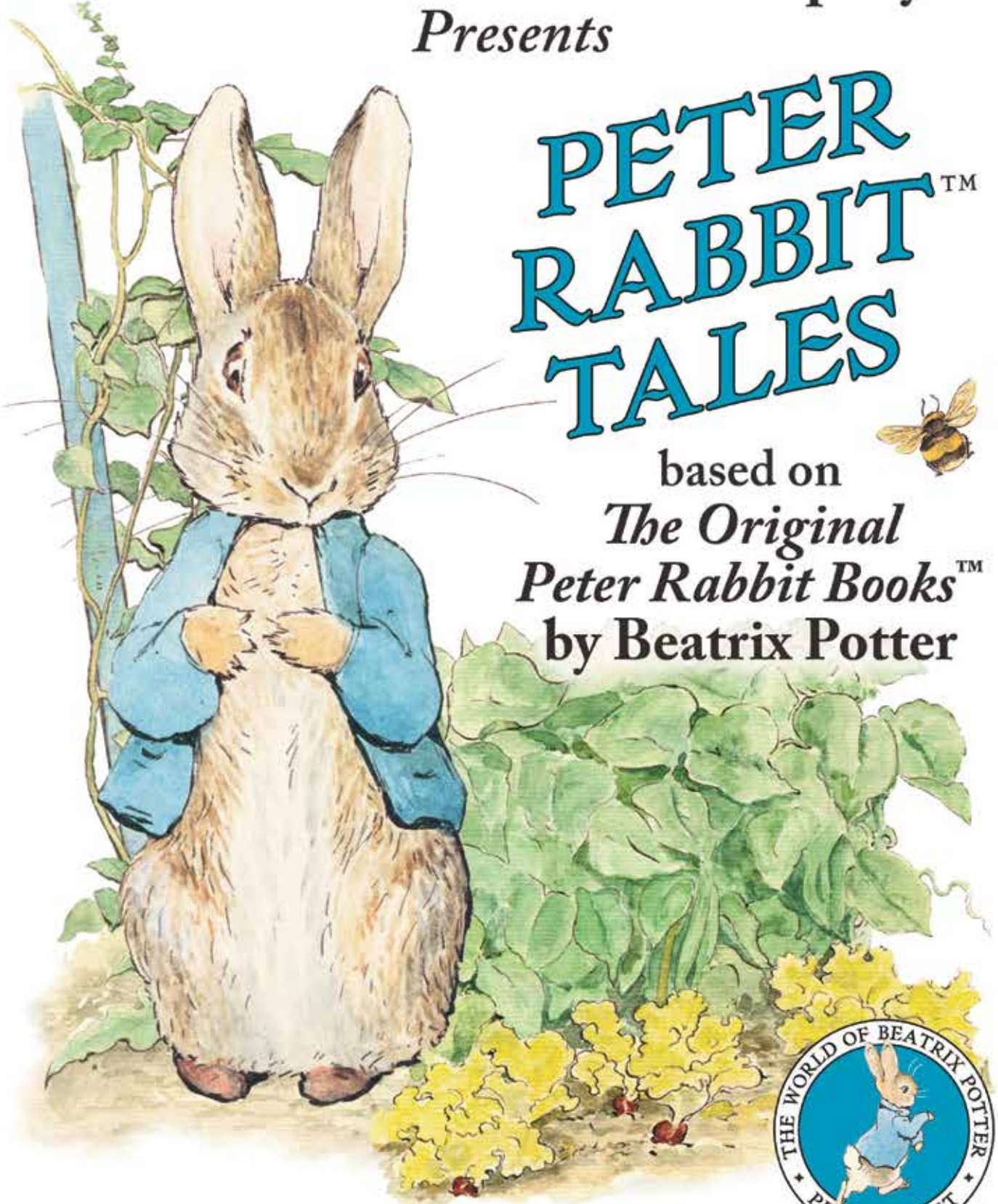


Enchantment Theatre Company  
*Presents*

# PETER RABBIT™ TALES

based on   
*The Original*  
*Peter Rabbit Books*™  
by Beatrix Potter



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter to Teachers .....	2
Show Synopsis.....	3
About the Tales.....	5
About the Play.....	7
Meet the Author, Beatrix Potter .....	8
Before you see <i>Peter Rabbit™ Tales</i> .....	10
Understanding the Story	
Preparing for the Play	
After you see <i>Peter Rabbit™ Tales</i> .....	12
Respond to the Play	
Discover Theater in the Classroom	
Introducing Enchantment Theatre Company .....	15

## SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Who Was Beatrix Potter? .....	16
Bibliography .....	21
Additional Pre-Show Activities.....	22
<i>Explore Imagination</i>	
<i>The Role of Music</i>	
<i>Jobs in the Theater</i>	
Additional Post-Show Activities .....	26
<i>Storytelling and Writing</i>	
<i>Nature and Conservation</i>	
Introduction to Theater .....	28
Introduction to Masks and Puppets .....	28
Experiencing Live Theater.....	30
References and Resources .....	31

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for taking your class to see our production of *Peter Rabbit™ Tales*. We hope you all enjoy it!

We believe that experiencing theater is essential for children to thrive, and it's the initiative taken by teachers like you that enables so many children to see our productions who may not otherwise have this unique opportunity.

We've provided this study guide to help you extend your theater experience into the classroom, should you have time for special activities before or after your class trip. In addition to the information and activities in the beginning of the study guide, there are supplementary materials included at the end with additional activities and more detailed information about the theater.

We hope you find some of our suggestions fun, educational, and adaptable to suit your varying needs.

Thank you again and we look forward to seeing you at the show!

