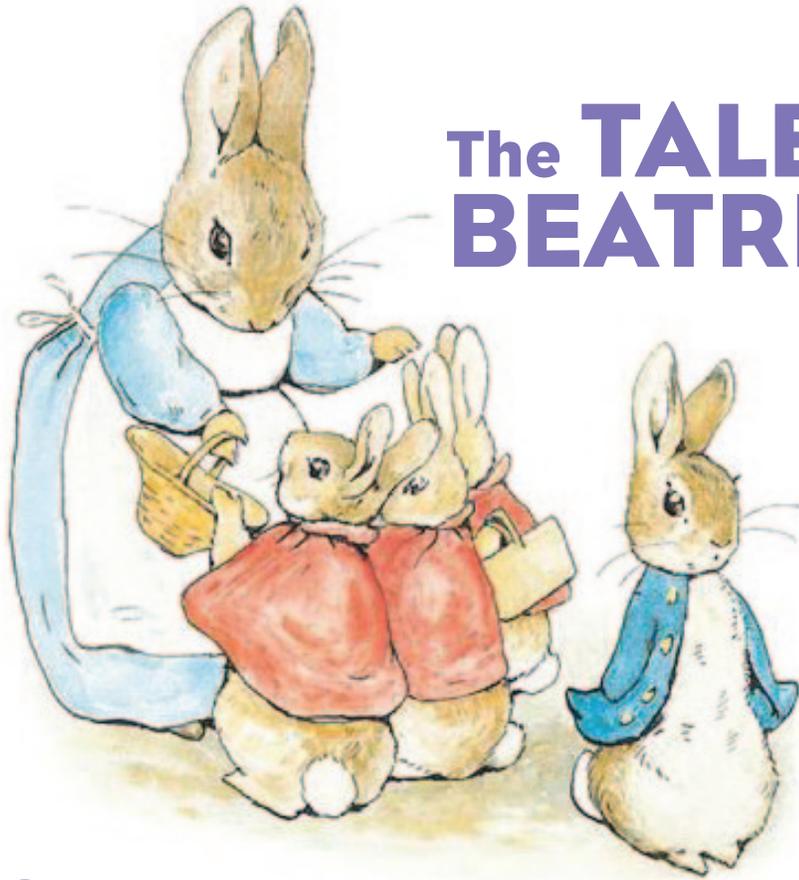


2012–2013 Season

CATCO IS
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PLAYGUIDE



The TALES of BEATRIX POTTER

November 9–18, 2012

Studio One,
Riffe Center

By Beatrix Potter

Adapted for the stage
by Steven C. Anderson

The Story

A troupe of English actors is preparing to do a play. Bernard refuses to perform and leaves the stage to sit in the audience and watch. The other three actors, with help from the children in the audience, continue to perform the play without him.

The first story begins as Mrs. Rabbit tells her children to stay away from Mr. McGregor's garden. After she leaves, Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail decide to pick berries, but Peter heads straight for the garden. He is happily eating everything he can find until he runs into Mr. McGregor himself. The farmer chases Peter, who loses his shoes and his coat along the way. However, in the end, he arrives home, frightened and feeling quite sick, but alive. His mother sends him to bed without blackberries and cream.

The second story opens as Jemima Puddle Duck is refusing to eat, and the farmer's wife warns that she will lose her strength and not be able to lay any eggs. Jemima, who never had the patience to sit on her eggs anyway, decides to go off to find the perfect private spot to lay her eggs. On her journey, she is befriended by the Elegantly Dressed Gentleman who leads her to his summer house to lay her eggs. Thanks to her friend Kep, the Gentleman is exposed as the villainous fox. After a narrow escape, Jemima is rescued by Kep and the fox and hound puppies.



About the Author / Illustrator



Beatrix Potter, the author of the stories upon which the play is based, was born in London, England, in 1866, and grew up surrounded by a collection of unusual pets. From an early age, she was interested in animals and studied their anatomy and behavior, filling many sketchbooks with her drawings. Not content with merely sketching from a distance, at the age of 10 she was bringing home dead animals to study their skeletons. As she grew up, her ambition was to earn a livelihood with her botanical illustrations. However, she lived in the confining Victorian age which would not take a woman's scientific efforts seriously, and so she turned to writing and illustrating children's books.

In 1893, Beatrix wrote an illustrated letter to a child which told the story of four rabbits. The rabbits—Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail, and Peter—later achieved fame in her first book, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. After sending the manuscript to six publishers, all of whom rejected it, Beatrix printed it with her own funds. She also broke with tradition on the size of the book, demanding that it be small enough for little hands to hold. This and the 22 little books that followed became one of the most popular children's series in the world!

