

# Mr Leon's Paris

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*The amazing thing about taxi driver Mr Leon is that he travels the world without ever leaving his home city of Paris.*

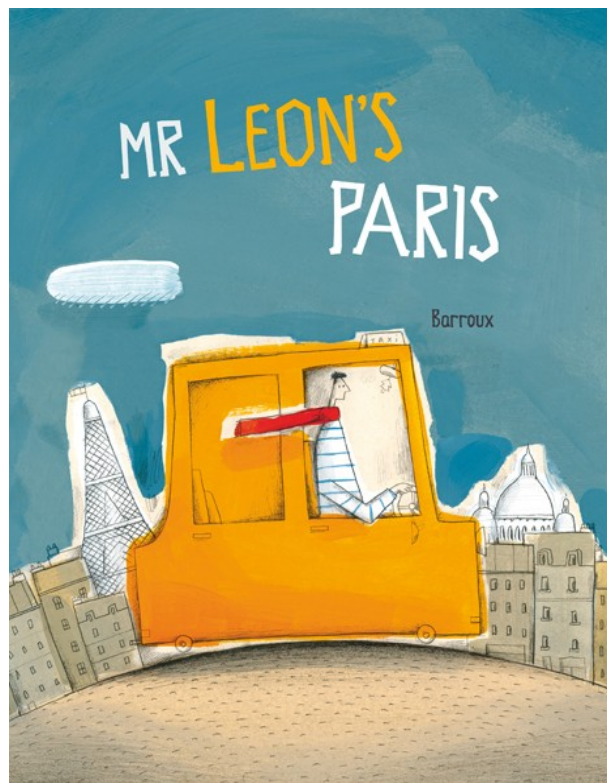
## **USING STREET NAMES (IN ENGLISH AND IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES) TO PIECE TOGETHER AND CREATE A STORY**

### **Activity 1 - Mr Leon Plays 'Snap' or 'The Memory Game'**

- Students sit in a circle, with the street names face down on the floor (forming an inner circle) opposite them.
- One by one, ask the students to hold up and reveal the place name opposite them. Is it in French or English? What might it mean? What associations or images does the place name conjure? Do we prefer the sound of it in English or French?
- Put it back down again, face down. Now it's the next person's turn, and so on.

Soon, a place name should have occurred both in English and French – who can be the first to make the connection and match the two place names?

The teacher, translator or facilitator can fine-tune the dynamic of the game – is it about which student can spot or collect the most matching pairs? Who's got the best memory for who has which street name?...



### **Discussion Points**

***The key difference between French street names and English ones lies in the WORD ORDER.***

In French, the “street” word comes at the beginning (eg. Rue du Maroc, Rue Princesse) followed by the more interesting word (a place, a thing, an animal, a feeling).

Whereas in English, the “street” word comes at the end (Morocco Street, Princess Court), with the more interesting word appearing first.

This is a problem when we're translating into English, because the end of the line always risks being the same word – “street” – which could sound flat and boring. So flat and boring, in fact, that you might not want to carry on reading the story!

### **Challenge**

- How many different words (or synonyms) can students think of as an alternative to the word “street”? (e.g. cul-de-sac, close, avenue, mews, road, lane, court, drive...)
- Can you spot where the translator has chosen to go for a “free” translation and use a different word from “street” to spice up the sound?
- What different words are there for “street” and its variants in the languages that might be the mother tongues of some of the students?
- What slang words are there in this vein too? Eg. endz, area, manor, hood...

### **Activity 2 – oral storytelling, from local to far-flung**

- All the students in the circle (or back at their desks) now take a fresh sheet of paper and write on it the first line of their real address.
- Just from the sound of it, what associations or images does this address conjure?
- On the other side of the page, they must write a completely different address. This could be, for example:-
  - A) your dream taxi destination (yes, your taxi can fly, cross oceans, travel to the moon...)
  - B) an outlandish alternative home address
  - C) an address in another language
- Once these real and imaginary addresses have been presented to the group, someone might like to put on the beret and stripy top that turn them into Monsieur/Mr Leon or Madame/Mrs Leonora (see cover image of Mr Leon).
- They become the storyteller (even if it's only for 2 minutes) and it's their job to weave some of the addresses offered above into the tale of Leon's taxi travels, before passing the hat and stripy top on to the next storyteller.

### **Activity 3 – drawing and writing an original taxi-ride storyscape**

- Once the group has explored some options orally and collectively, break up into smaller groups, eg. 6 students.
- Take a huge piece of coloured sugar paper (or several pieces stuck together), which forms the background for the story-map or "storyscape" you're going to create.
- Once the group has decided whether their taxi driver is a man or a woman, and where they're starting off from, it's up to them to create a new story and a brand new journey for our travelling taxi hero/heroine.
- The journey might be incredibly local – and all about finding amazing details to bring your neighbourhood to life on the page. What are the place names that really stand out as curious or surprising or interesting sounding? Which place names contrast well against each other?
- Or the taxi driver might start out local but end up in outer space...
- Or it might be about a journey on the other side of the world, perhaps where some of the students have travelled to or have relatives...
- Individual students write and draw their contribution to the story on normal A4 paper to be cut out and stuck onto the map/storyscape of the sugar paper.

***The aim of these activities is to show that translation can be a fun route into creative and expressive English, as well as a means of highlighting and exploring linguistic diversity.***

**IT IS NOT NECESSARY FOR THE TEACHER TO HAVE FRENCH OR ANOTHER LANGUAGE TO BE ABLE TO LEAD THESE ACTIVITIES.**