Sincerely,

The Staff of Enchantment Theatre Company



*This study guide was prepared by Jennifer Blatchley Smith, Sara Nye, and Kate DeRosa Howell, with special contributions from Dr. Ellen Handler Spitz, author of "Inside Picture Books"*

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Visit Enchantment Theatre Company at [enchantmenttheatre.org](http://enchantmenttheatre.org)

Visit Peter Rabbit at [www.peterrabbit.com](http://www.peterrabbit.com)

## Peter Rabbit™ Tales Show Synopsis



Peter Rabbit in Mr. McGregor's garden

At the beginning of the play, we meet the characters in our story: Peter Rabbit is grown-up and has his own garden. Peter is easily frightened and avoids anything that smacks of danger or adventure.

We also meet Peter's sister Flopsy, her husband, Benjamin Bunny, and their three baby bunnies. Living with Benjamin and Flopsy is Benjamin's father, old Mr. Bouncer, who often baby-sits for the children when Flopsy and Benjamin go out. We're also introduced to two unpleasant neighbors, Mr. Tod, the fox and Tommy Brock, the badger. Tommy Brock is a disagreeable fellow who eats worms and frogs, and Mr. Tod is disliked by everyone for his habit of nibbling on small animals. Tommy Brock and Mr. Tod are not at all fond of one another. Neighbors to the Rabbit family are Squirrel Nutkin, a cheeky squirrel who's lost his tail, and the hedgehog, Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle, a kindly laundress.

As our play unfolds, Tommy Brock steals the baby bunnies while they're under Mr. Bouncer's care. Benjamin decides to set off to track the badger and find his children, and he asks Peter to join him on his quest. But Peter refuses, reminding Benjamin that he's never recovered from his frightening experience in Mr. McGregor's garden. Suddenly the lights dim, the scenery changes and the cousins are sent back to the past. The lights come up on Peter's mother, Mrs. Rabbit, his three sisters and a younger Peter in a flashback sequence that recounts Peter's escapade in Mr. McGregor's garden. Mrs. Rabbit warns Peter



Flopsy, Benjamin and bunnies

not to go into the garden, but Peter disobeys her and loses his coat and shoes and, almost, his life. Just as Peter is about to be caught by Mr. McGregor, he returns back to the present. Benjamin gently suggests that because of Peter's past experience, he should certainly understand how frightened the baby bunnies must feel. Reluctantly, Peter agrees to join Benjamin on his search.

When Peter and Benjamin lose Tommy Brock's trail, Benjamin gets upset at his father for letting Tommy Brock near his children. Peter reminds Benjamin how brave Mr. Bouncer was when they were young and, again, the scenery and lights change, as the cousins' travel back into the past in a second flashback sequence. Returning to Mr. McGregor's garden, the young Peter and Benjamin try to recover Peter's coat and shoes but get trapped by a cat. Mr. Bouncer suddenly arrives and fights off the cat, rescuing the young cousins. Peter and Benjamin return to the present, and Benjamin hopes that he can be as brave as his father was.

As they continue their pursuit, the rambunctious Squirrel Nutkin and the motherly Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle help Peter and Benjamin find the badger's trail. Back at home, a worried Flopsy decides to follow the cousins and join the search. Tommy Brock arrives at Mr. Tod's house and discovers that the fox is out. He makes himself at home, taking a nap in Mr. Tod's bed. Peter and Benjamin follow the badger to the fox's house, but they can't find a way in, so they dig a tunnel under the house. Suddenly, Flopsy arrives, and Peter sends her into the tunnel to join Benjamin. Just as they are about to break through into the kitchen, Mr. Tod appears, and Peter, in a panic, runs away. But when Mr. Tod enters his house and realizes that Tommy Brock is in his bed, Peter returns to save the day.

With delightful derring-do, Peter hilariously pits the badger and fox against one another and rescues the baby bunnies. The fox and the badger chase each another off into the woods and Benjamin and Flopsy are joyously reunited with their children. Peter is praised for his bravery and the rabbits travel home to Mr. Bouncer, who is forgiven for his blunder. Squirrel Nutkin and Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle join the family for a country dance, celebrating the return of the babies and Peter's return to the family fold.



Mr. Benjamin Bouncer



Peter and Benjamin

## About the Tales



Peter sneaking into the garden

Our production is based on three of Beatrix Potter's "rabbit tales": *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* and *The Tale of Mr. Tod*. Beatrix Potter wrote and illustrated over 24 tales and some of her most popular stories featured rabbits. When Enchantment Theatre decided to make a play based on some of Beatrix Potter's stories, we wanted to use the tales about Peter Rabbit and his family; not only are they delightful adventures, filled with humor, bravery and loyalty, but these stories are remarkably true to both animal and human nature. We recognize ourselves in Peter, Benjamin and Flopsy and are also keenly aware of the dangers they face as rabbits, both from Mr. McGregor, the farmer and Mr. Tod, the fox. Ms. Potter's stories are told with humor and wit, combined with a deep appreciation for her character's strengths and foibles. Her gorgeous illustrations perfectly evoke her animal characters and the English countryside, as they beautifully support the storytelling.

*The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, published in 1902, was Beatrix Potter's first book and it became an instant classic. It's the story of Peter; a naughty rabbit-child who disobeys his mother's warning and goes into Mr. McGregor's garden. Peter stuffs himself on vegetables and is almost caught by Mr. McGregor. During the chase he loses his coat and shoes but manages to escape under the garden gate. When Peter returns home, ill and exhausted, his mother puts him to bed with chamomile tea.



