



0. ENTER NORMAN WARNE - Story Preface

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This photo depicts Norman Warne as he appeared around 1900. He is seen here with his nephew Fred. In the summer of 1905, after his company had published Beatrix Potter's first three books, Norman sent Beatrix a special letter containing a marriage proposal. The creator of Peter Rabbit was overjoyed when she read Norman's words.

Rupert and Helen Potter were Unitarians. As such, they neither celebrated Christmas nor had a beautifully decorated tree in the house. Once Beatrix wistfully observed in a letter:

How pretty Miss Paget's tree used to be, with the little doll angel on top.

It was something the lonely girl, then maturing woman, could never stare at in her own family's home.

Because Beatrix's parents were so obsessed with class distinctions, they never allowed Norman Warne - their daughter's editor - to set foot in their home. He earned his living, after all, "in the trades." (One wonders: Could they really have missed the irony that their own family fortunes came from the cotton and printing trades?)

Beatrix had ideas for more "little books." As she and Norman worked on them, they sent letters to each other nearly every day. They also spent significant time together. At those meetings Miss Potter, even though she was in her late thirties, was always accompanied by a chaperone.

During the summer of 1903, the Potter family traveled to the Lake District, staying at Fawe Park (on the northwest side of Derwentwater). *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* was on Beatrix's mind at the time.

She continually exchanged letters with Norman about her ideas. "Mr. McGregor's garden," actually based on the garden at Fawe Park, combined what she observed and what she created:

- The garden path, with its stone outhouse;
- Garden and greenhouse;
- A wooden walk in the Fawe Park garden;
- Clutter - like empty flower pots - is sometimes part of a garden scene;
- Lettuce, in a garden, is hard for a rabbit to resist;
- It proved irresistible for Benjamin Bunny;

- Onion beds, at Fawe Park, also proved too tempting for both Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny.

As Beatrix and Norman exchanged ideas - about books and merchandising items based on those books - the 37-year-old editor's friendship with his author changed.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ENTER-NORMAN-WARNE-Miss-Potter>

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ENTER-NORMAN-WARNE-Miss-Potter>

Media Stream



Norman Warne with His Nephew Fred

Image—by an unknown British photographer—appears in Margaret Lane, "The Magic Years of Beatrix Potter," Warne 1978.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Norman-Warne-with-His-Nephew-Fred>