

Creativity in the Languages Classroom

The ALL Special Interest Group (SIG) for Creativity in the MFL Classroom was delighted to launch the first edition of the *Permission to Be Creative* competition in 2026. This initiative was born directly from conversations with teachers across our network. Over the past year, SIG members repeatedly shared how difficult it has become to sustain creativity in language teaching. Time pressure, curriculum coverage, and the relentless focus on exam preparation often leave little space for the imaginative, playful, and exploratory tasks that first inspired many of us to teach languages.

Yet, when speaking with colleagues in international schools, particularly SIG members in France, Germany, Sweden, and the UAE, a different picture emerged. Many colleagues report embedding creative tasks not as “extras,” but as integral components of assessment, homework, and project-based learning. Their examples encouraged us to revisit, as a SIG, how creativity can be woven into everyday practice in ways that support, not compete with, curriculum demands.

The result is the *Permission to Be Creative* competition: a celebration of how creative work can consolidate learning, reduce language anxiety, and re-energise both teachers and learners.

A Celebration of Creativity Across Borders

This first edition has been a joyful showcase of what young linguists can achieve when given the freedom to create. We received submissions from primary, secondary, sixth form, and *lycée professionnel* settings across England and France, each demonstrating how creative tasks can deepen linguistic understanding and strengthen learner motivation.

The range of work was remarkable:

- poems and calligrammes
- videos and magazines
- storyboards and comic strips
- creative boxes, food-truck designs, and visual projects

What united them was the way students used creativity to consolidate prior knowledge, express identity, and engage with language in meaningful ways.

In France, one standout project came from Collège Mandel in Paris, where Fanny Hory guided students to create creative book-review boxes. Each side of the box represented a different element of the book: plot summary, character descriptions, personal opinions, and favourite extracts. Students reported that the tactile, visual nature of the task made reading in a foreign language feel more accessible and enjoyable.

From the Lycée Professionnel Les Alpilles, Caroline Sroka submitted an inspiring Food Truck Project. Students designed food trucks representing the cuisines of their home cultures, blending vocabulary learning with cultural pride. The project not only consolidated key language structures but also celebrated diversity within the school community.

In England, teachers demonstrated how creative tasks can be embedded directly into assessment cycles. At Grey Coat School, Catherine Ames supported Year 9 students to produce comic strips on aches and pains in

French, transforming a traditionally dry topic into a lively narrative task. At Gumley House School, Manon Tournier encouraged Year 10 students to create celebrity-culture magazine pages, revitalising a GCSE theme that students often find less engaging.

At The Priory Academy, Naomi Eglington's learners produced beautiful *calligrammes* describing where they live and their imaginary pets: an inventive way to practise descriptive language while developing visual literacy. Across both primary and secondary phases, we also received thoughtful and expressive poems on a wide range of themes.

Why Creativity Matters

The learner voice collected in France highlighted a powerful message: creative work reduces language anxiety. Students who recorded their feedback on audio, reported feeling more confident, more willing to take risks, and more motivated to use the language beyond the usual classroom routines. This aligns with Ryan & Deci's (2000) research and their self-determination theory, which emphasises that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are key drivers of intrinsic motivation. Creative tasks naturally support these conditions as they give learners ownership, allow them to demonstrate understanding in varied ways, and connect language learning to personal expression.

The competition is therefore not simply a celebration of beautiful work; it is a reminder that creativity is not an 'add-on' but a powerful pedagogical tool. Our aim is to encourage colleagues to integrate creative tasks into assessment cycles and everyday teaching, even within the constraints of busy school life.

