

= The Tale of Peter Rabbit =

The Tale of Peter Rabbit is a British children 's book written and illustrated by Beatrix Potter that follows mischievous and disobedient young Peter Rabbit as he is chased about the garden of Mr. McGregor . He escapes and returns home to his mother who puts him to bed after dosing him with camomile tea . The tale was written for five @-@ year @-@ old Noel Moore , son of Potter 's former governess Annie Carter Moore , in 1893 . It was revised and privately printed by Potter in 1901 after several publishers ' rejections but was printed in a trade edition by Frederick Warne & Co. in 1902 . The book was a success , and multiple reprints were issued in the years immediately following its debut . It has been translated into 36 languages and with 45 million copies sold it is one of the best @-@ selling books of all time .

The book has generated considerable merchandise over the decades since its release for both children and adults with toys , dishes , foods , clothing , videos and other products made available . Potter was one of the first to be responsible for such merchandise when she patented a Peter Rabbit doll in 1903 and followed it almost immediately with a Peter Rabbit board game .

= = Plot = =

The story focuses on a family of anthropomorphic rabbits , the widowed mother rabbit cautioning her young against entering a vegetable garden grown by a man named Mr. McGregor , telling them : " your Father had an accident there ; he was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor " . Whereas her three daughters obediently refrain from entering the garden , going down the lane to pick blackberries , her rebellious son Peter enters the garden to snack on some vegetables . Peter ends up eating more than is good for him and goes looking for parsley to cure his stomach ache . However , Peter is spotted by Mr. McGregor and loses his jacket and shoes while trying to escape . He hides in a watering can in a shed , but then has to run away again when Mr. McGregor finds him , and ends up completely lost . After sneaking past a cat , Peter sees the gate where he entered the garden from a distance and heads for it , despite being spotted and chased by Mr. McGregor again . He finds difficulties in wriggling beneath the gate , but manages to escape the garden , only to spot his abandoned clothing articles being used to dress Mr. McGregor 's scarecrow . After returning home , a sick Peter is sent to bed by his mother whereas his well @-@ behaved sisters receive a sumptuous dinner of milk and berries as opposed to Peter 's supper of chamomile tea .

= = Composition = =

The story was inspired by a pet rabbit Potter had as a child , which she named Peter Piper . Through the 1890s , Potter sent illustrated story letters to the children of her former governess , Annie Moore , and , in 1900 , Moore , realizing the commercial potential of Potter 's stories , suggested they be made into books . Potter embraced the suggestion , and , borrowing her complete correspondence (which had been carefully preserved by the Moore children) , selected a letter written on 4 September 1893 to five @-@ year @-@ old Noel that featured a tale about a rabbit named Peter . Potter biographer Linda Lear explains : " The original letter was too short to make a proper book so [Potter] added some text and made new black @-@ and @-@ white illustrations ... and made it more suspenseful . These changes slowed the narrative down , added intrigue , and gave a greater sense of the passage of time . Then she copied it out into a stiff @-@ covered exercise book , and painted a coloured frontispiece showing Mrs. Rabbit dosing Peter with camomile tea " .

= = Publication history = =

= = = Private publication = = =

As Lear explains , Potter titled The Tale of Peter Rabbit and Mr. McGregor 's Garden and sent it to publishers , but " her manuscript was returned ... including Frederick Warne & Co who nearly a decade earlier had shown some interest in her artwork . Some publishers wanted a shorter book , others a longer one . But most wanted coloured illustrations which by 1900 were both popular and affordable " . The several rejections proved frustrating to Potter who knew exactly how her book should look (she had adopted the format and style of Helen Bannerman 's Little Black Sambo) " and how much it should cost " . She decided to publish the book herself , and , on 16 December 1901 , the first 250 copies of her privately printed The Tale of Peter Rabbit " was ready for distribution to family and friends " .

