

Candidate 2 evidence



Advanced Higher French

To what extent are the life lessons advocated in the poetry of Jacques Prévert and in the novel 'Le Petit Prince' by Antoine De Saint-Exupéry applicable to our lives in society today?



To what extent are the life lessons advocated in the works of Jacques Prévert and in the novel 'Le Petit Prince' by Antoine De Saint-Exupéry applicable to our lives in our society today?

The concurrent theme in both the novel 'Le Petit Prince' and the poetry of Prévert is the loss of childhood and imagination. Both texts explore what it means to grow up and neglect the strong innocence of one's past and to strive for materialistic possessions to find happiness. The preface at the beginning of the 'Le Petit Prince' clearly addresses that this book is not for children; it is fundamentally aimed at adults in order to show them a simpler more profound lifestyle. We can all be moved by the 'Le Petit Prince':

« Ce beau livre séduira toutes les grandes personnes qui n'ont pas oublié qu'elles ont d'abord été des enfants »

according to Stéphanie Gatignol, writer for 'Pleine Vie'. Similarly the poetry of Prévert is much loved by all generations in France and convinces readers to hold on to their imagination as they go through adulthood. The French artist Henri Matisse believes that:

« Il y a des fleurs partout pour qui veut bien les voir ».

He means that whether it's through education, repetition of mundane chores, or through the feelings of greed and ownership, there is a way of escaping by seeing the beauty that surrounds us. This essay describes the lessons advocated in the texts addressing how we can get back to the purer life we all had when we were four year olds, without necessarily moving to an asteroid or making conversation with the flowers in our gardens.

At the beginning of 'Le Petit Prince', the narrator begins by telling us about his childhood when he made a drawing and his love of art which was discouraged by the 'grandes personnes' in his life. Their disinterest in his talent upset the narrator throughout his life:

*« Les grandes personnes m'ont conseillé de laisser de côté les dessins... et de m'intéresser plutôt à la géographie, à l'histoire, au calcul et à la grammaire. C'est ainsi que j'ai abandonné à l'âge de six ans une magnifique carrière de peinture. Les grandes personnes ne comprennent jamais rien toutes seules, et c'est fatigant, pour les enfants, de toujours et toujours leur donner des explications ».*¹

The narrator highlights how the education system, as well as pressure from parents, forces children to give up what they are good at if it does not pay well, or will result in a menial job, however this is restricting of the child's imagination and limits growth and development of their natural strengths. This is echoed in Prévert's poem, 'Le Cancre' in which a child feels overwhelmed and pressured into understanding:

*« Les chiffres et les mots, les dates et les noms, les phrases et les pièges »*²

The message in both the poem and the novel is that you should not be influenced absolutely by what others suggest, you have to be your own person and follow your own

¹ Page 14, 'Le Petit Prince' published 1999 Folio Edition

² Prévert Poem 'Le Cancre' lines 10,11 and 12

path leading to where you want to get to in life, and this is the key to having a happy, healthy life.

The narrator in 'Le Petit Prince' tells us of the Turkish astronomer who first found the Little Prince's asteroid. He presents his discoveries wearing traditional Turkish clothing and no one seems to believe him. However, years later when the man is dressed in Western European attire, his discoveries are received well. This anecdote highlights how the arrogance within certain people leads to xenophobia and racial hatred, which are both rife in our world today. This discrimination is also highlighted towards children as they are described in Prévert's poem 'La Chasse à L'Enfant' as:

*« Bandit! Voyou! Voleur! Chenapan! »*³

This poem denounces the abuse that the 'honest children' experienced in juvenile prisons, and Prévert himself is against this mistreatment and believes children are not the ones to blame. The little prince highlights how useless and nonsensical racism is, but could it really be stopped in our world today? There will always be people who feel scorn towards others due to where they come from, but Saint-Exupéry advocates a life for the individual where racism is pointless and it is so much easier to be accepting of all race. Prévert, on similar terms, believes that children should be treated more equally and we must find solutions through love and care instead of hate and punishment.