WHAT STUDENTS REMEMBER

"We are working while **having fun**"
Héloïse

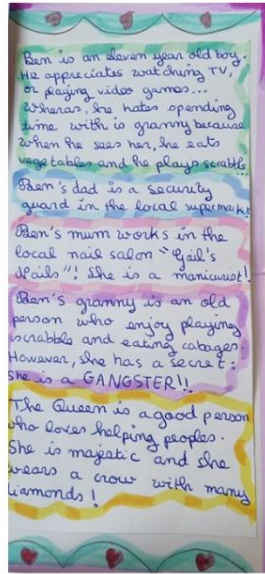
"I'm a very nervous student.
It helps me **settle down** in class »
Océane

"We can **memorise** the
story more easily"
Aline

A CREATIVE BOOK REVIEW



THE BOX



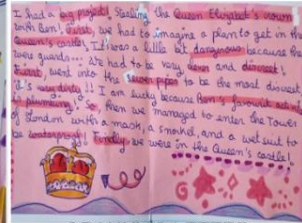
THE CHARACTERS



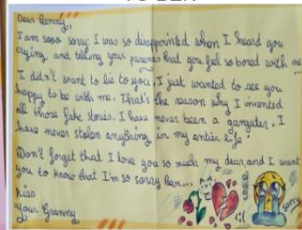
BEN'S DIARY



ONE OF GRANNY'S ADVENTURES



GRANNY'S LETTER TO BEN



idea: la Bande à Baudelaire

Outstanding: Oceane College George Mandel Paris (yr8)



Highly Commended: Lamris Food Truck – Lycée Professionel Les Alpilles (Year 12)

①

Mes dents!

J'ai mal aux dents parce que hier, j'avais très faim donc j'ai mangé un rocher. J'ai été une idiote! Je sais ça. Cependant je pense que c'était un peu délicieux.



②

Ma gorge!



Le week-end dernier, j'ai regardé une émission en la télé avec mon frère. Nous avons regardé 'The Traitors' et 'Les innocents' étaient trop affreux à mon avis. Puis, j'ai crié à la télé et maintenant j'aimai à la gorge.

③

Ma tête

J'ai trop tété. Parce que j'ai baigné et ma tête (flor), très être, je devrai être plus prudent à l'avenir mais maintenant je dois aller à l'hôpital.



mal à la que, je me et quand j'ai suis tombé a frappe le dur. Peut

④

Mon ventre!

Je suis malade et je pense que je vais vomir car récemment, j'ai bu lait au chocolat et... Je déteste ça. Ça doit être rance! Je suis désolée mais j'en je n'en mangerai jamais encore.

⑤

Ma jambe!



D'accord! Je suis très paresseuse donc ma mère a dit "Cecilia, tu dois faire d'exercice" parce que tous les jours, je dors au lit. Hier, j'ai fait du vélo mais, j'ai tombé. Alors, je me suis cassé ma jambe. Que c'est triste!

