



Study language and social classes in Green Book

Un film de Peter Farrelly, 2018

Au cinéma le 23 janvier 2019

Type d'activité : Questionnaire après projection

Durée de l'activité : 2 h

Green Book : sur les routes du Sud relate l'amitié apparemment improbable entre deux personnages issus de milieux radicalement différents. Cette activité a pour but de sensibiliser les élèves à l'importance du langage dans une analyse de la société. Le langage révèle une appartenance sociale et véhicule une identité, d'où le soin que doit y porter l'artiste lorsqu'il cherche à faire revivre une réalité sociale. À l'issue de ce travail, les élèves pourront créer leur propre reflet de la société américaine des années 60.

Dans les programmes

Niveau	Dans les programmes	Compétences
Cycle 4 4 ^e et 3 ^e	Langages : Art et société Art reflet de la société	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A2 : Interagir avec une aisance raisonnable dans des situations bien structurées et de courtes conversations ▶ B1 : Exprimer sa pensée sur un sujet abstrait ou culturel comme un film, des livres, de la musique.



Green Book : sur les routes du Sud

A film by : Peter Farrelly
Film genre : Comedy
Year : 2018

Story
In 1962 a working-class Italian-American bouncer becomes the driver of an African-American pianist on a tour of venues through the Deep South. As they are confronted with the horrors of the Jim Crow laws, they gradually set aside their differences and become friends. Inspired by a true story.

1/ Remember who is who.

Name :

 Address :

 Job (s) :

 Family situation :



Name :

 Address :

 Job (s) :

 Family situation :

2/ Places and social classes.

Look at the picture and say what you remember about the scene.
 Compare the two characters' economic and social status.



Help ! Make comparisons

short adjective + ER (+ than) :
Mr X is older than Mrs Y

MORE + long adjective (+ than) :
Mrs Y is more courageous than Mr X

!/\ good => better (than);
 bad => worse (than)

AS + adjective + AS :
She is as lazy as her brother

LESS + adjective (+ than) :
He is less stupid than he seems

3/ Language(s) and identity

- Read the following quotes and find who says them.



I ain't ironing no shirts and I'm not polishing nobody's shoes.
.....

People don't like the way I talk, they can go take a shit.
.....

You've impressed several people with your innate ability to handle trouble.
.....

I'm just saying you have a marvelous way with words when describing food.
.....

Make sure it's a Steinway as per my contract...
.....

I don't need no goddamn help.
.....

Now I gotta worry about what people think about the way I talk?
.....

As the guest of honor, I'll be introduced when entering these intimate
.....

- Comment on both characters' choice of words and grammar. What can else can you say about the way they speak?

- Look at the picture and remember what the problem is.

What is Dr Shirley's suggestion?

How does Tony react?



4/ Language, education and social classes

- Say what the characters are doing in the picture.
- How would you describe this scene? Pick adjectives in the following list and explain your choice:



scary - funny - pathetic - dramatic -
hilarious - tragic - sad - violent
comical - romantic - emotional -
frightening - disturbing

- Here are the two versions of Tony's letter: compare them (grammar, spelling, language, topic, style).

Dear Dolores,
I'm meeting all the highly-leading
citizens of the town. People that
use big words, all of them. But
you know me, I get by. I'm a good
bullshiter. As I am writing this
letter, I'm eating potato chips
and I'm starting to get thirsty.
I washed my socks and dried them
on the TV. I should have brung the
iron.

Dear Dolores,
When I think of you, I'm reminded
of the beautiful plains of Iowa.
The distance between us is break-
ing my spirit. My time and experi-
ences without you are meaningless
to me. Falling in love with you was
the easiest thing I've ever done.
Nothing matters to me but you. And
every day I am alive, I'm aware
of this. I loved you the day I met
you. I love you today. And I will
love you the rest of my life.

- Explain what Dr Shirley is doing with Tony. Is he successful in his project?
- What does Dr Shirley also do with Tony? Can you think a particular sort of exercise?

5/ Make your own social analysis

- Conclude about the relation between language and social class.

PAIRWORK

With your partner, prepare a very short sketch between two characters who've come to listen to Dr Shirley. One is a working class character and the other is an upper-class character. Act out your short dialogue in front of the class: they have to guess the social status of your characters.

Tongue twisters

Tongue-twisters are sentences that are difficult to articulate properly and which are created for fun or as diction exercises.

Among the most famous tongue-twisters are *She sells sea-shells on the sea-shore* and the song *Betty Botter*.





Éléments de correction

1/ Retrace the characters' road trip.