The rose in 'Le Petit Prince' represents universal love and beauty, but also vanity and naivety. Saint-Exupéry presents the rose as having human qualities in order to show that the rose's characteristics are similar to those of many people in our world today; she craves attention and wants to be admired. It is clear that the rose is very important to the little prince when he compares her to other roses:

*« Vous êtes belles, mais vous êtes vides. Bien sûr, ma rose à moi, un passant ordinaire croirait qu'elle vous ressemble. Mais à elle seule elle est plus importante que vous toutes, puisque c'est elle que j'ai arrosée... puisque c'est elle que j'ai écoutée se plaindre, ou se vanter, ou même quelquefois se taire. Puisque c'est ma rose. »*⁴

The rose highlights how most people take everything in our world for granted, and do not take time out of their monotonous, daily routines to admire the beauty that surrounds them, additionally, many people do not invest enough time in the people they love in order to gain a special relationship like the little prince and his rose. The lesson described is that no matter how important a task may seem at the time, there is always time to take in and admire the world around us and to spend time with the people we love, because this is how we make connections with the world and find fulfilment.

³ Prévert poem 'La Chasse à L'Enfant' line 1

⁴ Page 76, 'Le Petit Prince' published 1999 Folio Edition

The little Prince visits other planets which all represent an allegory of human nature. The most insightful of all the planets he visits is the one inhabiting the businessman. The businessman believes that :

« Quand tu trouves un diamant qui n'est pas à personne, il est à toi. Quand tu trouves une île qui n'est à personne, elle est à toi. Quand tu as une idée le premier, tu la fais breveter: elle est à toi. Et moi, je possède les étoiles, puisque jamais personne avant moi n'a songé à posséder ». ⁵

The meaningless lifestyle adopted by the businessman resembles the lives of many people today, with their lack of attention to the beautiful things in life like the flowers and the stars, only predominantly appreciated by children, and the constant strive to own everything for themselves. This is mirrored by the teacher in Prévert's poem 'Page d'écriture' who constantly repeats numbers and figures:

« Deux et deux quatre, quatre et quatre huit, huit et huit font seize ». ⁶

The teacher is trapped in the idea that success and happiness can only be achieved by closing off to the outside world, when really it is the opposite. In turn, the children also suffer as:

« Il montre que l'école peut rapidement devenir une prison mais aussi que la liberté n'est jamais loin ».

Both the poem and 'Le Petit Prince' highlight the complete ineffectiveness of the repetitive, materialistic, adult-way of learning and living, surrounded by facts and figures with one aim: to gain material possessions, whereas what children really need to learn is the qualities of compassion, empathy and practical skills for achieving their goals.

The fox in 'Le Petit Prince' teaches us the true meaning of investing time in something you love and how it is important to not get caught up in the materialistic temptations that surround us. The fox describes how:

« Les hommes n'ont plus le temps de rien connaître. Ils achètent des choses toutes faites chez les marchands. Mais comme il n'existe point de marchands d'amis, les hommes n'ont plus d'amis. » ⁷

In this materialistic world we live in these days, it's easy to forget what true friendship means and how important it is for our wellbeing. The fox introduces the idea of 'apprivoisement' or 'taming' to the little prince where they would get to know each other on a deeper level. Without 'apprivoisement' the fox says to the Prince:

« Tu n'es encore pour moi qu'un petit garçon tout semblable à cent mille petits garçons ». ⁸

And to the prince, the fox is:

« Un renard semblable à cent mille renards ». ⁹

⁵ Page 52, 'Le Petit Prince' published 1999 Folio Edition

⁶ Prévert poem 'Page d'écriture' lines 1,2 and 3

⁷ Page 73, 'Le Petit Prince' published 1999 Folio Edition

⁸ Page 72, 'Le Petit Prince' published 1999 Folio Edition

⁹ Page 72, 'Le Petit Prince' published 1999 Folio Edition

But after the fox is tamed, the prince and the fox will become unique to each other. The message Saint-Exupéry is advocating is the importance of giving priority to relationships in your life. All these interactions build stronger and stronger bonds between humans and it is this which gives true purpose and meaning to our lives.

To conclude, the novel 'Le Petit Prince' and the poetry of Prévert teach the reader many important life lessons that we should all implement in our daily lives. Firstly, the texts highlight the need for escapism from the bombardment of figures, dates and times that we are faced with on a daily basis and focus more of the life choices that make you happier. Another lesson learned is to not judge people by where they come from or who they are as a person. Whether it is racial inequality or mistreatment of children, this feeling of hatred is pointless and unnecessary in our world today and only takes us a step backwards. The texts radiate a warm message of the importance of love and how we must show love to the people around us to alleviate our minds from the stresses of everyday life. Saint-Exupéry and Prévert have shown to the world a purer more meaningful way of life through the eloquence and characterisation of their work, in order to show everyday people that love and happiness can be achieved in our profound yet sometimes materialistic lives.

