captain who was holding us up, and finally he freed us and waved us on.

For fifteen minutes we drove through a flat gardenlike country under a magnificent bright sun and amidst greenery, with distant banks of smoke pillaring the horizon ahead and to our left. And then we came gradually into the suburbs, and soon into Paris itself and a pandemonium of surely the greatest mass joy that has ever happened.

*

The streets were lined as by Fourth of July parade crowds at home, only this crowd was almost hysterical. The streets of Paris are very wide, and they were packed on each side. The women were all brightly dressed in white or red blouses and colorful peasant skirts, with flowers in their hair and big flashy earrings. Everybody was throwing flowers, and even serpentine.

As our jeep eased through the crowds, thousands of people crowded up, leaving only a narrow corridor, and frantic men, women and children grabbed us and kissed us and shook our hands and beat on our shoulders and slapped our backs and shouted their joy as we passed.

I was in a jeep with Henry Gorrell of the United Press, Capt. Carl Pergler of Washington, D.C., and Corp. Alexander Belon of Amherst, Massachusetts. We all got kissed until we were literally red in face, and I must say we enjoyed it.

Once when the jeep was simply swamped in human traffic and had to stop, we were swarmed over and hugged and kissed and torn at. Everybody, even beautiful girls, insisted on kissing you on both cheeks. Somehow I got started kissing babies that were held up by their parents, and for a while I looked like a baby-kissing politician going down the street. The fact that I hadn't shaved for days, and was gray-bearded as well as bald-headed, made no difference. Once when we came to a stop, some Frenchman told us there were still snipers shooting, so we put our steel helmets back on.

The people certainly looked well fed and well dressed. The streets were lined with green trees and modern buildings. All the stores were closed in holiday. Bicycles were so thick I have an idea there have been plenty of accidents today, with tanks and jeeps overrunning the populace.

We entered Paris via Rue Aristide Briand and Rue d'Orléans. We were slightly apprehensive, but decided it was all right to keep going as long as there were crowds. But finally we were stymied by the people in the streets, and then above the din we heard some not-too-distant explosions – the Germans trying to destroy bridges across the Seine. And then the rattling of machine guns up the street, and that old battlefield whine of high-velocity shells just overhead. Some of us veterans ducked, but the Parisians just laughed and continued to carry on.

There came running over to our jeep a tall, thin, happy woman in a light brown dress, who spoke perfect American.

She was Mrs. Helen Cardon, who lived in Paris for twenty-one years and has not been home to America since 1935. Her husband is an officer in French Army headquarters and home now after two and a half years as a German prisoner. He was with her, in civilian clothes.

Mrs. Cardon has a sister, Mrs. George Swikart, of New York, and I can say here to her relatives in America that she is well and happy. Incidentally, her two children, Edgar and Peter, are the only two American children, she says, who have been in Paris throughout the entire war.

*

We entered Paris from due south and the Germans were still battling in the heart of the city along the Seine when we arrived, but they were doomed. There was a full French armored division in the city, plus American troops entering constantly.

The farthest we got in our first hour in Paris was near the Senate building, where some Germans were holed up and firing desperately. So we took a hotel room nearby and decided to write while the others fought. By the time you read this I'm sure Paris will once again be free for Frenchmen, and I'll be out all over town getting my bald head kissed. Of all the days of national joy I've ever witnessed this is the biggest.

THE LIBERATION OF FRANCE

WORKSHEET

DOC B



Objectif (Objective)

Write a descriptive paragraph in French about the end of the war in Paris (Liberation of Paris, 1944).
Use correct vocabulary, verb tenses, and descriptive details.

Partie 1 : Vocabulaire (Vocabulary Practice)

Match the French words with their English meanings.

La guerre → _____

La libération → _____

Les soldats → _____

La paix → _____

La ville → _____

Célébrer → _____

Les citoyens → _____

La victoire → _____

Word Bank:

- a. soldiers
- b. war
- c. victory
- d. peace
- e. city
- f. citizens
- g. liberation
- h. to celebrate

Partie 2 : Phrases Modèles (Model Sentences)

Translate the following sentences into French.

The war is ending.

→ _____

The people celebrate in the streets.

→ _____

The soldiers arrive in Paris.

→ _____

The city is free.

→ _____

Partie 3 : Pré-écriture (Pre-Writing)

Answer the questions in French using complete sentences.

Comment est l'atmosphère à Paris ? (joyeuse, triste, excitée, etc.)

→ _____

Que font les habitants de Paris ?

→ _____

Que font les soldats ?

→ _____

Quels sentiments ressentent les gens ?

→ _____

Partie 4 : Rédaction (Writing Task)

Prompt: Write a paragraph (5–8 sentences) in French describing the end of the war in Paris.

Include:

- What you see (people, soldiers, city)
- What people are doing
- Emotions and atmosphere
- At least 3 vocabulary words from Part 1

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TEACHER KEY

DOC C



Teacher Notes / Answer Key

Part 1 Answers:

1-b

2-g

3-a

4-d

5-e

6-h

7-f

8-c