Benjamin Bunny

*The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* was published in 1904 and picks up where Peter's story ended. Peter's cousin, Benjamin Bunny, convinces Peter to return to Mr. McGregor's garden to retrieve his coat and shoes – Benjamin saw the McGregor's drive away in their wagon. Peter reluctantly agrees to accompany Benjamin back to the garden. The cousins find Peter's coat on a scarecrow and linger to pick vegetables to take home. But just as they're about to leave they run into the garden cat and hide under a basket. Old Mr. Bouncer comes to save the day and fights with the cat, locking it in the greenhouse. He scolds the bunnies and sends them home.

*The Tale of Mr. Tod* was published in 1912. The story features two “disagreeable people”, Mr. Tod, the fox, and Tommy Brock, the badger. In this tale, Peter, Benjamin and Flopsy are grown up and Benjamin and Flopsy have children of their own. When Tommy Brock steals Flopsy and Benjamin’s babies, Benjamin and Peter go off to rescue them. Tommy Brock doesn’t have a house of his own, so he decides to settle in Mr. Tod’s house to cook a baby bunny pie. Peter and Benjamin follow his tracks to the fox’s house, but they aren’t able to get inside. They decide to dig a tunnel under the house, when suddenly Mr. Tod appears. Mr. Tod tries to get the badger out of his house and they begin to fight and chase each other into the woods. Peter and Benjamin are able to rescue the baby bunnies and bring them back home.

There are a number of other beloved Beatrix Potter characters that we’ve introduced into our play: Squirrel Nutkin (from *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin*, published 1903) and Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle (from *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle*, published 1905). Both of these animals help Peter and Benjamin as they search for the baby bunnies.

And look out for Jeremy Fisher, Jemima Puddle-Duck, Sally Henny-Penny, Pigling Bland and Timmy Tiptoes as they all make a brief appearance when they collect their laundry from Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle!



Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle



Squirrel Nutkin

## About the Play

Tommy Brock



Copyright© C. David Russell,  
Production Designer

MR. Tod



Copyright© C. David Russell,  
Production Designer

In our production of *Peter Rabbit™ Tales*, we use a number of different theatrical devices to bring the story to life. Here are some of the things you and your students can expect to see:

- **Masks:** In the show, all of the actors wear animal masks to help them portray the different characters. Masks have been used in theater since its earliest beginnings, and they help to transform the actor and to transport the audience to another world.
- **Mime:** Mime is acting without speaking or making any noise. In *Peter Rabbit™ Tales*, the performers act out the story with their bodies and gestures, but they do not speak.
- **Words and Music:** There is recorded narration spoken by Susan Sweeney throughout the show to help the audience follow the story. Original music, composed by Charles Gilbert especially for this production, adds to the atmosphere.
- **Puppets:** Some of the characters in the story are played by actors wearing masks and costumes. Other characters—Mr. McGregor and his cat—are played by puppets. **ROD PUPPETS** (manipulated by sticks) will be the primary puppet device you'll see.
- **Scenery:** There will be painted curtains to evoke the world of the stories as well as set pieces representing Mr. McGregor's garden and Mr. Tod's house.
- **Lighting:** Special theatrical lights will help create the mood and the world of the story.

**Note:** Very young children may be confused or even frightened by the characters wearing masks. Show them the production photos on this page and pages 15, 26 and 27 so they know what to expect. Another way to prepare is to have students experiment with masks in class. Have them silently act out different characters, actions, and emotions while wearing simple masks, and see if their classmates can guess who or what they are portraying. Talk about different ways we can communicate without using words or facial expressions. A few scenes in the show are performed in low light. Prepare children who are afraid of the dark by encouraging them to talk about their fears. Ask them to guess what parts of the story might take place when the stage is darker.



## About Beatrix Potter



Picture of Beatrix Potter is by courtesy of The National Trust

Beatrix Potter is known throughout the world for her beloved animal characters and inventive tales. The particular pleasure of her stories is their truthfully humorous observation of animals and celebration of the natural world. She combined exquisite drawings with imaginative, witty and highly original story-telling. Born in 1866, Beatrix Potter came from an upper middle-

class family and grew up in London. As a child, she was educated at home and had limited opportunities to spend time with other children. Her nursery became the home to a menagerie of pets that she and her brother Bertram collected. She observed her pets closely, studied their characteristics and drew them with great skill.

Through extended family vacations, first in Scotland and later in the Lake District, Beatrix fell in love with the English countryside. Her curiosity, artistic ability and keen observational skills led her to an interest in studying and drawing nature. As a young woman in the 1890s, she yearned to use her talents to find her purpose in life and gain financial and personal independence from the confines of her Victorian family. She began to sell some of her drawings for greeting cards and hoped to get one of her stories published. Her first story, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, was originally written in 1893 as a letter to cheer a sick child. In 1901 she privately published a small edition of the story when she was unable to find a publisher. The book was taken up by Frederick Warne & Company in 1902 and became an instant classic. Twenty-two tales followed, with most published over the next ten years. In 1905, Beatrix's editor, Norman Warne, asked her to marry him. Although her parent's disapproved, Beatrix accepted. Tragically Norman Warne died only a few weeks later.

Within the same year Beatrix bought Hill Top Farm in the village of Sawrey in the Lake District. She spent as much time as she could there and her illustrations of the farm and village began to appear in her tales. Working with



Picture of original story letter is by courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum



Picture of a young Beatrix is by courtesy of The Beatrix Potter Society

a local solicitor, William Heelis, she began to purchase properties in the area, with the intention of preserving the farms and conserving the land. In 1913 Beatrix married William Heelis and made Sawrey her permanent home. For the next thirty years they shared a passion for farming and land preservation. When Beatrix Heelis died in 1943, at the age of 77, she left over 4,000 acres of land and fifteen farms to the National Trust of England. Brilliant artist, imaginative writer, passionate naturalist and pioneer in land conservation; Beatrix Potter shared her love of nature with millions of children through her distinctively original tales and by preserving the land that inspired them.