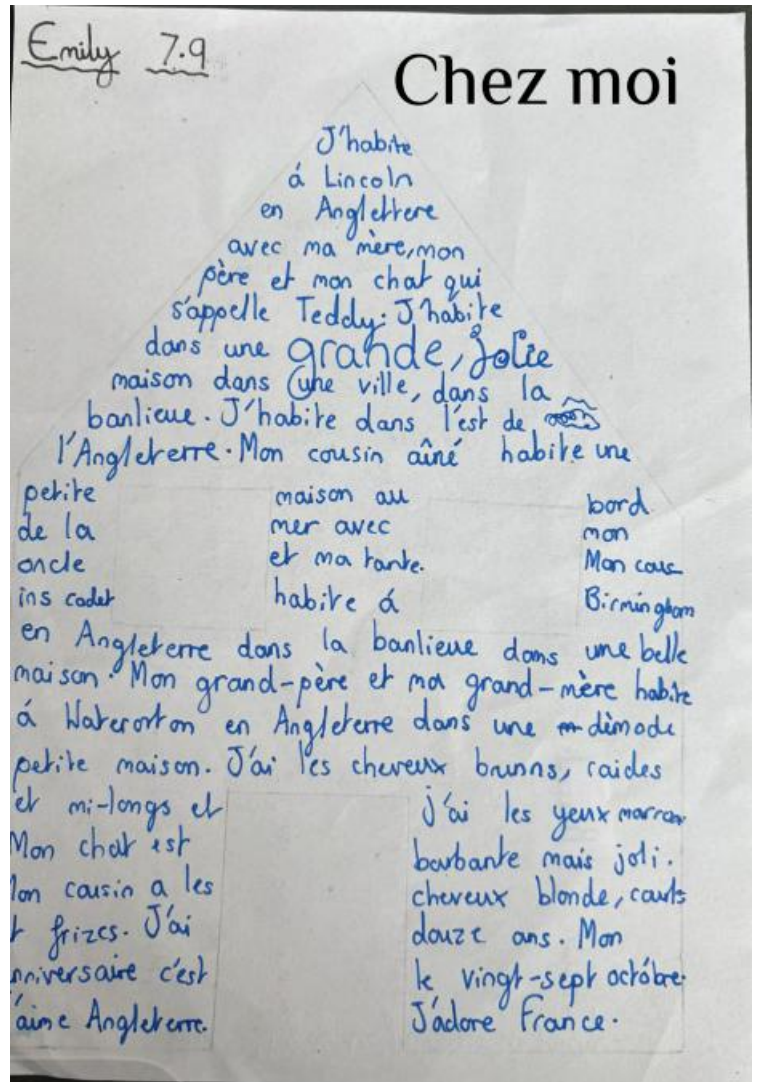
⑥

Mon dos!

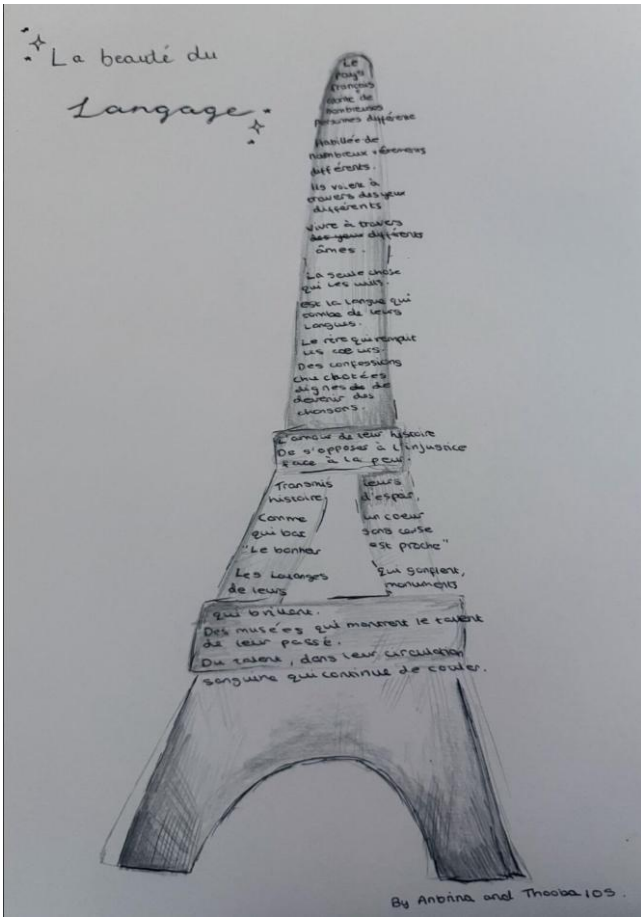
Tous les jours pour l'école, je porte mon sac mais c'est trop lourd. Maintenant, j'ai mal au dos. Je n'ai jamais voulu ça!



