

**INTEGRATING MUSIC TO THE FRENCH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASS**

by

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## **Abstract**

French as a second language teaching in British Columbia is increasingly focused on having students use the French language in authentic communication activities. Yet, having students learn new vocabulary and language structures still presents a challenge for teachers.

In view of this situation, this project presents some strategies for integrating music and language that have been developed to help French students learn and remember vocabulary and verbs, while respecting the principles of communicative language teaching. The project describes some activities that require active participation in order to make learning meaningful and more interesting.

The integration of music and singing has made the numerous repetitions that are required in learning a second language more interesting and fun. Music presents all the elements to make a lesson interesting to the students and develop their ability to memorize new language structures. Therefore, this project will explain how it is possible to mix some elements of old teaching methods, such as memorization, with some elements of communicative language teaching, such as student participation and exploration of songs and games in French. It also shows the

result of an in-class experiment done with some Grade 2/3 French students who participated in learning some new verbs through songs and who remembered the verbs accurately when they were tested.

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the years, an increasing number of French as a second language educators have adopted a communicative approach to language teaching.

Children enrolled in French as a second language programs benefit from an increasing use of authentic material such as newspapers and menus written in the target language. Their use has made the learning of a second language more interesting and more significant for children. Nonetheless, research indicates that despite the effort that has been made to improve the second language learning, the main obstacle to children's development in listening and reading is a lack of vocabulary (Nation, 1982). Surprisingly, it seems that very little has been done to help the students improve their vocabulary for a recent survey of the titles of articles published in a major second language journal for French teachers in Canada revealed not a single title relating to vocabulary teaching in the last ten years (Clipperton, 1994, P.741).

In order to improve the situation, teachers and researchers will have to begin to look into the question and develop some strategies that will help strengthen the vocabulary component of existing second language programs. Based on my experience as a French teacher, the methods that we develop to overcome this

problem must take into account the following constraints to be effective:

- teaching the French language basic elements such as the verbs, vocabulary,
- providing some cultural background information to give a more meaningful context to the learning experience,
- maintaining the children's interest in learning a second language, and
- taking into consideration the fact that the children do not have the opportunity to practice the language, the structures and vocabulary seen in class in their home environment.

Some of the problems that second language teachers face seem to be common mistakes. Over the years, I have been able to notice that the children from grade one to grade seven have some difficulties using the proper masculine or feminine article with some words, and the proper verb "to be" or "to have" in some sentences. Therefore it is important to find some teaching strategies which attempt to correct these common mistakes while providing the children with a good sense of the basic structures of the language.

As a French Immersion teacher, I have been in a position where I could list and analyze some of those mistakes. As a music specialist I have been able to develop some strategies that give

the children some tools to help them correct those mistakes through the integration of music and language arts.

Over the years, a large number of studies, books and articles have been published on subjects related to second language teaching. Many questions have been asked about the difficulty in learning certain words (Laufer, 1990) or the quality of language of the students or what kind of French should be taught (Mignault, 1992). Many articles have also been written on the way grammar should be taught and which grammar should be taught (Calve, 1994). It appears that there is still room for improvement in the area of vocabulary teaching in French as a second language. This project presents some strategies and possibilities in the integration of music and French language lessons. It is only a first step. "The pedagogical potential of music in foreign languages is enormous and has only begun to be realized" (Claerr and Cargan, 1984, p.16). Some further research in education remains to be done, on music integration in a second language class in the way that is described in this project.

So far the research on music focused mainly with children with learning disabilities and has been the domain of music therapy. For example, in 1975, a pilot program was launched in Massachusetts called "Music for Children With Reading Learning Disabilities". In evaluating the effect of music skill development on language reading skills, where the daily routine included some

memory song games, rhythm exercises, singing activities and sequencing drill, the teachers noted some improvement in the students auditory, motor, visual and social development (Moyer, 1976).

Some research has been done in the use of music to increase verbal response and improve expressive language abilities of preschool language delayed children (Hoskins, 1988) and have shown positive results in children's language learning. One can only speculate that integrating music in language lesson will have similar positive results among children without disabilities.

A number of articles and books on how to use music in teaching a foreign language have been written and many authors have suggested that music has value "as a motivational aid in teaching certain aspects of language arts" (Wright, 1977). They indicate that the special qualities and components of music add quality and bring variety in a lesson. They aid language development through rhythm, melody, harmony, dynamics, form and mood (McCarthy, 1985).

Music brings the variety that is needed in order to reach every child. Several learning styles are linked with the use of songs in vocabulary : the visual, because the children see the words in print, the auditory because they hear the words along with the music and the kinesic because many movements such as clapping their

hands and moving in rhythm to the music are involved in the activity (Weatherford, 1990).

In this project I will present some music activities such as using songs to help the children learn vocabulary, and games that involve the use of rhythm that have been developed, and successfully used in language arts classes. To a large extent, the project draws on my personal experience and presents some strategies and activities that were gradually developed over approximately seven years teaching in a French Immersion program. These activities can be integrated in both immersion and French as a second language classes.

The first chapter of this work presents a brief history of the teaching of a second language.

The second chapter describes a major problem that is found in teaching a second language, namely the lack of practice that is available to the children who are enrolled in those programs because the only time they can practice the language is in class. This chapter includes a description of a strategy I developed to respond to this problem in my class and the method I used with the students to help them learn new verbs, improve their spelling and increase their vocabulary.

The third chapter explains the music component of the curriculum and describes some of the music notions that should be

learned in order for students to be able to integrate music and language arts.

The fourth chapter focuses on activities experienced by grade two and three children who have improved their knowledge of some verbs through the integration of music and language arts.

The last chapter presents a variety of music activities that can be used by the general classroom teacher and explores the implications for the curriculum.



## Chapter I

### THE CONTEXT OF FSL TEACHING

Communicative language teaching has become very important in second language education in British Columbia. For example, in 1992, the province introduced the draft of a new curriculum for French as a second language (FSL), the FSL Curriculum and Assessment Framework (Ministry of Education, 1992). This document has as a main objective to encourage children to "experience the power of authentic interaction in French, thereby gaining insight into language and culture as dynamic, human phenomena" (Ministry of Education, 1992, p.15). The new curriculum draws on the communicative approach put forth in the National Core French Study (Leblanc, 1989). It supports a communicative experiential approach to teaching a second language that considers language as a tool for communication in diverse "real - life" situations.

Traditionally, the emphasis of second language lessons was put on mastering the linguistic code and learning to read (Stern,1992). This resulted in a situation where people who had been exposed to the language could read it quite well, but they could not speak a word of it. Eventually more emphasis, in second language teaching was put on oral communication.

As a result, sentences and a certain element of repetition of spoken vocabulary was emphasized to ensure that a minimum amount of vocabulary words was mastered so that students could engage in prepared conversation.

Recognizing that students have difficulty memorizing prepared conversations, particularly when the topics have no real significance in their lives, the communicative experiential approach favours engaging students in authentic discussions about issues directly relevant to them. Therefore the new curriculum encourages the use of themes that are more important to students, and of authentic resources to stimulate student interest. The aim is to increase motivation by having students use the language in genuine communication. At the same time, students will learn about the language forms as they use it for real purposes.

Nevertheless, memorization of some basic language structures and vocabulary continues to be a vital element of second language learning and teaching. The challenge for teachers is to find stimulating ways to introduce new language forms and encourage students to remember them. Throughout the year, teachers are always looking for some new ways to motivate their students while teaching French, they welcome innovative methods that allow students to memorize new structures in a painless way, while respecting the principles of a communicative curriculum.

One such method has been introducing music and songs in language teaching. This is not new though for it can be traced as far back as the Middle Ages. Students were introduced to a second language in what was called "song schools". "From that time the use of rhythm as an aid to teaching a second language has been recognized" (Karimer, 1984).

Over the years, a number of music - related techniques in teaching a second language have been developed such as suggestopedia, developed by Dr. Georgi Lozanov in Bulgaria. In this method, the teacher would read a text to the steady beat of Baroque music to the students. This contributed to helping them remember new vocabulary and it claimed to enhance retention and speed up memorization through visualization (Karimer, 1984).

Finding ways to enable students to memorize new words continues to present a challenge to second language teachers today regardless of changes in methods and curriculum.

### ***Integrating Music in Second Language Learning***

Second language teachers are expected to interest the students in a language that is in some measure imposed on them and to follow a curriculum where students are to learn a new language and engage in genuine communication. Teachers must aim at getting the students involved in their learning activities as much as possible, so that the elements that they are learning

become more meaningful to them and they develop a growing interest in the language.

As a French language teacher, I found that the key for successful teaching was variety. As a music specialist, I found that music was an excellent way to create the variety that I was looking for. The children could be directly involved in their learning, creatively developing and exploring many aspects of the language.

Using music in a French language class does not only mean learning songs that contain some new vocabulary. It also provides an interesting tool for a number of activities such as creative writing, doing pantomime, vocabulary building from the words of a favorite song, finding alphabetical order, finding words that are the most interesting, beautiful, scary, etc. from songs, finding mood words, singing nonsense word songs, writing lyrics for songs, writing letters to persons involved in music, exchanging cassette tapes with another school and making posters to advertise a concert or a show (Cardarelli, 1979). The number of activities is only limited by the teachers' imagination.

This master's project will explain the use of a variety of music activities, such as songs and rhythm, that have been organized with some grade two and three classes I taught between 1986 and 1994. The students had the chance to learn the basic musical skills,

then they were guided towards the application of these music elements into the practice of French.

## Chapter II

### A PROBLEM IN TEACHING A SECOND LANGUAGE

As I mentioned earlier, French teachers in British Columbia must take into account the fact that students do not have the opportunity to practice the language outside of the classroom, or at home. If those students heard and used the language more often outside of the classroom, a large part of the second language retention problem would be solved. Because the students do not use the new words often enough, they do not come easily when needed. Therefore, in order to help the students remember what they are learning in class, it is a good idea to plan some activities where the students will have the chance to repeat the new vocabulary a certain number of times. These activities must be carefully planned so that the students can still find them interesting and stimulating despite the repetitions. In my desire to stimulate students, I remembered my own experience as a student.

#### *Turning a Recitation into a Song*

In grade five, when repeating some sentences in order to memorize a lesson I discovered that the best way to memorize them was to repeat them with the rhythm of the words. Having started music lessons at age 5 was probably a good factor in making me aware of the use of rhythm. Therefore, I transferred my

music skills to my social studies lesson, and read the words as I would for a song, with the same rhythm at every repetition. At the end, I also added a simple melody. In other words, I was not only memorizing a social studies lesson, I was learning a new song. I had added a new dimension to the lesson, and by putting it into rhythm and creating a melody, I was learning in a very personal and active way.

