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**Barnett, Barbara P. and Eileen M. Angelini.**  
*La France Diviseé.*

**Videocassette and DVD — Carbondale, IL and Rosemont, PA:  
American Association of Teachers of French and the Agnes Irwin  
School Holocaust Project, 2001. Study Guide — Carbondale, IL and**

**Rosemont, PA: American Association of Teachers of French and the Agnes Irwin School Holocaust Project, 2002. Film Website: [www.francedivided.com](http://www.francedivided.com).**

*La France Diviséé (France Divided)* is a 36-minute documentary film in French with subtitles available in either French or English but which can also be viewed without subtitles. It is written, produced, and directed by Barbara P. Barnett and Eileen M. Angelini and was made possible primarily through a Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education to the American Association of Teachers of French.

The film explores the two ways France was divided during World War II — not only between the German-occupied zone in the north and the Maréchal Pétain-controlled “free” zone in the south, but also between those in France who collaborated with the Nazis and the Vichy government, or at the very least contributed to the hardships experienced by those Jews who remained in France, and those who helped the Jews, such as Righteous Gentiles and members of the Resistance.

The film is primarily composed of first-person oral testimonies of seven French citizens: four Holocaust survivors (one deportee who returned from a series of concentration camps and three children who were hidden in different parts of France), two historians, and a leader of the French Resistance. Each interviewee’s account of the period differs dramatically by virtue of his or her personal experiences and, thereby, paints a complex and compelling picture of French complicity and resistance during World War II.

Charles Baron’s parents were arrested in 1942, sent to the Drancy internment camp, and deported to Auschwitz. Baron was arrested two months later and spent three years in various German concentration camps. He has written articles, given lectures, accompanied groups to Auschwitz, reviewed books on television and radio, and received numerous medals from the French government, including the *Légion d’honneur*.

The theme of the film is the fate of Jewish children who lost most if not all of their family members, and were often left alone to fend for themselves, to be hidden, or to be sent to the countryside. Their experiences vary, presenting both positive and negative accounts of how they were treated by their fellow citizens because they were Jewish. Madeleine Gerber was on her own at age nine, following the deportation of her mother to Auschwitz. As a hidden child, she spent two painful years with a family of farmers who, according to Gerber, took her in for the money they received and then mistreated her. Constantly frightened, she received little food and frequent beatings. Janine Godkine was an adolescent when the Germans invaded France. Fearful that someone would detect her father’s accent, Janine and her family left Paris. They were hidden during the war by a courageous Catholic family in Châteauroux. Régine Barshak lived rather peacefully in Paris with her parents and younger brother until age 17 when the Germans arrived. She and her family were arrested in 1942 by the French police and taken to Drancy, but her mother convinced the authorities to release their French-born daughter. Régine and her brother spent the war years “in hiding” with a non-Jewish aunt in Alsace.

Serge Klarsfeld — president of *L'Association des Fils et Filles de Déportés Juifs de France* — is an historian, attorney, and author. He, along with his mother and sister, hid from the Gestapo in Nice in 1943; his father, however, was arrested and sent to his death at Auschwitz. Klarsfeld is one of the foremost historians of the fate of Jews in France during World War II and is the author of more than a dozen books, including *Le Mémorial de la Déportation des Juifs de France*. His and his wife Beate's efforts to find and pursue Nazi war criminals everywhere were the object of the TV motion picture *Nazi Hunter: The Beate Klarsfeld Story*. Gérard Bollon — historian, research assistant at the Collège du Chambon-sur-Lignon, and secretary of *La Société d'Histoire de la Montagne* — has written extensively on Protestant Resistance during World War II in the Cévennes region of Central France. According to Bollon, at least fifteen Protestant pastors were responsible for hiding Jews and opposing the Vichy government. Farmers in the area sheltered thousands of Jewish children during the war years and rarely spoke of their courageous deeds.

One of the strengths of the video is the fact that the interviewees include not only Holocaust survivors, but also one of the legendary figures of the French Resistance, Lucie Aubrac. In 1941, she helped create the underground newspaper *Libération* and spent the war years working tirelessly to defeat the Nazis and liberate France. She is a well-known author who has written extensively about the Resistance, including her memoirs *Ils Partiront dans l'Ivresse*, and is the subject of the motion picture *Lucie Aubrac*. She died in March 2007 near Paris at age 94.

The film concludes with brief excerpts from the actual footage of two historic public statements made by the French government and the Catholic Church. In 1995, President of the French Republic Jacques Chirac apologized for the role played by the French government in the deportation of Jews in France during World War II. In 1997, Bishop of Saint-Denis Olivier de Berranger apologized for the silence of the Catholic Church during the German occupation and asked the Jewish people for forgiveness.

Finally, brief biographical updates are provided on each of the interviewees, tracing their lives through the present.

The film was shown at the 13th annual New York Jewish Film Festival in 2004 and is available in both DVD and VHS format for \$25. An indispensable twenty-page study guide for teachers is sold separately for \$5 and includes an historical introduction by Princeton University professor David Bellos, as well as information about the interviewees, a chronology, a glossary, comprehension questions, class activities, and additional classroom resources. More pertinent information may be found at the film's official Website, at [www.francedivided.com](http://www.francedivided.com).

My reaction to the film is two-fold. On a pedagogical level, the video is especially good at addressing the Connections and Communities goal areas of the *ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* and is developmentally and language proficiency-level appropriate for high school and college/university French students at the intermediate through superior levels. The subject, however, is useful not only to learners of French but also to students of history and the social sciences. This video would broaden students' knowledge

and deepen their understanding of the Holocaust by educating them about the round-up, deportation, and overall fate of Jews in France during World War II, as seen through the eyes of the people who experienced these events first-hand. Thus, it would have been helpful if this truly interdisciplinary film were also available in an English language version. On a personal level, I was deeply touched by the first-hand accounts of the human tragedy that the interviewees, their families, and the Jewish people in general lived through during France's "dark years" of wartime occupation. The music that accompanies the film, composed by Murray Savar, is also moving and strikes an intimate chord to accompany this tragic period in French history.

As Barnett and Angelini point out: "the sensitive issue of the role that the French played in the deportation of Jewish French citizens and in resistance to the policies of the occupying forces continues to be discussed today, allowing this video to be not only a chronicle of past events, but a reflection of an on-going analysis of what actually happened in France during this period."

This timely, enriching, and powerful film not only is a significant contribution to the profession but also is a valuable educational resource that I would strongly encourage teachers to consider incorporating into their classes.

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### **Publisher's Response**

We would like to thank Dr. Elvira Sanatullova-Allison for her wonderful review of *La France Divisée*. She truly captures the importance of first-person testimonies in bringing to life this difficult period in French history and encouraging students to remember the courageous individuals who helped save men, women and children, as well as their country's honor. We hope that young people today will stand up against all forms of racism and discrimination and that this film will help them to understand how the actions of one can save many.

Teachers who wish to acquire this non-profit DVD may contact Barbara P. Barnett at [bbarnett@agnesirwin.org](mailto:bbarnett@agnesirwin.org) or the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) at [www.frenchteachers.org](http://www.frenchteachers.org). It is important to note that the DVD format of *La France Divisée* allows for three types of viewing: with English subtitles (perfect for introductory French courses or interdisciplinary courses taught in English); with French subtitles (ideal for intermediate to advanced French language courses where students' listening comprehension is enhanced by the ability to read the text simultaneously in French); and, with no subtitles (suitable for native and near-native speakers only).

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Authors, co-directors, and co-producers of *La France Divisée*