

BEATRIX POTTER™

AUTHOR, ARTIST AND CONSERVATIONIST



All over the world millions of adults can claim to being introduced as children to the delightful stories and enchanting illustrations of Beatrix Potter while sitting on a parent's knee. Until recently however, few people knew of her restricted childhood, her ambition to produce serious research on the subject of fungi, her determination to get her stories published and her pioneering work as a conservationist.

Her life is the story of the transformation of a solitary child into a remarkable woman who achieved her independence through her own publishing success, in spite of a Victorian upbringing which required women to be no more than decorative and domestic.

This pack has been written to help teachers make their pupils aware of the life and work of Beatrix Potter in a wider context. There are often exhibitions of her work in museums, galleries and libraries with which this pack could be used – so keep a look out for further information.

THE PACK CONTAINS

- Background information about the life and times of Beatrix Potter.
- Facsimiles of original documents which can be used in the classroom.

Resource Pack for Teachers

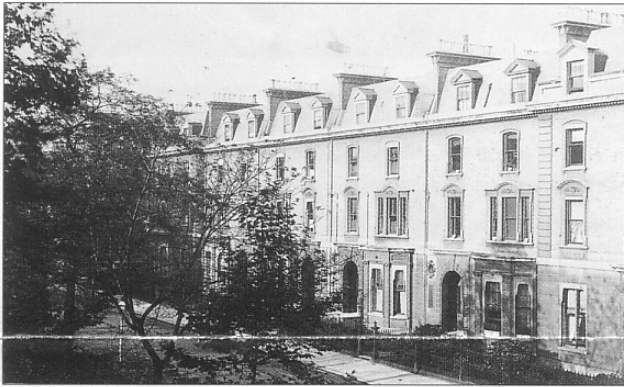
ABOUT BEATRIX POTTER™

(1866-1943)

A Victorian Childhood

Beatrix Potter was born in London in 1866, the daughter of Rupert and Helen Potter, whose families had both made money in the cotton industry in the north of England.

As children, Beatrix and her younger brother Bertram, lived the conventional lives of a Victorian well-to-do family where children were confined to the nursery, rarely saw their parents and where any sort of outside interest was frowned upon.



Courtesy of the V & A Museum

Bolton Gardens, Kensington, London where Beatrix Potter was born.

As soon as Bertram was old enough he was sent away to school and Beatrix was left to be supervised by nurses and taught by governesses. Left to her own resources for much of the day, she taught herself to draw and paint concentrating on animals, insects and plants.

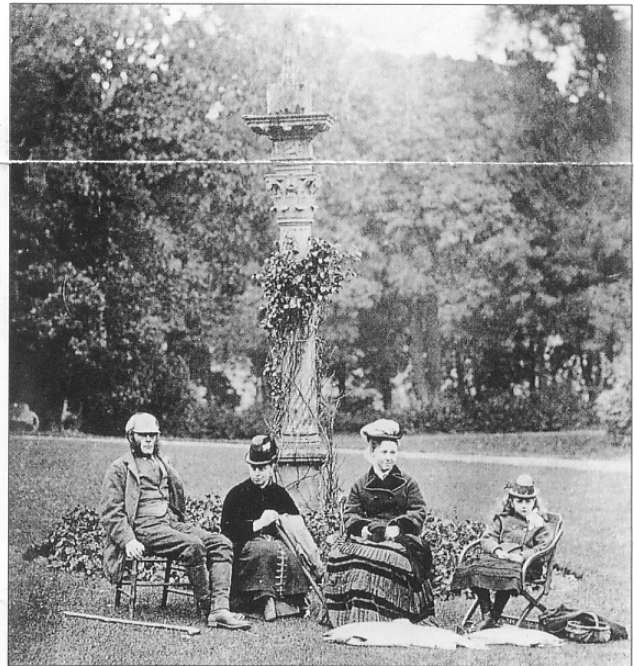


© F. Warne & Co., 1887

Caterpillars drawn when Beatrix was nine years old.

Beatrix's father, Rupert Potter, enjoyed a wide circle of friends so she was exposed to adult company and their interests, including Mr Gaskell, the husband of the Victorian novelist Mrs Gaskell, John Bright the politician, and Sir John Everett Millais the artist. However, she had little or no opportunity to make friends of her own.

The tedium of her life was relieved by wonderful holidays when she would be joined by Bertram and various adult friends of their father. Each year, Rupert Potter rented a house on the coast or the countryside at Easter, and for three months during the summer, at first in Perthshire and then later in the Lake District. It was on these visits that Beatrix grew to love the countryside with a passion.



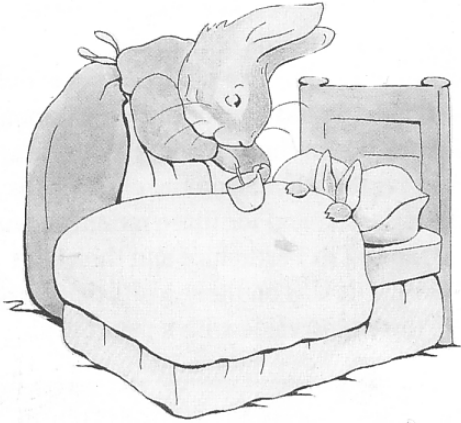
Courtesy of a Private Collector

Mrs and Mrs Potter and Beatrix on holiday at Dalguise House near Dunkeld in Perthshire accompanied by Mrs Millais, wife of John Millais.

Beatrix's solitary life led her to immerse herself in drawing and painting. She spent a lot of time observing the exhibits in the Natural History Museum near her home and visiting art exhibitions with her father. She became seriously interested in fossils and fungi and decided to learn all Shakespeare's plays off by heart!

Success as an Author

In 1890, when Beatrix was 24, an uncle persuaded her to try to sell some of her animal paintings as Christmas cards – her first commercial venture. She had almost immediate success. Three years later she wrote and illustrated a letter about a rabbit called Peter to a young friend who was ill. More picture letters followed and the enthusiastic response from the children who received them, coupled with her success with selling her paintings, persuaded her that she should try to publish the stories.



