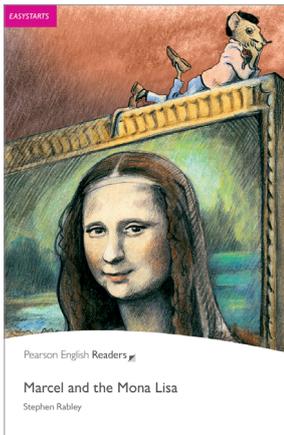


Marcel and the Mona Lisa

Stephen Rabley



Summary

Marcel and the Mona Lisa is a story about a detective mouse. One day, Marcel visits a friend, Céline, at the Louvre. As he's leaving, he sees a man dressed as a guard with a knife. The man cuts the Mona Lisa out of its frame and puts it in a bag. Marcel jumps into the bag. The man takes a train and sits next to a thin man. They mention Italy and cats, which makes Marcel afraid. The train arrives in Venice and the two men see Signor Spandini in his house. While they're talking, Marcel jumps out of the bag and hides behind a chair. Then he sees nine cats and decides to climb a curtain. One of Spandini's cats follows him. Marcel starts a fire. While the men decide what to do, Marcel grabs the painting and runs out of the house. He pushes the painting through the letter box of a police station. The police send the painting back to the Louvre.

Background and themes

Animal stereotypes: Some animals like mice are considered disgusting by some people, but they are often heroes in stories.

Justice: Marcel knows what's fair and what's not and he acts according to his beliefs.

Low profile: Marcel is the hero of the story, but he isn't motivated by the search for glory. He lets the Italian police take the credit for finding the Mona Lisa.

Art: Marcel knows that art is a very important cultural asset and he does what he has to do to preserve it.

Discussion activities

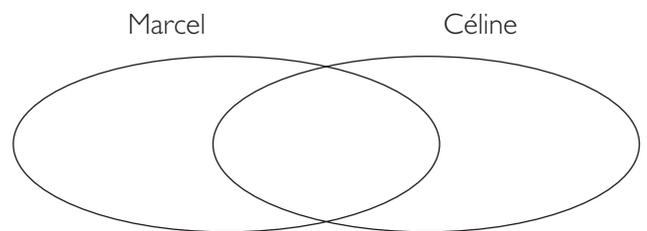
Pages 1–7

Before reading

- Predict:** Ask students to look at the cover and the title and discuss in pairs: *What can you see? Where is Marcel? Is he happy? Is this a happy story? Is Marcel a good mouse? Is he clever?*
Tell students to take down notes of their predictions about what will happen in the story so that they can go back to them once they finish reading.
- Research:** Ask students to use the Internet to find out about other famous works of art at the Louvre and information about the Mona Lisa.

While reading

- Read carefully:** Students record information about Marcel and Céline using a Venn diagram.



After reading

- Pair work:** Write BAD DREAMS on the board. Ask students in pairs to make a list of words they connect with bad dreams. Get feedback and write the students' words on the board. In pairs, ask them to say which of these words they have had bad dreams about. Then ask them to describe or invent a bad dream.
- Write and guess:** Put the students in pairs and tell them to choose one of the illustrations from pages 1–7. Students write a description, making three deliberate mistakes. Each pair then reads out their description and the rest of the class identify the mistakes.

Pages 8–15

Before reading

- Pair work:** Ask students to make a list of words related to Italy. Get feedback and write the words on the board.

After reading

- Check:** Ask students to go back to the predictions they wrote before reading the book. Were they right?
- Role play:** Student A: You work for a newspaper. Ask Marcel questions about his life and the Mona Lisa story. Student B: You're Marcel. Answer the questions. Brainstorm possible questions with the whole class before they start.