From there, I managed to memorize the whole passage, without much problem, and consequently got an excellent mark on my test because I had learned the lesson by heart as a song (some of which I can still remember now.) I found a way to improve my memory, and felt good about it.

In fact, I was learning to use my memory in a different way, and I made learning fun. I later used this method in my teaching, using it as one of the strategies to help the students overcome their difficulties and make learning more fun.

### **Making Learning Fun**

There are many ways for teachers to make learning fun. School can become more interesting by adding a variety of activities. If it becomes synonymous with fun, children will more easily lend their attention and develop an interest in learning (Cardarelli, 1976).

In his article, Cardarelli explains:

"Music can help make school a happy place. That reason alone would justify it being an integrated part of our instructional day. But if we extend this and develop activities directly connected with the music to assist in the teaching of reading and the Language Arts, we capitalize the interest of youngsters and make learning a pleasant undertaking" (p.3).

### **Some Difficulties the Students Managed to Overcome**

In this chapter, I would like to present two obstacles that the students find difficult to overcome, and then I will explain the method that I used in the classroom, for each one of these problems. These problems are: learning spelling and learning verbs.

During spelling exercises a certain number of students have some difficulties remembering all the letters in a given word. One of the elements that makes it especially difficult for them is that some of the words contain sounds that are not included in their own language. For the English speakers some of these sounds could be "eu", "oi", or "on". There are often more than one way to spell these sounds when they are used in the plural or singular, for example: "une oie/ des oies" or "le pont/ les ponts".

The other difficulty is remembering conjugations, which are an important part of the language. To help the students remember the verbs, I made up a song for the ones that we use most often, "to be" (être), "to have" (avoir), and the verbs with an "ER" ending, such as aimer, donner, manger, danser, etc. (see appendix A ).



### **Rhythm and Spelling**

During the spelling exercises, I found that some students had great difficulty in remembering all the letters in a word. I decided to use rhythmic patterns according to the number of letters in the words. The first step was to write the word on the board and ask the students to say the word.

As a prerequisite for this exercise, it was important to teach some basic music notions, such as rhythm and beat, which is the object of chapter three.

For example, in the word "maison" (house), they would do:

ti-ti,ta, ti-ti,ta and say the letters accordingly: M-a, i, s-o, n.

Short-short-long/ short -short-long.

Then I asked the students to clap the letters in their hands, first while looking at the word, then without looking at the word. They were clapping out the rhythm of the words rather than spelling the letters. The fact that the students are not concerned, at this point with letters, makes the rhythm easier to remember. They were using the music notions that we learned during the music lesson. Then I asked one student to clap the rhythm and say the letters at the same time. This was done repeatedly to give many students the chance to do it. I finally erased the word and asked someone to spell it and clap at the same time. At the end of the lesson I asked

the students to write the word. Learning to spell became easier with this method.

After a couple of months, one student took over my role as teacher at the blackboard. That student was the teacher during the spelling lesson. He/ she was giving the instructions while I was walking in the classroom monitoring the other students' work. The students really looked forward to being the teacher for that period.

In a few weeks, the students' spelling had greatly improved in this class and I could see that when they were asked to spell a word, they would not hesitate to check the letters with the rhythm to see if they had all the letters.

### **Rhythm, Melody and Verbs**

In order to memorize verbs, a great deal of repetition must be done. I decided to write a melody for the conjugation that the students could sing every morning. The children are given the choice to sing solo or if they prefer, in groups of two, three, or four.

I use the following method for teaching a verb song:

I sing the "verb song" twice, to present it to the class, then I sing only the first line, and the students repeat the same line.

I sing lines one and two, the students repeat lines one and two. We do the same for the lines one, two, three, and so on until they know the whole song. There are usually eight lines for most of the verbs, unless I added some introductory sentences.

When the students know the song, we do some variations by asking a group of students to sing the singular form of the verb, and another group to sing the plural form. We could also have one child per line. This way it will take eight children to do the whole song, and if we want to do three repetitions, we will have 24 children involved in the singing of the song. By the end of the lesson they know the verb quite well. The fact that they were able to produce some sentences between each song has demonstrated that they know how to use the verb without the help of the song. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to observe a group of students throughout the year to see if indeed, they can use those verbs correctly all the time.

Later, with a triangle, a hand drum, cymbals, xylophones, or body percussion such as clapping hands, stamping feet, or snapping fingers, a simple accompaniment can be added. We sing the song to relax between two subjects in class, and before leaving the classroom at the end of the day. In a few weeks, the students are ready to sing their song to other classes, and teach verbs to other students.

At this level we sing the present tense only but the song approach can be successfully used in conjugation songs for all tenses.

## Chapter III

### THE MUSIC COMPONENT OF THE CURRICULUM

#### *Music and the "Generalist" Teacher*

As interesting as the use of music in a language arts class seems, one might wonder if primary teachers have the basic music knowledge to apply them to their French class. They are not necessarily music specialists, so they need to know some music elements to integrate music with language arts.

A simple example is the use of rhythm during spelling lesson. In order to be able to recognize the rhythm of the words as I mentioned earlier, one must have a knowledge of what rhythm is. To achieve this, French immersion teachers in British Columbia have the possibility to teach their own music in their class with the new Music Curriculum for French immersion teachers (*La musique au primaire*, 1991).

It has been designed for the "generalist" teacher who does not have a music background, but would like to learn enough basic music knowledge to teach it.

The content is the following:

- Expression - Making music.
- Creation - Composing and writing music.
- Appreciation - Responding to music.

### **Expression: Making Music**

In this part of the curriculum, playing and singing activities are performed in various ways. Students sing solo or in groups either reading or by heart. The children learn to keep the beat with a variety of instruments, or by body percussion. These activities, while developing the children's ability to make music with a group, also reinforce their motor skills.

Ten basic elements including: beat, rhythm, measure, pitch, melody, form, harmony, dynamics, and tempo are learned to help develop musical expression.

### **Creation: Composing and Writing Music**

Children like music and sounds. They easily make up songs. In a music class, they will explore sounds through a variety of mediums, but the most important one is their voice. They will learn to improvise songs or poems, and how to add verses to songs they know. They will also have the opportunity to improvise an answer to a musical phrase. By learning to choose the songs and the musical expression they want, the children will discover how the language of music functions. They will also discover how it can express emotions, ideas, events, and be used as a vehicle to promote culture.

### **Appreciation: Reacting to Music**

Despite its abstract nature, music is a powerful way of communication and expression that is common to all cultures. Our reaction to a variety of musical styles depends on our cultural background. Some children will associate music with real events, some others will let their imagination determine a meaning. Whatever the reaction, it is through musical experiences that children develop a keener sense of aesthetics that will allow them to form clear musical aesthetic judgments and to understand music in general.

In addition to learning music the students will also learn essential social and linguistic skills through singing.

In the British Columbia provincial music program some of the songs that are taught, are illustrated with pictures and can be used for the whole language approach by changing some words from the songs. (Appendix B).

### **Music to Help Develop Sound Awareness**

Among the numerous attributes ascribed to music, is its potential to develop and refine children's perceptive audition as well as to stimulate their sensitivity to new sounds. In order to achieve this, children must be exposed to music at an early age. In her book Quelques aspects de la méthode de Zoltán Kodály,

Erzsébet Szönyi mentions the importance for children to be exposed to music activities at an early age in order for the experience to be truly beneficial to the children. "Une véritable culture musicale doit commencer dès l'école maternelle; au lycée, il est déjà trop tard" (Szönyi ,1976,p.13).

This philosophy was developed by the Hungarian musician Zoltán Kodály, who lived from 1882 to 1967. He believed that between the ages of 6 and 16, children's musical experiences are decisive. As Szönyi explains, "Les expériences musicales décisives de la vie d'un enfant se situent entre 6 et 16 ans. C'est à cet âge qu'il est réceptif et fait preuve des plus grands dons" ( Szönyi , 1976, p.11).

When beginning at an early age to differentiate sounds, children will not only develop an ear for musical sounds, but also for spoken sounds. In the French language, there is a number of new sounds that are not found in English, such as "eu" and "on". A regular practice of auditory perception will contribute to their pronunciation accuracy and range.

## Some Basic Music Notions

### The Introduction of the Rhythmic Pattern

As mentioned in chapter two, the rhythm recognition activity is used to help students in the task of memorization of spelling words. I will explain the process that is involved in such an activity. The first step is the introduction of the simple formula that we will call: "TA"

1. The teacher draws four lines on the board and writes the word "TA" underneath each of them.

TA	TA	TA	TA

2. The teacher asks the students to clap once for each "TA" while repeating the words:

"TA TA TA TA".

3. The students are asked to clap once more, but with the words erased from the board.

4. A second rhythmic formula is introduced, where a new word is added: "TITI".

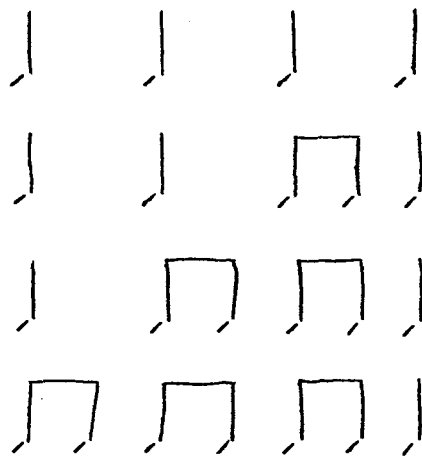
The teacher claps those rhythms and asks the students to repeat the clapped rhythms:

TA TA TITI TA



5. The teacher increases the variety of these two formulas in combination and asks the students to clap them.

When the students become familiar with those rhythms, the teacher can introduce the game of rhythmic recognition. The following set of rhythmic formulas will be written on the board.



1. The teacher asks the students to clap them all.
2. The teacher asks the students what they find remarkable about the sequence. (For example: The last vertical line has 4 ta's.)
3. The teacher erases the notes that are said to be remarkable by the students, and asks the students to clap the whole sequence, even the notes that have been erased.
4. The teacher again asks what are the notes that are remarkable, and erases the ones given by a student, until all the notes have been erased. At the end, the students must clap the entire

sequence by heart, and re-build the sequence, line by line, as it was at the beginning.

When the students become familiar with the use of the rhythmic words, they enjoy using them with French words during the spelling lessons, as shown earlier in the word "maison", or using them in various vocabulary building games as described in chapter 5.

Through this simple exercise, the students have learned to memorize a visual sequence. They have realized that a visual sequence was easier to remember as it became both auditory and physical.