The frontispiece from The Tale of Peter Rabbit.

© F. Warne & Co., 1902, 1987

Eventually the stories were accepted for publication by Frederick Warne & Co. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* was published in 1902 and by the end of 1903 had sold 50,000 copies. In all, twenty three books were published.

The association with the publishers Frederick Warne & Co. brought Beatrix into contact with the large, welcoming Warne family. A close friendship developed between Beatrix and Norman Warne, the younger son of Frederick Warne. In 1905 they decided to marry against her parents' wishes, who considered publishing to be 'trade' and so Norman unworthy of their daughter. But before they could do so, Norman suddenly fell ill and died of blood poisoning.

Building a new Life

The money from the sale of her books gave her the chance to develop a shrewd sense of business and financial independence. Beatrix decided to invest money and bought Hill Top Farm, Near Sawrey in the Lake District which she had first seen while on holiday as a child. Four years later she bought a second farm nearby and William Heelis, a local solicitor, helped her with the purchase. Beatrix and William grew fond of each other and married in 1913 - still against her parents' wishes!



The Warne Archive

Beatrix Potter and William Heelis on their wedding day.

Now aged 47, Beatrix adapted well to married life but wrote less, devoting her time instead to supervising her farms and pioneering conservation work. However, payments from Frederick Warne were increasingly erratic culminating in Harold Warne's arrest for fraud. Beatrix had to return to writing books to prevent her farm businesses from collapsing.



Courtesy of a Private Collector

Beatrix in her later years at Hill Top.

Beatrix and William had no children but joined in local life, supporting charities including the newly founded National Trust. Over the years, Beatrix acquired more land in the Lake District and when she died in 1943, aged 77, she left over 4000 acres of land and fifteen farms to the National Trust for the nation.

GEOGRAPHY

Much of Beatrix's middle and later years were devoted to conservation of traditional buildings and their environment. Use the theme of conservation to involve pupils in discussion.

In 1905 Beatrix Potter bought Hill Top Farm in the Lake District. It was to be the first of many such investments of land and farms in that area. When she died she bequeathed 4000 acres of land and 15 farms to the nation through the National Trust.

Beatrix was closely involved in the National Trust founded in 1895: Canon Rawley, a friend from childhood, was a founder member. When Beatrix settled in the Lake District the National Trust was busy acquiring vast tracts of rough moorland grazing. Beatrix had the vision to see the importance of preservation of the traditional farms in the valleys, many of which were beginning to fall into disrepair. She saw no point in seeking the effective management of the high ground habitats if the lowlands lost their traditional character, so she bought up land to preserve a more complete pattern of land management.



One of the farms owned by Beatrix

She also introduced Herdwick sheep on her farms, the traditional breed of the area, becoming quite an expert in the breed and eventually taking on the role of President of the Herdwick Sheep Breeders Association. Beatrix was also interested in country customs, folklore and other reminders of the past. She sat on committees concerned with preserving traditional footpaths, judged at country fairs and supported country dancing.



Beatrix at the Woolpack Show Eskdale

There were also the effects of more and more day trippers to consider. The narrow roads were becoming congested with tourists in the summer and Lake Windermere was being used for experiments with flying boats:

'There is a beastly fly-swimming spluttering aeroplane careering up and down over Windermere: it makes a noise like ten million blue-bottles.'

Project 7: Conservation Issues

KS3/4

Links to the curriculum: Geography AT5: Environmental geography; English AT1: speaking and listening; Environmental education; Education for citizenship.

Your local newspaper will carry articles on local conservation issues. Use them as a starting point.

You might also like to discuss issues such as:

- Should conservation be enforced?
- Should new techniques and technology be used when restoring old buildings?
- Who decides what or which area is worth preserving?
- What about the conflict of interests between conserving an important type of barn which is also the nesting place of an endangered species of owl?

You might like to involve your pupils in a survey. The survey sheet illustrated is a professional example used by building inspectors which could be adapted to the needs of your pupils. You will need to familiarize them with terminology such as crown, local authority etc and introduce them to architectural terms as necessary.

Suitable areas for a survey include:

- Graveyards.
- The local church.
- The school building.
- An area due for re-development.
- A local estate.

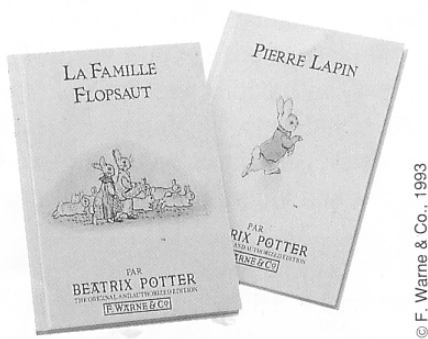
PLACES TO VISIT

Your local museum is a good starting point for a project on conservation. A social history museum might house artefacts connected with your area. Industrial history museums and museums of buildings will have information on specific buildings, building types, other constructions and related documentation.

Your local environmental centre will be able to advise you on green conservation issues in your area.

ENGLISH

Although the story of Peter Rabbit is over one hundred years old, Beatrix Potter continues to gain appreciation as an author. Her books are very popular in Japan and have been translated into many languages including Latin.



Beatrix Potter's Tales have been translated into over 20 languages.