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3. 'Le Petit Prince' published 1999 Folio Edition
4. The poems: 'Page d'écriture', 'La Chasse à L'Enfant', and 'Le Cancre' by Jacques Prévert

Word count: 1,354 words

To be completed by the candidate 270

The grid below allows entries to be made covering the options detailed on the previous page.

Please indicate the option chosen and the portfolio title. A tick (✓) should be entered to indicate the inclusion of the bibliography, and the word count should also be noted.

Portfolio option (circle as appropriate) Literature/Media/Language in Work	
Portfolio title	To what extent are the life lessons advocated in the works of Prévert and in the novel 'Le Petit Prince' by Antoine De Saint-Exupéry applicable to our lives in our society today?
Bibliography enclosed (please tick) (✓)	✓
Word count (excluding quotations and bibliography)	1354

Candidate 3 evidence

To what extent does Camus make a satire of the justice system in *L'Etranger*?

L'Etranger, Albert Camus' first book, is set in French Algeria. It tells the story of a man, Meursault, the narrator, who lives a life of the senses, but is judged and condemned by society. Having worked as a court journalist, Camus' concern for social justice was frequently expressed in his articles published in *Alger républicain*. Whilst believing in the importance of justice, he argued that «nous avons choisi d'assumer la justice humaine avec ses terribles imperfections, soucieux seulement de les corriger par une honnêteté désespérément maintenue»¹. In *L'Etranger*, Camus seeks to undermine the sense of reassurance the justice system provides: it does not seek the truth but instead creates a false version of events whilst also being excessively theatrical. Using a myriad of literary techniques, Camus conveys his view that the justice system is a microcosm of our flawed society, rooting out and eliminating that which we do not understand and therefore fear. As Rey accurately surmises: «on pourrait lire le roman comme une satire de nos institutions juridiques»².

Throughout the book, Camus effectively portrays the justice system as an absurd and false illusion of truth. Meursault describes the system as «un jeu» (p.111) which has childish connotations of amusement and playing, emphasizing the absurdity of the system. From the outset, it is clear to see that Meursault's naivety will prevent him winning the game, and avoiding or reducing his sentence. His refusal to lie and question about why he needs a lawyer in the first place highlights to the reader that he has «jamais eu de rapports avec la justice» (p.113). Just as a game is a contest played according to rules, so too is the justice system. Entirely dependent upon the adroitness of arguments presented, the system does not create a trial of truth but a contest of skill, evidenced by the prosecutor's «regard triomphant» (p.131) when he is winning. The lawyers' «tirades entières» (p.138) demonstrate Camus' negative view of the justice system: that justice, based on such deception and lies, can never elicit the truth. The subterfuge in the search for the truth is further evidenced by Meursault's lawyer asking him «s'il pouvait dire que ce jour-là, j'avais dominé mes sentiments naturels» (p.113).

¹ Hughes, Edward J., 2007, *The Cambridge Companion To Camus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.98

² Rey, Pierre Louis, 1981, *L'etranger (1942), Albert Camus*, Paris: Hatier, p.65

Meursault replies «Non, parce que c'est faux» (p.113). However, ultimately, the lawyer makes Meursault «fait promettre de ne pas dire cela à l'audience» (p.112) because he will be eschewed by the court, and therefore society, for upholding their ideals of honesty to an extent that they themselves cannot. Through the lawyer's character, an insider who asserts «tout est vrai et rien n'est vrai» (p.133) within the justice system, Camus demonstrates the impossibility of living a life of principled sincerity, of honesty without compromise. The reader understands that the morality which condemns Meursault is false, and as Masters argues, hypocritical and cruel.