Highly Commended: Emily – Priory Academy
year 7

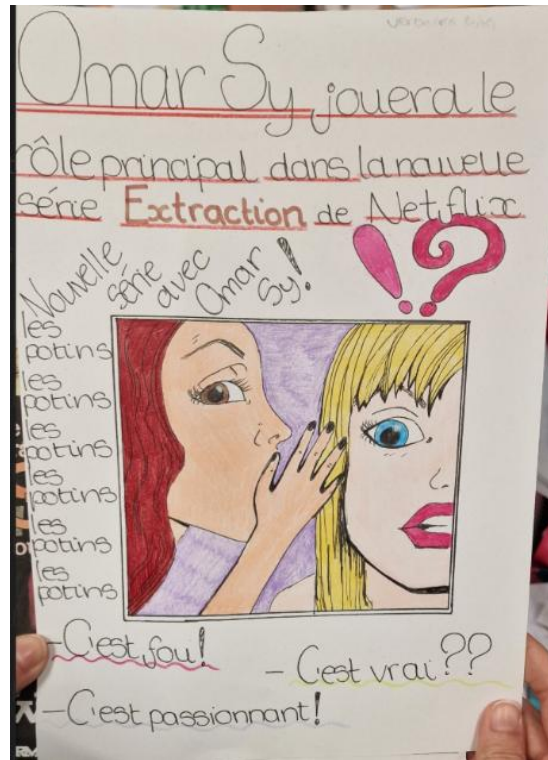
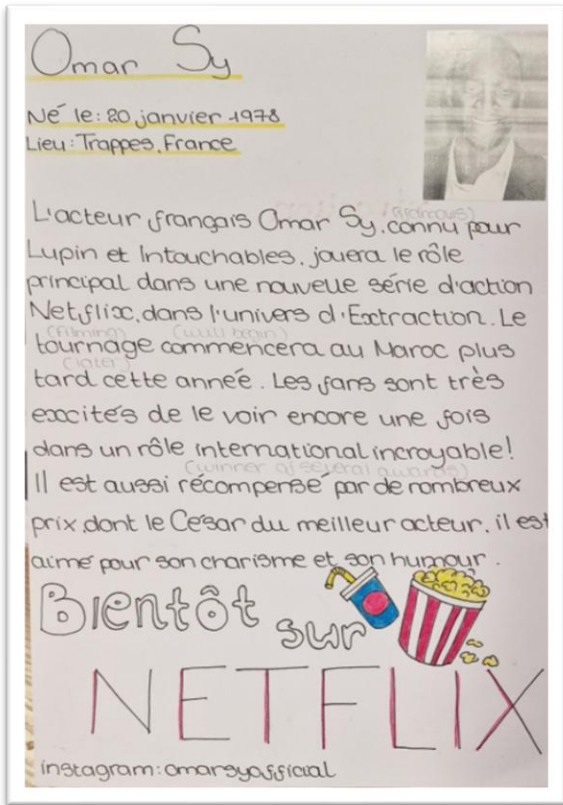


French Key Stage 4:



Outstanding: La Beauté du Langage poem and calligramme

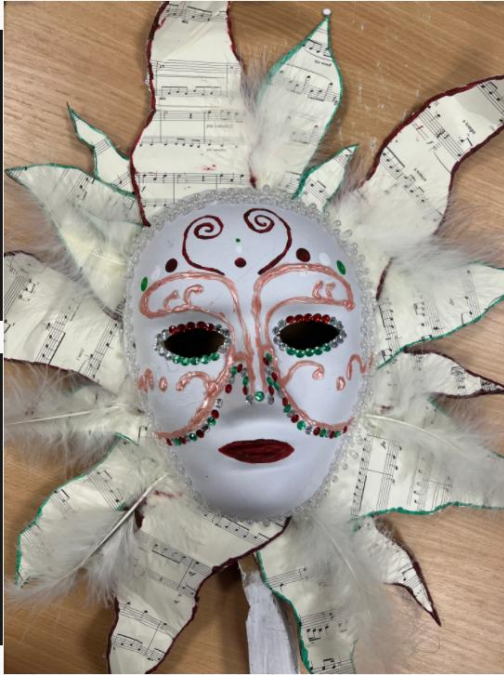
Anbrina & Thooba (year 10)



Highly Commended: Veronika – Gumley House School – Year 10

Italian Key Stage 3

This is a Venetian mask competition submitted by Tania Arecco – Head of Italian at mley House School. Students learnt the traditions of the Venetian carnival through dual language book. Students submit a mask for a inter house competition combining art skills, culture and collaborative work:



Outstanding: Led by Zoya (yr8)



Highly commended: LEd by Elis and Ellie

Chinese New Year Lanterns Gumley House School – Confucius Classroom

These entries were submitted by Xiaomin Lu, Head of Chinese at Gumley House School. Each year students learn about the Chinese New Year its meaning in the Asian communities. This leads to an inter-house competition where each form produces a lantern.