In our scripted adaptation, an eccentric British acting troupe perform two Beatrix Potter tales—Peter Rabbit and Jemima Puddle Duck. The action of the play takes place in rural England and the cast of characters include:

The Story of Peter Rabbit: Peter—a curious young rabbit
Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail—his three sisters
Mrs. Rabbit—their mother
Mr. McGregor—a neighboring farmer

The Story of Jemima Puddle Duck: Jemima Puddle Duck—a slightly backward duck
Kep—her friend, the collie dog
Farmer's Wife—Jemima's caretaker
Elegantly Dressed Gentleman—a fox in disguise
Fox Hound Puppies—puppies on the lookout for a fox

The English Acting Troupe: Bernard—the troublesome actor
Gwendolyn—the leader of the troupe
Cecil—the comedian and Gwendolyn's right hand man
Alexandra—a somewhat fragile but nonetheless wonderful actress





About the Playwright



Steven C. Anderson has created plays for and with central Ohio children for the past 29 years, first at the Leo Yassenoff Jewish Center, then at Players Theatre Columbus, and most recently, at The Phoenix Theatre for Children which he founded 16 years ago. He is the recipient of the Ohio Theatre Alliance Lifetime Achievement Award, the Southside Settlement Arts Freedom Award, a Certificate of Achievement from the Community Center for the Deaf, and a Central Ohio Critics Circle Award for "a decade of respectful and exhilarating theatrical adaptations of works of literature from around the world and for using a diverse array of theatrical styles to challenge and delight children." His work has been nominated five times for the prestigious Greater Columbus Arts Council's Excellence in the Arts Award. His work as a director includes *Candide* and *Hair* at The Ohio State University Theatre Department; *Love! Valour! Compassion!* and *The Taste of Sunrise* at CATCO; *Big River* and *Pippin* for Actors Theatre; *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* at New Harmony Theatre; and *Greater Tuna*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *Assassins* for the former Players Theatre Columbus where he served as Associate Producing Director. He is particularly proud of the 2006 collaboration with BalletMet of *Alice in Wonderland*, the 2007 collaboration with CAPA and Opera Columbus on *The Secret Garden* that paired deaf and hearing actors on stage together, and the 2009 Phoenix production of *The Miracle Worker* that incorporated the talents of deaf and blind actors.



Reading Recommendations

Check out the enchanting 2006 film about Beatrix Potter called *Miss Potter* starring Renée Zellweger, Ewan McGregor and Emily Watson. (Rated PG)

Beatrix Potter's Letters
by Judy Taylor
Frederick Warne & Co., NY 1989

Beatrix Potter—The Story of the Creator of Peter Rabbit
by Elizabeth Buchan
Penguin Books, NY 1987

Books by Beatrix Potter, all published by Frederick Warne & Co., NY

Benjamin Bunny
The Peter Rabbit Books
Squirrel Nutkin
The Tale of Jemima Puddleduck
and dozens more!





Curriculum Connections

You can use this Playguide and your visit to CATCO is Kids to help your students meet the curriculum standards required in schools by the Ohio Department of Education. Look throughout our Playguide for the icon

Curriculum Connection

and you will find academic standards that correspond with the different activities listed.



Vocabulary Section

Here are some words and phrases from *The Tales of Beatrix Potter*. How many of these words do you know? Look up any words you don't know, and think of a way to use them in a sentence of your own.

Curriculum Connection

Reading Standards for Literature K-5: Craft and Structure

Grade K: Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

Grade 3: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from non-literal language.

"You know Bernard-all **BLUSTER** when he gets in a mood."

"She began to waddle about in search of a **CONVENIENT** dry nesting place."

"He is **CUNNING** and false and mean and nasty and- well, a regular beast."

"Cooking makes me so **EDGY**."

"This fellow is very **ELEGANT**."

"Jemima Puddle Duck was **ESCORTED** home in tears on account of those eggs."

"They don't look very **FEROCIOUS**."

"Here is your **FROCK COAT**."

"Gobble up some of those and **GORGE** myself upon those."

You alone are not a worthy **OPPONENT**.

"Don't say '**RUBBISH**', Bernard."

"Jemima Puddle Duck was a **SIMPLETON**."

"She **SKIMMED** along over the tree-tops."

"In fact, I think you are very elegant and very **SYMPATHETIC**."

"Madam, before you begin your **TEDIOUS** sitting, I intend to give you a treat."



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO



Before the Show

1. **Talk about the theatre.** Have you been to the theatre before, and if so, what plays have you seen? How is the theatre different from television? How is it different for the actors? How is it different for you in the audience?

Curriculum
Connection

Drama: Responding/Reflecting Grade 4: Explain how a theatrical experience (e.g. live theatre production, film, video, and media) impacts its audience.

2. **Read the stories of Peter Rabbit and Jemima Puddle Duck.** Would you rather be like Peter or like Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail? Why? What would happen to Jemima's eggs if Kep hadn't followed her? If you were doing a play version of the stories, which parts of the action would you keep? Which characters would you keep? Which would you eliminate?

3. **Animal dress up!** Pick one of your favorite animals from the Beatrix Potter stories and draw them. Write a paragraph below describing your favorite animal in detail. Now imagine how it would look dressed up as a person. Make a list of several items of clothing that are very special to you. Be sure to include fun things like jewelry, hats, book bags, etc. Then add them one at a time to the drawing of your animal. Do the clothes make them seem more human? More like you? Share your drawing with a parent or friend!

Curriculum
Connection

Speaking and Listening Standards K-5: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas Grade 1: Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings clearly.