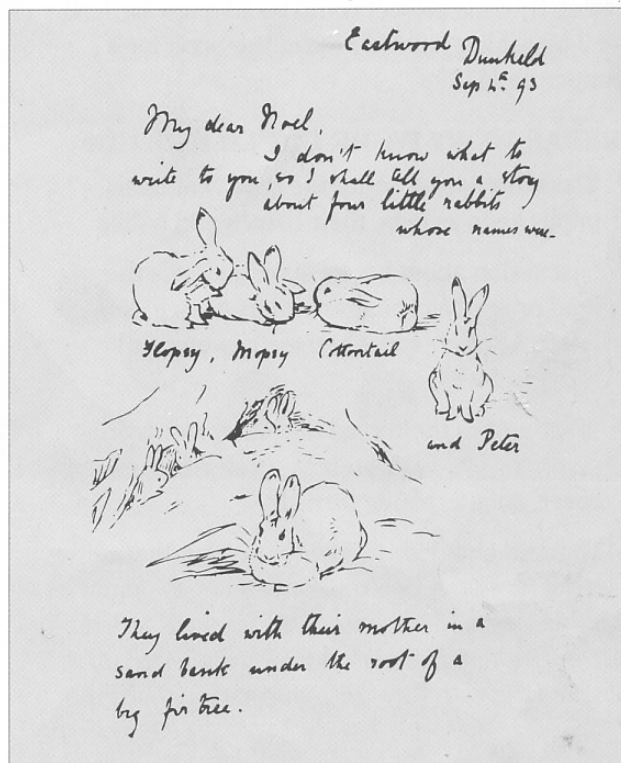
The opportunities for using The Tales of Beatrix Potter in English are endless through storytelling, language, both written and spoken, and creative writing.

Beatrix Potter's career as an author of children's books began when she wrote and illustrated a letter to the son of her ex-governess Annie Moore. Noel Moore was ill in bed when she wrote to him from Scotland saying:

*'My dear Noel,
I don't know what to write to you, so I shall tell you a story about four little rabbits, whose names were Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Peter.'*

Over the next few years more picture letters followed to Annie Moore's other children and their enthusiastic response, together with the ready success she had selling her pictures, persuaded her that she should try to publish the stories. Seven years later, Beatrix borrowed the original letter back from Noel and turned it into a book. She wrote out the words on one page of an exercise book and stuck in pen and ink drawings on the other, enclosed a coloured illustration for the frontispiece, and sent it off to six publishers. All rejected it.

Not to be put off, Beatrix decided to publish them herself. She had 250 printed, gave some away, sold the rest and had a further 200 re-printed. Eventually the manuscript was accepted by the London publishers Frederick Warne and Co. who asked for various modifications, such as coloured illustrations throughout.



Beatrix Potter sent this letter to a young friend called Noel Moore when he was ill in bed.

Beatrix however had her own firm views on how the book should look, and feel. She agreed to the colour illustrations but insisted on a small format so that children could hold the book comfortably. She had views on the colour of the cloth binding, the quality of the illustrations, the exact wording, and the price – it had to be produced as cheaply as possible so that as many children as possible could have access to it.

Project 1 Making a Book

KS1, 2/3

Links to the curriculum: English AT1: Speaking and listening, AT2: Reading, AT3: Writing, AT5: Presentation; Technology AT1: Designing AT2: Making AT5: Information technology capability; Art AT1: Investigating and making; Mathematics AT1: Using and applying mathematics.

Beatrix Potter's books were simple stories, expressed in flowing language which is not over simplified and yet which young children find easy to understand, and illustrated with very detailed pictures. Both the stories and illustrations were based on first hand knowledge and observation of animals and their habits.

Why not use them as a starting point for pupils creating their own books? They could be based on first hand observation of a family pet, a class pet or mini-beasts such as caterpillars temporarily collected for the exercise. (See also Science, project 4). This project could be adapted for KS2 and 3 by asking pupils to make the book for a younger child.

PREPARATORY WORK COULD INCLUDE:

- Class discussion about the type of animals pupils keep as pets, their names and habits.
- Discussion about books about animals they read or read as younger children, including Beatrix Potter, and whether they enjoyed them and why.
- What makes them read one story rather than another - a special interest, an attractive front cover, an interesting format?

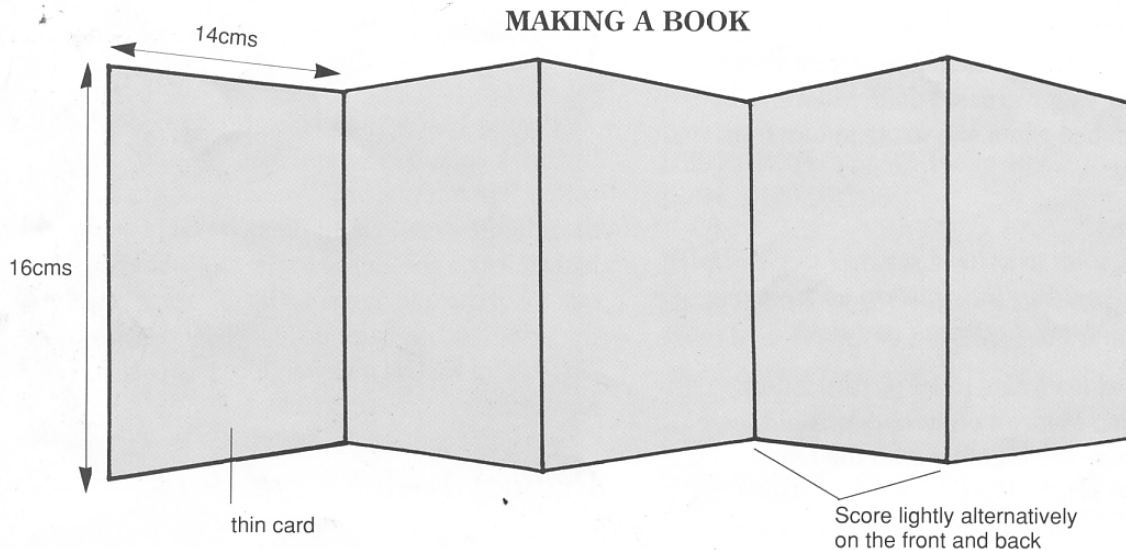
Thought should be given to presentation. How does the format of Beatrix Potter's books compare with those of modern animal stories such as Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* or Eric Hill's *Spot the Dog*, with their large formats and bright

colours. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* is now produced in very large format (see **further reading** for details) - how successful do pupils think it is?