Outstanding: 7C



Highly Commended: 7M

Primary French :

Sans Toi

Sans toi, je suis un arc-en-ciel sans couleur,

Sans toi, je suis un jour sans soleil,

Sans toi, je suis une plage sans sable,

Sans toi, je suis un feu sans chaleur, |

Sans toi, je suis un oiseau sans ailes,

Sans toi, je suis un piano sans clés,

Sans toi, je suis le Yin sans le Yang,

Sans toi, je suis la nuit sans étoiles,

Sans toi, je suis un arbre sans feuilles,

Sans toi, je suis un stylo sans encre,

Sans toi, je suis une voiture sans roues,

Sans toi, je suis un cactus sans points,

Sans toi, je suis une gourde sans eau,

Sans toi, je suis un océan sans sel,

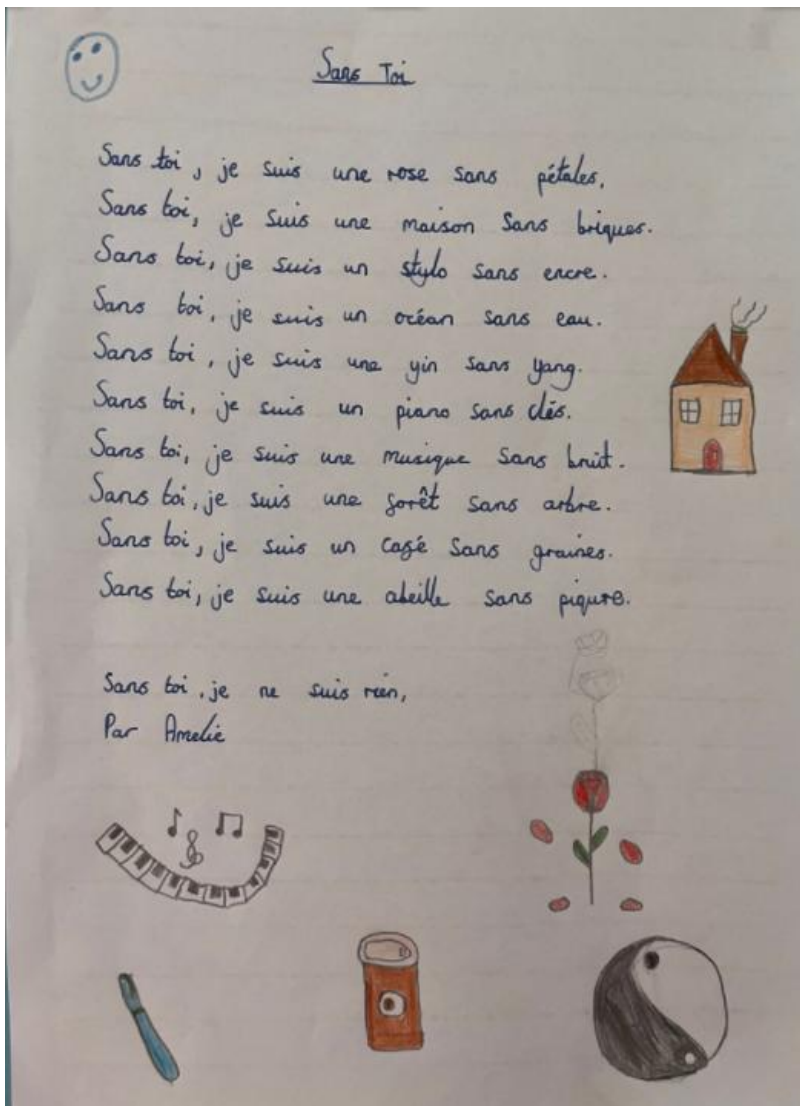
Sans toi, je suis une montagne sans sommet,

Sans toi, je ne suis rien.



Par Lexi

Outstanding : Sans Toi by Lexi



Highly Commended: Sans Toi by Amelie

Video entry: A special commendation for Kaustubha in Year 7 at Plashet School who taught her mum French greetings to consolidate learning and recording on a video:

