forms
In French, few nouns can stand alone. Most need to be introduced or ‘determined’ by an article. As in English, an article is characterized as either definite (‘the’) or indefinite (‘a’, ‘an’). In addition, French articles are also masculine or feminine, singular or plural, according to the gender and number of the noun they determine. Here are the definite articles in French:

| Masculine singular: le (l') | Tex le tatou | Tex the armadillo |
| Feminine singular: la (l') | Bette la chatte | Bette the cat (female) |
| Masculine and feminine plural: les | les tatous | les tatuos |

élision and liaison
In the examples above, note that le and la both become l’ when they precede a noun beginning with a vowel or a silent h: l’escargot, l’Université. This is called elision.

Unlike le and la, les does not have a contracted, reduced form. When les is followed by a word starting with a vowel, the normally silent final s of les is pronounced, making a /z/ sound. This additional sound linking two words is called liaison. Listen to the following examples:

| Compulsory liaison with a vowel or silent h | No liaison with a consonant |
| les insectes | les tatous |
| les animaux | les fourmis |
| les hommes | |

Note that elision and liaison occur with most words starting with h: l’homme, les hommes, l’hiver, les hivers. Exceptions to this rule are words beginning with an aspirate ‘h’.

to identify a specific noun
The definite article is used to identify a specific noun or to refer to a noun that has already been specified.

Corey: Tu connais la tour de l’Université du Texas?
Corey: Do you know the UT Tower?
Bien sûr, c'est le symbole de l'Université!

Corey: Et la Sixième rue?

Tex: Eh bien, c'est les Champs-Elysées d'Austin!

Corey: What about Sixth street?

Tex: Well, it's the Champs-Elysees of Austin.

**to express general truths or concepts**
French uses the definite article to express general truths or concepts. English, in contrast, uses no article at all. Compare the following sentences:

- Tex: L'argent ne rend pas l'homme heureux!
  - Tammy: Tu as raison. L'amour et la santé sont plus importants!
  - Tex: Of course, for insects and animals, money does not exist! But love is as important for us as it is for humans. Ah, yes, love, love, love, always love!
  - Tammy: You are right. Love and health are more important!

**to express likes and dislikes**
The French also use the definite article with verbs of preference, such as aimer, préférer, détester. Once again, English omits the article in such general statements. For example:

- Tex adore les croissants.
  - Joe-Bob préfère les doughnuts.
  - Tammy n'aime pas le café.
  - Edouard apprécie la bonne cuisine française.
  - Tex loves croissants.
  - Joe-Bob prefers doughnuts.
  - Tammy does not like coffee.
  - Edouard appreciates good French cuisine.

**to indicate habitual recurrence**
The definite article is used in French with moments of the day, days of the week, and seasons to indicate habitual recurrence. For example:

- Le matin, Tammy va en cours.
  - L'après-midi, elle va à la bibliothèque.
  - Le lundi, Tex fait son jogging.
  - L'été, il se baigne avec Tammy à Barton
  - Every morning, Tammy goes to class.
  - Every afternoon, she goes to the library.
  - On Mondays, Tex goes for a jog.
  - Every summer, he bathes with Tammy at
in a series
The article is usually repeated in a **series**, in contrast to English. For example:

```plaintext
Tammy: Tex, aide-moi à mettre la table! 
   Apporte les assiettes, les couteaux, les verres, les serviettes et le vin.
```

```plaintext
Tex, help me set the table! Bring the plates, knives, glasses, napkins, and wine.
```

no article
**Cities** usually do not require an article in French. For example:

```plaintext
Tex habite à Austin.
```

```plaintext
Tex lives in Austin,
```

but he prefers Paris.

Continents, countries, states, regions, and oceans usually require an article (**l'Afrique**, **la France**, **le Texas**, **la Bourgogne**, **l'Atlantique** etc.), but there are a few exceptions, usually islands: Haiti, Israël, Madagascar. See **prepositions with place names** for more information.

**Months** never require an article: **janvier, février, mars, etc.**

```plaintext
Cependant Tex adore mars à Austin.
```

```plaintext
Nevertheless Tex adores March in Austin.
```

**Days of the week** do not require an article in instances where they do not indicate habitual recurrence. For example:

```plaintext
Lundi, il a rendez-vous avec Tammy.
```

```plaintext
Monday he has a date with Tammy.
```

Listen to the dialogue:

```plaintext
Tammy: J'aime beaucoup le français. C'est la langue de Molière et de Hugo, et surtout c'est la langue maternelle de Tex!
```

```plaintext
Tammy: I like French a lot. It is the language of Molière and of Hugo, and above all it is the mother tongue of Tex!
```

```plaintext
Bette: Alors comme ça Tammy, tu aimes bien les Français?
```

```plaintext
Bette: So Tammy, you really like French men?
```

```plaintext
Tammy: Oh oui! Surtout les Français qui portent le béret!
```

```plaintext
Tammy: I sure do! Especially French men who wear a beret!
```

**fill in the blanks**
Fill in the blank with the correct definite article: **le**, **la**, **l'**, or **les**.

1. Tex : J'adore ______ chattes!

2. Corey : J'adore ______ odeur des pesticides!

3. Tammy : ______ femmes sont sensibles.

4. Corey : Je déteste _____ professeur de maths.
5. Tammy : _______ salle de classe est romantique!
6. Tammy : ______ affiche de Paris est super!
7. Corey ______ télévision.
8. Tex déteste ______ Texas.
9. Tammy : ______ tatous sont intelligents!
10. Tex : ____ dictionnaire est intéressant!
11. Tammy est ____ amie de Tex.
12. Tex est prof à ______ université.