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Picture Books

One More Sheep
Mij Kelly
Russell Ayto, illustrator
Peachtree Publishers
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Anyone can count sheep to fall asleep, but staying awake while counting them, well, that's a different story. Sam the shepherd often dozes off while counting his ten sheep after he's safely tucked them into bed for the night. When a wolf in sheep's clothing of course) tries to infiltrate the flock, the sheep make every effort to keep their shepherd awake and counting, so he'll realize that there is an extra animal in their midst.

This fresh twist on the age-old practice of counting sheep is launched to zany heights by the dramatic rhyming text and colorful, cartoonish illustrations. The author received a star from Booklist for a previous bedtime story, *William and the Night Train*, and this story promises a similar dose of satisfying bedtime whimsy. When Sam sadly informs the sheep, "You're a first-class ticket to the land of Nod," they react in the extreme, criticizing his "appalling attitude" and then gearing up for a counting kickline that is depicted in a vibrant triple-page spread.

The illustrator, whose previous picture-book drawings have been short-listed for such prestigious awards as the Smarties Prize and the Mother Goose Award, is at the top of his form with these lively pen-and-ink and watercolor illustrations, executed in a palette of nighttime hues of blues, greens, and purples. He individualizes each of the nearly-identical sheep by their different colored socks and slight differences in their eyes, making them all the more loveable.

This book, originally published in Great Britain, was a candidate for the 2004 Kate Greenaway Medal for outstanding illustration in a children's book. The illustrations and rhyming, rhythmic text work well together, weaving a bedtime story spell just right for young children, from toddlers through kindergarten, and the adults who read to them.

Carolyn Bailey