### **Dynamics: Soft and Loud and Opposite Vocabulary Words**

Dynamics is the difference in volume that we perceive in music. Sounds are not always loud and they are not always soft. A balance between the two can add interest to a musical piece. There is also a reason why sounds can be soft or loud. For example, a composer will often indicate softness at the end of a piece. It shows that the music has come to a conclusion. The dynamic in music will sometimes indicate a certain mood. We tend to attribute soft music to a quiet mood, and loud music to excitement. All the

progression of sounds between soft and loud is also important to express a variety of feelings.

These elements will be used to explore the world of feelings with language and will be explained in chapter 5, but they can also be explored as opposite vocabulary words to help students understand the concept of opposite such as big/ small, fast/ slow, noise/ silence, etc.. This will help them building a list of opposite vocabulary words as the students find them in their own readings.

### **The Tempo: The Speed, Fast or Slow, can Determine the Mood**

A musical composition can be played at a variety of speeds and express something different each time. When applied to written or spoken language, we find that some themes can be developed using slow or fast tempo.

### **The Pitch Combined with Color and Timbre: A Variety of Sounds in a Sentence**

Pitch is the height of the sound. It can be high or low. It will bring interest during a reading exercise, especially in choral reading. First, the students will practice reading a paragraph individually. Then they will be asked to think of a sound, high or low, to use when they will all read the paragraph together.

The result is a wide range of voices that makes up a sound cluster. It adds a great interest to the passage. It is particularly interesting when reading a scary story around Halloween time. It could be done in turn, by groups of seven or eight, with a longer story.

## Chapter IV

### EXPERIENCE WITH A GRADE 2/3 CLASS

#### *The Verbs "être" and "avoir"*

The students that were chosen to do these activities are from a school in Coquitlam, B.C.. They were in a split grade two and three French immersion class. I chose a class that had not examined the verbs "to be" and "to have" in a formal manner. The verbs are on a chart on the wall but they had not studied them.

I arrived in the classroom and greeted the students. Their teacher had told them that a special guest would come that day to teach them a verb. The first step was to measure their knowledge of the verbs "avoir" and "être". I told them that I needed to know what they knew before we could start, so I handed them a piece of paper to write the verbs that they knew, either "être" or "avoir", or both if they felt they knew them.

The fact that they had never formally studied the verbs before made some students a bit uncomfortable, and they did not want to try. I made it very clear to them that it was not a test and I told them that it was all right to make mistakes. They decided to give it a try.

### **Introduction of the Verb "to Have"**

I asked the students to listen carefully to the song that I was going to sing them. They had to tell me if they recognized any of the words in the song.

When I had finished, some students told me that they recognized some of the words such as the conjugated form of the verb "avoir". (i.e. j'ai, tu as, il a, etc.) I taught them the song by repetition as explained in chapter 3, using the same sentence at the end. With the verb "avoir" it would look like this: J'ai un chat, tu as un chat, il/elle a un chat, nous avons un chat, vous avez un chat, ils /elles ont un chat. We would then change the ending by another word provided by a student. Instead of "un chat", it could be "une pomme". Later we would use a new word for each verb, such as "J'ai un chat, tu as une pomme, etc."

I divided the class in two groups. One group to sing the singular form and the second group to sing the plural form of the verb, and we exchanged parts. The singing activity took fifteen minutes. I returned to the class twice to practice the song with them within the month.

### **Introduction of the Verb "to BE"**

At the end of the month, when I went back to the class, I introduced the song with the verb "être". I used the same method to teach the song. We then had two songs, and spent about twenty minutes singing. The children were very happy and interested in singing the songs.

### **Verbs with ER Ending**

I used the same process for introducing the verbs with ER ending such as parler, marcher, donner.

The only difference being that we could mime the verbs as we sang them. For example while singing the verb sauter (to skip), we could skip, for the verb manger, (to eat), we were moving one arm as we would do when we eat, etc. The children were very actively involved and they enjoyed singing those songs. The students also used different actions according to the different subjects. For example when they said the first person: je marche, they were showing themselves, for the second person: tu marches, they were showing a person next to them, etc. We did not have a test on those verbs.

### **Students Self-Assessment**

When I returned to the class (June 14, 1994 ) I taped the song, so that the children could listen to their own voices.

To the original verb - song, we added some spoken parts. We sang the whole song with only the verb, "J'ai, tu as, il/elle a, etc., and three students were asked to contribute to the song by adding three sentences at the end of the song in which they use the first part of the verb: J'ai.

We had: "J'ai des amis", "J'ai un jouet", "J'ai soif" as a spoken part. Then we sang the whole song once more, and three other students were asked to contribute to the song by adding three sentences with the second part of the verb: tu as. And so on for each part of the verb. This way I could monitor their use of the verb in a sentence.

As I was taping the song, some students were using the wrong form of the verb "to be" which is very common in the French immersion classes. In the case of the verb "to be thirsty", we often hear: "je suis soif". This is, in fact, the exact translation of the English sentence "I am thirsty". The correct form is: "j'ai soif". When the student made that mistake, I quickly corrected him, and when we listened to the tape after, he could hear his sentence and correct it. The teacher kept the tape to practice with the students during the week.



### **Another Test and a Different Attitude**

The following week, I tested the students on both verbs to see if they had learned them and if they could write the verb corresponding to the right pronoun.

I gave them a work sheet (see appendix C) on which they had to write the verb to be or to have. They had to read it by themselves, and they had about twenty minutes to write down their answers. The students that I watched while they were doing the test, seemed to be singing the song in their head, and moving their lips repeating the words of the song as they went through the sentences on the paper. Also, I did not see any of the negative attitude that I saw the very first time. At this point, no one was afraid of failing a test, and they tried their best to write all the answers they could. Their attitude had changed drastically and looked more confident. After the test some students told me that they had cheated. When I asked them why, and how, they explained to me that they had been singing the songs while doing the test and that they found all the answers in the songs.

Effectively when I marked the tests, I noticed a great improvement in the way the students wrote the verbs. Some of them still made some mistakes in the use of the singular or the plural form. For example, I could read: il ont, instead of ils ont. This could mean that we still need to work on the sound "sont" as in "ils sont", and the

sound contained in "ils ont", which are rather close sounds. The children had memorized the verbs easily and were saying the conjugation without any difficulties after they had learned their songs.

### **Overall Results**

It was very interesting to discuss the lessons on the verbs with their teacher. She was impressed by the students ability to conjugate the verbs after spending such a short period of time repeating them. She also felt that they remained on task for a longer period of time with the integration of music to grammar. The students do not view the learning of verbs as something difficult but rather as something fun and they like singing the songs any time during the day, which is an excellent practice for them.

## Chapter V

### MUSIC ACTIVITIES FOR THE LANGUAGE CLASS

The lack of information and research on vocabulary exercises has led the teachers who feel that more time should be spent on the subject, to make up their own activities and try them until they feel that the method is right. My personal experience with music has resulted in the following exercises.

The following activities have been used many times in grade 2, 3, and 5, in French Immersion classes.

#### **Vocabulary-Building Games**

Activity : Practice and review the vocabulary of the things that we find in the classroom.

Materials : One card (2"/8"), one pencil or felt pen, one piece of paper (8.5/11), some pencil crayons and one paper clip for each student.

Procedure : With the help of the students, the teacher makes a list of the things that are found in the classroom and writes their names down on the board.

The students are asked to pick two words from the list, write one of them on each side of their card and illustrate one of their words on the piece of paper.

The students will be asked to sit on the floor to form a circle with their card in front of them in a way that the other students can see it. The card will be attached to the paper with the paper clip. The teacher asks for a volunteer to come up with a four-beat-rhythm such as clapping hands twice and tapping on their laps twice. This rhythm will be repeated all through the exercise.

The class will clap four beats of introduction and the teacher will say the opening sentence on a steady beat: "Les choses que l'on trouve dans la classe sont: ".

In turn all the students will say the word that is written on their card, and clap two beats between every word. (For example: les/ chaises/ X X, les cray/ons/ X X, etc.)

The first time around, some students will have some difficulties saying their word while keeping a steady beat. This exercise must be repeated two or three times or until the students become comfortable with the rhythms when their turn comes. When they are able to say their word without breaking the beat, they use their second word or choose somebody else's word.

Later the teacher will put all the pictures on a bulletin board, and will use the cards on which the words are written for a guessing and reading game. In this game, one student must pick a card,

reads it to the class, and asks another student to show the appropriate picture on the wall.

After a few weeks, the teacher will affix the pictures on a piece of construction paper, and staple them together to make a class book. A student will be chosen to make a cover picture with the title: Les choses que l'on trouve dans la classe

During the year the same activity will be repeated with various themes such as: The things that we find in our neighborhood, the things that we find in the house, the animals of the farm, etc. After a while the class will have many books that the students can read during their silent reading activity.

### **Developing Vocabulary Through Songs**

Teaching a song that contains some words that are related to the current theme studied in class is a good practice, but there is also a possibility to expand that vocabulary by exploring that song deeper and to search for other words that are related to those in the song. The class can begin by asking some questions on the form before exploring the content of the song.

The teacher chooses a story or a song. After a listening activity, or singing songs, some questions are asked about the song.

#### **The form:**

Description of the rhythm and the beat : Do we feel a steady beat? Is there a fast or slow rhythm? Can we find a rhythmic

pattern in the song? If yes, can we find some words that correspond to that same rhythm when we say them? Is the beat appropriate for this kind of song?

Description of the melody : What form does it take? Does it go up, down, or does it remain on the same note at times? Does it skip sometimes? Can we follow the melody with a movement of our hand in the air, as it goes up and down?

### **The content:**

Description of the words : Are there many new words? Do we know the meaning of them all? What theme do we find in the song? What are the words that are related to that theme? Can we think of some other words related to that theme that were not used in the song but that we have learned before?

Additional comments : Can we think of a different way to finish this song? Can we think of a different melody?

### **The Impossible Song**

Teach a special song with impossible situations in it. Ex: Monsieur Gribouille, Pot-pourri (see appendix D). Make a list of the impossible things that we find in the song. For example in Mr. Gribouille: "Son nez est en chocolat, ses cheveux sont une vadrouille," etc.

Make a class composition of an "Impossible Song".

### Song Writing

As a subject, the teacher might want to use either a theme that is being studied in class, such as the farm, transportation, family, dinosaurs, or a special event during the year such as Christmas, Remembrance Day, Easter, Thanksgiving or Halloween.

The teacher will read a story on the chosen theme. Then the students will make a list of the words found in the story that are related to the theme. They will make a second list of words that were not in the story but that are nonetheless related to the theme. The teacher will write these words on the board. The class will compose four lines, with a rhyme at the end of each line to form the chorus of the song. For example, in a song about the farm, the four lines could be:

- A: A la ferme je vais aller,
- A: Je jouerai toute la journée,
- B: Je verrai des animaux,
- B: Des moutons et des chevaux.