Camus further undermines the legitimacy of the justice system by highlighting that Meursault's challenge of society's accepted moral standards influences his sentence far more than his taking another's life. This is illustrated by Meursault's lawyer asking the court if Meursault is accused «d'avoir enterré sa mère ou d'avoir tué un homme?» (p.136) Despite Meursault explaining that his grief over his mother's death «n'avait pas de rapport avec (son) affaire» (p.113), he is still persecuted for «avoir enterré une mère avec un coeur de criminel» (p.136) as much as his crime. Lacking rational explanation for Meursault's murder of the Arab, the justice system – and therefore society – seeks to create its own: «Le même homme qui au lendemain de la mort de sa mère se livrait à la débauche la plus honteuse a tué pour des raisons futiles et pour liquider une affaire de mœurs inqualifiable» (p.136). By doing this, Camus highlights the flaws of the justice system: it does not reconstruct the truth, instead asking «des questions apparemment étrangères» (p.130), creating consistency and coherence from completely unrelated evidence. Ultimately, Meursault is condemned for his nonconformity, for ignoring «les règles les plus essentielles» (p.141) and «les réactions élémentaires» (p.141) by not crying at his mother's funeral. As Masters argues, “society demands a display of sensitivity... some show of regret, some hint of contrition”³ to show that he loved his mother, but Meursault does not do this, and refuses to pretend he did, instead stating that «Tous les êtres sains avaient plus ou moins souhaité la mort de ceux qu'ils aimaient» (p.112). The reader understands that Meursault is only «monstrueux» (p.141) insofar as he undermines society's rules, and therefore must be executed. As Camus asserted: «Dans notre société, tout

³ Masters, Brian, 1974, *A Student's Guide To Camus*, London: Heinemann Educational Books, p.29

homme qui ne pleure pas à l'enterrement de sa mère risqué d'être condamné à mort»⁴.

In *L'Étranger*, Camus ridicules the illogicality and ineffectiveness of the justice system by highlighting its subjectivity: Meursault's character escapes his control, only existing in the minds of others. His role as first person narrator reveals that he lives in the moment, without reference to past or future, and is therefore incredibly vulnerable to society imposing its own meaning on his actions. Through Meursault's mere chronological description of events and avoidance of conjunctions apart from 'then' and 'and', Camus demonstrates to the reader that Meursault attributes no motivation, no interpretation, and no supposed rationality or meaning to his actions, which are, according to him, merely «dans l'ordre des choses» (p.151). Meursault's vulnerability to others imposing such meaning for him, and the consequences of this, is highlighted by the reader and third-person characters all perceiving Meursault differently. While the reader's objective viewpoint notes Meursault's lack of emotion and distance from other characters, Marie and Raymond both form relationships with him, assuming a bond – love and friendship respectively - that Meursault does not feel, and is indeed indifferent to. Both Raymond and Marie capitalise on Meursault's passivity to shape their own version of his identity, ignoring responses they do not like and taking a lack of forceful agreement as assent. For instance, when Marie proposes, Meursault states that «cela (lui) était égal... que cela ne signifiait rien... que cela n'avait aucune importance» (p.95) but acquiesces to keep her happy. The reader understands that Meursault allowing others to define his reactions and shape an identity for him is part of what makes him a victim of justice, as evidenced by his trial: «Tout se déroulait sans mon intervention» (p.138). Both lawyers and witnesses manufacture different flawed interpretations of events, portraying Meursault as either guilty or innocent. The defence completely steals Meursault's identity, narrating his case in first person, the effect of which is to reduce Meursault «à zéro» (p.142) and «en un certain sens, se substituer» (p.142). Ultimately, the lawyers «simplifient les choses à l'excès... suppriment des nuances»⁵, leaving the jury with a choice of two lies. As the novel develops and Meursault reflects on his actions, the reader has a growing consciousness of what the

⁴ Camus, Albert, and Ray Davison, 1988, *L'étranger*, London: Routledge, Avant Propos p.6

⁵ Rey, Pierre Louis, 1981, *L'étranger (1942)*, Albert Camus, Paris: Hatier, p.66

jury, and therefore society, believes. Originally Meursault declares he is «absolument comme tout le monde» (p.113), watching the trial as if it was happening to someone else. However, he then realises how society perceives him: «J'étais un coupable. J'étais coupable, je payais, on ne pouvait rien me demander de plus» (p.153). The title of the book, 'The Stranger', aptly highlights that the justice system, and therefore society, identify and condemn Meursault as an outsider.