Pupils could use computers and word processing packages to achieve a professional looking result. If your software has options for different typefaces you may like to discuss the suitable size of letters (point size) for different age groups and how some typefaces are chosen for their legibility and sometimes for their decorative value.

The Story of Miss Moppet was first published as a panorama for younger children for Christmas 1906. Its concertina format is especially suitable for making a book with pupils, (see below). Follow-up work could include approaching your local library to display the work perhaps alongside the work of Beatrix Potter and other authors/illustrators.

1. Take a sheet of thin card
2. Measure 16cm in length and 70cm in width.
3. Using a pair of blunt scissors, score across the card at 14cm intervals. This is the page size.
4. Fold along the creases. (The diagram shows a book of five pages but you can make more if you want to).



Project 2: Animation

Older pupils might prefer to try their hand at animation.

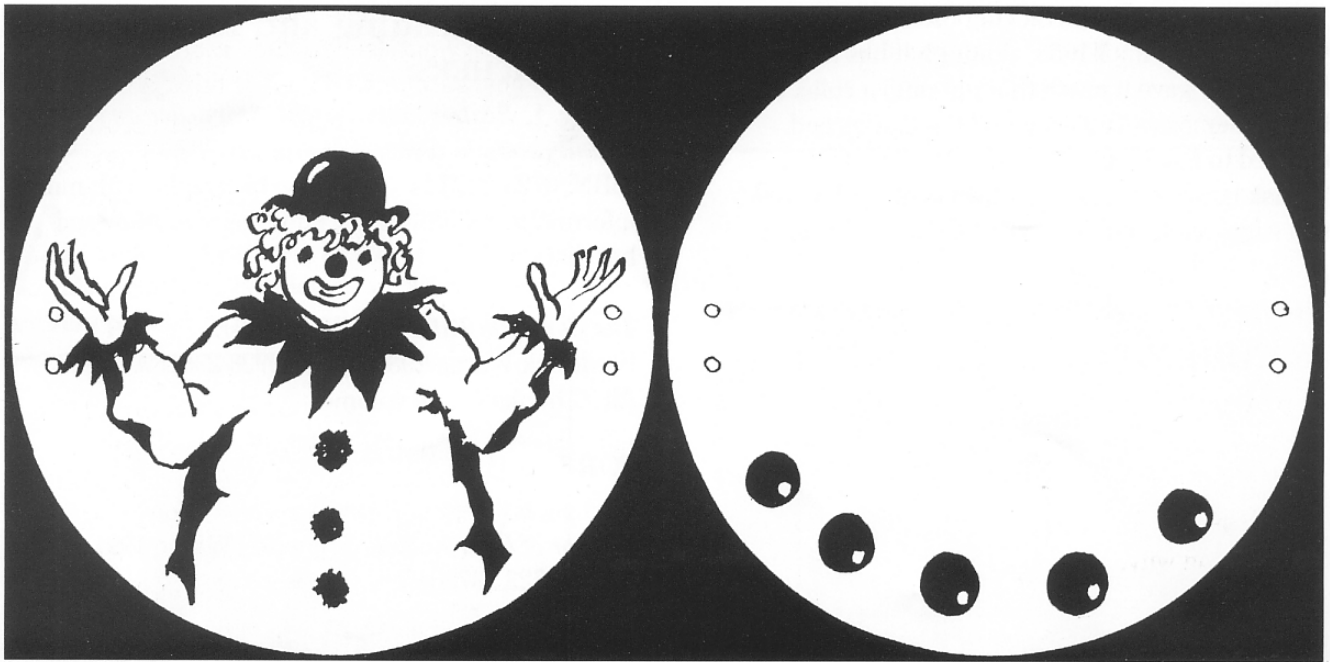
KS3/4

Links to the curriculum: English AT3: Writing AT5, Presentation; Technology AT1: Designing AT2: Making AT5: Information technology capability; Science AT1: Scientific investigation.

Six of Beatrix Potter's films are being made into animated films. This is the basic process for making animations.

Animation depends on 'the persistence of vision' – a process by which the brain retains an image of anything the eye sees for a short time after what it sees has gone. This means that a series of pictures shown in rapid succession will blend together and appear to move. Animators have to create those pictures from scratch and make it appear they are moving.

You can demonstrate the principal of the persistence of vision by getting pupils to make a thaumatrope. (See opposite).



Courtesy of MOMI.

Illustrations to show how to make a thaumatrope with clown and juggling balls.

1. Using a compass, draw and cut out a circle 8cm in diameter.
2. Pierce a hole in each side of the circle and thread a double piece of string through each hole, looping it back through itself.
3. Trace the illustrations above, one on each side of the card.
4. Spin the card!

You could ask pupils to 'animate' a simple sequence of events by designing their own thaumatrope. Use simple ideas such as Mr. Jeremy Fisher hopping on to a lily pad, or you may prefer a sequence of events based on pupils' own observation of animals.

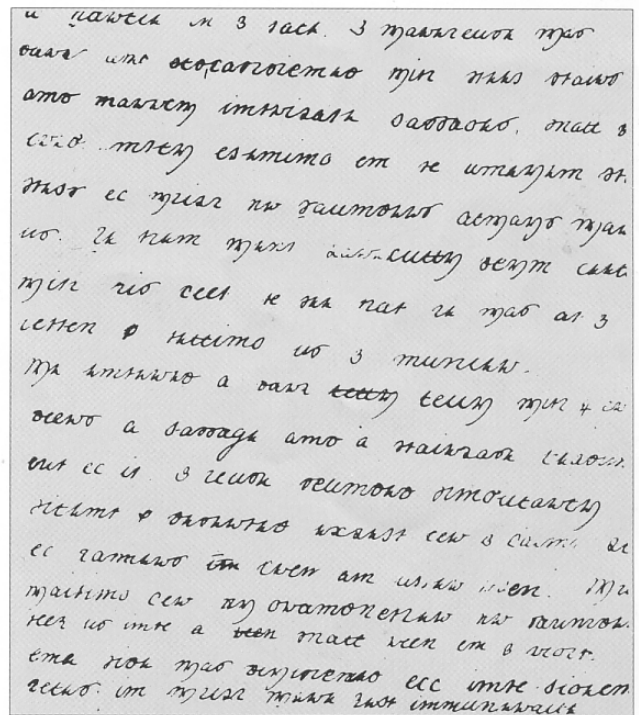
KS4 pupils upwards may like to animate a more complex story using computers and animation software such as Deluxe Paint IV on the Commodore Amiga. They could also make a sound track and voice overs.

