

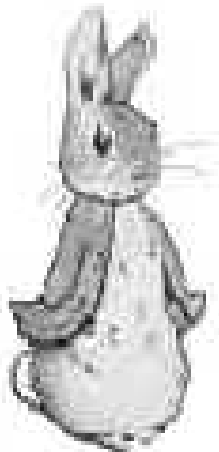


WILD
SWAN
THEATER

Study Guide for

PETER RABBIT

Adapted from Beatrix Potter by Jeff Duncan



Once upon a time there were four little rabbits whose names were Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Peter. They lived with their mother in a sand-bank underneath the root of a very big fir tree...."

PETER RABBIT

STUDY GUIDE

About the Performance:

Peter Rabbit, an original Wild Swan screenplay by author Jeff Duncan, is a lively adaptation of Beatrix Potter's delightful collection of stories. This version, based mainly on the events of *Peter Rabbit* combines characters and details from many of Potter's tales. You will meet Peter, Benjamin Bunny, Squirrel Nutkin and, of course, the farmer, Mr. McGregor. The performance is approximately 45 minutes in length, and is appropriate for children ages 3-8. Puppets are used throughout to represent various characters in the show.

Table of Contents

About Beatrix Potter	3
Facts About Rabbits	4
A Reading Adventure with Beatrix Potter An Integrated Reading Unit	5 - 6
General Bibliography	7 - 8
Beatrix Potter Bibliography	9

This study guide was written and compiled by Ramona Brand, Director of Education for Wild Swan Theater
August, 2002



About Beatrix Potter (1866-1943)

Beatrix Potter came from a wealthy middle-class family and was educated by a governess at home. As an only daughter, she had no playmates for much of the time (a younger brother had more formal schooling), but she enjoyed various pets, writing and drawing. Her parents evidently sought to be conventional in every respect and chiefly benefited their children by neglecting them. Carpenter says her journals reveal

her to be very independent and determined from the beginning, contemptuous of Victorian convention, including both religious and class strictures (279).

Every summer of her childhood was spent in the Lake District, where Beatrix and her younger brother wandered at large collecting plants and other natural artifacts, making pets of smaller wild animals, and drawing everything - both were natural artists.

As an adult, Potter showed little interest in socializing or marriage; instead, she frequented the Natural History Museum near her London home and worked at her art. In 1896, an uncle tried to get some serious attention for her botanical drawings of mushrooms and her biological theories (she correctly described the symbiotic relationship of fungus and algae that creates lichens), but to no avail. The botanical

establishment of her day was not prepared to credit her accurate understanding of the nature of lichens and the propagation of mold spores. Both ideas, now known to be true, were dismissed in part because they flew in the face of scientific orthodoxy and because of Potter's age (30) and gender (Golden, "Naturalist" 631).

After establishing herself as an author-illustrator, many of Potter's naturalist studies reappeared in subsequent stories, and all of her illustrations are extremely accurate: "Potter insisted on accuracy because she wanted her book illustrations also to serve as nature lessons for children" (Golden, "Naturalist" 638). She first wrote the adventures of Peter Rabbit in a letter to the son of her former governess in 1893; this story was enlarged with additional drawings in 1901, when she tried unsuccessfully to find a publisher. Six rejected it, so she had 250 copies privately printed; they sold, causing a publisher, Frederick Warne, to pick it up in 1903.

Peter Rabbit was immediately successful, and she produced more than 20 additional books over the next 15 years. Her books quickly brought Potter money, fame, and a certain amount of independence from her stifling family life. Her first editor, Norman Warne, fell in love with her but her parents rejected him since he was not a gentleman but "in trade"; however, Beatrix became engaged anyway, thanks to her independence. Before they could be married, though, Warne became ill with leukemia and died.

Potter used her royalties to buy property in the Lake District and increasingly spent more time there, marrying a local lawyer (William Heelis) over her parents' objections in 1913. After marriage, she turned to farming and reduced her writing; over her last 30 years, she published only four more books. She continued to be active in farming and worked to preserve the natural and historical sites in the Lake District.

