

ADVANCED. SONG #1. À LA CLAIRE FONTAINE



À la claire fontaine

1. À la claire fontaine
M'en allant promener
J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle
Que je m'y suis baigné

Il y a longtemps que je t'aime
Jamais je ne t'oublierai

2. Sous les feuilles d'un chêne
Je me suis fait sécher
Sur la plus haute branche
Un rossignol chantait

3. Chante rossignol chante
Toi qui as le cœur gai
Tu as le cœur à rire
Moi je l'ai à pleurer

4. J'ai perdu mon amie
Sans l'avoir mérité
Pour un bouton de rose
Que je lui refusai

5. Je voudrais que la rose
Fût encore au rosier
Et que ma douce amie
Fût encore à m'aimer



À la claire fontaine is a traditional French song. It's a very popular one. It dates from the 17th century. This song crossed the Atlantic Ocean, at the middle of the 18th century with soldiers going to Canada. Then it became an important song also in Quebec.

This song has five verses and a chorus. It's a young man who's speaking, he's very sad because his sweetheart left him.

This song is about a fountain, a nightingale and a heartbreak which are classical themes of « chansons de toile » (weaving songs). They were sung by women while they were working on cloth, weaving and spinning. Some of them exist since the 12th century and they all are about love.

You can find the score of this song on :

<http://www.traditional-songs.com>



Clair, claire : clear.
Fontaine (fém.) : fountain.
Feuille (fém.) : leaf.
Chêne (masc.) : oak (tree).
Sécher : to dry.
Branche (fém.) : branch.
Rossignol (masc.) : nightingale.
Cœur (masc.) : heart.
Gai, gaie : happy, joyful, cheerful.
Rire : to laugh.
Mériter : to deserve.
Bouton (masc.) de fleur : bud.
Refuser : to refuse.
Rosier (masc.) : rosebush, rosewood.



Let's have a look together on the verbs in this song.
We have several different forms.

Some verbs are conjugated at the present tense :

Je t'aime, tu as, je l'ai.

Some are at the *passé composé* :

J'ai trouvé, je m'y suis baigné.

One is at the *imparfait* tense :

Un rossignol chantait.

One is at the *passé simple* tense :

Je lui refusai.

One is at the conditional mood :

Je voudrais.

We also can find a verb at the present participle :

M'en allant promener.

And one at the imperative form :

Chante, rossignol, chante.

Did you notice ? There's also a form we never met : **fût**. This verb is at **imparfait subjunctive**.

It's quite a difficult tense and it's almost never used in French anymore. You can find it in books or old songs like this one but almost nobody uses it when speaking.

It is used, like here, in subordinate clauses when the main clause is in the past or in the conditional mood.

Je voudrais que la rose / Fût encore au rosier

Et que ma douce amie / Fût encore à m'aimer.

<http://www.frenchbyfrench.com>

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