Camus also portrays the justice system as a «mécanisme implacable» (p.146) to emphasise its impersonality which ignores the individual: «la mécanique écrasait tout : on était tué discrètement, avec un peu de honte et beaucoup de précision» (p.149). The system represents society and acts upon its expectations. Just like society, everything is «si naturel, si bien réglé et si sobrement joué» (p.117), with the trial's progression indicated by «une petite sonnerie» (p.127). In reality, «Tout le personnage est pétri de conformisme... C'est un pantin au mécanisme bien remonté. Le rituel a remplacé l'homme, dépossédé de toute vie authentique.»⁶ Comparing the system to «la roue» (p.146) which has cyclical connotations of endless motion, Camus highlights «l'inévitable» (p.146) of the justice system: it is «un saut hors du rite implacable» (p.147), «une affaire classée» (p.148). Camus does this to highlight that conformists, using the justice system, cooperate to ensure «le bon fonctionnement de la machine» (p.148). This is exemplified by «les petits éventails multicolores des jurés» (p.142) which, just like their beliefs, «s'agitaient tous dans le même sens» (p.142). A nonconformist is considered «un gouffre où la société peut succomber» (p.140), and must therefore be eliminated. The reader understands that a nonconformist cannot escape execution, and see Meursault as a «martyr de la vérité»⁷. Although Meursault «ne (comprenait) pas bien comment les qualités d'un homme ordinaire pouvaient devenir des charges écrasantes contre un coupable» (p.139), he understands that there is «une dette qui était due à la société. Il fallait, selon eux, la payer» (p.147).

Using setting and character, Camus illustrates the theatricalities of the justice system. The courtroom is an excessively theatrical place: «Je n'ai eu qu'une impression... tous ces voyageurs anonymes épiaient le nouvel

⁶ Sauvage, Pierre, 1990, *L'étranger*, Albert Camus, [Paris]: Nathan, p.50

⁷ Rey, Pierre Louis, 1981, *L'étranger (1942)*, Albert Camus, Paris: Hatier, p.66

arrivant pour en apercevoir les ridicules» (p.127) where «le public a ri» (p.133) at Meursault's crime. The police station is like «dans des livres» (p.111), «plein d'une lumière» (p.111), but the policeman stays «dans l'ombre» (p.111). The system is also rendered comical by the characters who are depicted like actors in a play. The lawyer's clothing is described as a «costume» (p.112) which is «sombre» (p.112) and a man wears «sa robe avec soin» (p.128). All of this creates an «impression ridicule» (p.117). Further, the prosecutor's behaviour is also an act with «le doigt tendu» (p.135). During the trial, «le même cérémonial» (p.132) is undertaken with the repetition of certain phrases like «les jurés apprécieront» (p.133) and rhetorical questions. This comic effect is exacerbated by the lawyer who raises his arms, shouting and gesturing wildly to impress the audience. Camus' negative view of the justice system is compounded by the «façon déraisonnable» (p.115) of the judge who replaces reason with religion by brandishing his crucifix at Meursault. His declaration that «sa vie n'aurait plus de sens» (p.115) if Meursault does not believe in God, highlights his concern for himself and «sa conviction» (p.115) instead of Meursault, and his crime. Further, his «voix toute changée, presque tremblante» (p.115) and «façon passionnée» (p.115) demonstrate him resorting to emotion rather than rationality, creating a comical effect. These theatricalities ultimately make a mockery of the justice system.

In conclusion, it is clear that the judicial system is deeply flawed. It does not seek the truth but instead creates a false version of events. Further, it is based only on acts and ritual rather than facts. And finally, it condemns those who are considered strangers to society, as evidenced by Meursault who: «En ne jouant pas le rôle qui lui a été assigné dans ce cérémonial réglé d'avance, (il) pose à ses juges une énigme insupportable, qui fausse le jeu social»⁸. In *L'Étranger*, Camus portrays the justice system in a satirical light in order to highlight its inadequacies to a large extent. As Camus rightfully declared in November 1944 : «Nous savons avec quelle rapidité les moyens sont pris pour les fins, nous ne voulons pas de n'importe quelle justice»⁹.

⁸ Rey, Pierre Louis, 1981, *L'étranger (1942)*, Albert Camus, Paris: Hatier, p.65

⁹ Hughes, Edward J., 2007, *The Cambridge Companion To Camus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.100

Word Count (including quotations): 1859

Word Count (excluding quotations): 1320

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To be completed by the candidate

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Portfolio option (circle as appropriate) Literature / Media / Language in Work	
Portfolio title	<i>To what extent does Camus make a satire of the justice system in L'Etranger?</i>
Bibliography enclosed (please tick) (✓)	✓
Word count (excluding quotations and bibliography)	1320

Candidate 4 evidence

To what extent is Louis Malle's "Au Revoir les enfants" influenced by the historical context at the time it is set?