FACTS ABOUT RABBITS



RABBITS LIKE TO NIBBLE ON CARROTS, TREE BARK, BITS OF LETTUCE AND OTHER VEGETABLES.



THEY LIVE IN GROUPS, IN UNDERGROUND BURROWS.



RABBITS WEIGH FROM 2 TO 11 LBS.



RABBITS CAN HAVE BABIES AT AGE 6 MONTHS, AND LIVE FOR ABOUT 10 YEARS.



FEMALES CAN HAVE 20 TO 40 BABIES A YEAR.



RABBITS ARE FASTER THAN CATS! THEY CAN RUN 35 MPH.

**A READING ADVENTURE WITH BEATRIX POTTER
INTEGRATED CURRICULUM UNIT**

The children are invited to bring any Beatrix Potter books they have, and/or stuffed rabbits to school to share with the class during the unit.



DAY 1

Reading:

I. Discuss Questions

What do you know about rabbits? Where do they live? What do rabbits eat?

Is it important to mind your parents? Why? Why not? How do you feel when you don't?

Have you ever lost a sweater or jacket? What did your mother or father say? How did you feel?

II. Introduce and Read "Peter Rabbit"

Word Study: Rabbits - a list of facts the children know about rabbits, their habits, etc.

Research: Rabbit facts - Co-operative group activity: each group finds as many facts as possible about a type of rabbit, and then shares their facts with the class.

Writing: Write a letter to Peter

Art Activity: Make Beatrix Potter character hand puppets on Popsicle sticks for drama use later.

DAY 2

Fill out a 3x5 index card about the stuffed animal the children brought to school.

Include the information:

Kind of animal

Animal's name

Animal's age

Where was your animal born?

Animal's favorite thing to do

Animal's favorite food

Where does the animal sleep?

Owner of animal

Share the information about your animal with the class!

Reading: Main Idea, details - in co-operative groups, reread story, then list the main idea, and at least 3 details

Word Study: word clusters about Peter Rabbit (build vocabulary with words from story such as: mischievous, naughty)

Writing: Write a recipe for a pie. (Preferably not rabbit!)

Art Activity: Make puppet in water can (re-read story in co-operative groups using water can, children "ah-choo" with Peter)

Story Time: One of Beatrix Potter's stories brought in by the children or another rabbit story from bibliography

DAY 3

Language: ABC order - a list of vegetables from Mr. McGregor's Garden

Reading: Compare/contrast different versions of Peter Rabbit

Word Study: Mr. McGregor – list word associated with gardening- will use in drama activity later

Science: Needs of plants that grow from seeds

Activity: Plant parsley seeds

Story Time: See day 2 above

DAY 4

Reading: Discuss setting; Read Benjamin Bunny, is the setting the same? different?

Word Study: Benjamin Bunny

Art: Have children draw from nature. If weather allows go outside a pick a specific plant to draw. If weather does not allow, bring into class various natural item, flowers, leaves, nuts, seeds etc.

Activity: Make scarecrow, put in with parsley seeds

Story Time: See above

DAY 5

Drama: have children act out various activities associated with gardening. i.e. sowing seeds, raking, weeding, hoeing, watering, pulling, eating. How many different activities are there?

Reading: Read biography about Beatrix Potter

Word Study: Beatrix Potter- words related to botany

Science: classification- using natural items have children classify by set of given identifiers and self created identifiers

Math: use Math Rabbit software to support math program

Story Time: Re-enact story of Peter Rabbit using puppets made earlier

Credit: <http://home.att.net/~elteach/rabbits.html>

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bornstein, Ruth Lercher : Rabbit's Good News, Clarion Books, New York, 1995.

Rabbit leaves her warm dark burrow and discovers that spring has come.

Brown, Margaret Wise, pictures by Lisa McCue: Bunny's Noisy Book, Hyperion Books, New York : 2000.

A little bunny listens to noises all around him and then makes some of his own.

