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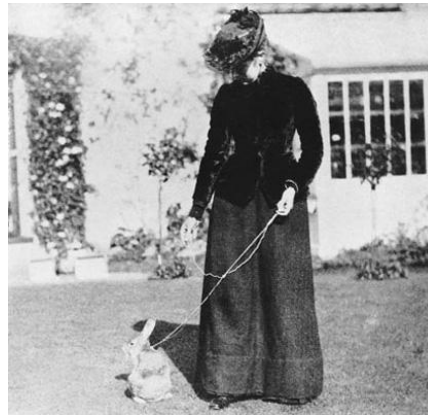
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Beatrix Potter based some of her famous characters—like "Peter Rabbit"—on real animals (such as "Peter Piper"). In this image, we see Miss Potter with her pet rabbit, "Benjamin Bouncer."

As she approached her mid-thirties, Beatrix Potter was alone much of the time. When she was not spending summers in Scotland or the Lake District, she was home in London. She was a dutiful, Victorian daughter who helped her parents as she waited for "the right" marriage partner.

She'd had pets, though, who were her friends throughout her life. A rabbit, whom she called "[Benjamin Bouncer](#)," was replaced by "Peter Piper." She would walk her rabbits with a lead, as though they were puppies. Later, she put her hedgehog, "Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle," in a box and took it with her wherever she traveled.

The "real Peter" - her rabbit, Peter Piper - was a Belgian buck rabbit whom Beatrix described as an "[affectionate companion](#)." After she became a famous author, Potter wrote:

Peter used to lie before the fire on the hearth rug like a cat. He was clever at learning tricks, he used to jump through a hoop, and ring a bell, and play the tambourine.

He was also, according to Beatrix, "very naughty." What better model to use for a children's story?

It wasn't just [the animals](#) that [were real](#) in Beatrix's books. (Follow both links to see a Benjamin Bunny animation.) Drawing heavily on what she had experienced herself, she pulled the Scottish countryside, the Lake District's beauty and her [uncle's Welsh garden](#) (which is *still* filled with rabbits) into her stories.

Many Potter scholars believe that even Mr. McGregor is real. Was he based on Charlie McIntosh? One can certainly draw that conclusion when comparing the [fictional McGregor](#) with the [real McIntosh](#).

Beatrix did not say how she named her characters. But there might be clues in Brompton Cemetery, not far from the Potter family home. In the summer of 2001, an investigation of the cemetery's computerized records revealed something worth considering:

Names on headstones included Mr. Nutkin, Mr. McGregor, Jeremiah Fisher, Tommy Brock - and even a Peter Rabbett. ("Cemetery clue to Potter animals," BBC News, 27 July 2001)

In 1900, Beatrix talked with her friend, Hardwicke Rawnsley, about an illustrated children's book she wished to publish. It was about "Peter Rabbit," based on the picture-letter she had written to Noel Moore seven years earlier.

Rawnsley tried to help her find a publisher. No one wanted the book. One company expressed some interest, but only if she increased the book's size. Beatrix dismissed that suggestion out-of-hand. She knew what children wanted and, if she could not find a company to work with her, she would publish the book herself.

Just before Christmas, in 1901, her [privately published book](#) - with its black and white illustrations - was ready. She had 250 copies of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* to either sell or give away. Most fell into the latter category.

Hardwicke Rawnsley, however, still believed a publisher should get involved. He continued to search for a reputable company, finally convincing [Frederick Warne](#) to take another look. They agreed - if the narration was simple and the pictures were in color. (Hardwicke, in an effort to help Beatrix "sell" her book idea, had changed

her text to rhyme the words.)

Unable to sign contracts for herself - even though she was in her mid-thirties - Beatrix convinced her father to execute a publishing agreement, on her behalf, with F. Warne & Co. When the new *Peter Rabbit* book was released - on 2 October 1902 - all 8,000 copies had been pre-sold.

As she continued to work with her editor, Norman Warne, Beatrix was about to take another journey on her road to independence. She fell in love.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-REAL-PETER-RABBIT-Miss-Potter>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-REAL-PETER-RABBIT-Miss-Potter>

Media Stream



Benjamin Bouncer - Beatrix Potter's Rabbit

Image online, courtesy UK National Trust via [Living on Earth](#) website.

PD

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Mr. McGregor - Charlie McIntosh

Image online, courtesy Peter Rabbit.com

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Mr. McGregor - Is He Charlie McIntosh?

Image online, courtesy Birnam Arts.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Mr.-McGregor-Is-He-Charlie-McIntosh->

Beatrix Potter - The World of Peter Rabbit, Part 1

Clip from the nine-episode series, *The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends*, which originally aired on the BBC in 1992 and is currently available for purchase from the BBC. Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved. Online, courtesy Surf the Net with Kids. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

Writers:

Beatrix Potter

Dianne Jackson

Director:

Dianne Jackson

Producer:

John Coates

Starring:

Niamh Cusack:

Beatrix Potter (Live Action)

Rory Carty:

Voice of Peter Rabbit

Adrian Scarborough/Andrew Clitheroe:

Voice of Benjamin Bunny

Enn Reitel:

Voice of Mr Bouncer

June Whitfield:

Voice of Mrs. Rabbit

Richard Wilson:

Voice of Mr. McGregor

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beatrix-Potter-The-World-of-Peter-Rabbit-Part-1>



Beatrix Potter - The World of Peter Rabbit, Part 2

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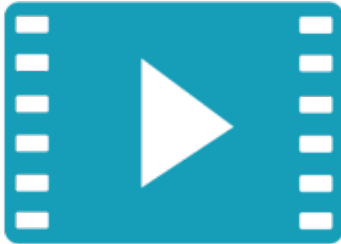
Voice of Mrs. Rabbit

Richard Wilson:

Voice of Mr. McGregor

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Beatrix-Potter-The-World-of-Peter-Rabbit-Part-2>



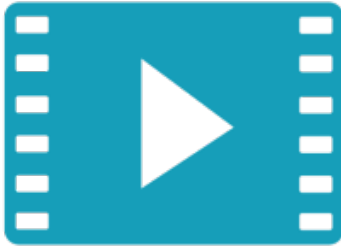
Tale of Benjamin Bunny, The - Part 1

The Tale of Benjamin Bunny - with June Whitfield (as Mrs. Rabbit), Victor Meldrew (as Mr. McGregor) and Niamh Cusack (as narrator).

From *The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends* (Television series).

A TVC London production in Association with the BBC, Pony Canyon Inc. and Fuji Television Network Inc. Produced by Ginger Gibbons; directed by Geoff Dunbar. Goodtimes Home Video, 1993.

Clip from the [nine-episode series](#), *The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends*, which originally aired on the BBC in 1992 and is currently [available for purchase](#) from the BBC. Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved. Online, courtesy Surf the Net with Kids. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes.



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Tale of Benjamin Bunny, The - Part 2

Clip, from *The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends* (Television series).

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