*For more information on Beatrix Potter read Dr. Ellen Handler Spitz's in-depth essay in the supplement section of this guide.*



Rooftop view from Hill Top Farm from *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers*

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### Activity One: Understand the Story

- Read the *Peter Rabbit™ Tales* show synopsis on page 3.
- Discuss student's reactions to the story and the characters.

### Questions for Class Discussion:

1. Who is the main character of this story? Who are some of the other characters?
2. What are some words to describe Peter at the beginning of the story? Explain.
3. What are some words to describe Tommy Brock and Mr. Tod at the beginning of the story? Explain.
4. Why is Peter afraid?
5. Why do you think Peter went into Mr. McGregor's garden even after he was warned by his mother?
6. Why is Benjamin mad at his father?
7. What animal scares Peter and Benjamin while they're in Mr. McGregor's garden?
8. Can you define what a "flashback" is? Can you give examples of this device from other stories you've read or films you've seen?
9. Which animals help Peter and Benjamin find Tommy Brock's trail?
10. What does Tommy Brock do at Mr. Tod's house?
11. Why does Flopsy decide to join the search?
12. What do Peter and Benjamin do to get into Mr. Tod's house?
13. Why does Peter run away?
14. How does Peter rescue the baby bunnies?
15. How do you think Peter feels at the end of the story? Did Peter change?



Peter escapes Mr. McGregor

## Activity Two: Prepare for the Play

Enchantment Theatre Company's production of *Peter Rabbit™ Tales* is an **adaptation**. That means that Enchantment Theatre Company read the three "rabbit tales" outlined on pages 4-5 and then had to come up a way to combine the tales and make the story come to life on stage!



### Questions for class discussion:

1. Define "adaptation" with your class. (Synonyms: adjust, modify, convert, transform).
2. There are a number of cartoon adaptations of Beatrix Potter's tales. Have any of the students watched the current "Peter Rabbit" Nickelodeon cartoon series or the British animated series, "The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends"? The creators of these cartoon series had to adapt the stories when they created their cartoons.
3. If the students are familiar with either cartoon series, what's different about the adaptations than the story you read in class?
4. Ask your class to identify some fairy tales that they know (*Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Pinocchio*, etc.). Find a story with which most of the class is familiar and discuss all the different adaptations of that story.
  - a. How many of you have seen a movie, play, ballet, or cartoon of the *Cinderella* story?
  - b. How many have you have read the story in a book?
  - c. What was different about these adaptations? What was similar?
  - d. Do you know which adaptation came first?
5. Have you ever read a book and then seen the movie adaptation of that book? How were they alike? How were they different? Which did you prefer and why?
6. The performers will be acting out the story of Peter, Benjamin and their family.
  - a. What do you imagine the play will be like? What will it look like/sound like?
  - b. How do you think watching the play will be different from reading the story?
7. Define the following (reference page 5): masks, mime, music, puppets, scenery. You will see all of these during the play.



Tommy Brock snoring in Mr. Tod's bed

### Activity One: Respond to the Play

- Review the performance and ask students to describe with as much detail as possible what they remember. What animals did they see? What were the costumes like? How did the actors transform themselves to play different characters? What was the scenery like? What kind of music was used?
- Ask the students to help make a list of different things that happened in the performance. Write these down on the board.

### Questions for Class Discussion:

1. Who is the main character in the story? How do you know that?
2. How did you feel about not being able to see the actor's faces completely?
3. Did you have to use your imagination when you watched this play? Explain.
4. What happened in the story that was surprising? Exciting? Funny? Scary?
5. How was the play different than the story you read in class (if you read the story prior to seeing the play). How was it the same?
6. Did the music help tell the story? How?
7. How did the actors show how they were feeling or what they were doing without words? (see Activity Two for more)
8. Were Tommy Brock and Mr. Tod friends?
9. Did Squirrel Nutkin and Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle help Benjamin and Peter? How?
10. List characters that were portrayed by actors. Then list some that were portrayed by puppets.
11. Do you have a pet that reminds you of a human? What does it do that is "human-like?"
12. Benjamin and Flopsy are mad at Old Mr. Bouncer but forgive him by the end of the play.
13. Name a time you forgave someone. Did you feel better afterwards?
14. What do you think Peter learned by helping Benjamin?
15. If the story kept on going, what do you think would happen?



Tommy Brock

## Activity Two: Discover Theater in the Classroom

In *Peter Rabbit™ Tales*, the actors were able to communicate ideas and feelings without using words. Discuss with the students how the actors let the audience know what was happening, even when they weren't using their voices.

Use the following activities to explore the possibilities of communicating without speaking:

1. **Invisible Object:** Imagine you are holding a very heavy bowling ball. Pass it around the circle without speaking and without dropping it! Think about how you have to stand to hold a heavy object, what your muscles feel like, how slowly you have to move. Give prompts like, "Be ready for it! It's heavy. Make sure your neighbor has it before you let it go!" When it's gone all the way around, try passing around a very light feather, a hot potato, a live frog. "Don't let it get away!" Don't say what it is you are passing, have the students guess based on how you handle the imaginary object.

