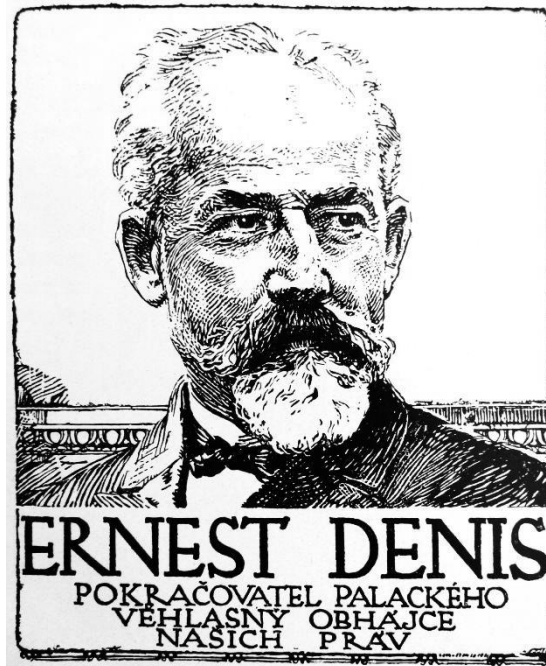


Ernest Denis (1849 – 1921)

Teacher's Guide Worksheet [level A](#)



Source: VANČURA, J. *Arnošt Denis*. Praha: Zlatoroh, 1924, p. 153.

I. Denis's Aversion to Violence and the Defeat of France in the Franco-German War 1870–1871

Young history student Ernest Denis was just finishing his studies at a college in Paris, when the Franco-Prussian War broke out in 1870. Denis voluntarily enlisted in the French Army, which suffered a defeat and the French regions of Alsace and Lorraine were forcibly annexed to the newly established German Empire (1871). Denis and his contemporaries were deeply marked by this war and desired revenge. France's primary goal was to enter into cooperation with nations that could help France regain the lost territory.

DOK 1: Accounts of Religious Persecution of his Grandparents that Denis Heard about as a Boy

During bloody storms [after 1815] a new persecution of Huguenots [French Protestants] took place (...) to which Denis's grandfather and grandmother nearly fell victim. Their stories left a deep impression in the boy's [Denis's] mind, which explains the aversion that Denis the historian later felt towards all physical and psychological violence.

Source: VANČURA, J. *Ibidem*, s. 6–7.

- *His grandmother's eyewitness testimony about the violence committed against the French non-Catholics remained engraved in Denis's memory. What did the future historian despise and what did he later criticize in his books?*

The critical aversion toward violence, both physical and psychological (dogmatism) is the leitmotif in Denis's interpretation of not only Czech history.

- *What do you understand by the term "physical and psychological violence"?*

It's a physical violence, violence to property, and ideological pressure (oppression).

DOC 2: Blank map of Europe



Source: <http://www.zsfrymburk.cz>. [10/15/2014].

DOC 3: Present Map of French Regions (Alsace and Lorraine are marked in red)



Source: <http://www.lafayette.edu>. [10/15/2014].

- *Fill in the blank. Refer to the introductory text.*

In the year **1870** the so called Franco-Prussian War broke out, in which these two nations fought against each other: **France** and the future **Germany**. France suffered a hard defeat and in 1871, Prussia acquired the French provinces of **Alsace** and **Lorraine** for the future united Germany.

- *On the DOC 2 map, mark France, Germany and Czechoslovakia. If you have any doubts use the world atlas.*
- *On the blank map in DOC 2, mark with the help of your history atlas and the map in DOC 3 the above-mentioned provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. In which country are they located today?*

The regions Alsace and Lorraine are located in present-day France.

II. Studies in Prague

What brought the young historian to Prague? Above all it was Denis's patriotic sense of "duty", i.e. his effort to regain for France its provinces. He believed that learning about Slavic nations would facilitate a future diplomatic cooperation between these nations and France. In 1872-75, Denis traveled to Prague with the objective to learn German and later also the Czech language. At this time, the Czech lands formed a part of Austria-Hungary where German was the official language.

