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When I first thought about writing a story behind "Miss Potter," I knew very little about Beatrix herself. I could tell you about "Peter Rabbit," but I could not tell you about Peter's creator.

As I got further into the research, I found it interesting that she often seemed to be in the right place, at the right time. If - for example - her father hadn't leased Wray Castle, would she have met her mentor, Hardwicke Rawnsley? If she hadn't met Hardwicke, would she have ever published "Peter Rabbit?" If she never knew Hardwicke, would she have been so keen to buy Lake District property and then give it, at the end of her husband's life, to the National Trust?

Now that the story is complete, I can look back and answer a few additional questions:

- Why did I use pictures of the Lake District?

Many people, who read this story, will never have an opportunity to see the beauty of this area first-hand. To gain a better understanding of the place which played such a significant role in Potter's life, and books, I think we need to "see" it, even if it's through a "virtual field trip."

- Why mention Randolph Caldecott, or include his pictures in a story about Beatrix Potter?

Every year, an illustrator of children's books receives a Caldecott Medal for "the most distinguished American picture book for children." Caldecott, therefore, is relevant in this story not just because he influenced Potter but because his outstanding work is still commemorated today.

- Why bring Hardwicke Rawnsley into the story?

If we examine the evidence, we have to conclude that Rawnsley was an important influence in Beatrix Potter's life. Her actions, in purchasing Lake District property and then giving that land back to Britain's National Trust, are still protecting the area. One could make a fair argument such a bequest may not have happened without Rawnsley's influence.

- What do we know of Beatrix personally, especially as a young woman?

The answer to this question seemed elusive, until I looked at her journal. I still don't "know" her, but her words were very helpful as I tried to decide what to include in this story. She intended the journal for herself only. By reading it, we gain some insight into her thoughts and ideas.

- What did she, herself, SOUND like?

Whether she was reading one of her stories, or just talking with an interviewer, I wanted to hear her voice and her accent. But there are no known recordings, even though she died in 1943 - late enough for someone to have recorded her.

- Why are her books still so popular?

Children may not always understand Miss Potter's words, but those words will make them think. She must have sensed that children enjoy stories which produce a bit of fear but are also filled with drama and excitement. Actions have consequences in her world, and exploring (and disobeying!) seem more fun than behaving. I think those are just a few reasons why she remains popular.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/AUTHOR-S-OBSERVATIONS-Miss-Potter>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/AUTHOR-S-OBSERVATIONS-Miss-Potter>