2. **Without Words:** Ask students to think of actions or gestures they use to communicate. For example, can they think of ways to act surprised using only their face? Can they say something without using any words? Without speaking, try saying:

Hello!	I don't know
Yes! / No!	I'm hungry
I'm sleepy	Go away! / Come here!
I'm scared	That's funny!
I'm going to sneeze	Where are you?
It's over there	My stomach hurts
I love you	

3. **Tableau:** Now try to communicate a larger idea as a group. Still without talking, your students will have to create a tableau, or a frozen picture, of a place or activity of your choosing. They should try to do different things from each other. For example, if the activity is recess, not everyone should be playing kickball. You should see people frozen in mid-run, sitting and laughing together, throwing a ball, etc. Try the following:

- a. At recess
- b. In the desert
- c. Having a picnic
- d. Getting ready for school
- e. Everyone is a dinosaur looking for food

4. **How Do You Move?** Make a space in the classroom for the students to move freely. Tell the students they are standing on a towel on a very hot beach and in order to get to the ocean they must walk through the scalding hot sand. Ouch! How do they move across the space? Other suggestions for environments to move through:
  - a. A sidewalk covered with chewed bubble gum
  - b. A frozen pond
  - c. A very steep hill
  - d. A pond scattered with stepping stones
  - e. The surface of the moon
  - f. A giant bowl of Jell-O
5. **More Mime:** Extend the space exploration to include other imaginary activities:
  - a. Carefully paint a door. After finishing, open the door and step through it without getting any paint on your clothes.
  - b. Build a snowman. The teacher should be able to tell how big the snowman is by how the student uses the space.
  - c. Eat an ice cream cone. At some point, the ice cream should fall on the floor. How do you react to this?
  - d. Rake leaves into a large pile. Admire the size of the pile, make sure no one is looking, and then jump into it.
6. To conclude, ask the students to list the ways they saw one another communicate without using words (through facial expressions, movement, gesture).



Mr. Tod and Tommy Brock

# Introducing Enchantment Theatre Company

## Enchantment Theatre Company Mission Statement

Enchantment Theatre Company exists to create original theater for young audiences and families. We accomplish this through the imaginative telling of stories that inspire, challenge and enrich our audiences, on stage and in the classroom. In doing so, we engage the imagination and spirit of our audience until a transformation occurs and the true grace of our mutual humanity is revealed.

Enchantment Theatre Company is a professional non-profit arts organization based in Philadelphia whose mission is to create original theater for children and families. For over 35 years, the Company has performed throughout the United States, Canada, and the Far East, presenting imaginative and innovative theatrical productions for school groups and families. Originally a privately-owned touring company, in 2000 Enchantment put down new roots in Philadelphia, where it was reestablished as a resident non-profit theater. While dedicated to serving its home community, the Company also maintains an extensive national touring schedule that includes performances on its own and in collaboration with the nation's finest symphony orchestras.

In its home city, Enchantment has reached audiences of about 20,000 per year through its innovative and imaginative presentations of literary classics for children. Its newest program, *Enchantment Everywhere*, was started in the spring of 2014, and takes completely portable productions directly into school auditoriums, community centers and local venues – anywhere children and families gather - providing free tickets to thousands of children. On tour across the United States each year, the Company reaches more than 150,000 people in 35-40 states. Based on extensive experience, about 80% of the Company's touring audience is comprised of children from 5-12 who delight in the company's fantastic life-size puppets, skilled masked actors, original music, and startling feats of magic and illusion. It is to their infectious laughs, astonished gasps, and enthusiastic applause that Enchantment is dedicated.



Set model of Mr. Tod's house. Copyright© C. David Russell, Production Designer



## *Peter Rabbit™ Tales*

### SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Who Was Beatrix Potter? .....	16
Bibliography .....	21
Additional Pre-Show Activities .....	22
Explore Imagination	
The Role of Music	
Jobs in the Theater	
Additional Post-Show Activities .....	26
Storytelling and Writing	
Nature and Conservation	
Introduction to Theater .....	28
Introduction to Masks and Puppets .....	28
Experiencing Live Theater .....	30
References and Resources .....	31

## WHO WAS BEATRIX POTTER?

c 2015 Ellen Handler Spitz  
Author of *Inside Picture Books*



Picture of Beatrix Potter is by courtesy of The Victoria & Albert Museum



The White Rabbit from *Alice in Wonderland* by John Tenniel

First and foremost, Beatrix Potter created the most beloved rabbit of all time. Just picture Peter with his cottontail, whiskers, and pale blue jacket; does a smile creep involuntarily across your face? Who created this curious, naughty, greedy, clever, brave, and irresistibly lovable animal?



Beatrix Potter was born nearly a hundred fifty years ago in Victorian London: July 28, 1866. It was a time of feverish creativity in literature and the arts. Mary Ann Evans was producing luminous novels under her masculine pen name George Eliot. The Pre-Raphaelite artists, championed by leading critic John Ruskin, were painting lyrical scenes of languid dreamy subjects in flowing lines and pastel colors, and a prominent member of their group, John Everett Millais, was friendly with the Potters when Beatrix was a little girl and showed her his work. Shy, whimsical, eccentric Charles Dodgson, installed at Christ Church College, Oxford, went rowing one famous afternoon with the dean's daughter and shortly thereafter---under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll---released the first edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Beatrix Potter encountered *Alice* at age seven and later drew her own illustrations. Algernon Swinburne, decadently poeticizing, penned lines that were to impress Oscar Wilde, whom the Potters met, and, indefatigably, William Morris redecorated England inside and out, while Virginia Woolf's father, Leslie Stephens, clambered about on Alpine peaks and recorded his adventures for posterity. Randolph Caldecott, the inventive story artist par excellence (our best American picture books each year are awarded a medal in his honor), was publishing in the *Illustrated London News*, which was also a site for uncanny art of Gustave Doré, both artists' work known to young Beatrix Potter. Other children's book illustrators Kate Greenaway and Walter Crane were formative as well. And let's not forget the irrepressible, epileptic, and peripatetic Edward Lear ("The Owl and the Pussycat"), who was disgorging his books of notable nonsense, one of which was given to Beatrix Potter at the tender age of four and a half. All these contemporary artists and writers were influential and formed the cultural ambience in which her unique imagination took flight.