The students will practice reading the paragraph until they feel comfortable enough to add a melody according to the rhythm of the words. The melody could be a combination of sounds that go up, down, or stay on the same note. The teacher will tape the examples as they are given, to be able to remember them

after. At the end the students will choose the melody that they want to save on the cassette.

The finished song will have the following structure:

A: Chorus: Sang twice by the whole class.

B: Verse: Five words taken from the theme list on the board, read by 5 or 6 students.

A: Chorus: Sang twice by the whole class.

C: Verse: Five different words taken from the theme list on the board, read by 5 or 6 students.

A: Chorus: Sang twice by the whole class.

D: Verse: Five different words taken from the theme list on the board, read by 5 or 6 students.

A simple accompaniment could be added to the song, and the students could present it to another class.

**Using soft/loud, high/low, slow/fast, in a reading ;A Variety of Musical Elements in Language Arts**

Activity : The students will choose a short poem. In groups of four or five they will make a list of the words in the poem that show certain feelings such as happiness, sadness, surprise and will discuss the tone of voice and the mood that would be appropriate when reading it. Some examples are : Should it be soft or loud? Is there a part that should be read very slowly or very fast? What pitch should be used?



Five students will read one part of the poem (or all of it) on five different pitches.

They will practice the reading of the poem with the mood that was chosen and that they feel would add some interest to it. They might want to add body percussion, or other kinds of accompaniment to perform it in front of the class.

After the performance, a class discussion could take place in order to practice some of the sentences for commenting on the work. A list of the sentences could be written on the board to facilitate the work. Here are some examples: "C'était très intéressant, la meilleure partie était..., j'ai aimé..., vous avez bien réussi..., les voix étaient (fortes, douces, trop fortes, trop basses.)

In order to do this activity, it is important that the students understand the concept of high and low sounds. This should be reviewed to review that concept before starting this activity by giving some examples of high and low sounds.

One student will use a xylophone to play a note requested by another student in the class. They will then take turns playing on the instrument. One student will ask: "Joue-moi une note aiguë" or "Joue-moi une note grave" and the other student will play that note.

## CONCLUSION

As mentioned in this paper, there are many ways to make learning fun and stimulate student participation. The strategies that have been explained in this project are just a beginning and teachers will realize that more new ideas come easily with practice. Language is certainly not the only subject to which music can be integrated. It would also be appropriate in a social studies class or in an art class where the students would see the parallel in the development of musical form through the ages compared to the styles that have evolved in the arts in the same period of time.

As we begin using music in our language classes, we quickly find that the students respond with enthusiasm and before long many new ideas come from the students. To them learning becomes synonymous with fun. As they learn to manipulate rhythm, melody and words, they develop skills to make up new songs with the vocabulary words. After a while, it becomes easier to use those words in a sentence.

Once they develop the ability to put a regular rhythm to the words, students are not afraid to get involved in activities that requires their participation such as spelling lessons.

During this activity, one student is given the opportunity to play the teacher's role by writing the new vocabulary words on the board and asking the students in the class to spell them on a steady beat. Because of the nature of the task in which they feel they are in charge, students enjoy taking turns in playing the teacher's role and writing the spelling words on the board. When one student is on the board teaching the

rhythm of a new word, the (real) teacher can more easily supervise the other students individually by going from desk to desk.

As they are writing the words, those students can get some positive reinforcement from the teacher through comments on their handwriting, spelling, tidiness of their work, the way they sit to do their work or the way they listen as their peer says the new word. This creates a positive atmosphere in the classroom and the students can improve their work habits.

The students realize that the elements of melody, rhythm, and beat support each other as the year goes by. From one word repeated rhythmically, they make up a sentence. From that sentence, they build up a song. Finally that song becomes a part of their learning activities that they can share with others.

The students involvement in all these activities translates into a willingness to be included in the decision-making process at the class level and is an excellent sign that education is reaching everyone. At the social level it also teaches the students to try new ideas that come from their peers and to develop a positive idea while learning to accept others.

## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**SONGS LIST**

***La chanson du verbe avoir***

1st version: J'ai (un chat), tu as (un chat), il/elle a (un chat), nous avons (un chat), vous avez (un chat), ils/elles ont (un chat).

2nd version: J'ai, tu as, il a, elle a, nous avons, vous avez, ils ont, elles ont, XX (clapping hands twice).

***La chanson du verbe être***

1st version: Je suis (à l'école), tu es (à l'école), il/elle est (à l'école), nous sommes (à l'école), vous êtes (à l'école), ils/elles sont (à l'école).

Je suis, tu es, il est, elle est, nous sommes, vous êtes, ils/elles sont,

Je connais bien cette chanson, c'est la conjugaison, c'est la conjugaison.

***La chanson des verbes en ER: sauter***

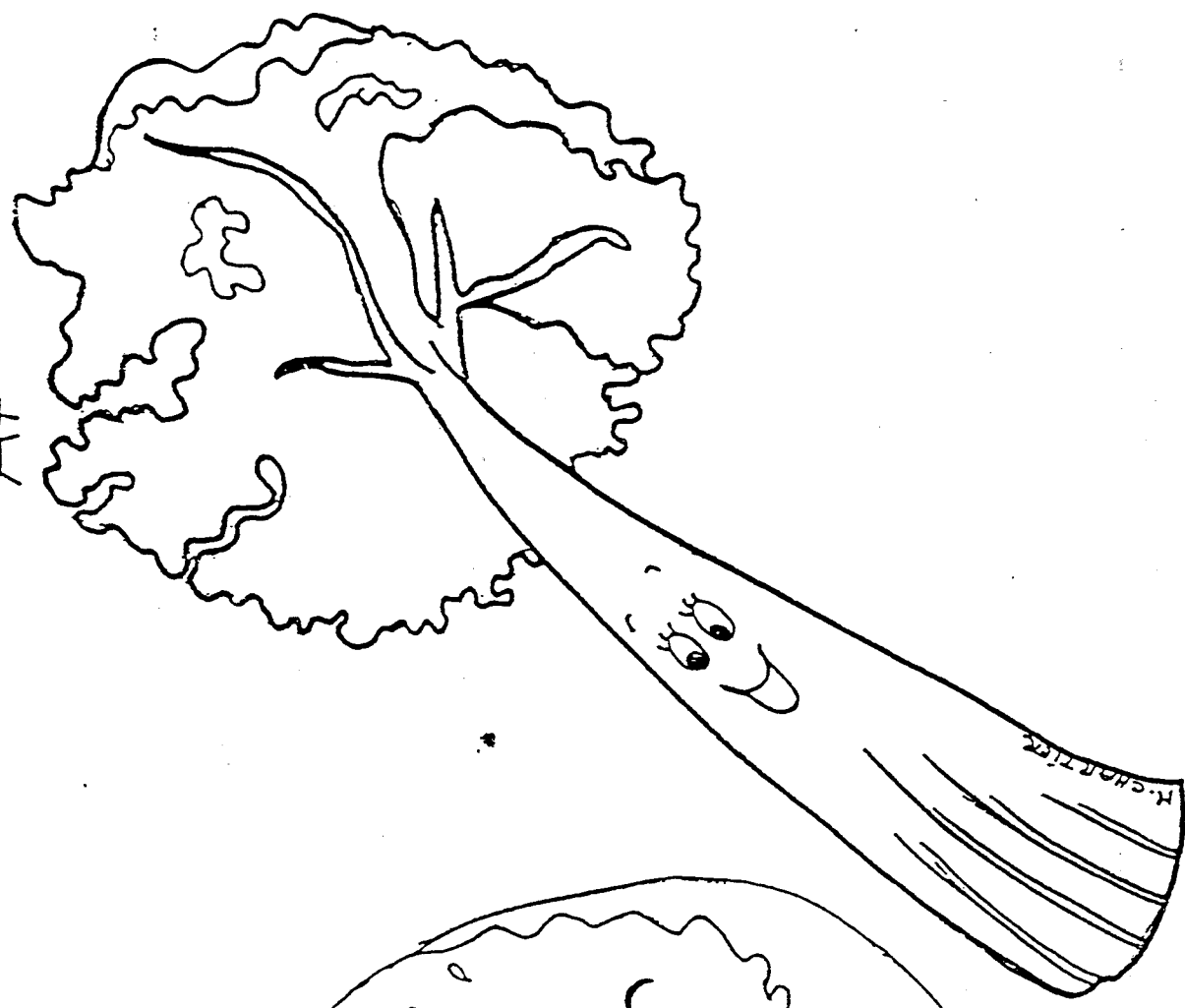
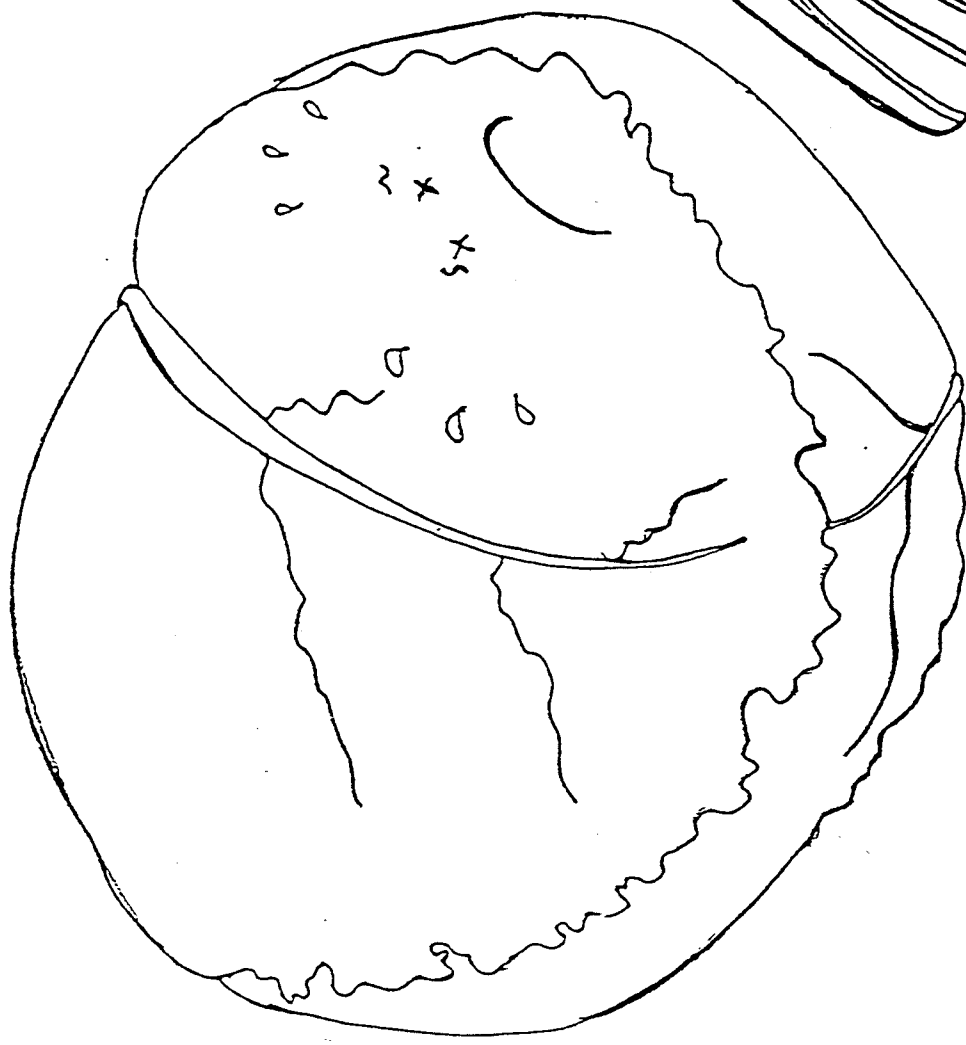
Je saute, tu sautes, il saute, elle saute,

Nous sautons, vous sautez, ils sautent, elles sautent.

