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BEATRIX POTTER

History

KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

Overview

Beatrix Potter (1866–1943) was a British children's writer, illustrator, natural scientist and conservationist.

She is famous for her books involving animals, for example *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and *The Tale of Gemima Puddleduck*.

Potter wrote about 30 books, the best known of which were her 23 children's tales.

She was also widely praised for her illustration and painting skills. She also had a respected understanding of the natural world (particularly plants and fungi).

Her books have sold millions of copies around the world, and have been translated into many languages. Many have been retold in song, film and ballet.

A photograph of Beatrix Potter from 1913



Answers to Important Questions and Key Vocabulary

What did Potter write about and illustrate?



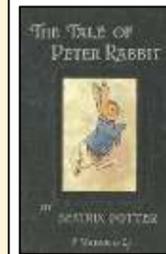
-From an early age, Potter was hugely interested in the natural world around her. She kept pets as a young girl, and was extremely interested in the plants and animals that filled the countryside. As a result, they became the focus of many of her illustrations. -Her popular children's stories were almost entirely about animals. Most of these were animals that can be found in the British countryside, such as rabbits, squirrels and ducks. Many of the had interesting characters, making them appeal to children!

Was Potter popular during her life?



-Beatrix Potter's stories were immediately successful. There was a wave of interest in children's stories, which she was at the forefront of. By the end of her life, she was a very wealthy woman.

What are Potter's most famous stories?



-Perhaps Potter's most famous story is the *Tale of Peter Rabbit*. It is the story of a naughty rabbit named Peter, who is chased about the garden of Mr McGregor. He returns to his mother, who puts him to bed for his behaviour. *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* is another of her famous tales. It tells the story of a red squirrel called Nutkin who has a narrow escape from an owl called Old Brown. It was published in 1903.

What else do we know about Beatrix Potter?



-She was really interested in conservation, and supported the National Trust in trying to make sure that places of natural beauty were left untouched. She bought many farms around Hill Top Farm so that the countryside around her house would not be spoiled. She restored each of the farms that she bought, and kept many as working farms.

Key Vocabulary

- Writer
- Illustrator
- Botany
- Mycology
- Published
- Victorian
- Businesswoman
- Memorabilia
- Spin-off
- Conservation
- Hill Top Farm
- Pneumonia

Times in Her Life

Early Life



-Potter was born on 28th July 1866 in Kensington, London.

-Her family lived comfortably, and Beatrix received a good education for a woman at the time.

-From an early age, Beatrix loved drawing animal illustrations.

Late Childhood



-Around 1882, the family took their first holiday to the Lake District. Beatrix immediately loved the area.

-She began to keep a diary. She also grew interested in botany (the study of flowers and plants) and mycology (study of fungi).

Illustrating and Writing Career

-In 1890, the firm Hildesheimer and Faulkner bought several of her drawings, to use on Christmas cards. In 1893 and 1894, she sold more of her illustrations to publishers.

-Unable to find a publisher for her own work, Potter published her stories privately from 1901, before the publishers reconsidered and published them from 1902.

-Her stories were an immediate success. She also sold 'spin-off' dolls, figures and blankets.



Later Life



- Potter made a lot of money from selling her books, and was able to buy Hill Top Farm in the Lake District. She kept it as a working farm. She later bought the surrounding farms.

-She continued to write and draw, and enjoyed a happy 30-year marriage to William Heelis. She did not have any children, but helped to educate her many nieces. In the First World War, her London home was destroyed in the Blitz. She died of heart disease in 1943.

Top 10 Facts!

1. The young Beatrix kept several small animals as pets. They influenced her drawing.
2. Her diary contained lots of illustrations and opinions on places that she visited.
3. She became very interested in fossils, and collected them.
4. She was a keen reader when she was a child. One of her favourites was *Alice in Wonderland*.
5. She was a smart businesswoman, and designed memorabilia based on her stories.
6. She loved rural life, and became really interested in breeding sheep on her farm.
7. She left all of her property to the National Trust – this involved 16 farms.
8. In 1943 she was elected the President of the Sheepbreeder's Association.
9. In 1946, Hill Top Farm was opened to the general public by the National Trust.
10. A film about her life – called *Miss Potter* – was released in 2006.

Beatrix Potter Timeline

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| 28 th July, 1866: Potter is born in London, England. | 1875: First example of Potter's illustrations – a notebook showing birds and butterflies. | 1880: Won an award for freehand drawing – S. Kensington Museum. | 1887: Potter has rheumatic fever, which affects her heart. | 1890: Sells her first illustrations, for greetings cards. | 1901-1902: <i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i> is published. | 1908: <i>The Tale of Gemima Puddleduck</i> is published. | 1913: Marries William Heelis. | 1914-1918 & 1939-1943: Lives through WWI and start of WWII. | 22 nd December 1943: Potter dies at her home in Lake District. |
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