= = = First commercial edition = = =

In 1901 , as Lear explains , a Potter family friend and sometime poet , Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley , set Potter 's tale into " rather dreadful didactic verse and submitted it , along with Potter 's illustrations and half her revised manuscript , to Frederick Warne & Co . , " which had been among the original rejecters . Warne editors declined Rawnsley 's version " but asked to see the complete Potter manuscript " ? their interest stimulated by the opportunity The Tale of Peter Rabbit offered the publisher to compete with the success of Helen Bannerman 's wildly popular Little Black Sambo and other small format children 's books then on the market . When Warne inquired about the lack of colour illustrations in the book , Potter replied that rabbit @-@ brown and green were not good subjects for colouration . Warne declined the book but opened the possibility for future publication .

Warne wanted colour illustrations throughout the ' bunny book ' (as the firm referred to the tale) and suggested cutting the illustrations " from forty @-@ two to thirty @-@ two ... and marked which ones might best be eliminated " . Potter initially resisted the idea of colour illustrations but then realized her stubborn stance was a mistake . She sent Warne " several colour illustrations , along with a copy of her privately printed edition " which Warne then handed to their eminent children 's book illustrator L. Leslie Brooke for his professional opinion , who was impressed with to Potter 's work . Fortuitously , his recommendation coincided with a sudden surge in the small picture @-@ book market .

Meanwhile , Potter continued to distribute her privately printed edition to family and friends , with the celebrated creator of Sherlock Holmes , Arthur Conan Doyle , acquiring a copy for his children . When the first private printing of 250 copies was sold out , another 200 were prepared . She noted in an inscription in one copy that her beloved pet rabbit Peter had died .

Potter arrived at an agreement with Warne for an initial publication of 5 @,@ 000 commercial copies . Negotiations dragged on into the following year with a contract finally signed in June 1902 . Potter was closely involved in the publication process of the trade edition of the tale ? redrawing when necessary , making minor adjustments to the prose and correcting punctuation . The blocks for the illustrations and text were sent to printer Edmund Evans for engraving , and she made adjustments to the proofs when she received them . Lear writes that " Even before the publication of the tale in early October 1902 , the first 8 @,@ 000 copies were sold out . By the year 's end there were 28 @,@ 000 copies of The Tale of Peter Rabbit in print . By the middle of 1903 there was a fifth edition sporting coloured endpapers ... a sixth printing was produced within the month " ; and a year after the first commercial publication there were 56 @,@ 470 copies in print .

= = = American copyright = = =

Warne 's New York office " failed to register the copyright for The Tale of Peter Rabbit in the United States " and unlicensed copies of the book " (from which Potter would receive no royalties) began to appear in the spring of 1903 . There was nothing anyone could do to stop them " .

The enormous financial loss ... [to Potter] only became evident over time " , but the necessity of protecting her intellectual property hit home after the successful 1903 publication of The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin when her father returned from the Burlington Arcade in Mayfair at Christmas 1903 with a toy squirrel labelled Nutkin .

= = Merchandising = =

Potter asserted her tales would one day be nursery classics , and part of the " longevity of her books comes from strategy " , writes Potter biographer Ruth MacDonald . She was the first to exploit the commercial possibilities of her characters and tales ; between 1903 and 1905 these included a Peter Rabbit stuffed toy , an unpublished board game , and nursery wallpaper .

Considerable variants on the original format and version of The Tale of Peter Rabbit as well as spin off merchandise have been made available over the decades . Variant versions include " pop ups , toy theatres , and lift the flap books " . By 1998 , modern technology had made available " videos , audio cassette , a CD ROMs , a computer program , and Internet sites " , as described by Margaret Mackey writing in The case of Peter Rabbit : changing conditions of literature for children . She continues : " Warne and their collaborators and competitors have produced a large collection of activity books and a monthly educational magazine " . A plethora of other Peter Rabbit related merchandise exists as well , and " toy shops in the United States and Britain have whole sections of store specially signposted and earmarked exclusively for Potter related toys and merchandise " .