**APPENDIX B**  
**WHOLE LANGUAGE EXERCISES AND PICTURES**

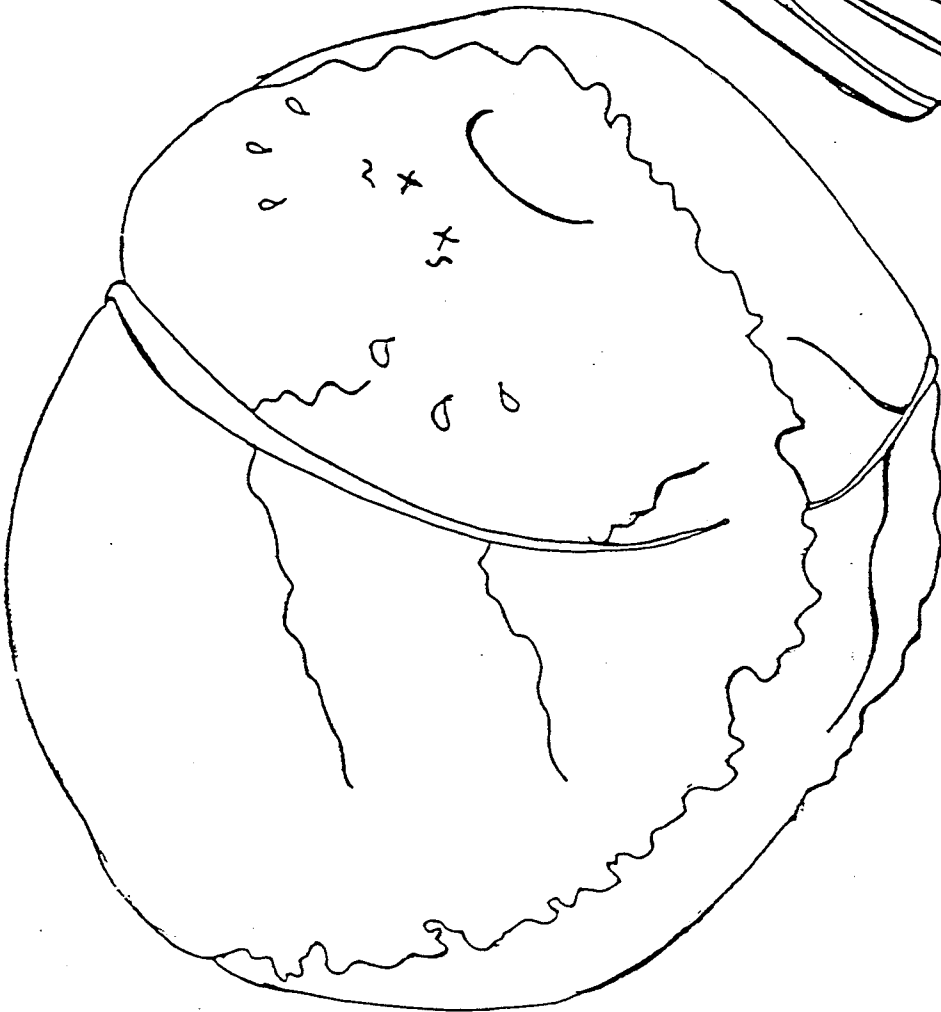
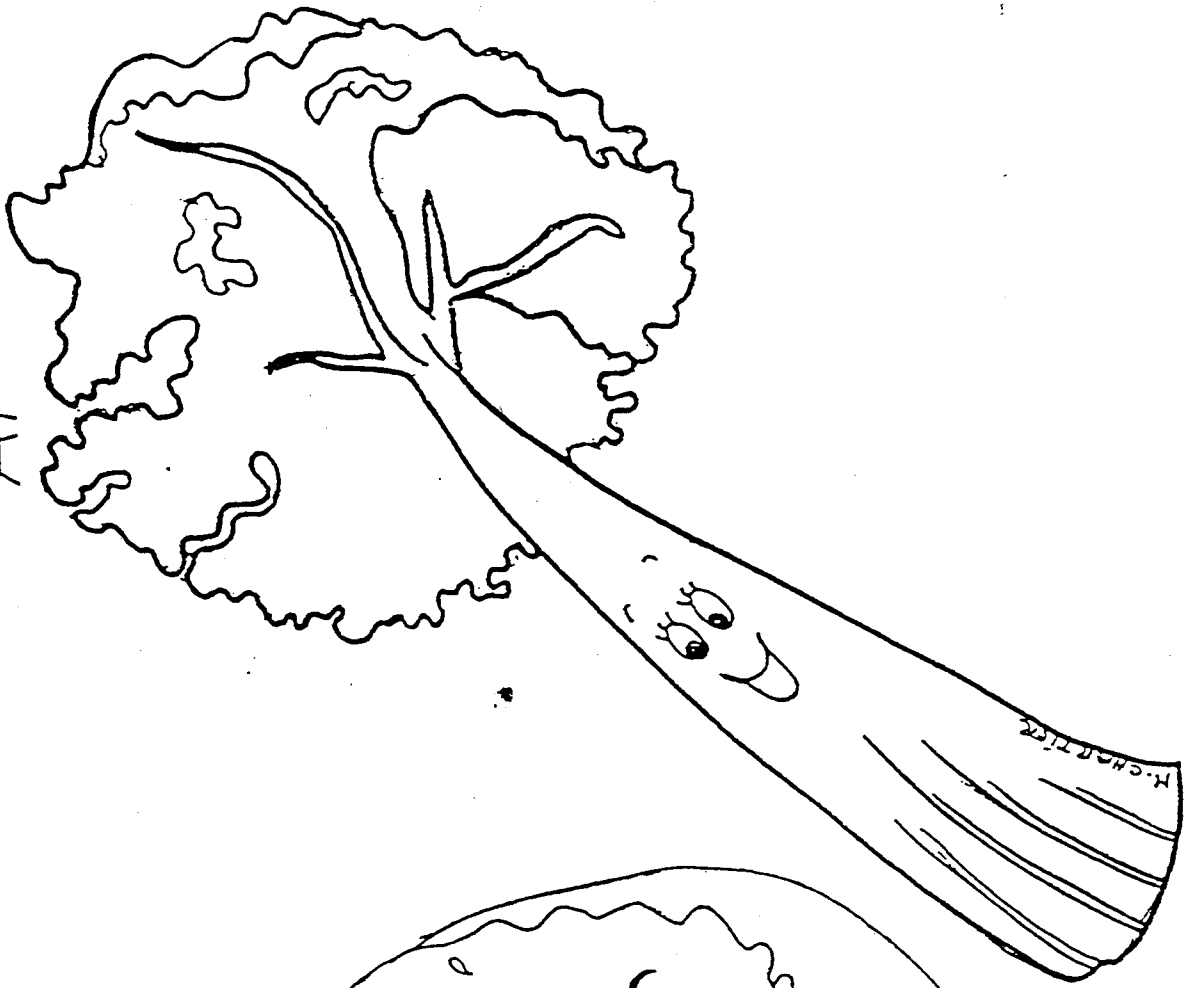
A7

A la salade



A la \_\_\_\_\_, je suis malade. Au \_\_\_\_\_, je suis guéri!

