
Williams, Ann, Carmen Grace, and Christian Roche. *Bien vu, bien dit.*

New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008. ISBN: 0-07-289759-7. Includes: Textbook, Workbook/Laboratory Manual (printed and electronic), Audio CD Program (6 CDs), *Le chemin du retour* (film), instructional version (DVD or VHS) and director's cut version with or without French subtitles, Online Instructor's Manual and Testing Program, audioscript and filmscript, Online Learning Center (for both students and instructors) www.mhhe.com/bien-vubiendit.

French teachers are always keen on innovative methods of teaching language and culture. In recent years, the focus has been primarily on the communicative content-based method. While adopting this approach, *Bien vu, bien dit*, a new, intermediate-level textbook, goes much further not only by integrating a systematic practice of vocabulary and grammar, but also by incorporating an excellent feature-length film, *Le chemin du retour*. Written by three seasoned pedagogues who are authors of other successful French textbooks, this program is flexible and versatile. Because of the way it is designed, teachers can use it over two semesters or three quarters, at both the high school and college levels.

The textbook is divided into twelve chapters. After an introduction and a presentation of the film's cast of characters, each chapter forms a thematic unit focused on specific vocabulary used in the film. Themes studied include: *les études et la vie professionnelle, la famille, la sphère publique et privée, des activités pour s'amuser, des histoires personnelles et collectives, les voyages, la cuisine, la spécificité physique d'un pays, les sociétés plurielles, les technologies modernes et la communication*. Each chapter has a similar organizational structure, with several components: presentation and explanation of vocabulary, previewing activities, and two separate sections devoted to grammar, culture-in-images activities, cultural and literary texts followed by discussion questions, a final exercise *bors-champs* designed to help students get to know the film's characters better, a writing activity, and a multimedia activity. Each section is followed by numerous drills and exercises: fill-in-the-blank exercises, dialogues, pair work and group work conversational activities, etc. The authors have included a particularly rich variety of original and creative exercises to test and reinforce vocabulary. Students will not only learn new words and expressions, but also gain practice with synonyms, antonyms, *faux amis*, and word associations.

The film *Le chemin du retour* takes us on a series of cinematic adventures with the main character, Camille Leclair, who is looking for her grandfather's hidden past. Seeking to unravel this mystery, Camille travels to different places and meets people of different nationalities, ages, and professions. Through the young French journalist's quest, students get to know many facets of French and Francophone cultures, as well as important historical events in France. The film is divided into twelve episodes, approximately fifteen to twenty minutes in length. Each episode is correlated with a corresponding chapter of the textbook and includes a num-

ber of onscreen pre- and post-viewing activities. The section *Le mot du réalisateur*, at the end of each chapter, encourages students to analyze the cinematic techniques used in each episode. The rich lexical and functional context provided by the film is definitely one of the many strengths of *Bien vu, bien dit*.

Another remarkable aspect of this intermediate program is the presentation of Francophone cultures. The authors have integrated culture in both the film and the textbook. The film includes cultural information on France during the Second World War and introduces students to the Vichy government, the Resistance, and the Collaboration. The producers of the film have made sure to include French spoken with a variety of accents. One episode, for example, takes place in Casablanca, Morocco. Students are not only exposed to various aspects of Moroccan culture, such as the *thé à la menthe* tradition or *rai* music, but can also hear the distinct French accent characteristic of this Francophone country.

Although the program is geared towards the development and practice of communicative skills, I also was very impressed by its introduction and presentation of grammar. Unlike many other intermediate textbooks in which grammatical explanations are relegated to *l'arrière-plan*, or merely included in footnotes or appendices at the end of the book, *Bien vu, bien dit* presents students with concise, systematic, and cogent grammar explanations. The authors did a first-rate job of providing numerous, well thought-out exercises to practice various grammatical points, and then to use them in dialogues and conversations. From my own experience, minimizing the importance of grammar, especially at the intermediate level, simply does not work in the long run. Students may have adequate vocabulary resources, but if they are not able to form a correct sentence in the *passé composé* or lack the knowledge of the subjunctive, their spoken French will, at best, be substandard. *Bien vu, bien dit* proposes a balanced approach where grammar, writing, listening comprehension, culture, and literature are all given equal weight and effectively contribute to the development of speaking skills. Moreover, numerous annotations and marginal notes, such as *Notes culturelles*, *A noter*, and *Rappel* provide additional linguistic and cultural information. One *Rappel* in each chapter has a corresponding online activity in the Online Learning Center.

Overall, *Bien vu, bien dit* is a very solid and well-planned intermediate program. It will no doubt interest, motivate, and inspire French students. It will consequently contribute to increasing their interest in Francophone cultures and help them develop proficiency in intermediate French in all skill areas. By exploring the richness of French language and culture presented in this textbook and reinforced by a variety of onscreen activities, students will eventually gain confidence in their ability to understand authentic, spoken French. For these reasons, I would strongly recommend this textbook to any instructor interested in an excellent, up-to-date program. Last, but not least, I must note that the authors, the editors, and the publisher should be commended for a carefully and beautifully designed art deco layout and full-color images throughout the textbook.

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Publisher's Response

McGraw-Hill is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to Professor Dziejic's complimentary review of *Bien vu, bien dit*, a program which he describes as "excellent and up-to-date" as well as "flexible and versatile." Based on the feature-length film *Le Chemin du retour*, *Bien vu, bien dit* is designed to inspire and motivate students of intermediate French in what Professor Dziejic calls "the rich lexical and functional context provided by the film."

Professor Dziejic opens his review by describing the approach of *Bien vu, bien dit* as "innovative," not only for its communicative, content-based methodology, but also because it effectively integrates vocabulary and grammar practice with the film. He praises the text itself for its "rich variety" of vocabulary exercises, as well as the "concise, systematic, and cogent" presentations of grammar. He goes on to describe the engaging storyline of the film, which coordinates seamlessly with the text and provides strong coverage of Francophone cultures. In summary, he calls *Bien vu, bien dit* a "balanced approach" in that it provides ample skills practice as well as a wealth of cultural content.

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

Katherine K. Crouch
Sponsoring Editor, World Languages
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