

## BEATRIX POTTER

By Carole L. Cooney

Beatrix Potter was a famous English author and illustrator of picture-books for young children. One of her most loved books is *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. She was born in South Kensington, London, where she spent a sheltered life with her younger brother, Bertram. Since she wasn't permitted to go to school, she was cared for by a Governess who encouraged her to read, write, and study music and art.

Setting: the Potter garden; the Study Room

Characters:

Narrator

Beatrix

Bertram, brother

Governess

**Narrator:** Beatrix Potter was a famous English author and illustrator of picture-books for young children. One of the most loved books is *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. She was born in South Kensington, London, where she spent a sheltered life with her younger brother, Bertram. Since she wasn't permitted to go to school, she was cared for by a governess who encouraged her to read, write, and study music and art. One day, Beatrix and her brother, Bertram were in the garden.

**Beatrix:** Bertram, where is my paint box? Look at these lovely caterpillars I found in the garden. I so want to paint them in my drawing book. Will you help me find my paints?

**Bertram:** Yes, Beatrix. I think you left them on the back porch steps. I'll run and get them.

**Beatrix:** Oh, thank you Bertram. You're the best brother ever!

**Narrator:** Bertram brought the paints and drawing book to Beatrix in the garden. They sat down on the grass and studied the different caterpillars eating leaves.

**Bertram:** Look at this one, Beatrix! It has long black hairs all over its short body. It looks like there's a grey color on its bottom.

**Beatrix:** Good examination, Bertram! Now tell me about this one.

**Bertram:** I've never seen an orange caterpillar. Is that a black nose I see?

**Beatrix:** I'm not sure but I'll paint it the best way I can.

**Narrator:** Suddenly, the children hear a bell ringing, signaling the time for lunch. Their Governess stands at the back porch calling to them.

**Governess:** Come, Beatrix and Bertram. Wash your hands and prepare for lunch.

**Beatrix:** Bertram, let's ask Governess Ann if we can save some bits of food for our pets.

**Bertram:** That's a splendid idea!

**Narrator:** After lunch the children carry bits of lettuce, carrots and bread into their study room, where they keep their pets. There were two rabbits, a hedgehog, a dormouse and a baby pig.

**Beatrix:** Bertram, would you mind feeding our pets while I do some more sketching? I'd like to start with Benjamin Bouncer, our rabbit.

**Bertram:** All right. I'll feed him some lettuce so that he will stay still while you sketch him.

**Beatrix:** I'll do a quick sketch...Now, bring over Peter Piper and see if he'd like some lettuce.

**Bertram:** Yesterday, that black rabbit wasn't very hungry, but look at him today! Oh, no! Mrs. Tiggy-winkle is running all over the place. How am I going to catch the hedgehog, Beatrix?

**Beatrix:** I think you must ask Mrs. Tiggy-winkle if she wants some tea. (laughing) I know it sounds funny, but she will drink milk out of my doll's tea cup.

**Narrator:** Bertram fills a tea cup with milk and puts it on the floor near the window.

**Bertram:** Beatrix, you are so smart. Look at her! She's very thirsty.

**Beatrix:** What's that on your shoulder?

**Bertram:** Oh, it's Xarifa. How did you get all the way up on my shoulder? You are usually a sleepy little dormouse. Beatrix, he must be hungry, too. Here, have a piece of bread.

**Narrator:** Beatrix filled pages of her sketch book while Bertram fed the pets. Pig-wig was the last pet to be fed and he was crying.

**Bertram:** Beatrix, why is Pig-wig crying? What should we do?

**Beatrix:** Bertram, please get Pig-wig's basket by my bed and his bottle. He's just a little black baby piggy and I'm sure he wants his mother. Once he's in his basket with his bottle he'll settle down.

**Narrator:** Bertram had fun that afternoon feeding the animals while Beatrix sketched and sketched. It was the practice of sketching her pets and the many things she discovered in nature, that made it possible, when Beatrix grew older, to draw the illustrations for her children's story books.