DOC 4: Vrchlický's Recollection of Tutoring Denis in the Czech Language (Máj, 1909)

*It soon became clear that two hours a week was not enough. Denis (...) was a **man of unwearied diligence and amazing endurance**. He kept on adding time and soon we held tutoring sessions every single day. The teaching plan was as follows: Denis (...) read the National Newspaper **aloud** (...). At the same time, what was read was **translated into French**. At the end came literature – **novels, short stories and poems** were read and translated. (...) I used to be at Denis's not one, but **several hours**. I arrived at eight and I didn't leave my beloved disciple until after twelve.*

Source: VANČURA, J. *Arnošt Denis*. Praha: Zlatoroh, 1924, p. 34–35.

- *What was the format of Denis's lesson plan? With what types of texts did he work and in developing what skills was he particularly interested? To master a foreign language, another skill that Vrchlický doesn't mention is necessary. Which one is it: reading, speaking or writing?*

Every day, Denis read the National Newspaper and translated it into French. Later he did applied the same method to more complex texts such as Palacký's *History of the Czech Nation in Bohemia and Moravia*, novels, or poems by Vrchlický.

- *Find out from the text how many hours per day and week did Denis dedicate to the Czech language during the most intensive period.*

Denis spent more than four hours a day on the study of the Czech language.

- *In your opinion, why did two hours a week turned into several hours a day of intensive study? Find out from the text how did Denis approach his studies and what were his qualities.*

According to Vrchlický, Denis was very diligent and persistent.

III. Czech History “the French Way”

Denis was well aware of the shortcomings of his own historical exploration of the Czech lands, because he did not discover any new written sources during his research. Still, his endeavor was admirable, especially in its scope – from the Hussite period (i.e. after the year 1400) up the year 1900. Indeed, there was no other historian in Bohemia who would be able to cover such a broad period of national history.

DOC 5: From Denis’s Letter to the People of Prague, 1907

I know better than anyone the imperfections and flaws in my work. Others will come after me, who will correct it and fill in the gaps. However, I believe that I can say that no one else will approach these studies with more sincere love for your noble country and your admirable city.

Source: VANČURA, J. Ibidem, p. 181.

- *What attitude does Denis assume towards his historical research? Does he cling to the invariability of his original writings? What does he suggest?*

Denis was aware that his Czech history was put together in a great hurry and gaps would have to be filled in. He encourages Czech historians to examine and if need be, to revise his work.

- *What feelings does he confess in connection with his research about the Czech lands? Do you think that he – a Frenchman – liked the Czech lands?*

Denis expresses his affection for the Czech lands, especially for Prague. He grew very fond of the Czech lands. (His “true love” probably went hand in hand with his desire to release France from its political isolation and arrange for its influence in the Slavic Central Europe).

IV. Denis’s Defense of Czechoslovakia during the Great War

*With France entering the war against Germany in 1914, Denis’s Franco-Czech activities became more and more important. In 1915, together with T. G. Masaryk (the future Czech president), he founded the journal *The Czech Nation* (*La Nation Tchèque*) in order to defend the Czechs’ and other Slavic nations’ right for independence. These nations together with France should then resist a common enemy – the bellicose Germany and Austria-Hungary. In this way, Denis tried to convince the French politicians about the need to break up the Austro-Hungarian Empire during World War I.*

- *What other term can be used for World War I? Refer to the title of the chapter.*

The Great War

DOC 6: The Czecho-Slovak Colony, i.e. Czechs and Slovaks living in Paris



“In 1916, the interim Czechoslovak government set up its headquarters here under the leadership of T. G. Masaryk “

The commemorative plaque on the building No. 18 in Bonaparte Street in Paris (in the 20's and 30's the Center of the Czecho-Slovak Colony in Paris; today the Czech Center, Czech School Without Borders, and Consulate of the Czech Republic (as of January 2015).

Source: Commemorative plaque on the Czech Center building in Paris. Photography by Jan Lorenc, 6/19/2013.

