

Fiche de Lecture


The *fiche de lecture* is a way of keeping notes on *Les Pieds tanqués* that will help you remember what you have learnt and will be an invaluable source for writing an essay on the play.

	<i>Les Pieds tanqués</i>
Director	Philippe Chuyen
Genre	Historical, comedy, play, French, tragedy/tragicomedy
Plot summary	4 men play pétanque, as the game progresses questions of identity and background arise as they discuss their conflicting perspectives and memories on the Algerian War.
Key Characters	Loule (Provençal) Zé (pied-noir) Yaya (French. Algerian parents) M Blanc (Parisian)
Setting and time period	Provence, terrain de pétanque 24 July 1995, the day of the terrorist attack on the St Michel metro station in Paris.
Key themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Algerian War – Identity (individual and national; who am I? What does it mean to be French?) – Friendship / conflict – Competitive memory – conflicting interpretations of history, often based on suffering and victimhood – Family memories and inherited responsibilities – The arc of history (le sens de l’Histoire) – Discrimination, racism, (in)justice – Ambiguity – Tragedy
Session 6 Pp9-18 Key moments and quotations	<p>P9. Loule comes on stage and turns off radio announcement of bomb attack – he isn’t interested in this reminder of France’s Algerian past.</p> <p>The characters are introduced. Zé, the pied-noir, is teased for having a short memory (pieds-noirs are renowned for not having moved on from the past). Yaya is teased for not being seen as fully part of French</p>


	<p>society. But it is clear that they are all friends, with the divisions merely highlighted as banter.</p> <p>P10 'la mémoire courte' discussion around Zé (pied-noir)</p> <p>P11 Yaya – Pas moi Zé. Je suis parfaitement intégré ! (A reference to his Algerian heritage and the need to assert his Frenchness)</p> <p>The men begin playing pétanque</p> <p>When M Blanc arrives and asks to join he is treated as an outsider because of his accent, his brand-new boules and newly-built house, and his complaints about the cost of everything. He upsets Yaya by implying he isn't from 'here' and Zé hints at his upset at having been forced to leave Algeria and come and live in Provence.</p>
<p>Session 7</p> <p>Key moments and quotations</p>	<p>M Blanc continues to upset the others by referencing President de Gaulle's 'Je vous ai compris!' speech.</p> <p>Loule is impatient to start the game.</p> <p>Discussion of Albert Camus, Zé's old neighbour, leads into talk of the war. M Blanc contends that it was not a war (merely 'events') but Yaya doesn't agree.</p> <p>Loule refers to M Blanc as M Brun (the outsider from a city to the north in Marcel Pagnol's famous plays. M Blanc is also an outsider from a northern city). M Blanc is offended and almost leaves. They persuade him to stay and play.</p> <p>11 – Loule tells how his Communist father supported Algerian independence: 'Il militait pour l'indépendance de ton foutu pays !</p> <p>Yaya – C'est pas mon pays.</p> <p>Zé – C'était le mien.'</p> <p>The characters struggle over who has the right to call a place their home.</p> <p>Mention of M Blanc's father but he pretends he knows very little about his time of service in Algeria.</p>
<p>Session 8</p> <p>Key moments and quotations</p>	<p>M Blanc and Zé disagree about whether History evolved naturally in a certain direction, or whether we construct History in retrospect, looking backwards at events to see a pattern. 'Le sens de l'Histoire' (11).</p> <p>Yaya suggests that French Algeria could have been a success if France</p>

	<p>had kept its promises of liberty, equality and fraternity.</p> <p>Yaya and Zé disagree about whether the pieds-noirs belonged in Algeria, having been there for 5 or 6 generations. Zé claims that the settlers built Algeria from nothing: 'On a inventé un pays, une culture!'</p> <p>Loule objects that the white Frenchman gets blamed for all the ills of the world.</p> <p>Zé nostalgically remembers his childhood in Algeria.</p> <p>Loule tells how his Communist father's faith in ideas was destroyed by the fall of Communism and the Berlin Wall in 1989. He complains about all of the new arrivals in Provence; each of the other characters feels that he is complaining about them.</p> <p>Yaya highlights the horrors of war; Zé says that the pieds-noirs knew nothing about them.</p> <p>M Blanc admits that his father was not just a conscript; he was an officer in charge of a torture centre. Having been tortured by the Nazis in WWII, he found himself using the same techniques and couldn't live with himself. He committed suicide 3 months after returning to France.</p>
<p>Session 9</p> <p>Key moments and quotations</p>	<p>Loule accuses Yaya of not loving France enough. Yaya asks how he is supposed to prove his allegiance?</p> <p>Yaya talks about why he might reasonably not love France: both his father (FLN) and his uncle (harki) were killed by the French. He explains that as a harki who fought in the French army, after the war his uncle was considered a traitor.</p> <p>On behalf of his father and for Yaya's father and uncle, M Blanc asks Yaya's forgiveness.</p> <p>Yaya tells of how he had to prove his parents' French identity to France's bureaucracy. Proof is impossible because they did not have ID cards in Algeria.</p> <p>Zé realises he would be in the same position, as the son of Jewish parents. Loule is surprised to learn that Zé is Jewish – it is another point of division.</p> <p>Loule expresses his frustration at how Provence has been changed by successive waves of new arrivals: pied-noir repatriates, Algerian immigrants, and rich Parisians building second homes. He feels he is losing his own culture, reduced to playing the part of a 'traditional' Provençal person (compare this with people wearing kilts and playing bagpipes on Princes St in Edinburgh; is this 'real' Scottish culture?). 'Il</p>