"Au Revoir les enfants" by Louis Malle is a gripping novel set in German occupied France during the Second World War. Malle depicts events similar to those he experienced in an all-boys Catholic school during his childhood. Through this quasi auto-biographical description, Malle effectively portrays the themes of innocence, ignorance and betrayal. These themes not only deepen the reader's understanding of the characters but also of the events that were affecting French people at the time. Malle makes clear to the reader that innocence, ignorance and betrayal reflect the way of thinking and the feelings of the French during the war.

Throughout the novel, Malle incorporates the themes of innocence and ignorance in order to make the reader question the extent to which the French people were either innocent or ignorant with regards to the persecution of French Jews during the German occupation. The main character of Julien Quentin represents both themes due to his childish nature and naivety. Julien is revealed to know nothing about the Jewish faith nor about the suffering of those who follow it.

"Qu'est-ce que c'est un youpin?"¹

Julien's innocence is portrayed through Malle's use of simple and childlike language. This particular question not only reveals just how naïve Julien is but also how ignorant of his surroundings he is. The fact that Julien shows no understanding of how or why Jewish people in France are being persecuted highlights the theme of innocence as it is clear that, as a young boy, issues such as these do not affect him. However this quote also brings the extent to which Julien is ignorant into question. Julien is educated and intelligent yet shows no knowledge of what is happening around him. Therefore this makes it unclear whether Julien is innocent or ignorant. Malle uses the themes of innocence and ignorance against each other to make the reader question whether the French were truly innocent towards the atrocities which happened around them, if they were ignorant or if they simply feigned innocence to avoid blame.

The theme of innocence is further conveyed when Malle depicts Julien and Bonnet playing together in the playground where they both witness a war plane flying overhead. Julien's question following this incident highlights his innocence towards the suffering of his friend.

Julien: "Tu as peur?"

Bonnet: "Tout le temps."²

Malle creates a contrast between the two main characters when Julien's innocence and complete lack of understanding about Bonnet's situation is revealed while Bonnet's knowledge of suffering is conveyed through his response. Malle's use of simple language highlights the childish nature of Julien's question and the lack of complexity behind it. It is clear that Julien is thinking of nothing more than the plane flying overhead and has not taken Bonnet's experiences into consideration. Bonnet's honest and saddening response makes it clear that, unlike Julien, his childhood innocence has been lost due to the war. This highlights how many lost their innocence as a result of the war. Malle uses the juxtaposition of these two characters to highlight the theme of innocence throughout the novel.

¹ Malle, L (1987). *Au Revoir Les Enfants*. Paris : Éditions Gallimard. Page 85

² Malle, L (1987). *Au Revoir Les Enfants*. Paris : Éditions Gallimard. Page 143

While the character of Julien Quentin mainly represents the theme of innocence, his mother, Madame Quentin, is used by Malle to represent the ignorance towards the atrocities of the war which some French people showed at the time. Madame Quentin's ignorance is represented in a letter she writes to her son where she describes the state of Paris during the occupation.

"Paris n'est pas drôle en ce moment"³

Madame Quentin's description of Paris conveys the way in which she, a wealthy woman, has not truly suffered from the change of regime. She shows no empathy in her description of the terrible effects that the Nazis have had on the French capital, effectively conveying her ignorance towards the invasion and flippant attitude towards those who have suffered from it. This ignorance towards the situation in France displayed by Madame Quentin represents those at the time who preferred to carry on with their daily life and remain ignorant towards the damaging effects that the Nazi occupation had on France.

Malle continues to build upon the theme of ignorance in the restaurant scene where Madame Quentin is witness to an older man being asked to leave the restaurant on account of being Jewish.

"Qu'est-ce qu'ils ont besoin d'embêter les gens? Il a l'air si convenable, ce monsieur."⁴

The question Madame Quentin asks conveys her ignorance and complete lack of understanding of how terrible the situation she has just witnessed truly is. The word choice of "embêter" is a flippant way to describe the blatant persecution she is seeing. The fact that Madame Quentin also comments on the man's respectable appearance not only reveals her superficial attitude but also conveys the way in which her logic is ignorant and does not make sense. Malle's use of the theme of ignorance effectively reflects the superficial and ignorant views some French people had towards Jewish people and the way they were treated. This gives the reader a better understanding of the attitudes amongst the French at the time and therefore a greater understanding of the historical events.

The theme of betrayal is also prominent. Malle portrays this theme through the actions of several characters. The first glimpse of betrayal that the reader sees is when the milice and some of the customers in the restaurant scene betray the Jewish man by humiliating him and demanding that he leave.