Project 3: Breaking the Code

KS2

Links to the curriculum: English AT3: Writing; Technology AT1: Designing, AT2 Making.

Beatrix Potter led a very solitary life. Her relationship with her mother was distant and she had no friends of her own age in whom she could confide. From the age of 14 until she was 30, she kept a diary written in code.



The Warne Archive

Beatrix Potter's secret code writing

Throughout history people have invented ways to disguise messages. Codes have included replacing letters with numbers, using symbols to represent whole phrases and different arrangements of dots and dashes to represent letters and numbers (Morse code). Beatrix Potter used a simple system of substituting letter for letter.

Using the extract from Beatrix's coded diary as a starting point, you may like to discuss:

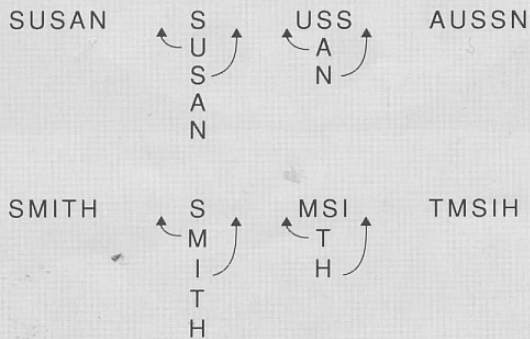
- Why pupils think Beatrix found it necessary to write in code.
- Who uses codes today (spies, scouts).

Pupils might enjoy cracking the code – in fact it wasn't cracked until 1958, although it has to be said that no one gave it much thought until a collector of Potter memorabilia discovered the diaries and decided to have a go.

Ask pupils to make their own codes. Here are two suggestions for ways in which it can be done.

CODE WRITING

1. You could write words starting from the middle, with the letters arranged left and right around the first one, so that SUSAN SMITH becomes AUSSN TMSIH.



2. You can number the letters of the alphabet A-Z, going from 'A' as 1 to 'Z' as 26, and write your whole message or account in numbers.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

16 5 20 5 18,
 3 1 14 25 15 21 13 5 5 20
 13 5 1 20 20 8 5 2 21 19
 19 20 1 20 9 15 14 20 8 9 19
 1 6 20 5 18 14 15 15 14? 23 5
 3 15 21 12 4 7 15 9 14 20 15
 20 15 23 14 20 15 19 5 5
 20 8 5 14 5 23 6 9 12 13
 2 5 14 10 1 13 9 14.

Can you work out this message, written in the code above?

There are all sorts of codes to explore, but it might be best to choose a fairly simple one if you're going to write your whole diary in it. You may get sick of a very complicated scheme, and anyway, you never know who might be trying to solve your code later on if you become famous!

Further Reading and Resources

FOR TEACHERS:

Taylor, J. *Beatrix Potter: Artist, Storyteller and Countrywoman*. Frederick Warne 1987
 ISBN: 0723 233144. Definitive biography with much information about Beatrix Potter as an author and her diary.

The Complete Tales of Beatrix Potter.
 Frederick Warne 1989 ISBN: 0723 236186.
 All 23 books in one volume.

FOR PUPILS:

Buchan, E. *Beatrix Potter; the story of the Creator of Peter Rabbit*. Frederick Warne 1991
 ISBN: 0723 237808.

Travis, F and Hindley, J. *The Know How Book of Spycraft*. Usbourne 1975 ISBN: 0 86020 005 1.
 Lots of ideas for creating codes. Suitable for pupils 9 years upwards.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit Giant Paperback.
 Frederick Warne ISBN: 0723 240299.
 Large format edition, very useful for reading to a whole class.

Carle, E. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Puffin
 1993 ISBN: 0140 500871

Hill, E. *Where's Spot?* Puffin 1992
 ISBN: 0140 504206

VIDEOS

Six of Beatrix Potter's stories are being released on video by Pickwick and are available from most major outlets including WH Smith and Woolworth.

PLACES TO VISIT

Some museums have education services and loan collections which may contain Victorian books and optical toys. Find out the name of your local museum from the local Tourist Information Office.

The Museum of the Moving Image,
 South Bank, Waterloo, London, SE1 8XT.
 Tel: 071 815 1326 and **The National Museum of Photography, Film and Television**, Prince's View, Bradford, BD5 0TR. Tel: 0274 727488.

Both have imaginative education departments and sometimes run animation workshops for school children.

HISTORY

All her life Beatrix Potter observed and recorded not only through drawing and painting, but also by writing letters and diaries. This project uses photographs, illustrations and quotes from Beatrix's life as a stimulus for comparing childhood in Victorian times with that of your pupils.

NB The material refers to mother, father, grandparents; we leave it to the discretion of the teacher as to whether this material is suitable for their class.

Project 6: Then and Now

Beatrix Potter was born to Rupert and Helen Potter, a well-to-do family living a life of leisured ease in 2 Bolton Gardens, Kensington, London. The nursery in Bolton Gardens was on the third floor and for much of Beatrix's life it was her playroom, schoolroom and eventually her studio.

Beatrix grew up living the conventionally sheltered life of a Victorian girl; she saw little of her parents, was supervised by nurses, taught by governesses and much of her time was spent in the nursery.

