





Beatrix Potter...Biography

Beatrix Potter was a scientist, conservationist, and farmer as well as a much-loved author of children's books.

"Once upon a time there were four little Rabbits, and their names were Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail, and Peter." – The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter

What makes author Beatrix Potter especially fascinating and noteworthy is her multifaceted, complex background. Potter was not only an author and illustrator; she was a scientist, conservationist, and farmer. Some of the particulars of her complex yet inspirational life remain obscure and mysterious but this is what we do know...

Potter's Childhood

Potter, born in 1866 in South Kensington, London, lived a lonely life reared and educated by nurses and governesses, isolated from peers, and with minimal interaction with her wealthy parents. It was on annual summer vacations to Scotland and the Lake District that Potter developed a love of nature. To combat loneliness Potter would sketch her greatest passions: animals and the natural world. At one point, Potter possessed a frog, two lizards, water newts, a ring-snake, a tortoise and a rabbit.

Potter the Scientist

Potter was fascinated with science and spent a great deal of time studying botany, entomology, geology and paleontology, and mycology, finally creating a theory of the germination of fungus spores.

Potter wrote a paper, "On the Germination of the Spores of Agaricineae," which was presented to Linnaean Society of London by a man (women were not allowed). She was not respected in a field almost entirely dominated by Victorian men and became frustrated that her work was not taken seriously. Potter, dejected, began to focus on animals.

Potter kept a journal of her life from age 15 to 30 in her own secret code. The journal was published in 1966 after Leslie Linder, an engineer, broke the code and took seven years to translate it. The journal documents Potter's unsuccessful attempts to gain recognition for her theories and drawings.

Potter the Author and Illustrator

Encouraged by close friend Vicar Hardwicke Rawnsley, Potter continued her artwork. In her mid-20s, Potter created greeting cards from her illustrations and also illustrated a book small book of animal drawings, A Happy Pair, accompanied by verses by Fredric Weatherley.

Potter also wrote about her animals in letters to her former governess' children. In one such letter to five-year-old Noel Moore in 1893, Potter began, "My dear Noel, I don't know what to write to you, so I shall tell you a story about four little rabbits..."

This story of a naughty rabbit named Peter was published as the Tale of Peter Rabbit in 1902 by Frederick Warneand became one of the most famous stories ever written. It was an overnight success and led to a series of 23 small books for small hands. Nearly every character is based on the pets Potter owned.

In addition to creating children's books, Potter created accurate, realistic botanical drawings and paintings and created a collection of detailed watercolors of fungi, which are now held in the Armitt Library in Ambleside, England.

Potter the Conservationist and Farmer

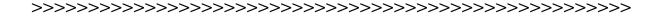
Potter fell in love with Norman Warne, of whom her family did not approve, and although they became engaged, weeks later Norman died of pernicious anemia.

In 1905 Potter purchased a small farm, Hill Top, in Sawrey, and in1909 she bought another farm near Hill Top, Castle Farm, which became her main Lakeland headquarters. Potter married William Heelis in 1913.

As her eyesight declined in the 1930s, her writing waned as well. Potter therefore began devoting herself to raising sheep and investing in real estate. At the time of Potter's death in 1943, she bequeathed f14 farms and 4,000 acres of land to the British National Trust.

Margaret Lane, in The Tale of Beatrix Potter writes, "All her...animals are conceived with imaginative truth, and though they are shrewdly humanized, and their stories told throughout in human terms, there is, imaginatively speaking, not a word of falsehood."

Despite an extraordinary life fraught with admirable accomplishments, Beatrix Potter will remain, to most, an exceptional illustrator who accompanied her work with enchanting stories. And that, in itself, is praiseworthy.



"Miss Potter"...Chris Noonan's new film opened in January 2007 with Renee Zellwegger in Potter role, Ewan McGregor in Henrick Warne's role and Emily Watson in his sister Millie's role.

From: http://www.suite101.com/content/the-extraordinary-beatrix-potter-a14363

Books by Beatrix Potter

- 1. The Tale of Peter Rabbit -- 1902
- 2. The Tailor of Gloucester 1902
- 3. The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin 1903
- 4. The Tale of Benjamin Bunny -- 1904
- 5. The Tale of Two Bad Mice 1904
- 6. The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle 1905
- 7. The Pie and the Patty-pan -- 1905
- 8. The Tale of Mr. Jeremy Fisher 1906
- 9. The Story of a Fierce Bad Rabbit 1906
- 10. The Story of Miss Moppet 1906
- 11. The Tale of Tom Kitten 1907
- 12. The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck -- 1908
- 13. The Roly-Poly Pudding (The Tale of Samuel Whiskers) -- 1908
- 14. The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies 1909
- 15. Ginger and Pickles 1909
- 16. The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse -- 1910
- 17. Peter Rabbit's Painting Book 1911
- 18. The Tale of Timmy Tiptoes 1911
- 19. The Tale of Mr. Tod --1912
- 20. The Tale of Pigling Bland -- 1913
- 21. Tom Kitten's Painting Book 1917
- 22. Appley Dapply's Nursery Rhymes 1917
- 23. The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse 1918
- 24. Cecily Parsley's Nursery Rhymes 1922
- 25. Jemima Puddle-Duck's Painting Book -- 1925
- 26. Peter Rabbit's Almanac for 1929 1928
- 27. The Fairy Caravan 1929
- 28. The Tale of Little Pig Robinson 1930
- 29. Sister Anne -- 1932
- 30. Wag-by-Wall -- 1914
- 31. The Tale of the Faithful Dove 1955
- 32. The Sly Old Cat -- 1971
- 33. The Tale of Tuppenny

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