
Siskin, H. Jay, Ann Williams, and Thomas T. Field. *Débuts: An Introduction to French*. 2nd Edition.

New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2007. ISBN: 0-07-321910-X-0 (Instructor edition). Includes: interactive CD-ROM, Instructor's Manual, *Le Chemin du retour* Instructional Version DVD (a 3-DVD set complete with onscreen activities), *Le Chemin du retour* Instructional Version four-pack videocassette, *Le Chemin du retour* Director's Cut DVD, *Le Chemin du retour* Director's Cut (French subtitled version), Film Script, Picture File, Adopter's Audio CD Program, Student Audio Program (Parts 1 and 2), Online Resources. For ordering information and assistance from a sales representative, contact McGraw-Hill World Languages at 1-800/338-3987 or www.mhhe.com/worldlanguages.

Textbook publishers and their marketing executives are always trying to find something unique and innovative to promote their books. This is especially true in the case of introductory language texts. What sets *Débuts* apart is the feature-length film *Le Chemin du retour*. Serving as the centerpiece of the program, *Le Chemin du retour* follows the story of Camille Leclair, a popular, attractive, and young French television journalist who is investigating her grandfather Antoine's hidden past: was he a Resistance fighter or a Nazi collaborator during World War II? Camille's search, which causes personal pain for her family and professional stress for her employers, takes her from Paris to the south of France and from

there to Morocco. *Débuts* is therefore especially appealing to the instructor seeking the seamless integration of recent French history in a beginning French language course.

Having successfully used *Débuts* with my beginning students, I am able to provide some student perspective here. First and foremost, students truly enjoyed the fact that the film was so visually pleasing. They were happy to discover that the film did not have a corny plot and weak acting. In fact, attendance in the language laboratory increased as students, intrigued by the film's plot, were impatient to find out how the plot unraveled. Thus, they would go to the language laboratory during their free time to watch the next episode of the film. Without a doubt, the publisher-provided film script facilitated individual student viewing of *Le Chemin du retour*.

Secondly, my students were motivated by the authentic cultural readings. A particular student favorite was the Chapitre 14 reading "Marraine de Guerre: Correspondance d'un matelot corse à une jeune Canadienne pendant la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale," which presented the myriad of Francophone connections during World War II. Also popular with students was the presentation of the song "Mon amant de Saint-Jean," in Chapitre 12. I was often impressed by the number of students who, on their own, would search for the song online and download different versions onto their I-pods to share with the class. Indeed, the authentic cultural readings inspired my students to move beyond their textbook and to explore French language, culture, and history.

From an instructor's standpoint, the elements most appealing in *Débuts* are the Instructional Version of *Le Chemin du retour*, which comes with complete pre- and post-viewing onscreen activities (which are done by students outside of class and which sometimes mine found to be too easy), the Director's Cut *Le Chemin du retour* with French subtitles so that students simultaneously hear and read French (which I firmly believe tremendously enhances the language acquisition process), and the picture file, a collection of photo stills from the film that facilitates class discussion of the film's plot. Also fun to share with students are the film director's anecdotes found in the Instructor's Manual and which provide insight into the actual filming of *Le Chemin du retour*. For example, the dinner scene of Chapitre 10 ("Rendez-vous au restaurant") was done in the wee hours of the morning so as to eliminate background noise. As a result, the window shades had to be drawn so that the early morning sunshine did not appear on screen.

Débuts comprises twenty-two chapters plus a preliminary chapter and an epilogue chapter. For a class that meets three days per week, it can easily be used over the course of three semesters, or, as I did, over four semesters, since I supplemented the cultural readings with my own authentic materials from the World War II era and on the other Francophone regions of the world. Having used the first edition of *Débuts*, I am happy to see that the authors listened to instructor feedback on the grammar sections and adjusted the activities so that there is a more gradual transition from the beginning activities to the more challenging ones. In addition, more care is given in the second edition to the explanations of how to correctly use the *passé composé* and *imparfait*. Overall, *Débuts* is an effective and satisfying introductory French program.

Eileen M. Angelini, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Foreign Languages
Canisius College
Buffalo, NY

Publisher's Response

McGraw-Hill is delighted to have the opportunity to respond to Professor Angelini's favorable review of the second edition of *Débuts*, which she describes as "an effective and satisfying introductory French program." Based on the feature-length film *Le Chemin du retour*, *Débuts* is an innovative program that provides a balanced, four-skills introduction to French language and culture in the rich context of film.

In her review, Professor Angelini has made numerous complimentary remarks about her experience using *Débuts* with her students. It is gratifying to learn that her students are engaged and motivated by the story of *Le Chemin*, as evidenced by increased attendance in the language laboratory. In addition, Professor Angelini has highlighted some of her students' favorite authentic cultural readings in *Débuts*, which are excellent examples of how these can be used as a point of departure for cultural exploration beyond the text and the film. Of additional note are Professor Angelini's favorable comments about changes to the second edition. As someone who used *Débuts* in its first edition, she is well qualified to observe and comment on changes appearing in the second edition. Finally, Professor Angelini has detailed a few of her favorite components from the wealth of print and media assets available with *Débuts*. It is a pleasure to see these components acknowledged here.

McGraw-Hill World Languages is committed to publishing high quality foreign language print and digital materials, and we are proud to include *Débuts* and its ancillary program among our many titles. We again thank Professor Angelini for sharing her review of *Débuts* with the readership of *The NECTFL Review*.

Katherine K. Crouch
Sponsoring Editor
McGraw-Hill