Using the quotes, photographs and illustrations on the following two pages as a starting point, you may like to discuss:

- **Clothes then and now;** what Beatrix felt about her clothes; what pupils like or do not like wearing; what they find comfortable/uncomfortable.
- **Illness;** do pupils consider it was wise to stay indoors with a cold? Or over protective? What would their parents recommend?
- **Parental censorship;** is it right that parents should exercise control over what children read or watch?
- **Staying at grandparents;** did Beatrix enjoy staying with her grandmother and why? Do pupils find it an enjoyable experience staying with relatives or not?
- **Presents;** do your pupils enjoy getting books as presents?

Using all the photographs, illustrations and questions, ask your pupils what they can deduce about Beatrix Potter's childhood for example:

- Does she look happy?
- Does she sound happy?
- Does the school room look warm and cosy or austere and bleak?
- How would they describe Beatrix's mother?

This project would be considerably enhanced by a visit to an historic house. Many country houses owned by the National Trust have nurseries which allow pupils to see how they were often sited in the attics near the servants quarters, as remote as possible from the living rooms. But beware, many are prettily presented for the public and do not reflect the bare bleak atmosphere that was often the reality of the nursery.

You may also like to contact your local museum who may be able to lend artefacts associated with Victorian childhood. Many museums also have Victorian clothes which pupils can try on with opportunities for role play.

Why not invite older members of the community in to talk about their childhood? Is it possible to talk around old photographs of the area and the changes that have occurred? Contact your local record office or library for further help. The project could also include interviewing people about their childhood memories.

'What I wore was absurdly uncomfortable; white pique starched frocks... cotton stockings striped round like a zebra's legs. [Her long hair was brushed back and held in place with a hair band] black velvet on Sundays, and either black or brown ribbon week days...I remember the bands fastened with a bit of elastic, looped over a button behind the ear; it hurt.'



Courtesy of a Private Collector

Beatrix Potter wearing her stripey stockings

About the books she read

'Probably I was about six or seven... when a friend of my father's, Professor Wilson, from Oxford came in and produced a book from his pocket and discussed with my mother whether I was old enough or whether the book was too old? Which was the same thing.'

On Health

'Dear papa, I am not to go out into the garden as I have got a cold.'

About staying with grandparents

'The place I loved best in the world... the notes of the stable clock... the smell of new-mown hay, the distant sounds of the farmyard...'

'There was something rapturous to us London children in the unlimited supply of new milk. I remember always the first teas of the visit when we were thirsty and tired. How I watched at the window for the little farm-boy, staggering along the

carriage drive with the cans! It came up warm in a great snuff-coloured jug which seemed to have no bottom, and made the milk look blue.'

'The table cloth had a yellowy green fringe, and Grandmamma also had very hard gingersnap biscuits in a canister. I remember one of my teeth... came out in consequence... while I was under the table.'

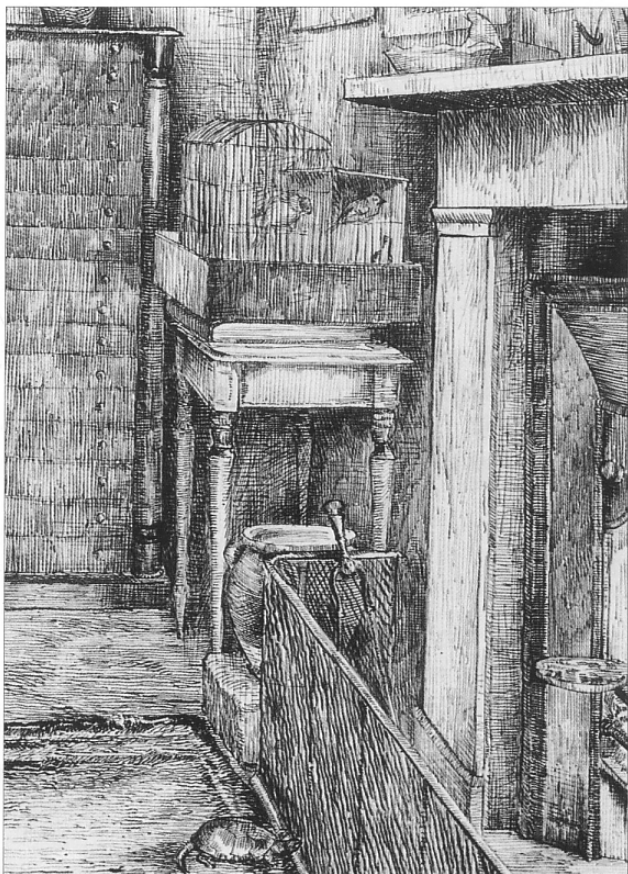


Courtesy of a Private Collector

Beatrix's grandmother's house in Hertfordshire

On receiving a present

'I remember so clearly... the morning I was ten years old – and my father gave me Mrs Blackburn's book of birds, drawn from nature, for my birthday present.'



The Warne Archive

A corner of the schoolroom at 2 Bolton Gardens drawn by Beatrix when she was 19

SCIENCE

A notable feature of all the work that Beatrix undertook was careful and accurate observation – ‘Thank God I have the seeing eye’. Methods of observing and recording accurately provide many opportunities for science KS1 and 2.

During the summer months, Rupert Potter rented large houses first in Perthshire and later in the Lake District. There Beatrix and Bertram were able to go fishing, explore the countryside and run wild through the woods. They tracked deer, identified birds, drew wild flowers, caught rabbits and tamed them. They even skinned dead animals, boiled the bones, drew and preserved them in their collection.

At home in London, Beatrix and Bertram had a small ‘zoo’ in the nursery - animals brought back from their holidays or bought in pet shops in London. Besides the usual dogs, cats, guinea pigs and rabbits there were at various times: bats, a jay, a pig, rats, a dormouse, a frog called Punch, two lizards called Toby and Judy, newts and a grass snake called Sally which escaped the day after being found in the road.

When Bertram’s pet bat was dying he wrote to Beatrix saying: ‘If he cannot be kept alive, as I suppose he can’t, you had better kill him, and stuff him as well as you can. Be sure to take his measurements most carefully before you stuff him. That is, the length of head, body, tail, Humerus, Radius, Femoris, Tibia, Pollux and Claw, and also the fingers; in other words all the bones of its wings and legs.’