	<p>[Loule] devient une sorte de santon, momifié.’ Loule feels he is forced into playing a caricatured and outdated conception of Provençal culture in order to keep any of it alive.</p> <p>The other three characters feel that they are being attacked as the source of his difficulties.</p>
<p>Session 10</p> <p>Key moments and quotations</p>	<p>Zé points out that, unlike Zé, Loule still has his own homeland.</p> <p>Yaya says that Loule has a choice: become bitter at the changes he sees, or assert that Provence’s history of changing cultures is his history. ‘Dans mes veines coule la Méditerranée, le sang de mes ancêtres... Mon pays a une histoire noble, profonde et belle, une histoire de résistance contre les tyrannies, et il a toujours survécu !’ (22)</p> <p>Yaya points out that if the pieds-noirs had been open to learning new things, they might have been able to stay in Algeria, which would have become a harmonious multi-ethnic society: ‘L’Algérie, un subtil mélange de Musulmans, de Chrétiens et de Juifs qui vivraient en paix, d’égal à égal : la plus belle et la plus grande des régions françaises, de l’Union européenne ! Ça serait pas beau ça ?’ (23)</p> <p>M Blanc wonders if that harmonious mix is possible now, in Provence: ‘Et si cette région elle existait déjà ? Si l’expérience d’Algérie, commencée en 1830, avait toutes les chances de réussir ici, en Provence, au xxie siècle. Comme une greffe qui aurait pris de ce côté-ci de la Méditerranée ?’ (23)</p> <p>The close of the play sees the characters repeat the play’s opening discussions, subtly altered to reflect the new harmony and understanding between them.</p> <p>Yaya’s final line mentions ‘tout vient avec le temps’, an encouragement for M. Blanc given his poor performance in pétanque. It can be expanded to be a metaphor of what could be in Provence, again highlighting the more harmonious potential for the future.</p>

Loule	
Image	
Name	Loule
Origin/ethnicity	Provençal
Clothing	Traditional, worn
Accent	Provençal, more traditional rural/town than young city/urban accent
Social status	<p>Labourer communist father</p> <p>Working-class background, blames others for the changes occurring in Provence</p>
Relation to France	<p>Protective of Provençal culture, patriotic. But he struggles with the secret of his father's past: his father was a Communist who raised money for Algerian independence; the money paid for bombs to kill French soldiers.</p> <p>Anti-immigrant, anti-outsiders coming into the region</p>
Relation to Algeria	<p>Resentful of the past, war and its impacts on his father and his region. Seen to be keen to ignore the past (see radio scene).</p>
Angry at who and when? Why?	<p>Begins by not wanting to engage with the past. When this proves impossible he becomes frustrated.</p> <p>Angry towards the other three characters at various points who feel that he is attacking them.</p> <p>He feels that Provence is being changed by the influx of arrivals from elsewhere. He speaks against the influx of pieds-noirs (e.g. Zé), the arrival of immigrants from N.Africa (e.g. Yaya's parents) and the recent shift towards the wealthy urbanites buying up local land (e.g. M Blanc)</p>

	Asks Yaya to prove his love for France.
Key quotations	<p>Wants to avoid talk of the past: Loule (s'énervant) – Oh, ouh ! On joue aux boules ou on refait la guerre ! (8)</p> <p>Mon pauvre père... Contre sa propre patrie il militait... Il transférait du pognon pour acheter des bombes qui tuaient ses compatriotes. (11)</p> <p>[Complaining about how Provence has changed; the others feel he is attacking them] on a vu peu à peu tout un petit monde se rappliquer par ici, (14)</p> <p>To Yaya: il est où ton camp maintenant, à toi? (18)</p> <p>(speaking about himself, the Provençal): il sait plus de quoi il est fait, si sa culture, sa langue, son accent, c'est des trucs de la télé ou des choses qu'il tient de ses ancêtres.... Il devient une sorte de santon, momifié. (21)</p>


	Yaya
Image	
Name	Yaya
Origin/ethnicity	French with Algerian parents, French citizen
Clothing	Younger, urban/city
Accent	Marseillais – city accent / Provençal
Social status	Treated differently than others due to ethnicity – fewer privileges Lower-middle class. Second generation immigrant
Relation to France	French, born and raised. Double identity – connection to both France and Algeria But others challenge that due to his parentage
Relation to Algeria	connection to both France and Algeria Parents were Algerian Defensive character
Angry at who and when? Why?	Anyone questioning his Frenchness: Loule, and the woman working for the mairie when he asks for a replacement ID card (20) Annoyed at M Blanc for implying that he isn't from the region Defends Algeria – challenging the views of Zé and M Blanc
Key quotations	See slides e.g. Yaya – Pas moi Zé. Je suis parfaitement intégré ! (3)

