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**Stillman, David M. and Ronni L. Gordon.**  
***Reprise: A French Grammar Review Worktext.***  
**2nd edition.**

**New York: McGraw Hill, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-0-07-353541-8; ISBN-10: 0-07-353541-0. Pp.340.**

*Reprise* is a manual of workbook size (8 ½" x 11") comprising a comprehensive grammar review, a varied collection of exercises (*activités*) with an answer key for the practice of grammatical structures and vocabulary, appendices, a French-English glossary (including idiomatic expressions), and an index. This second college edition incorporates suggestions from teachers who used the first,

and is designed for use by intermediate to advanced learners as part of classroom instruction or self-study. The aptly titled “worktext” is visually clear and attractive but stark, with dark blue print and no photos or illustrations. The text is highly legible, with traditionally organized verb conjugation charts (*je/tu/il* in one column, *nous/vous/ils* in the other) and short, easy-to-read vocabulary lists.

The manual is comprehensive, straightforward, traditional in its approach and content. The grammar review consists of twenty-five chapters divided into five sections: Verbs (11 chapters); Nouns, Adjectives, Adverbs, Pronouns (7 chapters); Interrogatives and Negatives (4 chapters); Prepositions (1 chapter); and Subjunctive (2 chapters). Brief explanations of each grammar point are provided in English. The five appendices provide explanations and charts relating to accents, telling time, infinitives as complements to verbs, literary tenses (including the imperfect and pluperfect subjunctive and *passé antérieur*), spelling-changing verbs, irregular verbs, and verbs that take *être* in compound tenses.

Overall the text describes language in terms of grammatical structure and vocabulary. No reference is made to language functions (compliments, apologies, etc.). There are, however, several notes on politeness. In the section on interrogatives, for example, distinctions are drawn with respect to informal and formal speaking styles, and between written and spoken forms of language.

In terms of grammar presentation, explanations of verb tenses begin with formation and are followed by brief descriptions of usage. These explanations may give rise to more questions than they answer. For example, the pluperfect tense is said to express “a past action that occurred prior to another past action that is either mentioned in the same sentence or understood from the context” (96). In a sentence such as *On a dîné, puis on s’est couché* the action of eating dinner occurs prior to the action of going to bed and is mentioned in the same sentence. Why, then, the learner might ask, isn’t the verb *dîner* expressed in the pluperfect? The brevity and opacity of textbook grammar explanations of this kind are problematic, as classroom instructors well know. With respect to past tenses, *Reprise* also reprises a common feature of traditional textbook explanations: all examples of tense usage are sentence-level. There are no samples of extended text to demonstrate tense shifting in past narration.

On the other hand, *Reprise* interestingly offers a well thought-out explanation of the difference between the *futur proche* (said to convey the idea that an action will be carried out soon) and the simple future tense (said to lack the same focus on completion of an action).

By far the strongest component of the text is the variety of intelligent exercises offered in each chapter to help students practice grammar and vocabulary. Instructions for the exercises are given in French. Many exercises can be used in oral or written modes; most are geared toward production, rather than comprehension. The exercises on relative pronouns (Chapter 18) stand out in particular for the thorough and varied selection of transformations represented. Basic exercise types throughout the worktext include: contextualized fill-in-the-blank sentences (in which the whole exercise relates to a single context, e.g., *problèmes de bureau*); sentence construction using given elements; question-answer exercises; paragraphs with fill-in-the-blanks; translation; and oral activities. To the

authors' credit, the utterances represented in many exercises are fairly natural representations of conversational speech, as in the question/response model: "*Vous travaillez aujourd'hui? — Non. Mais j'ai travaillé hier*" to practice the *passé composé*.

For the *passé simple*, there are two production exercises. First, the student rewrites a short narrative, changing verbs in the *passé composé* to the *passé simple*; second, the student performs the opposite transformation, with a different narrative. Arguably, there is no need for a production exercise at all; most learners need to understand rather than produce the *passé simple*. A recognition exercise (read a short narrative, underline all verbs in the *passé simple*, identify the infinitive), followed by an exercise calling for changing the verbs to *passé composé*, would be preferable.

In sum, *Reprise* can best be used for self-study in advanced-level courses as a review of language forms, high frequency vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions. It is not strictly speaking an advanced grammar text, because it does not deal with nuanced use of tenses or complex syntax. I would not recommend it for the intermediate level, because the grammar explanations are too cursory, and too much is missing in the way of social and situational use of language.

The book excels, however, in its compendium of *activités*. This is a book I want to have on my shelf in order to provide students of many levels with interesting and intelligent supplementary exercises, according to their individual needs.

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## Publisher's Response

McGraw-Hill is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to Professor Knutson's review of the second edition of *Reprise*, which she describes as "comprehensive, straightforward, and traditional in its approach and content." In its second edition, *Reprise* is a comprehensive grammar review worktext, intended to be used either as a stand-alone text or in conjunction with a literary or cultural reader. *Reprise* is also useful as a grammar reference for French students at any level.

In her review, Professor Knutson provides a detailed summary of the contents and organization of *Reprise*, and she is correct in pointing out that *Reprise* focuses almost exclusively on grammar review. The text is designed in a workbook format to allow students to review concise grammar explanations before moving on to a wealth of exercises for self-paced practice. While Professor Knutson finds certain verb tense presentations to be less clear (such as the pluperfect), she expresses satisfaction with the "well thought-out" presentation of others, such as the difference between the *futur simple* and the *futur immédiat*. Professor Knutson also makes favorable comments about the "compendium of *activités*," which she calls "the strongest component of the text." It is gratifying to learn that she finds these exercises both "interesting" and "intelligent," and that she feels that this collection is an excellent resource for both students and instructors.

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

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