© F. Warne & Co., 1987

Beatrix drew this pet bat in 1887

As a young woman, fossils and fungi caught Beatrix’s interest; she collected and drew them in minute detail and became knowledgeable about them in the process. Her interest in fungi became of considerable importance to her. She studied spores under a microscope, tried cultivating new spores and developed her own theories about their reproduction.

Her uncle, Sir Henry Roscoe, introduced her to the director of Kew Gardens where she was allowed to study further - Kew at this time was not open to visitors. She decided to submit her work to Kew but all the help she got was a recommendation to read a German authority on the culture of spores.

Not discouraged, she prepared a paper ‘On the Germination of the Spores of Agaricineae’ to be read to the Linnean Society. It was eventually presented on April 1 1887 by the director of Kew since, being a woman, Beatrix was not allowed to present the paper herself or indeed even attend the meeting.

The director reported back that it ‘had been well received’ but that ‘it requires more work in it before being printed’. In other words it was virtually dismissed. Beatrix must have been very disappointed but she continued to study fungi for several years until the success of Peter Rabbit changed her life.



© The Armit Trust 1989

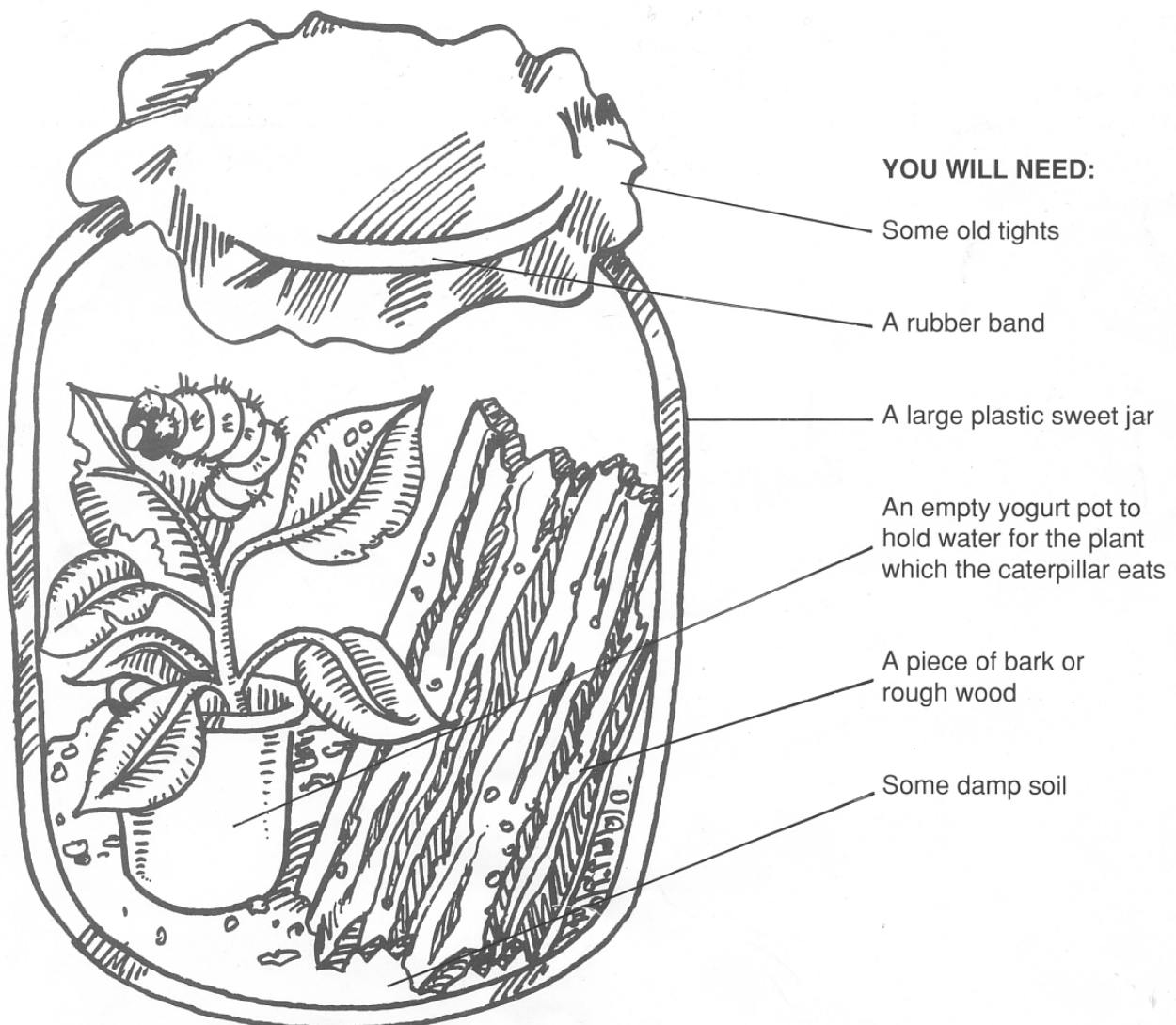
The Parasol Mushroom by Beatrix Potter.

Keeping Caterpillars

Butterflies pass through four stages; egg, caterpillar, pupa and finally the adult butterfly.

- Find a caterpillar in a garden – not from the countryside because it might be a rare species.
- Keep the caterpillar in a cool place. Caterpillars are very fussy about the food they eat, so make sure you take a piece of the plant you found it on and give it fresh food everyday.
- When it changes into a butterfly or moth, let it go. Watch it fly away!

Make a home for a caterpillar like this:



ART

Beatrix Potter is one of the best-loved children's illustrators of the 20th Century and an outstanding illustrator of natural history.