A7





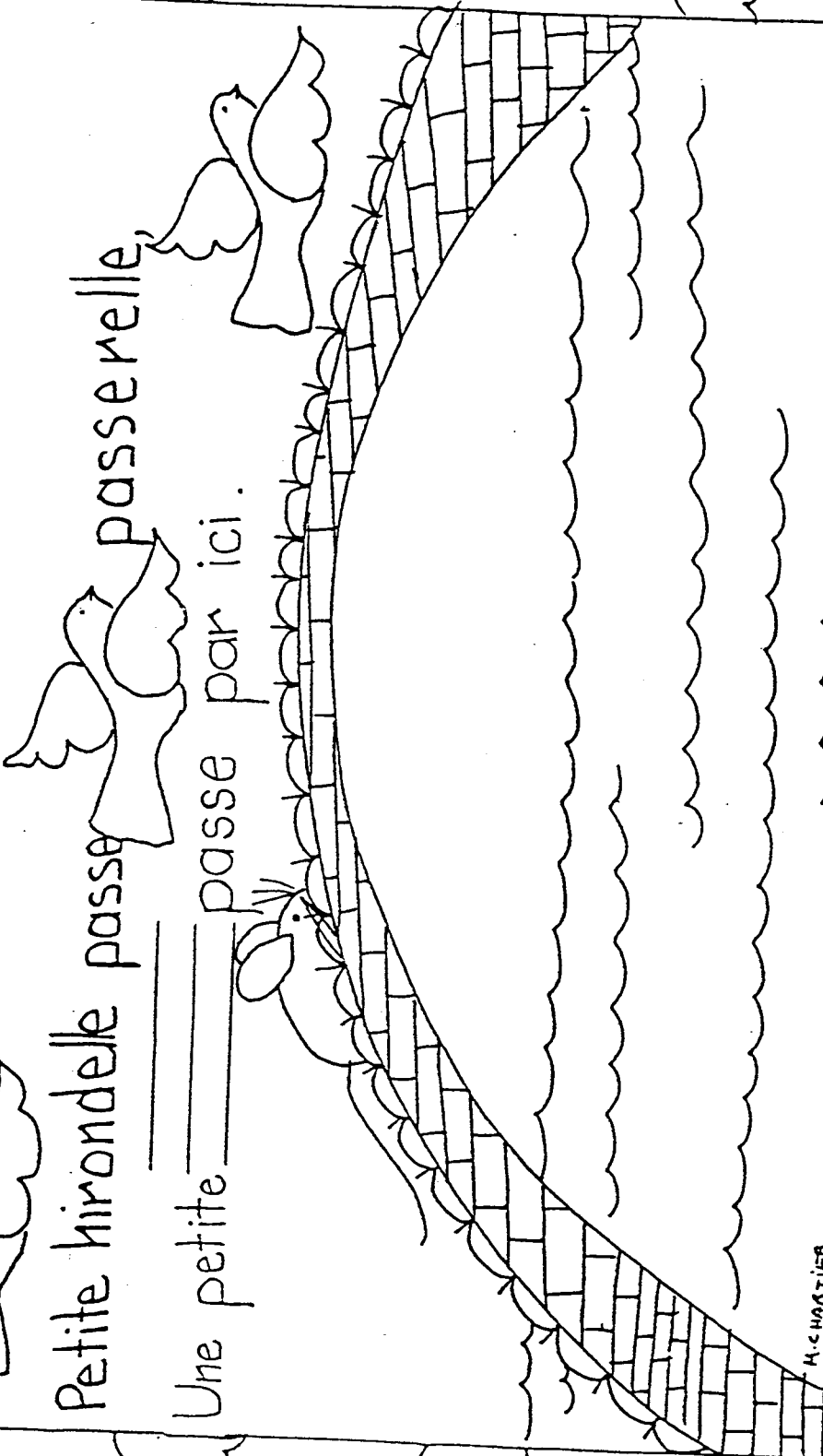
Petite hirondelle

A8



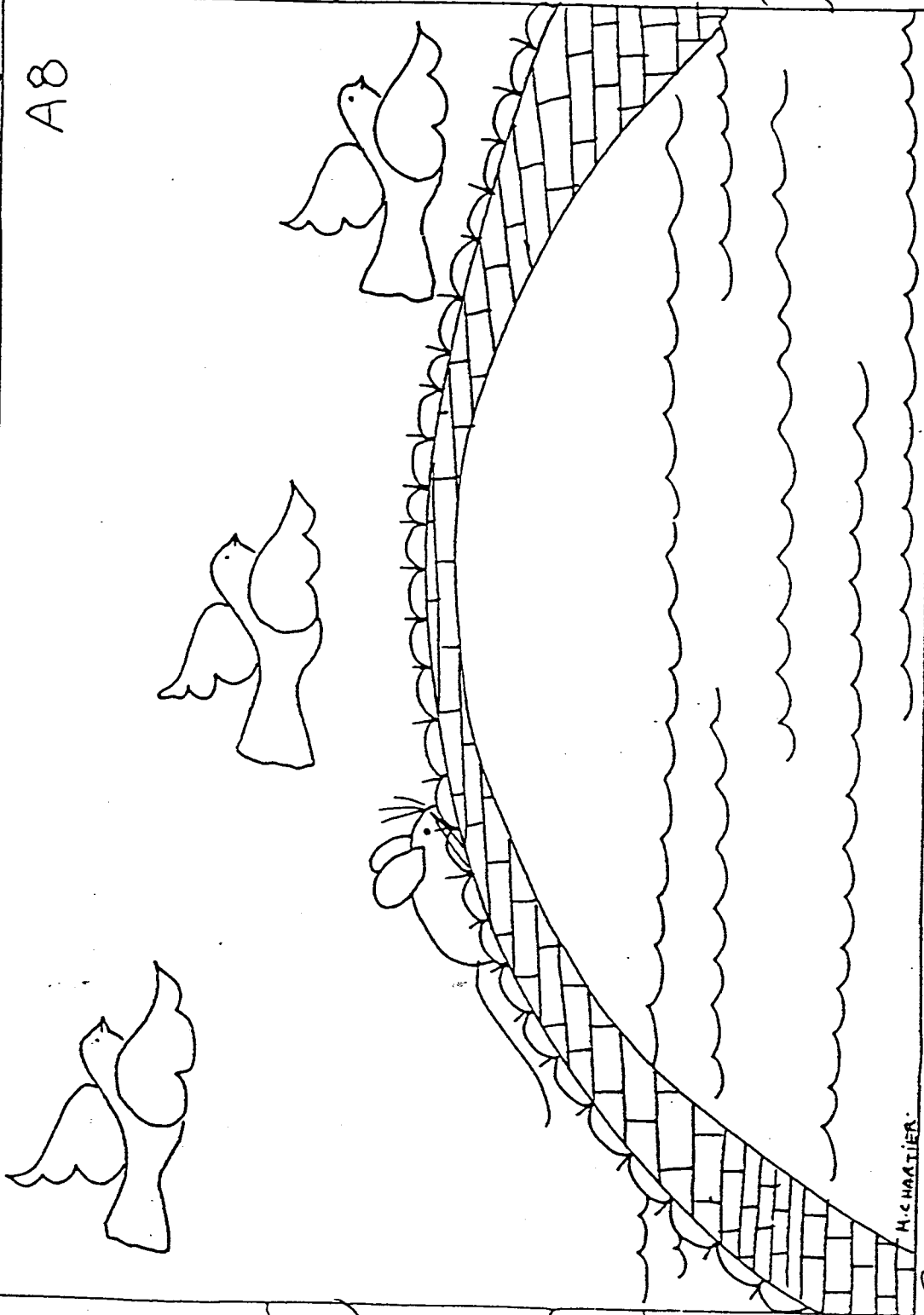
Petite hirondelle passe \_\_\_\_\_ passerelle,

Une petite \_\_\_\_\_ passe par ici.



