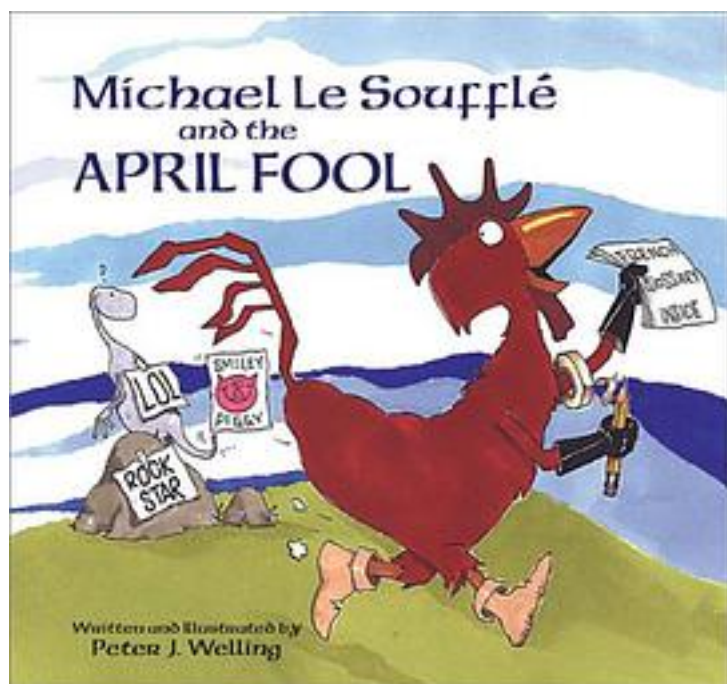


Michael Le Souffl E and the April Fool



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Once upon a time in 1564, Charles IX, the king of France, ruled that the first day of the year would be January 1 instead of April 1. Those who forgot the change and celebrated New Year's Day on April 1 were ridiculed by having fish thrown at them. In the skilled hands of Peter Welling, this history takes on a hilarious dimension. In the French town of Bakonneggs, there exists a rivalry between the Mayor Melon de Plume, a pig, and a prankster rooster, Michael Le Soufflé. The mayor lacks a sense of humor and is annoyed to be disturbed from his slumber by Michael's crowing laughter. He issues new laws (including a ban on all feathers), but the town continues, under the rooster's leadership, to laugh and play. Then one day, Michael posts a law, signed by the king, on the official oak tree: New Year's Day will no longer be April 1. From now on,

the first day of the year will be January 1. Melon is in disbelief and chases the rooster with a wagon of fish, accidentally hitting the king with one, for which he is put in the stocks. The next year, he still celebrates April 1 as New Yearis Day, and the king orders that he be pelted with fish until he comes to his senses. Melon is undaunted: he scoops up the fallen fish and hosts a big party, starting an annual day of celebration we now know as April Foolsi Day. Populated by a menagerie of animals and creatures real and imagined, including a crafty crew of gargoyles, Michael Le SoufflE and the April Fool is sure to keep readers young and old coming back to discover new laughs on every page.

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