

Kredensor, Diane, and Sandra Kress. *Ollie & Moon*. New York: Random House - Children's Books, 2011. Print.

Ollie loves to surprise his best friend Moon. Luckily Moon not only loves getting surprises, she loves trying to guess what they are even more. The story follows the two friends through the streets of Paris as Ollie provides more and more clues to a very big surprise. There are lots of silly interactions between the pair that are sure to amuse young children such as: Ollie surprising Moon on the toilet, Moon picking out silly hats, dancing on the Métro, and chasing a wheel of Brie cheese down some stairs. All of the characters in the story are cartoons superimposed on real photographs of Paris. Apart from Stanley the snail who provides a “Bonjour” and an “Au revoir”, Ollie and Moon are the only speaking characters.

In spite of the fact that some words referencing things very specific to French culture such as *fromagerie*, *Métro* and *boulangerie* are sprinkled throughout the narrative or are displayed in the photographs, the location of the story is never referenced. In addition, these terms are never explained so a curious young reader would need to ask their parent or teacher or look them up on their own. When all the clues are assembled, the surprise is “round and musical, has lots of colors...fur, hooves, and feathers... is bright with lights and spins round and round”. Moon’s guess, while incorrect is presented in a very comedic image of “an elephant on a unicycle juggling animals while playing the French Horn”. The surprise actually turns out to be a beautiful carousel. Children might love the contrast of the cartoon figures against the photographic background and find the guessing game entertaining. However, from an adult point of view, the lack of context for the setting and cultural elements gives the whole story a slightly displaced feel.

Recommended with reservations: 2 out of 4 stars
Reviewer: Kim Frail