Potter was the first child and only daughter of Rupert Potter, a barrister and an avid amateur photographer, and Helen Leech Potter. The Potters resided in Bolton Gardens, Kensington, were endowed with inherited wealth, initially made in trade. This source seems to have mildly embarrassed Helen Potter,

whose abiding snobbishness caused her to express contempt years later for her daughter's suitors, one after another, on the dubious ground of class difference, so that the obedient Beatrix felt she had to conceal her affections as long as possible for fear of crossing her mother. Eventually her bother Bertram, six years her junior, secretly married and went off to live in Scotland rather than precipitate family dissension.

Nevertheless, the Potters' means provided them with a comfortable life in town as well as summers away in a series of rented properties in beautiful country settings, first in Scotland and later in the Lake District. These summers proved of inestimable value to young Beatrix, for she grew up immersing herself in a rustic life, tramping about on her own, delighting in the land and its native fauna and flora. She wandered freely, gathered specimens of insects and small mammals as well as mushrooms, which fascinated her, and she constantly sketched from nature. She expressed her strong preference for country over city years later in one of her most pithy picture books, the *Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse* (1918). With a plot line that follows Aesop's fable, Potter tells her child readers how Timmy Willie, a stout placid little country mouse, fell asleep one day in a vegetable hamper and was accidentally carted off to the city. There, despite being welcomed by his sophisticated rodent relations, he was perpetually on edge and terrified of the cat. His sleek cousin Johnny then took the reverse journey only to endure a different form of misery on Timmy Willie's tranquil farm. Potter, in the book's final sentence, confides her own clear preference for the country!

Beatrix Potter had a solitary girlhood. In keeping with the mores of her day, girls were not permitted to go to school but were tutored at home and not encouraged to play with children from other families. As Unitarian Dissenters, moreover, the Potters were consigned to the margins of Anglican London society, and this may have contributed to her shyness and social awkwardness. Like so many Victorian girls and women of her class, she was not encouraged to grow up. She lived with her parents well into her forties. She had no money of her own and not a shred of external independence. She wrote that, by age 28, she had never been anywhere by herself. With her parents, she moved seasonally from city to country and back, and in relation to them, she remained a child. We do know, however, that despite her dutiful demeanor and outward compliance, she felt rebellious, for she kept a coded journal and wrote many letters. Qualities she gleaned from the conditions of her personal life, from her repressive epoch, and from her close observations of nature found their way into her children's books and lent them their staying power.



Young Beatrix Potter courtesy of the Beatrix Potter Society



Timmy Willie and Johnny Town-Mouse



The Garden at Little Ees Wyke, painted by Beatrix Potter in 1902. By kind permission of the Linder Collection



Mrs. Tittlemouse

Potter, moreover, like many authors and artists famous for literature and art addressed to children, such as Hans Christian Andersen (fairy tales), Robert Louis Stevenson (*Treasure Island*), Margaret Wise Brown (*Goodnight Moon*), P.L. Travers (*Mary Poppins*) and Maurice Sendak (*Where the Wild Things Are*), never became a parent. One external cause of her childlessness was the sudden death in 1905 of Norman Warne, her beloved fiancé and son of her London publisher, with whom she had gradually fallen in love during protracted negotiations over her earliest children's books, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, *The Tailor of Gloucester*, and *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin*. Warne died of undiagnosed lymphatic leukemia as Potter was nearing forty. Later, with money earned from the sale of her books, she purchased a farm of her own, Hill Top, in the Lake District. She married a country solicitor named William Heelis, but her childbearing years were over. It is intriguing to consider what role childlessness may have played in shaping Potter's sensibility and her extraordinary ability to communicate to children via the natural world. As stated, it may have freed her from constraints of over-protectiveness, which tend to put on brakes and blinders. Naïve sweetness is nearly always deceptive in her work. She enjoyed children at a distance, rather as an extension of her own unbroken link with childhood. In writing to and for them (many of her books began as picture letters addressed to a particular boy or girl, most famous of them being Noel Moore, the son of her former governess Annie Carter Moore, for whom she wrote her first, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*), one senses she is also addressing a still vital aspect of herself, and this is typical of the finest children's authors, especially those who have not crossed the divide into parenthood.

A telling example of her stoicism and a clue as to her enduring attitudes toward children and animals may be found in her surprising opposition to a proposed addition to the British Protection of Animals Act (1911) that would have prohibited children from witnessing or participating in the slaughter of animals. Potter, who knew and loved animals, reasoned that, since human beings do indeed butcher animals for food, even appealing animals like pigs, ducks, and furry rabbits, children should not be kept innocent of that truth. Moreover, despite her lifelong care for the well-being of animals and her adoption of them almost exclusively as the characters in her stories, Potter was devoid of sentimentality toward them. Exceptions were made for one or two of her most cherished long-term pets, including the hedgehog she kept on a leash on whom she based the eponymous Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle and a beloved mouse called Hunca-Munca, who died falling off a chandelier and also became a character. Staunch realism along with whimsy pervade Potter's children's books, and her clear-eyed approach to life enabled her to probe emotional depths beyond their pretty pastel

surfaces. Their wise unflinching truth is in part, I believe, what has enabled them to survive for over a century.