Le milicien: "Dis donc toi, tu ne sais pas lire? Ce restaurant est interdit aux youtres"⁵

The theme of betrayal represents the way in which people such as collaborators and the milice betrayed their own country and worked for the enemy. It is revealed in the book that the old man had been attending that restaurant for over 20 years. The milice betray his loyalty and treat a man that had always been viewed with respect as an inferior being by undermining, belittling and humiliating him. This quote depicts the moment when the milice stop referring to the man as "vous" after discovering that he is Jewish, displaying the way in which they are deliberately being disrespectful towards him. This single chapter in the novel portrays incidents that would have been very similar and very common in France during the Second World War, giving the reader a better understanding of the historical context.

Malle also portrays the theme of betrayal by the reactions of some of the customers in the restaurant during this incident.

³ Malle, L (1987). *Au Revoir Les Enfants*. Paris : Éditions Gallimard. Page 76

⁴ Malle, L (1987). *Au Revoir Les Enfants*. Paris : Éditions Gallimard. Page 117

⁵ Malle, L (1987). *Au Revoir Les Enfants*. Paris : Éditions Gallimard. Page 116

"Ils ont raison. Les juifs à Moscou!"⁶

While a few of the customers jump to defend the old man, others turn against him and betray him by shouting malicious threats, making a French man feel as though he does not belong in his own country. This act of French people betraying their compatriots by following the rules of the Nazis effectively highlights the cruel, anti-Semitic behaviour of some of the French at the time.

Furthermore, the actions of the character of Joseph also effectively portray the theme of betrayal as he denounces the Jewish boys in the school to the Nazis which results in them as well as Le Père Jean, being sent to a concentration camp. His lack of care for his betrayal is revealed when he tells Julien,

"T'en fais pas. C'est que les juifs."⁷

The use of the word "only" effectively reveals the extent to which many people in France had also been brainwashed to believe that Jewish people were inferior, to the point of not even being human. Joseph's response also conveys his lack of sympathy and perhaps lack of understanding of how crucial his actions have been. This harsh statement is symbolic of the mind-set of many people during the war. Joseph's act of cruelty in revenge for a comparatively petty incident highlights the theme of betrayal and the way in which many French people carried out similar acts of betrayal during the war to either seek revenge or abide by the Nazi regime.

Malle continues to convey the extent of Joseph's cruelty at the end of the book when he taunts and mocks Julien.

Julien: "Qu'est-ce que tu fais avec eux?"

Joseph: "T'es content? Tu vas avoir des vacances."⁸

Malle shows Joseph's lack of understanding as to how serious his actions have been when he says that Julien "is going to have holidays" on account of his best friend and head master being sent away. This brings into question whether Joseph is, in fact, ignorant to the severity of his actions. The fact that he views the consequence as getting time off school makes him seem ignorant towards what is really happening to the Jewish people. However it is also clear to the reader that he may be saying this to Julien in a malicious way and that he could know perfectly well that the young boys and the priest will be taken to a concentration camp. The actions of Joseph at the end of the novel effectively convey the theme of betrayal as he collaborates with the people who have invaded his country. This theme of betrayal represents the way in which many French people betrayed their country and their compatriots by collaborating with the Nazis.

To conclude, "Au Revoir les Enfants" is a moving novel which explores a number of important themes. Malle's own childhood experience of wartime France has allowed him to effectively illustrate the atmosphere within France and the attitudes and mind-sets of the French people through the key themes in the novel. Therefore, it is clear that the themes of innocence, ignorance and betrayal explored in the novel have been greatly influenced by the historical context in which the book is set.

Word count: 1,531

⁶ Malle, L (1987). *Au Revoir Les Enfants*. Paris : Éditions Gallimard. Page 118

⁷ Malle, L (1987). *Au Revoir Les Enfants*. Paris : Éditions Gallimard. Page 160

⁸ Malle, L (1987). *Au Revoir Les Enfants*. Paris : Éditions Gallimard. Page 160

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Please indicate the option chosen and the portfolio title. A tick (✓) should be entered to indicate the inclusion of the bibliography, and the word count should also be noted.

Portfolio option (circle as appropriate) <u>Literature</u> / Media / Language in Work	
Portfolio title	To what extent is Louis Malle's 'Au Revoir les Enfants' influenced by the historical context at the time it is set?
Bibliography enclosed (please tick) (✓)	✓
Word count (excluding quotations and bibliography)	✓