

Reading about heritage, museums and cultural policy

French B2 (upper intermediate) · Lesson

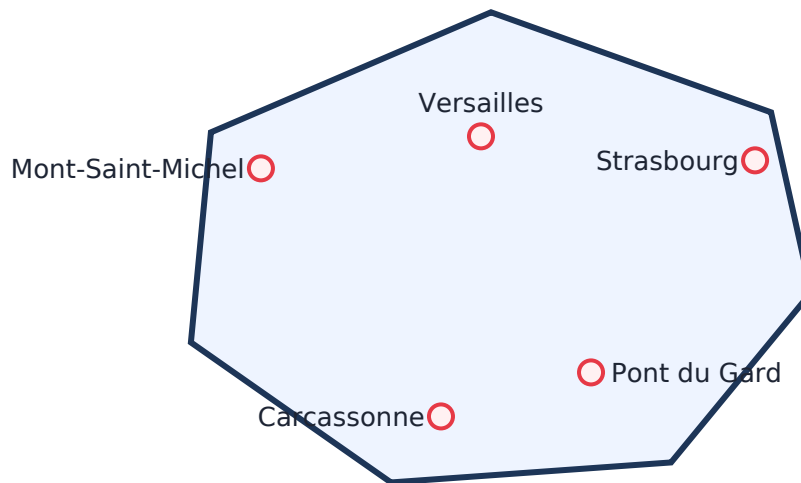
Quick answer: To read B2 texts about heritage and the arts, learn the key vocabulary (patrimoine, mécénat, subvention) and the relative pronouns that build long sentences: qui, que, dont, où and lequél. Combine them with the passive voice, where the participle agrees with the subject.

Level: French B2 (CEFR upper intermediate) · **Standards:** CEFR B2, Reading

How do you understand French texts about heritage and the arts?

Reading texts at B2 level (articles on museums, restoration or cultural policy) pack long sentences with **relative clauses** and **passives**. Learn the vocabulary first, then train your eye to find the noun each pronoun refers to.

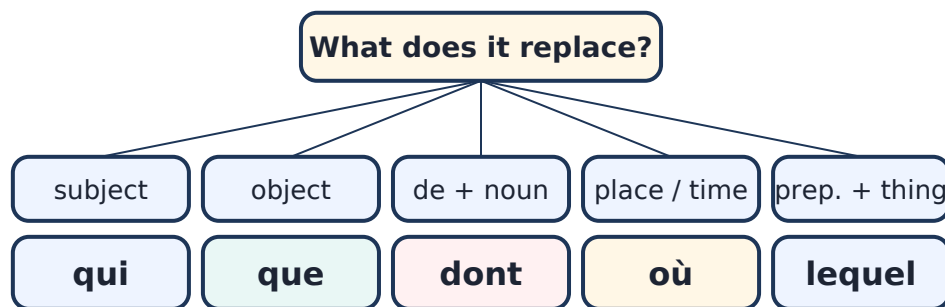
French	English
le patrimoine	heritage
un monument classé	a listed (protected) monument
le patrimoine mondial	World Heritage
le mécénat	private sponsorship
une subvention	a public grant
une exposition temporaire	a temporary exhibition
la fréquentation	visitor numbers
la gratuité	free admission
un conservateur	a curator



Five famous heritage sites in France.

Which relative pronoun do you need?

Pronoun	Replaces	Example
qui	a subject	Le pont du Gard, qui date de l'Antiquité, est un aqueduc romain.
que	a direct object	L'abbaye que nous avons visitée est en travaux.
dont	de + noun	Le château dont j'ai oublié le nom domine la vallée.
où	a place or a time	Le jour où le musée est gratuit, la file est immense.
lequel, auquel, duquel	preposition + thing	La grotte dans laquelle on a trouvé ces peintures est fermée.



Choosing a relative pronoun.

Ce qui, ce que, ce dont

When the antecedent is a whole idea, use *ce qui* (subject), *ce que* (object), *ce dont* (de): *Ce qui frappe, c'est la lumière.* · *Ce que j'admire, c'est la précision.* · *Ce dont les musées manquent, c'est de personnel.*

How is the passive used in heritage texts?

Passive voice

La façade a été restaurée par une équipe de tailleurs de pierre. — The façade was restored by a team of stonecutters.

Le château est entouré d'un grand parc. — The castle is surrounded by a large park.

The past participle agrees with the subject. Use *par* for an action, *de* for a state or feeling.

Common mistake

English drops the pronoun ("the museum I visited"); French never does: *le musée que j'ai visité*. After *dont*, the noun keeps its article and the subject follows: *un château dont j'admire les tours*, never *dont ses tours*. Also remember that *dont* is not *que* + preposition: *le projet dont je parle* (*parler de*), but *le projet auquel je pense* (*penser à*).

Culture note

About fifty sites in France are on the UNESCO World Heritage list, among them Mont-Saint-Michel, the Palace of Versailles and the Pont du Gard. Every September, the *Journées européennes du patrimoine* open many buildings that are normally closed. The Ministry of Culture was created in 1959, with the writer André Malraux as its first minister.

Zoé's tip

When a long sentence loses you, underline each relative pronoun and draw an arrow back to the noun it replaces. Then read the clause on its own: it is a mini-sentence with its own verb.

Key points to remember

- Qui is a subject, que an object, dont replaces *de* + noun, où a place or time.
- Lequel merges with *à* and *de*: *auquel*, *duquel*.
- Ce qui, ce que, ce dont refer to a whole idea.
- Passive: *être* + past participle, agent with *par* or *de*.
- Underline each pronoun and find its antecedent to untangle long sentences.

Reading about heritage, museums and cultural policy: frequently

asked questions

What does dont mean in French?

Dont replaces de + noun and can mean "of which", "whose" or "about which": un film dont tout le monde parle. It is followed by subject + verb or by a noun.

What is the difference between ce qui and ce que?

Ce qui is the subject of the next verb: Ce qui me plaît, c'est la lumière. Ce que is its object: Ce que j'aime, c'est la lumière.

When do you use par and de after a passive verb?

Use par for the agent of an action: restauré par des experts. Use de for a state, a feeling or a description: entouré d'un parc, aimé de tous.

Does patrimoine only mean inherited money?

No. In culture texts it means heritage: buildings, objects, landscapes and traditions that a community wants to protect and pass on.

How do you read a long DELF text faster?

First read the title and first lines for the main idea. Then mark relative pronouns and connectors, which show how the sentences are built, before answering questions.