M. CHASTIER

A8



M. CHARTIER

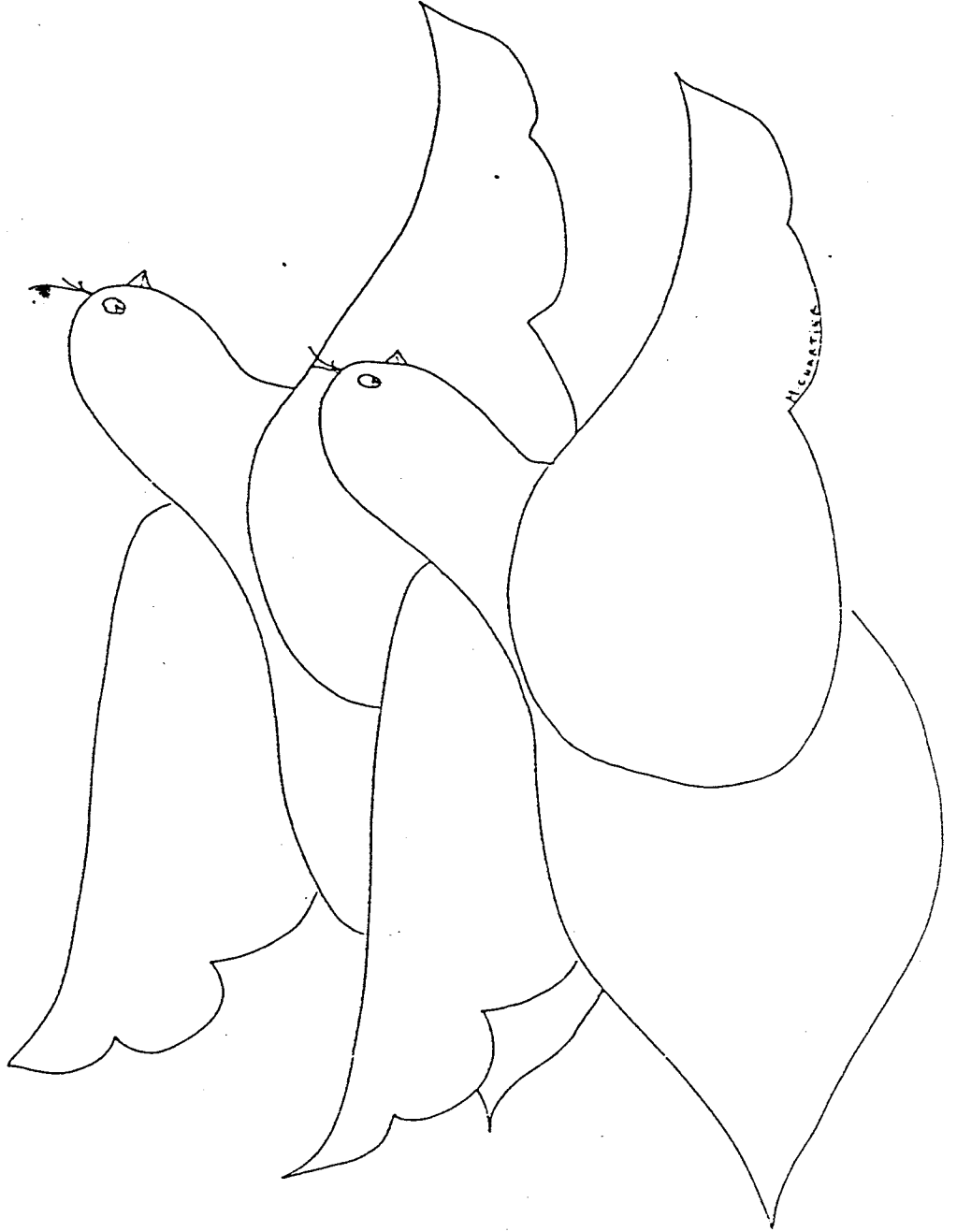
# Les pigeons

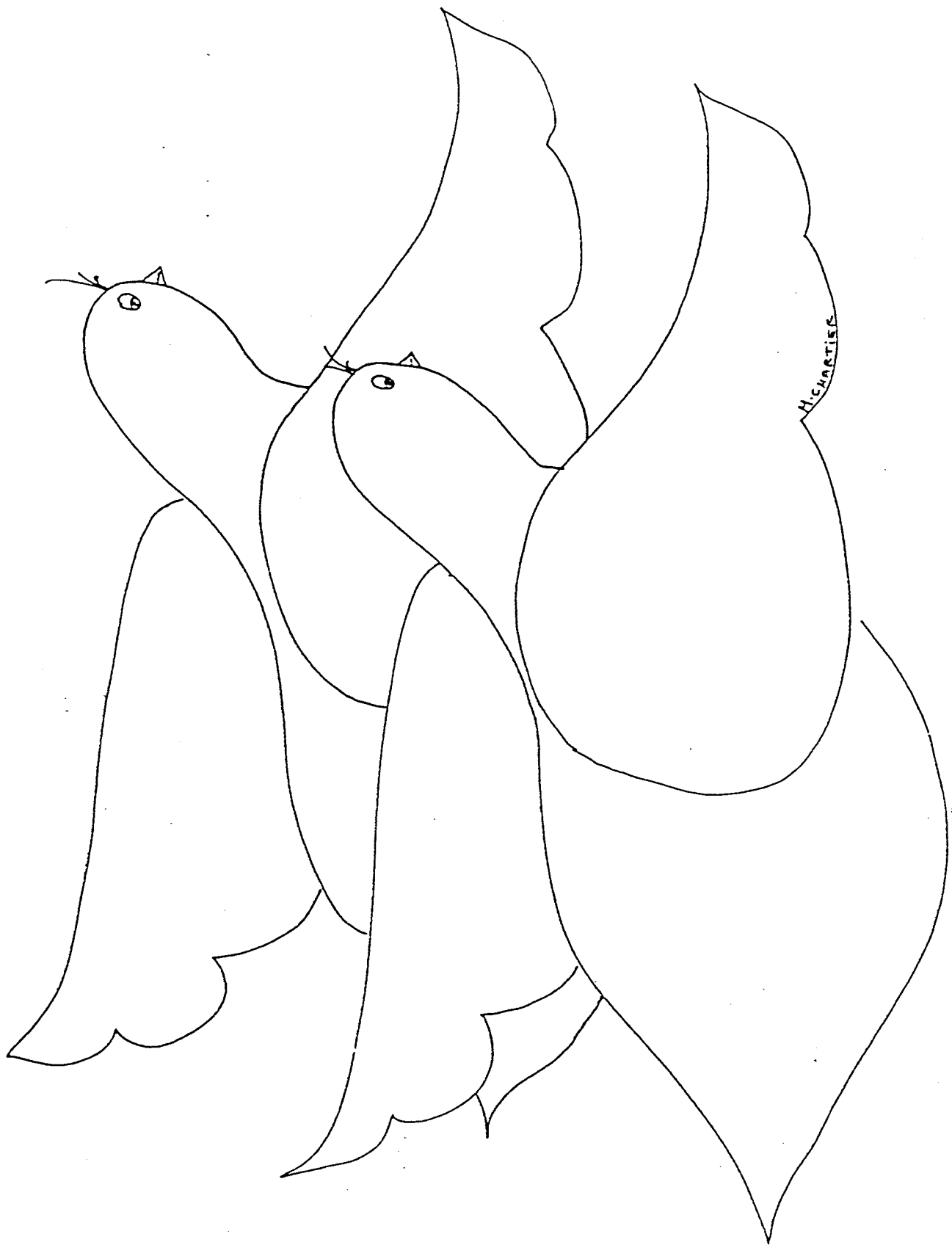
A21

Les pigeons sont \_\_\_\_\_

Ils sont verts et \_\_\_\_\_

Tourne le dos \_\_\_\_\_.





Savez-vous planter les choux?

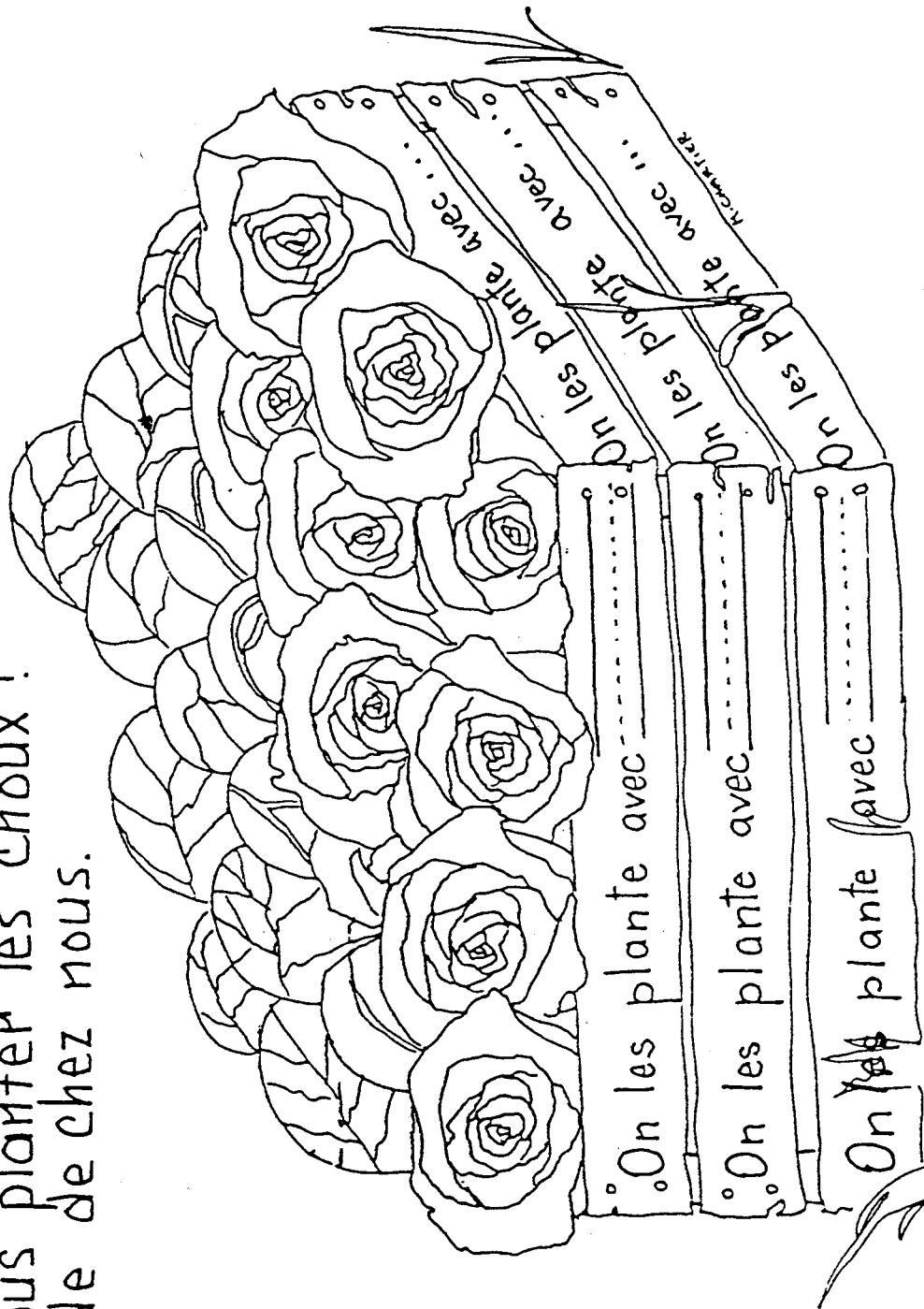
A20

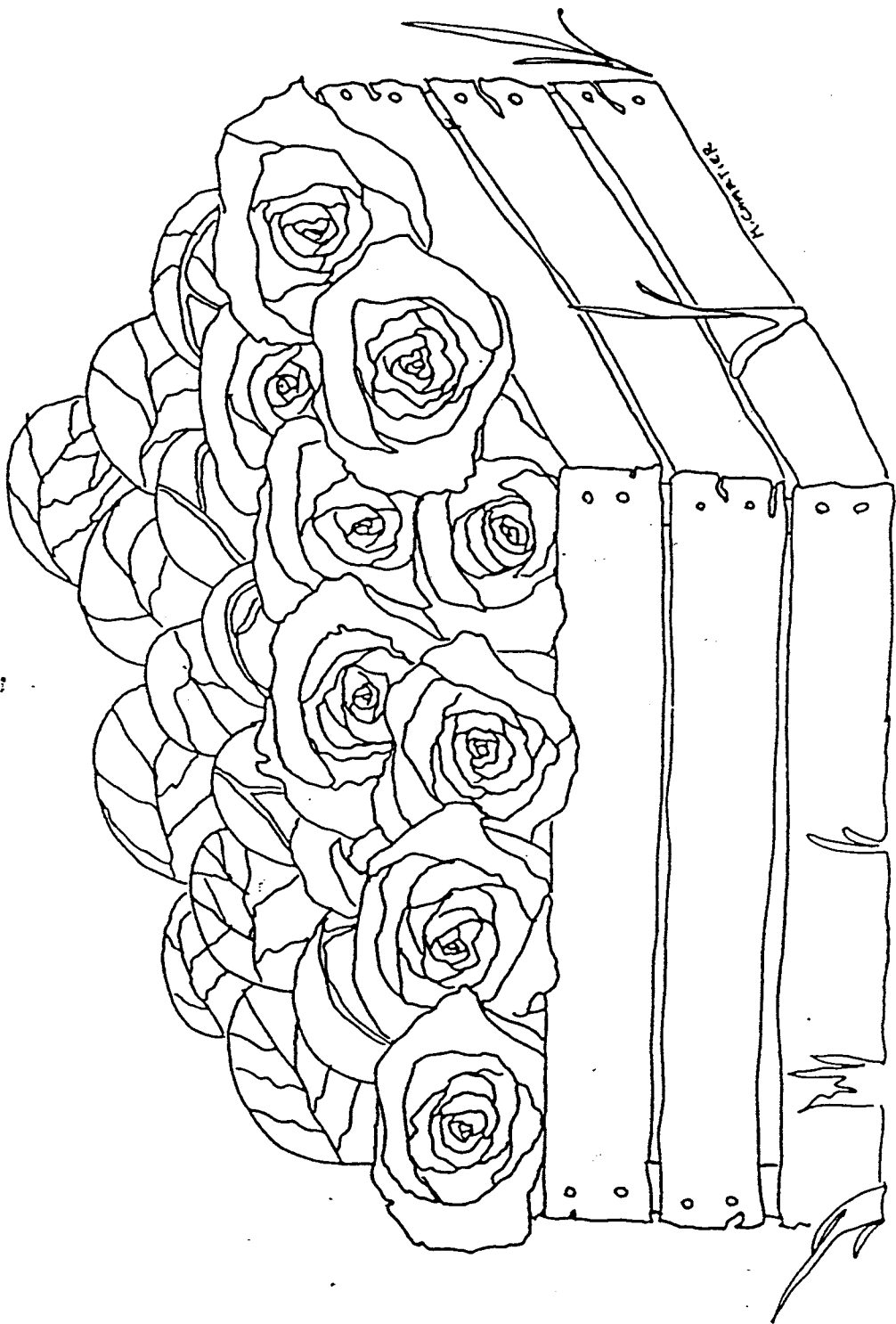
Savez-vous planter les choux?

À la mode, à la mode.

Savez-vous planter les choux?

À la mode de chez nous.





**APPENDIX C**  
**TEST ON THE VERBS "TO BE" AND "TO HAVE"**

23 juin 1994

Nom: \_\_\_\_\_

Emploie le verbe avoir:

1. Nous \_\_\_\_\_ des pommes.
2. J' \_\_\_\_\_ un petit chien.
3. Elle \_\_\_\_\_ des bonbons.
4. Ils \_\_\_\_\_ une auto bleue.
5. Tu \_\_\_\_\_ un chat noir.
6. Il \_\_\_\_\_ 7 ans.
7. Vous \_\_\_\_\_ de bons amis.
8. Elles \_\_\_\_\_ des vacances.

Emploie le verbe être:

1. Elles \_\_\_\_\_ en première année.
2. Je \_\_\_\_\_ la plus forte.
3. Vous \_\_\_\_\_ des amis.
4. Tu \_\_\_\_\_ dans la classe.
5. Ils \_\_\_\_\_ fatigués.
6. Elle \_\_\_\_\_ ici.
7. Nous \_\_\_\_\_ dans l'auto.
8. Il \_\_\_\_\_ vert.

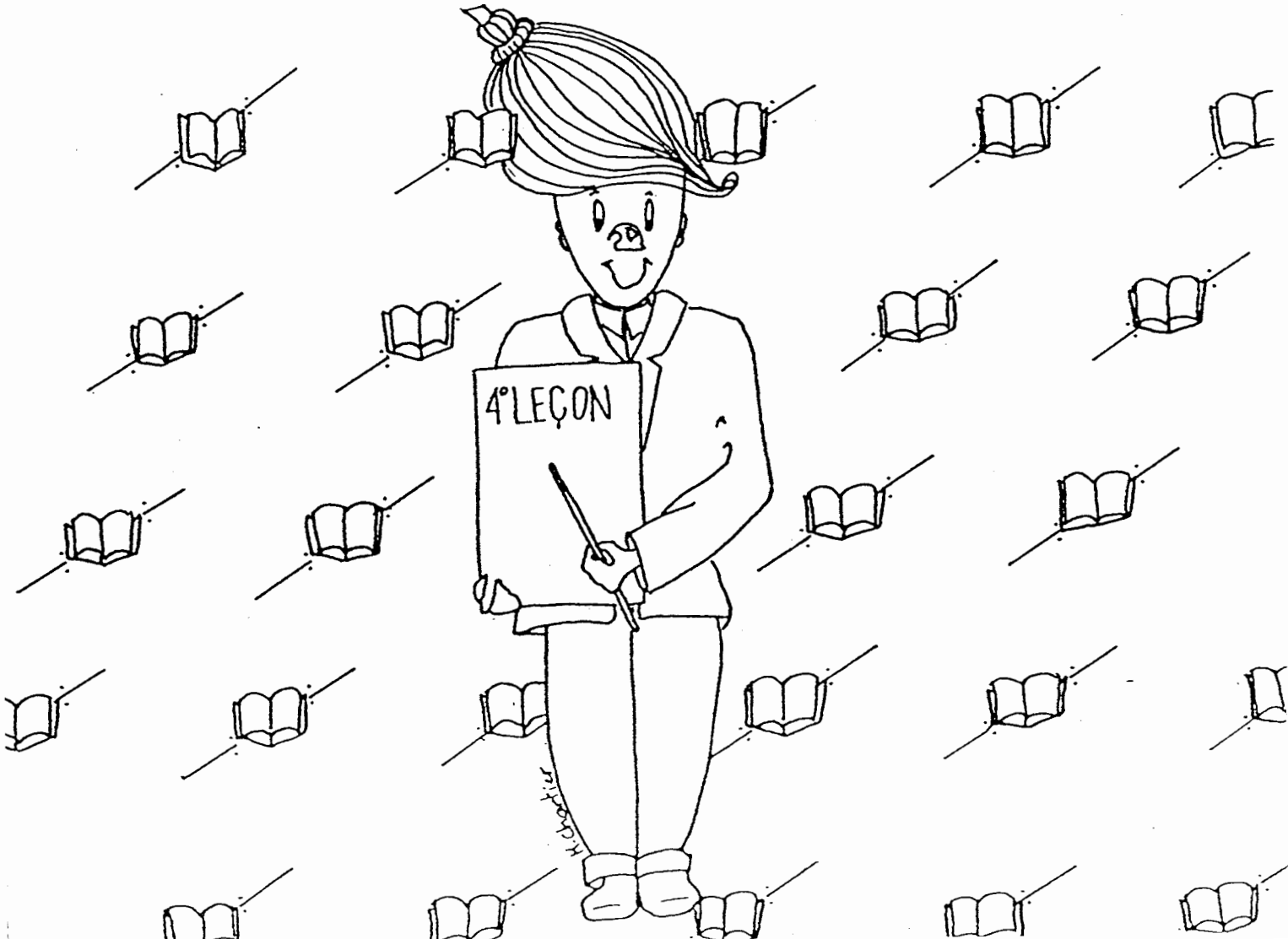


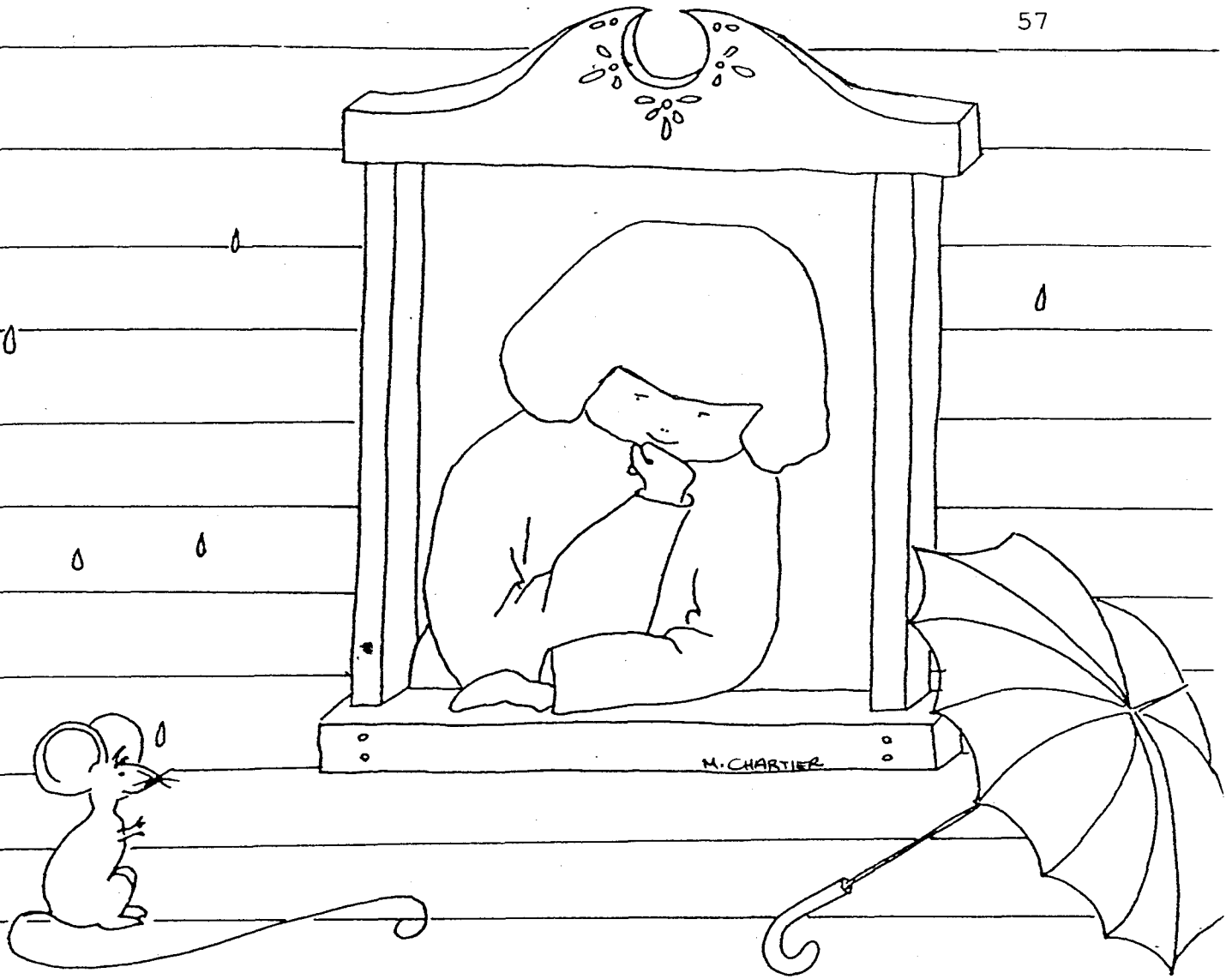
**APPENDIX D**  
**SONG SAMPLES**

## Monsieur Gribouille

words & music: H. Chartier

Con-nais-tu monsieur Gri-bouille? Son nez est en cho-co-lat, ses che-veux u-ne va-drouil-le et:  
 bouch' un a-na-nas. Il tra-vaill' à la four-rière et en-seigne à tous les chiens, tous c  
 sis sur leur derriè-re, ils ap-prennent le la-tin. Il leur parle jour et nuit, du bec  
 temps et de la pluie. On dit bien souvent de lui que tous les chiens sont ses a-mis.





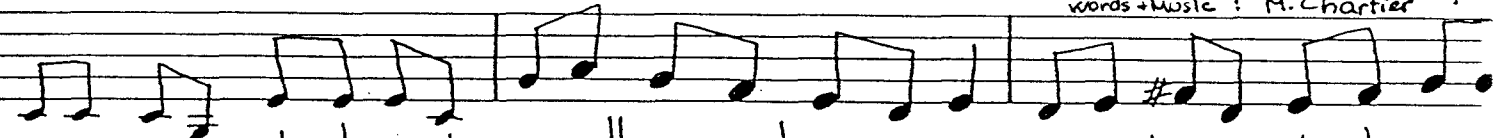
Pot - pourri

C

D

words + music : M. Chartier

G



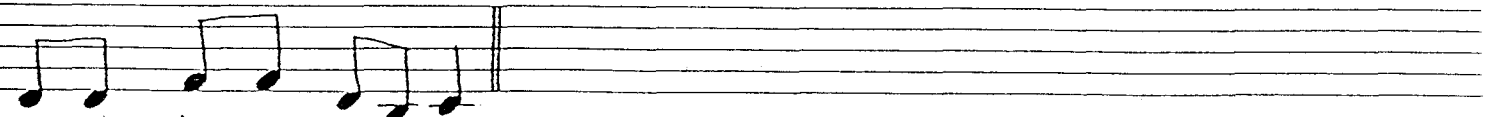
U-ne ro-che dans la po-che, un caillou sur ton ge-nou, u-ne branche dans la mand



un rosier dans ton sou-tier, u-ne fê-te dans ta tête, une chanson sur ton men-ton



Re-gar-de par la fe-nê-tre, tu y trou-ve-ras peut-être, u-ne pe-ti-te sou-ris



qui ou-blie son parapluie.

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