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**Valdman, Albert, Cathy Pons, and Mary Ellen Scullen. *Chez nous: Branché sur le monde francophone*. 3rd edition.**

**Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006. Includes text, Activities Manual, video, audio CDs, video, CD-ROM, Instructor's Resource Manual, Testing Program, and Audio CDs to accompany Testing Program. Companion Website: [www.prenhall.com/cheznous](http://www.prenhall.com/cheznous). ISBN: 0-13-192026-X.**

This attractive first-year program begins with a two-part *Leçon préliminaire*, followed by twelve *chapitres*, each subdivided into three lessons. The chapters are the-

matically organized and follow the same pattern. The preliminary chapter focuses on introductions and classroom expressions. Chapter 1 addresses the family, and includes dates, age, numbers, and various practice activities. Another chapter, titled *Méto, boulot, dodo*, addresses daily routine, telling time, and clothing. The final chapter includes the arts, music, and theater. Although the book is basically intended for traditional college students, it is appropriate for students of any age, really.

Each lesson begins with a dialogue or short passage, intended to illustrate the vocabulary and theme of the chapter. Usually very straightforward, it is not “authentic” material, and is somewhat artificial, although it does represent a limited real-life situation. *Sons et lettres* enables the student to assimilate the principal points of French phonetics. The grammar section titled *Formes et fonctions* explains the usages in English, with examples in French. They are followed by communicative exercises, some intended for paired work. They can be done orally, in class, or as written homework assignments. Reading, writing, and listening exercises follow. The readings are all authentic texts, some from literature, such as Jacques Prévert’s *Familiale*. Others are taken from newspapers, Websites, or travel brochures. The early lessons contain discussion questions in English; in subsequent chapters questions are in French. Most materials are well chosen, integrated into the chapter theme, and of interest to present-day students.

The text, the illustrations, and the video emphasize cultural diversity within the Francophone world. There are people from Québec, Morocco, Bénin, Congo, Madagascar, Haiti, Belgium, and different regions of France. Various races and age groups are also represented. Their cultures are reflected through their practices, artifacts, and perspectives.

The video, also available on the student CD-ROM, is new to the third edition. Each unit begins with *Observons*, clips of authentic cultural scenes integrated with the chapter theme. It continues with interviews of one or more key people representing various Francophone countries. The interviewees, mostly non-professionals, speak conversationally and informally with different accents. Although there is a wealth of material in their presentations, the student may have difficulty understanding them. Their articulation is not always clear, and their presentations are spontaneous and unscripted. Evidently this was done intentionally, to provide students with a wide range of native speakers. The cultural clips are not identified; thus the student may not recognize their significance, such as the old city in Québec or the monuments of Paris. The instructor will need to intervene throughout. The video manual and the textbook also help, providing exercises, and links to Websites with supplementary information. The video models diversity by choosing all types of places, rather than simply tourist attractions, so that one visits the fourteenth *arrondissement* in Paris, or the side streets in small villages. The script of the video is printed in the instructor’s edition of the text and the *Instructor’s Resource Manual*, with indications of standard French in places where the speakers use regional expressions.

The *Student Activities Manual* contains supplementary exercises for the text. It includes a workbook with written exercises, a Lab Manual, with oral components, and the Video Manual. The exercises are basically communicative in nature. They are not self-correcting, although an optional, separate answer key is

available. Without it, the instructor must check all the work. This can be a disadvantage for both student and instructor.

The audio CDs that accompany the text are clearly recorded and carefully enunciated. They correspond to sections of the text marked “audio.” They include the dialogue or passage at the beginning of the lesson, the phonetics section, a listening activity, *Écoutons*, not included in the text, which provides a completion exercise, as well as the vocabulary listed at the end of the chapter. Instructions are given in English in the earlier chapters, but gradually pass into French. The student can repeat the exercises as often as necessary.

The *Instructor's Resource Manual* contains suggestions for using the program, along with sample syllabi. *Chez nous* is designed for a two- or three-semester course, each semester consisting of fifteen weeks with 45 contact hours. The first option may be more ideal than practical. According to the authors, it is also suitable for an intensive course, that is, two fifteen-week semesters, with four meetings per week, and 60 contact hours per semester. The second option seems more realistic.

The *Instructor's Resource Manual* also gives numerous suggestions on integrating the National Standards, especially culture, comparisons, and connections, into the program. Since the text and illustrations are culturally oriented, it is almost impossible to miss these opportunities. The manual gives suggestions on making comparisons between American, French, and Francophone practices and perspectives, and between the grammar of English and French. Finally, various resources, answer keys, tape scripts, a number of lesson plans, and activities complete the Manual.

The *Testing Program* contains quizzes and exams for each unit, as well as comprehensive oral and written exams after Chapters 6 and 12, for two-semester courses, or 4, 8, and 12 for three-semester programs. Each quiz or exam has two formats, basically a reordering of the same material. The tests follow a similar pattern: listening comprehension, written exercises, culture questions, a reading based on an authentic text, and a *rédaction*. CDs are provided for the listening exercises. Although the material is clearly presented, the instructor most likely would have to interrupt the recording or replay it to give the students time to complete the exercises. The program contains an answer key and sample rubrics. The tests, while challenging, are comprehensive and address the four skills and the standards, as does the text.

A companion Website, [www.prenhall.com/cheznous](http://www.prenhall.com/cheznous), furnishes many useful links. For example, students can find written and oral practice exercises; and instructors can review sample syllabi, lesson plans, and Web links. The workbook and all supplementary materials are also available through *Onekey*, in collaboration with *Quia*. The exercises can be corrected and the marks recorded automatically. Students have the opportunity to repeat the exercises if necessary. This provides a decided advantage over the paper manual.

In comparison with other first-year college texts on the market, *Chez nous* provides a competitive alternative. It is especially useful to instructors seeking a culturally-oriented text attentive to diversity, one of the distinctive strengths of the program. The themes and sequencing of grammar topics are comprehensive

and typical for first-year texts. There are ample exercises for reinforcement, and the elements of the program are well coordinated. This text surely will enable students to attain the novice high oral proficiency level.

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