Name: Tony Vallelonga aka Tony Lip / Address: The Bronx, New York City / Job(s): bouncer, driver / Family situation: married, two children

Name: Dr Donald Shirley / Address: Carnegie Hall (Manhattan) New York City / Job(s): pianist / Family situation: divorced (very lonely)

2/ Places and social classes

- Look at the picture and say what you remember about the scene. Compare the two characters' economic and social status

Selon les productions des élèves. On encouragera les élèves à utiliser le comparatif.

Ex: In the picture, Dr Shirley appears to be clearly more powerful than Tony as he is seated in a higher position, on a throne, whereas Tony is in a lower position. When Tony arrives at Dr Shirley's he is obviously impressed by the place (size, objects, wealth). This scene is in sharp contrast with the preceding scenes which show how Tony loses his job and tries to get money for his family (the hotdog bet). Dr Shirley is wealthier, more educated, more refined, etc. / Tony is tougher, rougher, poorer, less educated, etc. => Dr Shirley belongs to the upper classes (or upper middle class); Tony belongs to the working class.

3/ Language(s) and identity

- Read the following quotes and find who says them.

I ain't ironing no shirts and I'm not polishing nobody's shoes => Tony

You've impressed several people with your innate ability to handle trouble. => Dr Shirley

Make sure it's a Steinway as per my contract. => Dr Shirley

I don't need no goddamn help. => Tony

I'm just saying you have a marvelous way with words when describing food. => Dr Shirley

People don't like the way I talk, they can go take a shit. => Tony

Now I gotta worry about what people think about the way I talk? => Tony

As the guest of honor, I'll be introduced when entering these intimate events. => Dr Shirley

- Comment on both characters' choice of words and grammar. What can else can you say about the way they speak?

Tony, contrary to Dr Shirley, uses a lot of swearwords (profanity), informal contractions (ain't, gotta) and makes grammar mistakes (especially double negatives; ex: I'm not polishing nobody's shoes). When he speaks, his intonation shows his emotions, which are underlined by his facial expressions and his body language. What is more, he speaks with a clearly identifiable Italian-American accent. Dr Shirley, on the other hand, tends to use extremely precise and slightly stilted vocabulary. His grammar and his diction are impeccable and his face remains rather impassible and enigmatic. He seems to be much less expressive than his driver.

- Look at the picture and remember what the problem is. What is Dr Shirley's suggestion? How does Tony react?

Dr Shirley tells Tony that the way he speaks might be embarrassing for him as they will meet upper-class people. He also says that Vallelonga should be shortened to Valle, so that it'd be much easier to introduce him (as Tony Valle "short and sweet"). Tony refuses to get his name shortened as he takes it as a denial of his identity.

4/ Language, education and social classes

- Say what the characters are doing in the picture.

Tony is writing a letter to his wife. Dr Shirley takes it, reads it and finally helps Tony to write a better letter.

- How would you describe this scene? Pick adjectives in the following list and explain your choice

Selon les réponses des élèves. On insistera sur le caractère comique du dialogue où se confrontent deux mondes radicalement opposés.



Éléments de correction

- Here are the two versions of Tony's letter: compare them (grammar, spelling, language, topic, style).

Tony's letter

Grammar: brung = past participle that doesn't exist => brought

Spelling: Deer = it's an animal => Dear / Bullshiter = one t missing => bullshitter

Language = very simple, even colloquial (+ slang: bullshitter)

Topic = very matter of fact, about his food, clothes

Style = extremely simple, no stylistic device

Don Shirley's version

Grammar: perfect

Spelling: perfect

Language = rather simple, but no colloquialism

Topic = love

Style = binary rhythm at the beginning and ternary rhythm at the end

- Explain what Dr Shirley is doing with Tony. Is he successful in his project?

Dr Shirley is trying to educate Tony, to improve the way he speaks and help him express himself. He is actually successful as Tony at the end of the film says he can write his letter by himself. Of course, we know these letters are far from being as good as Dr Shirley's but he has become aware of the importance of language.

- What does Dr Shirley also do with Tony? Can you think a particular sort of exercise?

Dr Shirley wants Tony to improve his diction and that's why he makes him repeat tongue twisters (such as "Betty bought a bit of better butter to make the bitter butter better.") But that doesn't seem to change anything in Tony's diction.

5 / Make your own social analysis

- Conclude about the relation between language and social class.

Selon les productions des élèves. On insistera sur le fait que le langage est un marqueur social évident qui est d'une très grande utilité pour tout artiste visant à représenter une certaine réalité sociale (avec le risque de tomber parfois dans la caricature).