4. **Just for fun!** Beatrix Potter started writing in a journal at the age of 15, but to make sure no one else could read what she wrote, she invented her own private code. After her death in 1943, several people attempted to decipher the code, but no one succeeded until 1958 when her journals were finally decoded and published. Sample of Beatrix Potter's code alphabet:

A=a
B=l
C=q
D=o
E=k
F=c

To make a private language of your very own, start by writing all the letters of the alphabet on a sheet of paper. Then write a new symbol next to each letter just as Beatrix Potter did. This is your own personal code alphabet. Now find the letters in your name and write the symbols one by one. This is your name code.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND DO

After the Show

1. **Talk about what you've just seen.** How is the play different from the story? How is it the same? Did the characters look like you expected them to? What costume was the most interesting to you? Which part of the scenery was the most intriguing?

Curriculum
Connection

Drama: Responding/Reflecting Grade K: Share thoughts, emotions and ideas in response to a dramatic or theatrical experience.

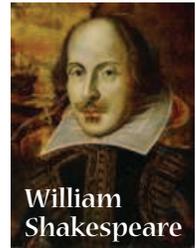
2. **In the theatrical version of these stories, the playwright Steven C. Anderson decided to create British characters to act out the stories.** Why do you think he made that choice? How does it affect the stories? Do the British actors resemble the animals in their personalities? How are they the same? How are they different? If you could be an actor in this production, which part would you most like to play? Why?

3. In our play, poor Bernard misquotes the following line from Shakespeare's play, *Romeo and Juliet*:

"As the great Bard, that's Shakespeare you know,
put it: Parting is such sweet wheel barrow, so I'll say
cheerio until all's well that ends well."

The real line that William Shakespeare wrote is:

"Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow
that I shall say good night til it be morrow."



And Bernard also confuses *All's Well that Ends Well*, the title of another play by William Shakespeare written in the 16th century! Practice being an actor by saying both of these speeches out loud several times. Surprise some adults by reciting your lines in character with a British accent!

4. **Music by British composers from the turn of the century is used throughout the play.** How does music help the action of the play? Does it make the chase scene between Peter and Mr. McGregor feel more dangerous? Does it help to make the audience laugh? The next time you hear music that doesn't have any words, think about the images that the sound suggests. Let your mind wander, and you'll probably have a movie running through your head in no time at all!

Curriculum
Connection

Music Standards Grade K: Explore connections between sound and its visual representation
**Grades 1-3: Perceiving/
Knowing/Creating**

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FUN FACTS

"Like Water off a Duck's Back"

Sayings like the above are actually based in fact. The oil produced on a duck's feathers is what keeps them buoyant. Young ducklings often drown when immersed in water before their bodies start to produce oil.

After a swim, ducks flap their wings to dry themselves and spend half an hour or so preening their feathers. They use their beaks like combs, giving each feather individual attention.

Ducks immerse their heads in water for cleaning purposes and to prevent blockage of the nasal passages. Adult ducks often suffer from sinusitis! They also suffer from sunstroke and have a great need for shade. They are often seen following a shadow as it moves with the time of day.

A female duck can produce three clutches a year and average about 40 ducklings per bird. However, not all eggs are fertile.

"Mad as a March Hare"

Another saying based in fact! The hare, bolting away on its snowshoe feet, can travel a three mile course in about five minutes or 35 mph. The mode of locomotion of rabbits and hares is called saltation, or hopping. It surprisingly surpasses running as a means of covering great distances quickly.

What is the difference between a rabbit and a hare? Hares are larger than rabbits, have longer legs, and particularly large, overgrown ears. However, they are both equipped with a superb and keen sense of smell, which is confirmed by their comically twitching noses.

Rabbits have eyes set on the sides of their heads so they can see any carnivorous mammals that cross their paths, from weasels and foxes to the big cats, as well as large snakes and most birds of prey.

A kit's life expectancy is less than one year, but if it manages to survive that critical period, the chance of living to the ripe old age of two is greatly increased. To compensate for relatively short life spans, rabbits are rapid breeders with young that mature very early.

Cottontails are instantly identifiable by their powder-puff tails. When threatened, cottontails will often freeze, and they can hold a motionless pose for five minutes or more!



MRS. RABBIT'S COOKING CORNER

Anzac Biscuits

Ingredients:

2 cups rolled oats
2 cups flour
2 cups coconut
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 cup butter
4 tbsp agave syrup (or agave nectar)
1 tsp baking soda
2 tblsp boiling water

Method:

Turn oven to 325°F. Lightly grease oven trays.

Place oats, flour, coconut, and sugar in a big mixing bowl.

Melt butter and agave syrup in saucepan. Take off heat.

Mix baking soda and boiling water in a cup. Add to melted butter mixture in the pan. Quickly add to big mixing bowl. Mix well.

Roll tablespoonfuls of the mixture into balls. Place on trays two inches apart. Press lightly with fork.

Bake for 20 minutes.



<http://www.kidspot.com.au/best-recipes/Cakes-and-Baking+20/Anzac-biscuits-recipe+564.htm>