



0. DISCUSSION TOPICS - Story Preface
1. LIFE in VICTORIAN BRITAIN
2. SUMMERS in SCOTLAND
3. ARTISTIC INFLUENCES
4. BEAUTY of the LAKE DISTRICT
5. SUMMERS in the LAKE DISTRICT
6. THE REAL PETER RABBIT
7. ENTER NORMAN WARNE
8. HAPPINESS TURNS to TRAGEDY
9. THE LITTLE BOOKS
10. Mrs. WILLIAM HEELIS
11. ASHES and LEGACY
- 12. DISCUSSION TOPICS**
13. AUTHOR'S OBSERVATIONS

The life and legacy of Beatrix Potter raises many questions and discussion topics. Among them:

- How do we explain her enormous achievements in light of her restrictive home life? Might those restrictions have fueled her drive to succeed?
- Is it easier for a young woman to succeed today than it was in Victorian times? If so, select someone whose achievements are similar to Beatrix Potter's, and then compare what each had to overcome to reach the height of success.
- Beatrix's family was considered upper-middle class. Would an upper-middle-class family, in the 21st century, be able to spend summers in a rented home resembling a mansion? What would it take, socio-economically, to have that type of family lifestyle now?
- Potter is still enormously successful, with her beneficiaries earning hundreds of millions of pounds (or, in dollars, about \$500,000,000) every year from the sale of books and merchandise. How likely is it that the beneficiaries of the person used in your comparison would be earning that kind of income 100 years from now? What would be needed for that kind of impact to continue?
- If Beatrix had been allowed to participate in the scientific community, and her work had been treated with respect, do you think she would have written children's books or pursued a career in science? If you had to face a similar situation, how do you think you'd respond?
- Would the world's children have benefitted more from her work as a scientist or her work as an illustrator and writer? Why?
- Most wealthy girls, in Victorian times, were not taught science like their male counterparts. Beatrix was largely self-taught in that field. How successful would a young woman be, in today's world, if she were self-taught in such endeavors?

- How did the Lake District impact Beatrix's life and work? In today's world, how likely is it that "a place" could so completely shape a person's life, career and legacy?
- When Beatrix started writing her "little books," she stopped writing in her journal. Why do you think that happened? Did her journal serve a purpose which was no longer needed once she began her formal writing career? If so, what might that purpose have been?
- Beatrix disregarded all the rejection letters she received from publishers, deciding that if no company would work with her, she would publish *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* herself. Had she not been willing to take that risk, would she have ended up as a successful, world-famous author? Is it possible to take such risks today? Why, or why not?
- Although she was in her mid-thirties, Beatrix could not sign a publishing contract for herself. How do you think that made her feel? Could such circumstances exist today? How would you react if those restrictions applied to females today?
- Beatrix's parents, especially her mother who lived until she was 92, were obsessed with class distinctions. Do such distinctions still exist? If so, are they expressed similarly or differently? How would you respond if society expected you to behave one way but you thought that way was unjust?
- Victorian-age daughters were expected to watch after their parents, often at the expense of their own happiness. Compare, and contrast, that time with our time, listing positives and negatives for each.
- Beatrix needed her parents' approval to marry - when she was 39 and when she was 47. Compare and contrast that to life in the 21st century. If those were today's expectations, would you be more likely - or less likely - to follow society's "rules?"

These, and other questions, were part of the driving force behind this story. For more of the author's observations, see chapter 14.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/DISCUSSION-TOPICS-Miss-Potter>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/DISCUSSION-TOPICS-Miss-Potter>