Children and animals seem almost interchangeable in Potter's inner world, and in real life she took on the care of many pets over the years, including frogs, lizards, snakes, hedgehogs, mice, rabbits, and pigs, as well as dogs and cats. These pets became subjects for her endless sketchbook studies. She enjoyed leading one of her rabbits Benjamin by a leash and fed it gooseberries. Unlike Aesop and La Fontaine, she observed animal behavior not merely in order to reflect on the morality of humans; she wanted to capture them as they are, true to species. Yet, her animals are drawn so that we can identify readily with them. Potter's Peter, for example, is both rabbit and boy: the more rabbit, the more boy, and vice versa, so that he confronts us with our own groundedness in the natural world.

Today, when so many children ignore the natural world and have their eyes glued to screens, robotic gadgets, and other electronic devices, the fauna and flora that Beatrix Potter loved so much go unheeded. Her exemplary life, during which she eschewed self-pity, and her crisp forthright picture stories, leavened with that marvelously wry sense of humor, matter more than ever. When we revisit them and introduce children to them (there are more than thirty), they re-attach us to pulsating out of doors life, to gardens, brooks, and woods, to tender, trenchant, sometimes cruel lessons, and to the wonder of our precarious place in it all.



Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle was a hedgehog!



Benjamin Bunny and Peter Rabbit

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Jemima Puddle-Duck

## ADDITIONAL PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

### Explore Imagination

When you hear a story read to you, you imagine what the characters look like and what they're doing. You use your imagination to create the story in your mind. When Enchantment created its adaptation of the Peter Rabbit stories, the artists and designers who worked on the show used their imaginations in the same way. They asked themselves: How can we bring the drawings to life on stage? What will Peter Rabbit look like? How will we show that Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle is a hedgehog? What kind of masks will the characters wear? What about their costumes and props? Which characters will be puppets, which will be actors? How will we create Mr. McGregor's garden? How will we show Peter and Benjamin making a tunnel under Mr. Tod's house? What will the music sound like?

Having an active imagination can help you in many ways.

1. Have you ever used your imagination to solve a problem or find your way out of a difficult situation?
2. Have you ever used your imagination to make something ordinary become more exciting (*for example, pretending that the jungle gym is a rocket ship*)?
3. Have you ever had a dream or a daydream that seemed so real you almost *believed* it really happened? Have students share stories in pairs or with the class.
4. Can you think of a time that your imagination "played a trick on you" and you imagined something scary was happening that turned out to be something different (*for example, you thought you heard a burglar in the house but it turned out to be a mouse*)? Have students share stories in pairs or with the class.
5. Have you ever used your imagination to make up an original story or play?

### Use Your Imagination!

1. **Simple Shape:** Draw a simple shape on the black board (*for example, triangle*) and ask students to look closely. If we use our imaginations, what can this simple shape become? Does it resemble anything (*for example, a mountain, a triangle instrument, a rooftop, a clown hat, a slice of pie, etc*)? Have students come up to the board and add details to the shape to create some of these images. Repeat the exercise with other shapes.
2. **Simple Shape Group:** To follow up with a group shape activity, put students together in small groups and give each group one large sheet of white paper and several basic shapes cut out of colored paper. Ask the students to lay the shapes on the paper in different combinations to create pictures (*for example, a half circle under a triangle to create a sail boat, a triangle over a square to create a house*). When the group is happy with its picture, have them glue the shapes into place.
3. **Scribble:** Ask students to scribble on a sheet of paper with their eyes closed. After a few seconds have everyone open their eyes and look closely at the scribbled page. Ask students, "What does your scribble look like? Can you find an image in the design?" Instruct students to take a crayon or marker and trace the outline of the image they see. Then, ask them to add details to turn their scribble designs to create complete pictures.

4. **Group Draw:** To follow up with a group drawing activity, put students together in small groups and give each student a sheet of paper and a different color crayon or marker. Ask the students to start drawing a tree. After a short time (5-10 seconds), ask everyone to put their markers down and pass their paper to the left. Each student should end up with a new tree. Ask the students to pick up their markers and add on to this new tree. After another 5 seconds, ask the students to put down their markers. Repeat these steps until everyone gets back the tree they started.
5. **Take a Walk:** Take your class for a walk through the school or outside. Ask them to imagine they are ... and let that change the way they walk:
  - a. Old Mr. Bouncer walking slowly with his cane.
  - b. Peter Rabbit hopping nervously in the woods.
  - c. Mr. Tod, the fox, following Flopsy Bunny.
  - d. Tommy Brock, the badger, sneaking into Mr. Tod's house.
6. **Games and Activities for Younger Children:** Visit the Peter Rabbit website at [www.peterrabbit.com](http://www.peterrabbit.com) for additional activities geared to pre-K through first grade.



Squirrel Nutkin and friends



## THE ROLE OF MUSIC

Charlie Gilbert is the composer for the music for *Peter Rabbit™ Tales*. He has worked on a number of Enchantment Theatre productions, creating musical arrangements and additional music for Enchantment's production of *The Velveteen Rabbit* in 2007 and the entire score of Enchantment's *Harold and the Purple Crayon* in 2009. Charlie recently composed the score for Enchantment's adaptation of *The Brave Little Tailor* and he adapted Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic suite, *Scheherazade*, for Enchantment's original production of *Aladdin and Other Enchanting Tales*. Charlie's music for *Peter Rabbit™ Tales* underscores the action of the story, and helps the performers tell the tale without words.

### Music and Character

One of the ways the composer helps to tell the story is to create musical "themes" or melodies that occur again and again throughout the play. See if you can find Peter Rabbit's theme music. Is there a theme you hear for Old Mr. Bouncer? What about Tommy Brock? Did you notice that the "rock-a-bye baby" melody occurs throughout the show whenever anyone rocks the baby bunnies? How many instruments can you list that each played that melody? (It was each played by the trumpet, French horn, flute, oboe and string bass!)