Both her parents were competent amateur artists and her brother Bertram became an artist. As a child she was encouraged to draw and paint and from twelve to eighteen had a private painting tutor, Miss Cameron:

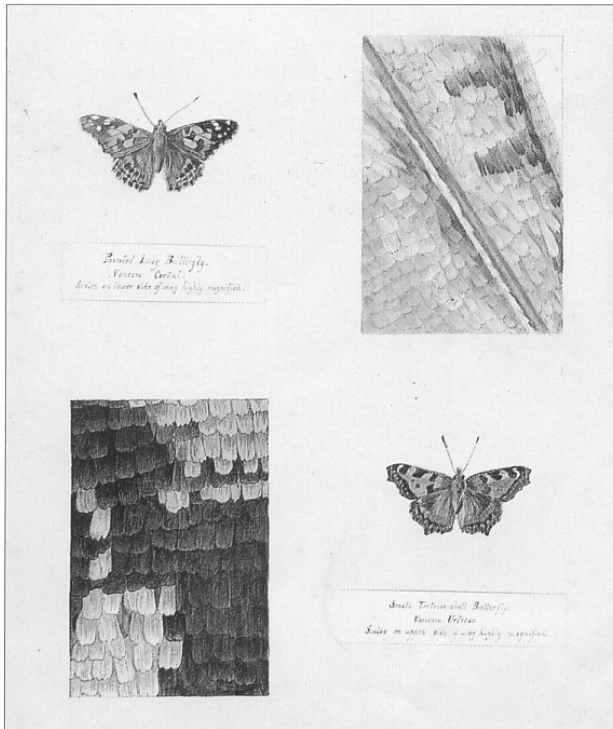
'I have great reason to be grateful to her, though we were not on particularly good terms for the last good while. I have learnt from her freehand, model, geometry, perspective and little water-colour flower painting.'

Beatrix often visited art exhibitions with her father and he often took her to visit Millais in his studio where the artist gave her advice on how to mix her paints.

Project 8

Links to the curriculum: Art AT1 investigating and making

Beatrix often drew with the aid of a microscope. Enlargements of other subjects such as the pattern of animal skins, shells, fruit and vegetables would all provide a good basis for design work.



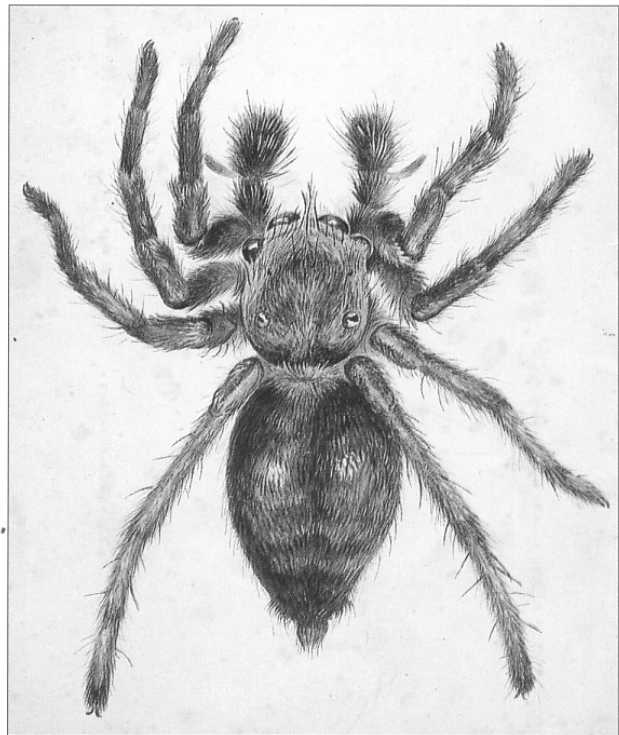
These studies show the magnified scales on butterfly wings.

Reading and Resources FOR TEACHERS

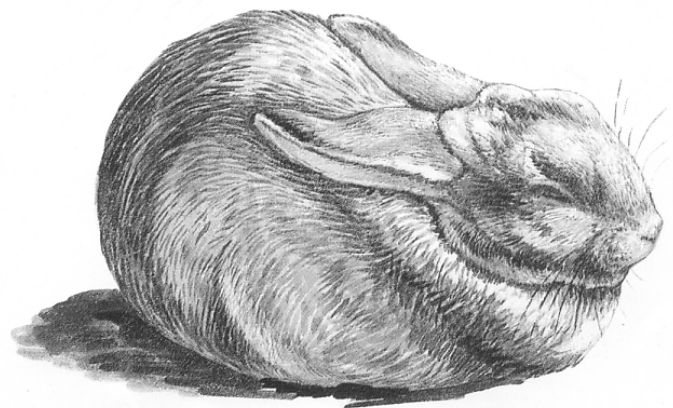
Hobbs, A. & Paine, J. *Art: Beatrix Potter*
1989 ISBN 0 773 21599 9

PLACES TO VISIT

Local museums often have natural history departments. It may be possible to borrow items for study.



Beatrix Potter's detailed study of a spider.



Beatrix Potter's study of a crouching rabbit.

© F. Warne & Co., 1987

© F. Warne & Co., 1987

A good starting point for scientific investigation would be to encourage pupils to observe and record their own collections. Animals and other small creatures are always popular for obvious reasons but it could equally well be a collection of fossils, rock and minerals, leaves and seeds or flotsam and jetsam from the beach. All would be relevant to Beatrix Potter.

Pupils might like to make a 'zoo' collecting an assortment of insects and mini-beasts.

PREPARATORY WORK COULD INCLUDE:

- Discussing pupils' pets.
- The purpose of zoos (scientific institutions or tourist attractions).
- Changing attitudes to conservation (bird's nesting and collecting wild flowers were popular past-times in Victorian times but are now against the law).

Many nature books have detailed instructions on how to keep insects and mini-beasts properly (see **further reading**). Caterpillars can be kept and observed. (See opposite page).

Teach pupils to use magnifying glasses or microscopes and to record accurately. Work could also include sorting and classifying (insects, gastropods etc). Younger pupils could classify by size, shape or colour. Your pupils could create a database to store the information on computers. Presentation could include writing information panels and labels for the 'zoo'.