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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2010 Volume III: Creating Lives: An Introduction to Biography

Voices of France: Understanding the Power of Individual Voice through Biography

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by Deborah Monroy

This unit gives a colorful twist to the study of French history and culture and is appropriate for intermediate- and advanced-level 11th and 12th grade students. Reading about famous figures has long been considered an interesting way to learn about a different culture and individuals who are prominent in that culture. In this unit, French students will study examples of graphic memoirs and biographies. They will divide into groups to read about the childhood of influential figures from French history and relate the figures to the periods in which they lived. Subsequently, the groups will write graphic biographies of the figures and present them to the class. In this way, a natural context is created for the use of written and oral French and the whole class can benefit from the knowledge amassed by each group. Students will see how pivotal moments change the courses of people's lives and how individual lives can become important voices in history. Finally, students will reflect on their own lives and the course that these may take.

(Developed for French IV, grades 11-12; recommended for Intermediate French IV-V, grades 11-12)

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