- *Explain in your own words what do you understand by “Czecho-Slovak Colony in Paris”. Where was its center?*

Colony is a group of people who settle together on a new territory. In this case, it's a group of Czech and Slovak immigrants in Paris with their headquarters at Bonaparte St. 18 in Paris.

- *Find on the Internet and in DOC 6 information about the following address: Bonaparte Street 18, Paris. Why is the house at the address important and what institutions reside there?*

See information in DOC 6.

DOC 7: “The Revived Czech” – An Article Published on October 3, 1914 in Paris

Slovaks, Moravians, Silesians, Czechs! A new life begins for the oppressed. Again comes the day of glory for the descendants of Žižka's warriors. A liberated Bohemia will unite all her sons scattered from the slopes of the Tatras to the Ore Mountains. They will take back their place among free nations, and will find again their role, which orders them to be the link connecting the civilizations of Western and Eastern Europe; they will become again the apostles (...) of freedom, justice and humanity.

Source: DENIS, E. Vzkříšený Čech. In: *Nazdar* (periodical of the Czech colony in Paris). 1/1914.

DOC 8: The Three Historical Regions in the Present-Day Czech Republic



Source: <http://vlast.cz/historicke-zeme-a-kraje>.

[10/15/2014].

- *In which periodical and in what country was Denis's article "The Revived Czech" published?*

It was published in *Nazdar* – a magazine published by the Czech community in Paris, France.

- *Who is its targeted audience – for whom was it published (find your answer in the document)?*

The article *The Revived Czech* was intended for the Czech and Slovak immigrants in Paris, i.e. in the colony.

- *Which four historical nations does Denis mention at the beginning of DOC 7? Find three of them on the DOC 8 map. Which is the fourth nation and why is it missing from the DOC 8 map? Find it on the DOC 9 map and write down the name.*

Denis mentions Czech, Moravians, Silesians and Slovaks. The map in DOC 8 does not include Slovakia – Slovaks are missing. On the map in DOC 9, Slovakia is located east of the Czech Republic.

- *What is the role of Czech in the fight for liberation? Whom does Denis mean by "all her sons" and in what geographical regions can they be found? Find Tatra and Ore Mountains on the map.*

Students should understand that Czech and Slovaks united in their fight for independence and in 1918 created a joint Czechoslovak state. Regarding these efforts, Czechs had the leading role among "Bohemia's sons", i.e. Moravians, Silesians and Slovaks.

Students should be capable of working with the school atlas and finding the Tatra and Ore Mountains on the map.

- *What should be the role of the "liberated Bohemia" in Europe?*

It should be the "moderator", the connecting link between Western and Eastern Europe.

DOC 9: Slavic Nations on the Austro-Hungarian Territory



Source: DENIS, E. Our Program. In: *La Nation Tchèque*. 1/1915, p. 8.



Source: Current Map Slavic Countries and Ethnic Groups. Website:

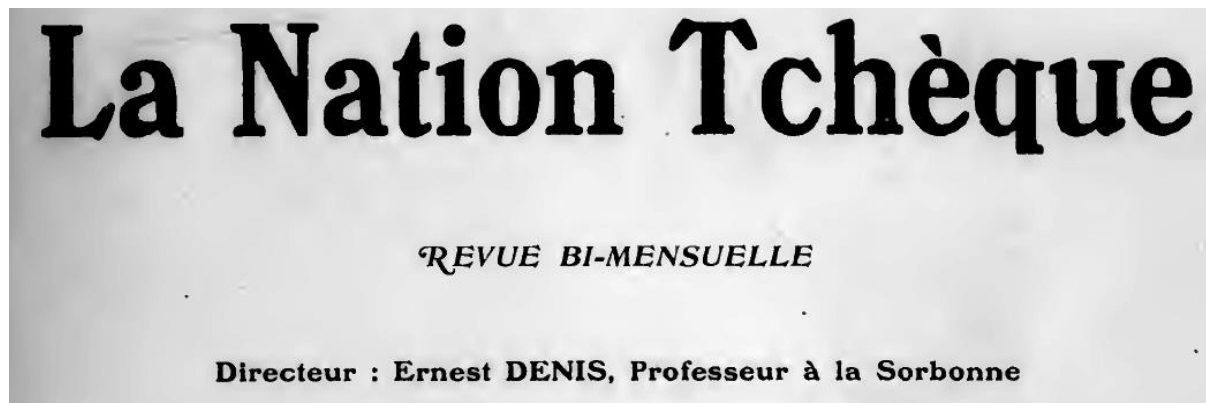
http://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovan%C3%A9#mediaviewer/File:Slovanske_jazyky_cz.png [10/15/2014].

