

Clicker MFL:

French CD1 & 2, French Stories



Price: single user £50; site licence £100; bundle £250

Contact: www.cricksoft.com

Reviewed by John Dabell



Primary teachers are, by their very job description, polymaths – Jacks and Jills of all subjects but masters and mistresses of none. You might be lucky enough to have a subject specialist in your school who actually is a specialist in their subject and not just in job title, but they're few and far between, and especially scarce when it comes to modern foreign languages. Most of us can muster a few French words and phrases here and there but "Mange tout, Rodney" and "Ouvrez la fenêtre" said in a dubious Gallic accent isn't exactly functional French...

Happily, there are various software resources to which non-specialists can turn for help. Award-winning Crick Software has produced the innovative Clicker MFL, a series of CDs aimed at helping children learn French. There are three titles in the series: French CD 1, French CD 2, and French Stories. Each title introduces pupils to basic vocabulary and sentence structures, and then methodically supports comprehension through a variety of reinforcement exercises that

integrate active reading, writing, speaking and listening. This is smartly structured through colour-coded activities and meets the objectives of the KS2 Framework for Languages.

CD1 contains the usual themes: family, colours, animals, numbers up to 20, at the market, portraits, activities and happy birthday. CD2 builds on these units and covers more numbers, days of the week, clothes, time, weather, food, sport, pocket money, 'all aboard', and the animal world. The French Stories CD contains *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*. Reassuringly the speech contained on the CDs is that of a native French speaker and so offers an excellent model of pronunciation and enunciation for children to follow and make their own. Lots of the activities are designed with a 'start page', a 'doing page' and a 'summary page'. The dynamic Clicker reading and writing tool really enhances the power of these CDs because children can listen to words and sentences and write labels and sentences. These features encourage children to



review their own writing and compare their work to the model in order to evaluate and progress their own performance. The CDs come with a variety of simple-to-use French templates, a fully translated graphic library and a spell-checker, allowing you to create your own personalised activities.

The bit children will enjoy most is recording their own voices. The pop-up sound recorder allows children to experiment, practise and perfect, and have fun in the process. All you need is a microphone connected to your computer. Saving these recordings provides invaluable evidence of children's progress and achievement. Written work can also be saved, and activities can be printed out as a record of completed work or for work away from the computer. The CDs contain comprehensive teaching notes, which add a real sense of security to your planning. They tell you all you need to know and what to do without overloading you. Extension ideas are also included.

A few grumbles: I think the image quality and graphics are pretty average and certainly could be more engaging compared to other resources on the market. I'd also like to see more stories included in the story CD. What about pupil workbooks? None included. This said, the Clicker MFL CDs are great value for money. A single user for one CD will cost you £50 and a site licence is £100. The site licence bundle for all three CDs is yours for £250.



VERDICT: C'EST TRÈS BIEN

This series is an off-the-shelf and easy-to-use set that will encourage you to make French part and parcel of your working week and avoid shying away from having a go yourself. The CDs make an excellent foundation for developing children's writing, reading, speaking and listening skills and who knows, they might even inspire you to specialise. I'd use Clicker MFL alongside my treasure chest collection of flash cards, songs, games and web-based bits and bobs.

A review of Clicker MFL: French from Teach Primary Magazine Volume 5.1

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