

Beatrix Potter



Beatrix Potter at fifteen
with her dog Spot

Beatrix Potter was born in South Kensington, London in 1866. Educated at home by a succession of governesses, she had little opportunity to mix with other children. Even Potter's younger brother, Bertram, was rarely at home; he was sent to boarding school, leaving Beatrix alone with her pet animals. She had frogs and newts and even a pet bat. She also had two rabbits -- the first was Benjamin, whom she described as "an impudent, cheeky little thing", while the second was Peter, whom she took everywhere with her, even on the occasional outings, on a little lead. Potter would watch these animals for hours on end, sketching them. Gradually the sketches became better and better, developing her talents from an early age.

Potter's father, Rupert William Potter (1832–1914), although trained as a barrister, spent his days at gentlemen's clubs and rarely practised. Her mother, Helen Potter née Leech (1839–1932), the daughter of a cotton merchant, spent her time visiting or receiving visitors. The family was supported by both parents' inherited incomes.

Every summer, Rupert Potter would rent a country house; firstly Dalguise House in Perthshire, Scotland for the eleven summers of 1871 to 1881,[1] then later one in the English Lake District. In 1882 the family met the local vicar, Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley, who was deeply worried about the effects of industry and tourism on the Lake District. He would later found the National Trust in 1895, to help protect the countryside. Beatrix Potter had immediately fallen in love with the rugged mountains and dark lakes, and through Rawnsley, learnt of the importance of trying to conserve the region, something that was to stay with her for the rest of her life.

Poetry for the family

Beatrix Potter

Bow, wow, wow

Bow, wow, wow!
Whose dog art thou?
"I'm little Tom Tinker's dog,
Bow, wow, wow!"

Cecily Parsley

Cecily Parsley
lived in a pen,
And brewed good ale
for gentlemen;

Gentlemen came
every day,
Till Cecily Parsley
ran away.

Goosey, Goosey, Gander

GOOSEY, goosey, gander,
Whither will you wander?
Upstairs and downstairs,
And in my lady's chamber!

Ninny Nanny Netticoat

Ninny Nanny Netticoat,
In a white petticoat,
With a red nose, --
The longer she stands,
The shorter she grows.

Pussy-cat sits by the fire

Pussy-cat sits by the fire;
How should she be fair?
In walks the little dog,
Says "Pussy! are you there?"

"How do you do, Mistress Pussy?
Mistress Pussy, how do you do?"
"I thank you kindly, little dog,
I fare as well as you!"

This pig went to market

THIS pig went to market;
This pig stayed at home;

This pig had a bit of meat;
And this pig had none;

This little pig cried
Wee! wee! wee!
I can't find my way home.

Three blind mice

Three blind mice, three blind mice,
See how they run! See how they run!
They all run after the farmer's wife,
And she cut off their tails with a carving knife,
Did ever you see such a thing in your life
As three blind mice!

We have a Little Garden

WE have a little garden,
A garden of our own,
And every day we water there
The seeds that we have sown.

WE love our little garden,
And tend it with such care,
You will not find a faced leaf
Or blighted blossom there.