- Compare both maps. On Denis's white map, with the help of the second colored map, mark the territories where Czech, Slovak and Polish were spoken. How do we call this Slavic language group? Select from the following choice: West, South or East?

Student should be able to compare both maps and mark the indicated language communities on the virtually blank map of Austria-Hungary: Czech language in Bohemia, Slovak in Upper Hungary and Polish in Galicia (at that time a part of Poland). These three languages belong to the group of West Slavic Languages.

- Refer to DOC 7 – The Revived Czech – where Denis writes: “liberated Bohemia will unite all her sons scattered from the slopes of the Tatras to the Ore Mountains”. Mark this region on the map and write down which two countries occupy this territory today.

The region is located in present-day Czech Republic and Slovakia.



Source: *La Nation Tchèque* (biweekly), Denis, E. (editor). Paris: rue Boissonnade, 1915–1917.

DOC 11: The Goals and Tasks of *The Czech Nation* according to Denis

This program is simple (...): the independence of Bohemia. I agreed to be their [Czech politicians' and writers'] interpreter [for the French and Allied politicians'], because I am convinced that by doing so I am also serving France. (...) The independence of Bohemia is of primary importance to us. It is one of the conditions of our security and one of the guarantees of our influence.

Source: DENIS, E. Our program. In: *La Nation Tchèque*. 1/1915, p. 3.

- *For what type of program does Denis strive in the journal *The Czech Nation (La Nation Tchèque)*?*

It's about the independence of the Czech lands.

- *Whose opinions should the journal convey through Denis?*

The magazine should be the platform for Czech liberal politicians and writers.

- *Try to look at the question of the Czech nation through the eyes of a Frenchman – Ernest Denis. Why does he want to help Czech people? Whom will he help at the same time?*

Denis, a French patriot, wants to ensure for his country a future influence in the independent Czech state. This will ensure France's security east of its borders.



Source: *La Nation Tchèque* (biweekly), Beneš, E. (editor). Paris: 18, rue Bonaparte, 1915–1918.

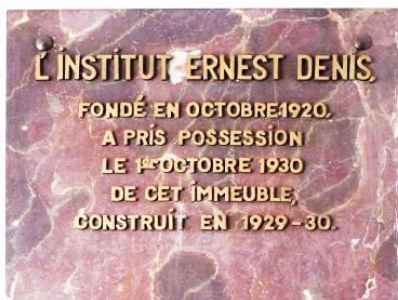
- *Fill in:*

In June 1917, **Eduard Beneš** took over after Denis and became the editor (“directeur”) of the journal *The Czech Nation*. It occurred so that the magazine could promptly respond to the current needs of the Czecho-Slovak resistance. The editor’s name is known mainly from later years, when he held the office of Foreign Minister and became Czech President after T. G. Masaryk.

V. Denis’s Postwar Glory and Success

In November of 1918 the fighting in Europe was over. The First World War – or the Great War – ended. . Denis’s “National Program” as well as the efforts T. G. Masaryk became reality – new independent Czechoslovakia was founded. In October of 1920, Denis traveled to Czechoslovakia on an official visit. The people of Czechoslovakia celebrated Denis as their national historian. Denis himself was instrumental in establishing the Institute of Slavic Studies in Paris (1919) and in 1920, the Ernest Denis Institute (today the French Institute) was founded in Prague.