Brown, Margaret Wise, Pictures by Clement Hurd, The Runaway Bunny, Harper [1942] , New York and London,

A little rabbit who wants to run away tells his mother how he will escape, but she is always right behind him; even if he changes into a fish, she will become a fisherman fishing with a carrot.

DeLage, Ida, drawings by Ellen Sloan: Am I A Bunny?, Garrard Pub. Co., Champaign, Ill., 1978.

A brown bunny thinks he is a rat, a cat, a squirrel, and a frog, until he meets some other brown bunnies.

Hillert, Margaret, illustrated by Robert Masheris: The Baby Bunny, Follett, Chicago, 1981.

Easy-to-read text follows the growth, antics, and adventures of a baby bunny.

Howe, James and Deborah, illustrated by Alan Daniel: Bunnacula: A Rabbit-Tale of Mystery, Atheneum, New York, 1979.

Though scoffed at by Harold the dog, Chester the cat tries to warn his human family that their foundling baby bunny must be a vampire.

Jennings, Linda, illustrated by Catherine Walters: The Brave Little Bunny, Dutton Children's Books, New York, 1995. Originally published in Great Britain 1995 by Magi Publications, London"

Millie the lop-eared rabbit is tired of living in a small, cramped hutch and when she decides to explore the world, she meets a wild rabbit who helps her escape danger.

Keller, Holly: Cecil's Garden, Greenwillow Books, New York: 2002.

After seeing how arguing affects the other animals, Cecil figures out how to plant a garden that he and his friends can all enjoy.

Quackenbush, Robert M.: Funny Bunnies , Clarion Books,
New York, 1984.

While little Lucy is out for a swim, various bunnies from the staff crowd into her family's hotel room.

Scarry, Richard: Richard Scarry's Watch your step, Mr. Rabbit!, Random House,
New York: 1997.

Bumble Bunny's feet get stuck in the street as he looks at his newspaper.

Spowart, Robin: Ten Little Bunnies , Scholastic,
New York: 2001.

Introduces the numbers one to ten as bunnies eat, sing, swing, and more.

Tafari, Nancy: Will you be my friend? : A Bunny and Bird Story, Scholastic Press,
New York: 2000.

Bird comes to feel less shy when Bunny helps her rebuild her ruined nest, showing her what a good friend can be.

Wabbes, Marie: Little Rabbit's Garden, Atlantic Monthly Press,
Boston: c1987.

Little Rabbit samples some of the luscious things growing in his garden.





BEATRIX POTTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

Potter, Beatrix: The Story of a Fierce Bad Rabbit , F. Warne & Co., Inc., New York; London, 1906.

Potter, Beatrix: The Tale of Benjamin Bunny, F. Warne & Co., Inc., New York; London, 1906.

Potter, Beatrix: The Tale of Ginger & Pickles, F. Warne & Co., Inc., New York; London, 1909.

Potter, Beatrix: The Tale of Peter Rabbit [giant format], London: F. Warne; London ; New York , Penguin, 1993.

Aldis, Dorothy, Drawings by Richard Cuffari: Nothing is Impossible: The Story of Beatrix Potter, Atheneum, New York: 1969.

A biography of the woman who created Peter Rabbit as well as other stories read by children all over the world.

Collins, David R., illustrations by Karen Ritz: The Country Artist: A Story about Beatrix Potter, Carolrhoda Books, Minneapolis, 1989.

A biography of the English author and illustrator who grew up during the Victorian era and whose detailed drawings of plants and animals found their way into her famous picture books.

Lane, Margaret, The Magic Years of Beatrix Potter , F. Warne, London; New York, 1978.

Taylor, Judy, Letters to Children from Beatrix Potter / collected and introduced by Judy Taylor, Frederick Warne London, England; Penguin Books, New York, N.Y.,1992.

Web Links for Peter Rabbit Study Guide:

<http://olp.swlauriersb.qc.ca/webquest/peterrabbit/petertortoisehare.htm>

Math and reading comprehension activities relating to the story of Peter Rabbit and the Tortoise and the Hare online