	<p>Yaya - ça s'entend pas que je suis d'ici ? Zé – Ça s'entend, mais ça se voit pas. (6)</p> <p>Loule - Il militait pour l'indépendance de ton foutu pays ! Yaya – C'est pas mon pays. Zé – C'était le mien. (11)</p> <p>Si la France avait tenu ses promesses, Zé ! Si elle avait accompli son idéal de justice, de progrès. Implication that things could have been different (12)</p> <p>Reasons why Yaya might hate France: – Un père F.L.N. arrêté par les paras et qu'on n'a jamais revu. Un oncle harki massacré sur le quai d'un embarquement qu'on lui refusait... (19)</p> <p>The trap of proving French citizenship: il y a trois semaines, j'ai perdu mes papiers... (20)</p> <p>What colonial Algeria might have been: L'Algérie, un subtil mélange de Musulmans, de Chrétiens et de Juifs qui vivraient en paix, d'égal à égal : la plus belle et la plus grande des régions françaises, de l'Union européenne ! (23)</p>
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Zé	
Image	
Name	Zé
Origin/ethnicity	Pied-noir / settler background
Clothing	Casual, reflects his age and game
Accent	Pied-noir
Social status	Not always welcomed, had to flee Algeria for France – resentment

	Privileges in Algeria, lost when moved to France
Relation to France	He sees Algeria as having been his home and feels poorly welcomed in France.
Relation to Algeria	Algeria was his 'eternal home', a lost paradise that he remembers nostalgically. Conflicted identity. 'On a créé une culture, un pays' [Algeria]
Angry at who and when? Why?	Being forced to flee Algeria Anyone suggesting that the settlers (pieds-noirs) knew about or were responsible for the injustice of colonisation or violence and torture in Algeria.
Key quotations	<p>La mémoire courte ? Ah non, pas moi (3)</p> <p>Zé – Nous l'accent, c'est tout ce qu'il nous reste; Loule – Fatche de con, c'est le bal des victimes aujourd'hui ! (6)</p> <p>Zé – C'est du passé, mais ça passe pas. (10)</p> <p>Le sens de l'Histoire ? Ça veut rien dire ça ! L'Histoire, on l'écrit toujours après (11)</p> <p>On n'était pas chez nous ? Après cinq ou six générations ! (12)</p> <p>On était coupable de quoi ? De nous sentir chez nous ? On a inventé un pays, une culture ! (12)</p> <p>Cette Algérie heureuse... Le pays de mon enfance, Yaya, mon pays éternel... (13)</p> <p>Nous, les Pieds-Noirs, on n'a rien à voir avec tout ça... (referring to Yaya's description of war crimes) (16)</p> <p>nous les Pieds-Noirs on était là, au beau milieu de toutes ces horreurs (18)</p> <p>On n'était pas des colons</p>

	Monsieur Blanc
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Image	
Name Origin/ethnicity	Monsieur Blanc Parisian
Clothing	All white, brand new boules, smart shoulder bag (cf. Loule's boules bucket). He stands out in his clichéd cote-d'azur outfit.
Accent	Parisian, gives his full title, posh accent, leads to him being mocked and coming across as an outsider. 'Vous ne cherchez pas un quatrième à tout hasard ?' 'le cochonnet' (v 'le bouchon' used by local characters)
Social status	Middle-upper class Rich - bought land and built a new house on it, but complains about the cost Outsider in this context [perhaps not used to that]
Relation to France	Born and raised, protective of France
Relation to Algeria	His father served as an officer in Algeria (previously a member of the Resistance in WWII when he was captured and tortured, fought in France's war in Indochina before serving in Algeria) In charge of an interrogation (torture) centre. Killed himself after. M Blanc tries to hide that family history at first
Angry at who and when? Why?	Annoyed at being picked on Keen to fit in, peacemaker
Key quotations	'ce n'était pas une guerre' - naïve (8) C'était le sens de l'Histoire. (11)

Mon père était responsable d'une villa. (17)

mon père s'est battu pour la France, pour préserver sa souveraineté, ses territoires, ses idéaux... C'est l'engrenage dans lequel il a été pris là-bas qui l'a broyé. Ça a été audessus de ses forces. (18)

Si ça peut avoir une valeur pour vous, Yaya, au nom de la mémoire de mon père, pour votre oncle, pour votre père: je vous demande pardon. (20)

(Responding to Yaya's vision of a harmonious colonial Algeria): Et si cette région elle existait déjà ? Si l'expérience d'Algérie, commencée en 1830, avait toutes les chances de réussir ici, en Provence, au xxie siècle. Comme une greffe qui aurait pris de ce côté-ci de la Méditerranée ? (23)