

***Mr Chicken Goes to Paris* by Leigh Hobbs**

Today's globe-trotting kids are going to love the latest adventures of Mr Chicken. We first met this grotesquely huge chicken in *Hooray for Horrible Harriet*, and now he surfaces again to take on the sophisticated Parisians in *Mr Chicken Goes to Paris*.

As is usual with books by Leigh Hobbs, the innocuous text is subverted by his comical pictures. Mr Chicken travels economy, where he overwhelms his unfortunate co-passengers by taking up considerably more than his fair share of the seat. On the tour bus to the Arc de Triomphe he asks a fellow tourist to take his photo, while no one can see past his bulk to view the sights. Before long and much to the indignation of guides at various destinations, he has managed to upstage every tourist attraction from the Mona Lisa to Notre Dame - and all this in the city best-loved by tourists from all over the world.

There is much to enjoy in this book which references Montmartre, street cafes, patisseries, and the Jardin des Tuileries – and hilariously, the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. My favourite picture is of the worldly diners in the bistro studiously ignoring his antics, although his departure, bowed down by countless shopping bags and souvenir Eiffel Towers is very funny too.

I think secondary students of French would enjoy an internet search to identify the attractions visited by Mr Chicken and Yvette, and the book could also be an inspiring alternative to those dreary 'make-a-travel-brochure' projects kids have to do.

But I wouldn't recommend that anybody take it too seriously!

Lisa Hill, Mossgiel Park Primary School, Vic

Mr Chicken Goes to Paris is a hardcover picture story book by Leigh Hobbs. I personally wasn't keen on this book. I didn't find Mr Chicken appealing and I think he looks more like a lemon than a chicken and he has a scowling expression in most of the pictures. The story line was a bit slow.

Nothing really happens in the story even though Mr Chicken tours the famous landmarks of Paris and the problem and resolution happen right at the end of the story.

On the positive side I am sure children will enjoy listening to the story and looking at the detail in the pen and ink pictures.

Anne Lewis, Qld

This book had mixed reactions. Some liked it and others did not. Mr Chicken's expression suggests he is quite unimpressed with what he is seeing, as he looks unhappy most of the time. He is very large, so his size causes a few problems for him along the way as he visits his friend Yvette, in Paris (all resolved by the time he goes home). Everywhere he goes, he is the centre of attention rather than the sights. The illustrations reveal another side of the story as the reader is able to see the amusing reaction of the people around him, to which he appears oblivious. This is a great discussion point.

The layout of the book is a wonderful starting point for many areas of study in the classroom. Some of these are:

- The main attractions of Paris
- Capital cities of countries
- French language, culture and festivals
- Students from other nationalities may like to create a list of words from their own culture to be shared with the class.
- Discussing passports and their use – extend to maths of height, tables, graphs etc
- Design a class book of travel tips
- Celebrate important festivals from different countries
- Find out about French food
- Holidays

Daisy Antoniou, Gardenvale VIC

What a great book to introduce a study of another country! Leigh Hobbs immediately captured my interest with his comical looking character Mr Chicken. After an invitation from his French friend

Yvette, Mr Chicken finds himself aboard a plane bound for Paris. Although tired Mr Chicken has no time to rest as he enthusiastically seeks out the attractions of Paris. Done in a fun way the reader is introduced to the main attractions in Paris including The Arc De Triomphe, The Louvre, The Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame and the Palace of Versailles.

I loved the use of common French words and challenge words like “The Metro” and “frogs’ legs”. These encourage the reader to find out more about these. What is the Metro and what other strange things do French people have on their menus? A city of painters is discreetly portrayed when Mr Chicken get his portrait painted.

In the primary classroom, as well as a great introduction to the study of France, this book could lead on to useful studies about passports, air travel, travel brochures, tourist guides and travel tips which include travel cards and special passes to attractions.

Children could be encouraged to compare languages, write travel diaries and postcards, as well as find out their own personal details they would need to get their own passport.

A most enjoyable book but maybe a little smile on Mr Chicken occasionally, would portray more his enthusiasm for Paris.

Jill Howard, ACT

Mr Chicken’s love of travel is exposed in *Mr Chicken Goes to Paris*, when his French friend, Yvette, invites him to visit. As any good tourist would, Mr Chicken prepares himself with a myriad of maps and his trusty camera.

Mr Chicken is a quirky, paradoxical character. I found Leigh Hobbs’ depiction of Mr Chicken entirely entertaining, with his enormous body, the tiny top hat that replaced his comb, dour faced expression and fangs! Although the story itself is not necessarily humorous, the pictures had me giggling my way through Mr Chicken’s travels through Paris.

As I read *Mr Chicken Goes to Paris*, I began to notice small details about the illustrations. Little things like the fact that Yvette is the only human smiling in any of the pictures. Indeed Parisians had little to smile about when Mr Chicken, too impatient to wait for the elevator, climbed their beloved Eiffel Tower and caused it to lean to one side. Mostly, the people who encounter Mr Chicken seem bemused and perturbed, if not a little stunned.

I found Mr Chicken’s return home on the plane to be an incredibly humorous ending to this unique and unusual tale. One immediately wonders how it is that Mr Chicken wedged himself into Economy class on his way to France, and yet cannot squeeze himself back onto the plane to return home.

Children of all ages will find *Mr Chicken Goes to Paris* engaging and amusing in many ways. There are many discussions that would be enhanced in the classroom after reading this book. Children could explore what happens in a foreign city when you get lost, as Mr Chicken did and students looking at ‘Transport’ will find an entertaining look at air transport.

Tracy Williams, Mountain District Christian School, Vic

A large yellow chicken with rather menacing canine teeth takes the reader on a tour of Paris and its iconic landmarks. Leigh Hobbs uses his inimitable pen and ink cartoons to showcase the sights and sounds of Paris. The Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe and Notre Dame are drawn dwarfed by the larger than life visitor, Monsieur Poulet. The traveller can identify with cramped economy seats, language difficulties, map reading issues and the feeling of getting lost in a big city. The end papers provide the reader with travel tips, helpful phrases, a copy of Mr. Chicken’s passport, must see places and photographs of his adventure.

A wide audience can enjoy this book, with adults empathizing with his difficulties and young readers enjoying the bold cartoons.

Teaching Tips:

SOSE: Place, Space and Environment

- Travel brochure for Mr. Chicken
- Research and plan Mr. Chicken’s holiday
- Develop another Mr. Chicken book for a visit to your city – local landmarks, art galleries, make a map of the city.

- Develop another Mr. Chicken book for a visit to another city- Athens, Rome, London, New York... – include local landmarks, art galleries, map of the city.

Use de Bono's 6 Thinking Hats to deconstruct the narrative.

Take photos of interesting places in your school, local community, print out as A4 draft quality pictures. Draw Mr Chicken visiting these places add the narrative text, develop into a book for the library.

Rhyl Bignell, Allenby Gardens Primary School, SA