Unauthorized copying of The Tale of Peter Rabbit has flourished over the decades with products only loosely associated with the original . In 1916 , American Louise A. Field cashed in on the popularity by writing books such as Peter Rabbit Goes to School or Peter Rabbit and His Ma , the illustrations of which showed him in his distinctive blue jacket . In an animated movie by Golden Films , The New Adventures of Peter Rabbit , " Peter is given buck teeth , an American accent and a fourth sister Hopsy . " Another video " retelling of the tale casts Peter as a Christian preacher singing songs about God and Jesus . "

= = Literary criticism = =

Writing in Storyteller : The Classic that Heralded America 's Storytelling Revival , in discussing the difference between stories that lend themselves well to telling and stories that lend themselves well to reading , Ramon Ross explains Peter Rabbit is a story created for reading . He believes Potter created a good mix of suspense and tension , intermixed with lulls in the action . He goes on to write that the writing style " the economy of words , the crisp writing " ? lends itself well to a young audience .

Lear writes that Potter " had in fact created a new form of animal fable in : one in which anthropomorphic animals behave as real animals with true animal instincts " , and a form of fable with anatomically correct illustrations drawn by a scientifically minded artist . She further states Peter Rabbit 's nature is familiar to rabbit enthusiasts " and endorsed by those who are not ... because her portrayal speaks to some universal understanding of rabbit behaviour . " She describes the tale as a " perfect marriage of word and image " and " a triumph of fantasy and fact " .

According to Stuart Jeffries , " ... psychoanalytic critiques of her work have multiplied since her death in 1943 . " Carole Scott writes in Beatrix Potter 's Peter Rabbit that the reader cannot help but identify with rebellious little Peter and his plight as all the illustrations are presented from his low to the ground view , most feature Peter in close up and within touching distance , and Mr. McGregor is distanced from the reader by always being depicted on the far side of Peter . Scott explains : " This identification dramatically instills fear and tension in the reader , and interacts with the frequently distanced voice of the verbal narrative " , sometimes with contradictory effects . In the verbal narrative and the illustration for the moment when Mr. McGregor attempts to trap Peter under a garden sieve , for example , the verbal narrative presents the murderous intent of Mr. McGregor as a matter of fact , everyday occurrence while the illustration presents the desperate moment from the terrified view of a small animal in fear of his life ? a view that is reinforced by the birds that take flight to the left and the right .

In the illustration of Peter standing by the locked door , the verbal narrative describes the scene without the flippancy evident in the moment of the sieve . The inability to overcome obstacles is

presented in the verbal narrative with objective matter @-@ of @-@ factness and the statement , " Peter began to cry " is offered without irony or attitude , thus drawing the reader closer to Peter ? s emotions and plight . The illustration depicts an unclothed Peter standing upright against the door , one foot upon the other with a tear running from his eye . Without his clothes , Peter is only a small , wild animal but his tears , his emotions , and his human posture intensifies the reader ? s identification with him . Here , verbal narrative and illustration work in harmony rather than in disharmony . Scott suggests Potter ? s tale has encouraged many generations of children to " self @-@ indulgence , disobedience , transgression of social boundaries and ethics , and assertion of their wild , unpredictable nature against the constrictions of civilized living . "

Frank Delaney notes " a self @-@ containment " in Potter 's writing reflective of an uninterested mother and a lonely childhood spent in the company of pets . John Bidwell , curator at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York , observed " ... the sardonic humor that makes Beatrix Potter so much fun for kids and grown @-@ ups . ?

= = Adaptations = =

In 1938 , shortly after the success of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs , Walt Disney became interested in making an animated film based on The Tale of Peter Rabbit . However , Beatrix Potter refused to give the rights to Disney because of marketing issues .

In 1971 , Peter Rabbit appeared as a character in the ballet film The Tales of Beatrix Potter . In the autumn of 1991 , HBO aired an animated musical adaptation of The Tale of Peter Rabbit , narrated by Carol Burnett , as part of the network 's Storybook Musicals series , which was later released to VHS by Family Home Entertainment . In 1992 , the tale was adapted to animation again for the BBC anthology series , The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends , which has since been released on VHS and DVD . In 2006 , Peter Rabbit was heavily referenced in a biopic about Beatrix Potter entitled Miss Potter . In December 2012 , a new CGI @-@ animated children 's TV series titled Peter Rabbit premiered on Nickelodeon , with a full series run beginning in February 2013 .