DOC 13: The French Institute in Prague



On October 1, 1930 the Ernest Denis Institute, founded in October of 1920, relocated to this building (Štěpánská 35 in Prague) built between 1929 and 1930.

Source: The commemorative plaque located at the French Institute building. Available on the Web: <http://www.ifp.cz/local/cache-vignettes>. [10/15/2014].

- *After what important personality was it named?*

It was named after Ernest Denis. The term “French Institute” was not used until after WW2.

- *Think about and make a list of activities that the French Institute might be carrying out. Compare your answers with the information that can be found online at: <http://www.ifp.cz/Qui-sommes-nous>.*

The institute offers language, cultural and other educational seminars. It also houses a library with a number of publications not only in French.

DOC 14: Denis's Station in Prague-Těšnov between the World Wars (demolished in the 1980's)

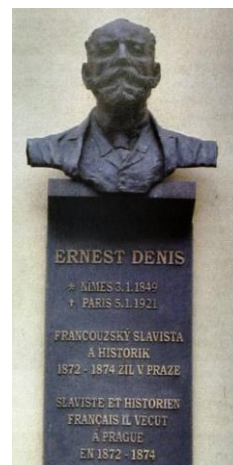


Source: MARÈS, A. *Lieux de mémoire en Europe centrale*. Paris: Institut d'études slaves, 2009, p. XIX–XXII.

- *Find on the Internet after whom was named the Prague-Těšnov station in 1919.*

It was named after Ernest Denis. In 1919 it became the “Denis Station”.

DOC 15: The Statue of Ernest Denis by Karel Dvořák placed at the Lesser Town Square in Prague in 1928 (left) and the bust by Petr Roztočil from 2003, which replaced the original statue (right)



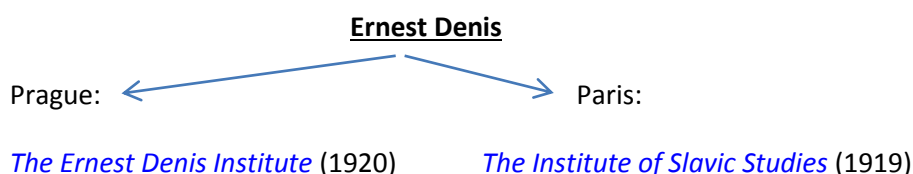
Source: MARÈS, A. *Lieux de mémoire en Europe centrale*. Paris: Institut d'études slaves, 2009, p. XIX–XXII.

- *How is professor Denis depicted? How do you feel about his sitting position and the book he holds in his hands (image on the left)?*

Dvořák's statue depicts Denis as a professor, i.e. teacher engaging in a conversation with book in his hands. The position gives the impression of calmness and ease.

VI. Summary

- *Fill in the names of the institutes connected with Denis's activity or directly with his name (see the introductory text to Chapter 5).*



- *Fill in: French – Masaryk – Czech – statue – Denis – station – Alsace-Lorraine*

*The new Czechoslovak nation celebrated **Denis** as its national historian, even though he was **French**. He was able to combine both French and **Czech** interests by fighting together with T. G. **Masaryk** for the breakup of Austria-Hungary. After the Great War, Czechs and Slovaks obtained their independence and France regained its province of **Alsace-Lorraine**. In Denis's honor the people of Prague erected a **statue** of him at Lesser Town Square, and in Těšnov they named a **station** after him.*

- *In your own words, describe who was Ernest Denis – first from the point of view of a Czech citizen and then try to imagine how a French citizen would feel about him. How would a French person describe him, his actions, etc.? Why will the two descriptions be different?*

Denis according to a Czech citizen	Denis according to a French citizen
Key concepts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrote about Czech history • Fought for independence of the Czech lands • Persuaded the French about the necessity of the foundation of Czechoslovakia. He established Czechoslovak-French collaboration on academic (university) basis.	Key concepts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He fought for the return of Alsace and Lorraine • He ensured France's influence in Central Europe • He taught the French people about the history of Slavs He established Czechoslovak-French collaboration on academic (university) basis.

Ernest Denis (1849 – 1921)