Pour aller plus loin

▶ *Pygmalion*, SHAW George Bernard, Penguin Classics, (1916) 2003

▶ *My Fair Lady*, CUKOR George, 1964

▶ Notions de sociologie sur les classes sociales aux Etats-Unis

<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-sociology/chapter/the-class-structure-in-the-u-s/>



Take a Deep South road trip with **Green Book**

Un film de Peter Farrelly, 2018

Type d'activité :

Durée : 2 h

Cette activité vise à analyser le contexte des relations raciales dans l'Amérique des années 60. Elle pourra parfaitement s'intégrer dans une séquence sur le mouvement des droits civiques. Comme *Green Book* s'inscrit dans la tradition du road movie hollywoodien, il s'agira également pour les élèves de comprendre comment le film parvient à faire passer son message didactique, pour pouvoir ensuite élaborer leur propre projet cinématographique visant à exposer la situation raciale actuelle aux Etats-Unis.

Dans les programmes

Niveau	Dans les programmes	Compétences
Seconde	Mémoires: héritages et ruptures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Produire une histoire simple de manière autonome.▶ Faire un exposé simple et direct, préparé, sur un sujet familier.
Cycle Terminal	Lieux et formes du pouvoir	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Écrire des descriptions élaborées d'événements et d'expériences réels ou imaginaires en respectant les règles du genre en question.▶ Faire un exposé clair, préparé, pour présenter un projet



Green book : sur les routes du Sud

A film by : Peter Farrelly
Story *In 1962 a working-class Italian-American bouncer becomes the driver of an African-American pianist on a tour of venues through the Deep South. As they are confronted with the horrors of the Jim Crow laws, they gradually set aside their differences and become friends. Inspired by a true story.*
Film genre : Comedy
Year : 2018

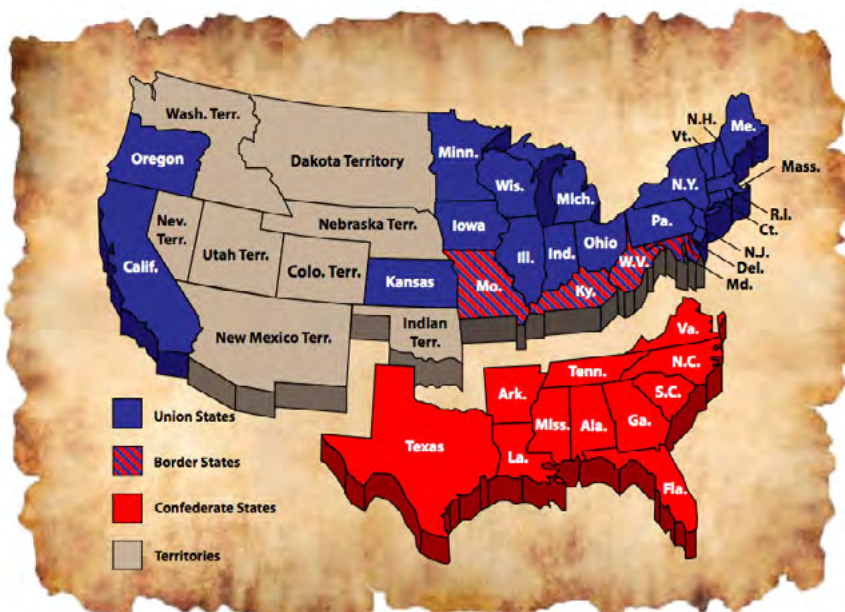
1/ Retrace the characters' road trip.

- List all the states that are mentioned in the film and place them on the map.



[Source](#)

- Compare it with that map. Read the legend of and say what you notice about most of the places the characters go through.



- Sum up what you know about the Civil War (1861-1865)

America before the Civil War

[Source](#)

2/ Study the context of America in the 1960s

- Look at the poster of the film.

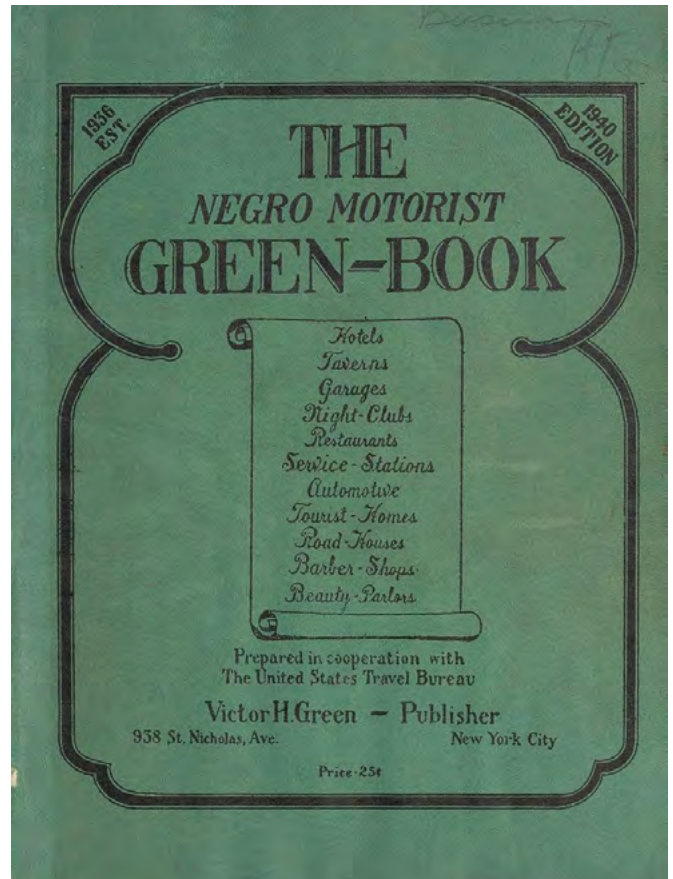
Can you explain the title?

Do you remember what it refers to?



- Study the cover of the 1940 edition of the Green Book.

In the list of places mentioned on the cover, identify 3 different types of places in which Dr Shirley is faced with discrimination.



- Comment on the “separate but equal” standard.

Does Dr. Shirley enjoy the same amount of comfort as white people?

Give two examples from the film.

Jim Crow laws

Jim Crow laws were state and local laws requiring the segregation of races that were established in the South after the Civil War.

The “**separate but equal**” standard, established by the Supreme Court in Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), made racial segregation for public facilities across the nation constitutional.



- Remember what the two men look at during this scene.

Why do you think the film director decided to include such a scene?

-Focus on what happens on the road in Mississippi.

Describe the atmosphere and comment on the effect on the viewer.

Describe the way the police treat both men and comment.

When does the viewer gets the explanation for the situation? What effect does this create?



- Analyse the broader context.

Are there instance of racism only in the South?

To what extent this context affect Dr Shirley's career? What does this show about America in the 1960s?

3/ Study the structure of the film.

- Compare the relationship between the two main characters at the beginning and at the end of the film.

- Where do most of the scenes take place? What can you deduce about this road trip? Can you think of other films that are structured in the same way?

- Do you think such a structure has an impact on the viewer? Why (not)?

4/ Prepare a pitch for your own road trip movie.

- Read the article and take notes about the situation.

- PAIRWORK: With your partner, write a short paragraph giving the bases (characters, places, events, type of car...) of a road trip film that would denounce today's situation in Missouri.

- Present your project to the class.

MISSOURI MAKES FODOR'S "NO-LIST 2018" FOLLOWING NAACP TRAVEL ADVISORY NOVEMBER 20, 2017

Baltimore, MD (November 20, 2017) - Fodor's, the world's largest publisher of English language travel and tourism information, has included Missouri on their 2018 "No List," citing the Missouri NAACP's travel advisory against the state.

"Missouri's laws, law makers, and law enforcers routinely discriminate against the state's vulnerable communities," said Nimrod Chapel, Jr., NAACP Missouri State Conference President. "People of color, people with disabilities, people of faith, women, senior citizens - all are at risk of biased, and sometimes violent, treatment. Our travel advisory seeks to warn potential visitors about the risks of traveling to or through Missouri and encourage them to consider the implications on them of spending their time and money in a state which has failed to make progress away from this Jim Crow culture of prejudice. We applaud Fodor's for recognizing the severity of the situation and including Missouri on their 2018 'No List.'"

Fodor's each year compiles a list of destinations that travelers should avoid out of "courtesy and concern for this wonderful world." Fodor's hopes that presence on this list will inspire the destinations to "recover, reconsider, or reform" come 2019. (...)

The NAACP Travel Advisory for the state of Missouri, initiated in August, is still ongoing. The advisory calls for African American travelers, visitors, and Missourians to pay special attention and exercise extreme caution when traveling throughout the state given the series of questionable, race-based incidents occurring statewide recently.

Note : NAACP: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is a civil rights organization in the United States, formed in 1909 as a bi-racial endeavor to advance justice for African Americans.



Éléments de correction

1/ Retrace the characters' road trip.

- List all the states that are mentioned in the film and place them on the map.

Pennsylvania - Indiana - Iowa - Kentucky - North Carolina - Tennessee - Arkansas - Louisiana - Mississippi - Alabama

- Read the legend of the map and say what you notice about most of the places the characters go through.

Most are situated in former Confederate states => Deep South

- Sum up what you know about the Civil War (1861-1865)

Suivant les réponses des élèves, on pourra retracer rapidement les enjeux de la Guerre de Sécession.

2/ Study the context of America in the 1960s

- Look at the poster of the film. Can you explain the title? Do you remember what it refers to?

Le Green Book apparaît assez peu dans le film : d'où cette question préalable et les questions suivantes.

Réponse possible: The Green Book was a guidebook aimed at helping Black travellers in segregated America. It listed the facilities that welcomed coloured people, especially in the South.

- Study the cover of the 1940 edition of the Green Book. In the list of places mentioned on the cover, identify 3 different types of places in which Dr Shirley is faced with discrimination.

Hotels: in Louisville, Kentucky, Tony Lip and Dr Shirley are not allowed to sleep in the same hotel.

Taverns: in Louisville again, Dr Shirley is told to leave the bar because he is black

Restaurants: in Birmingham, Alabama, Dr Shirley is not allowed to eat in the club's restaurant even though he is to play in that venue.

- Comment on the "separate but equal" standard. Does Dr. Shirley enjoy the same amount of comfort as white people? Give two examples from the film.

Suivant les réponses des élèves. (termes attendus: inequality, hypocrisy, absurdity)

Exemples possibles: The two hotels in Louisville obviously do not offer the same amount of comfort. One particularly striking example is also the toilet incident in Raleigh, North Carolina when Dr Shirley is told to go to a rundown outhouse instead of using the facilities in the luxurious plantation mansion.

- Remember what the two men look at during this scene. Why do you think the film director decided to include such a scene?

They are looking at Black field workers, a scene which seems to bring us back to the time of slavery. Such a scene was undoubtedly included to remind the viewer of the history of the Deep South.

- Focus on what happens on the road in Mississippi. Describe the atmosphere and comment on the effect on the viewer. Describe the way the police treat both men and comment. When does the viewer get the explanation for the situation? What effect does this create?

They are stopped by the police. The atmosphere is particularly gloomy (because of the lack of light and the rain) and tense (lots of different shots: close-ups on faces, shot reverse shot, different camera angles that create some form of confusion => at first, the viewer does not really understand what is going on, just like the characters). The police are particularly contemptuous, disrespectful and insulting towards the two men. They typically call Dr Shirley "boy", thus denying his status as a man. It is only at the end, when the two men eventually leave the place, that we discover a sign which reads "WHITES ONLY WITHIN CITY LIMITS AFTER DARK", which means that this place was a sundown town. The fact that the explanation only comes at the end makes the whole scene appear even more absurd and completely wrong for the viewer.

- Analyse the broader context. Are there instances of racism only in the South? To what extent does this context affect Dr Shirley's career? What does this show about America in the 1960s?

Other instances: Tony Lip's racism (the glasses used by black repairman which he throws into the bin); the stage manager in Indiana who refuses to get a proper Steinway piano for Dr Shirley... Such a context prevented Dr Shirley to perform as a fully classical artist: as a Black man, he wasn't allowed to play classical pieces even though he was fully qualified to do so. This shows that American society as a whole was riddled with racism, both institutionalised and ordinary.

3/ Study the structure of the film

- Compare the relationship between the two main characters at the beginning and at the end of the film.

At first, the two men clearly dislike each other, for racial and social reasons. But little by little, they get to know more about each other and end up as true friends.

- Where do most of the scenes take place? What can you deduce about this road trip? Can you think of other films that are structured in the same way?

Most scenes take place within the car and this road trip appears to be a transformative experience, which turns both cha-



Éléments de correction

racters into better men. Such a structure is actually quite common in road movies, which can often be seen as symbolic self-revealing and/or self-improving journeys. (examples: *Thelma and Louise*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *On the Road*, *Easy Rider*, *Rain Man*...)

- Do you think such a structure has an impact on the viewer? Why (not)?

Such a structure is quite effective to convey its denunciation of racism and its message of hope for change to the viewer as we experience the hardships of the road trip along with the characters and eventually reach the happy conclusion with them.

Pour aller plus loin

- ▶ *Mississippi Burning*, PARKER Alan, 1988
- ▶ *Selma*, DUVERNAY, Ava, 2014
- ▶ *Freedom Riders*, NELSON Stanley, 2011
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/freedomriders/#part01>
- ▶ Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia : <https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/>