### Music and Setting

The music in a performance can often indicate a new setting. Listen for the changes in the music when Peter and Benjamin go back into the past, when Benjamin and Peter arrive at Mr. Tod's house and when Peter, Benjamin and Flopsy return home. Were there other musical setting changes that the students noticed?

### Music and Mood

The composer has an important job in setting the mood or atmosphere of a play by the music he creates. For example, when Peter Rabbit is frightened in Mr. McGregor's garden, the music is much different than when he's happily picking vegetables in his own garden.

1. Have you ever seen a scary movie or been to a haunted house? Describe the music you heard. How did the music help make the movie/experience scary?
2. Have you ever been to a circus and heard happy, carnival music? What if you heard that music when you were at school? What would you think was happening?

If you were a composer, what kind of music would you write for the scene in which Peter pits Tommy Brock and Mr. Tod against one another?

3. What was the mood of the music at the end of the play?

To illustrate the role of music in storytelling, try the following activities:

1. Ask your students to recall a personal experience (*for example, a family vacation or the first day of school*). Ask one student to tell his/her story to the class. After he/she is finished, have the same student retell the same story. This time, play a dynamic track of music (preferably instrumental) to underscore the story. Ask the class how this music affected the story. When you attend the performance, encourage your students to pay attention to the music, and remember how the music created different moods within the piece.
2. Get the entire class up and away from their desks. Play a piece of music and ask everyone to move or dance how the music makes them feel. Does it make you want to sneak? Look for something? Skip? Does it make you feel sleepy? Angry? Scared? After a minute or so, play a different piece of music with a vastly different mood. Switch at least one more time.

## JOBS IN THE THEATER

1. What kind of jobs do you imagine people have at the theater? Can you name five different kinds of theater jobs?
2. When your class comes to the theater, look around to see what kinds of jobs people are doing. You will see someone in the box office, ushers, and actors. There are also people doing many jobs you don't see: the stage manager who calls the cues for the show; the lighting technician who runs the lights; the director who directed the actors in rehearsal; the costume designer; the designers who created the masks, puppets, and scenery; the people who publicize the show, answer the phones, and sell the tickets.



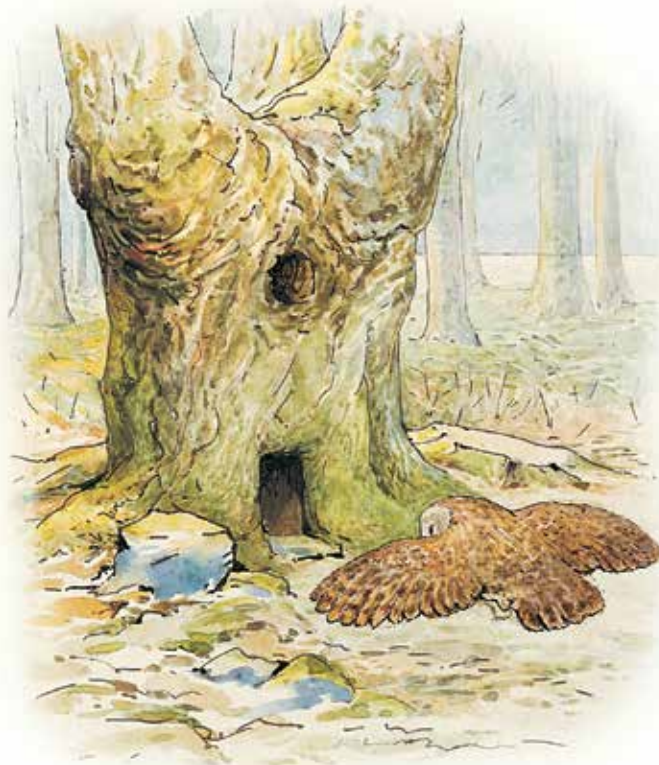
Piggling Bland and Pig-wig

## ADDITIONAL POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

### Storytelling and Writing

Try these writing exercises to get your students writing and illustrating their own stories. Talk about the following important parts of a story: setting, introduction to characters, conflict, rising action, climax, and resolution.

- **Group Storytelling (Listening, Speaking):** Tell a story as a group with each student telling just one line at a time. You can begin the story to set-up the adventure, but you never know where it will go. For example: “One day, Hawthorne School’s fourth grade class (substitute your school and class) decided to go on a walk to Blue Creek Park (substitute a location near you).” Go around the room with each student contributing one line. Remind students to listen to what has been said and build on what has already happened in the story. Help them move the story along and find an ending.
- **Writing a Story in Pairs (Writing, Reading):** Divide students into pairs. Ask each student to write the first line of a story. Ask everyone to put pencils down after the first sentence. Have students trade papers with their partner, read the first line of their partner’s story, and add a second line. Ask everyone to put pencils down and trade papers again. Repeat this process until partners reach a conclusion to both stories. Once they are done, you could have students copy these stories onto blank paper, one or two lines per page, and have them illustrate them.
- **Draw Your Own Tale (Drawing, Visual):** Imagine that you’re an animal who lives in the woods. What kind of animal are you? Do you live in a tree trunk... under the ground? Who are your friends? Are there other animals that frighten you? Draw an adventure you might have in the woods. What are you looking for? Who do you meet? What do you find? How do you get home? Can you write captions for each drawing you create?



Old Brown, the owl

## NATURE AND CONSERVATION

Through Beatrix Potter's exquisite drawings and imaginative stories, children around the world have been introduced to the English countryside. At a time when nature being taken for granted, Ms. Potter recognized the value of land conservation for future generations. Discuss with your students different activities their community could undertake to preserve or enhance the natural environment around them. Create a community garden, park or preserve? Create a conservation center for animals? Conserve woodland areas against future development? Why do they think these different activities would be of value?

**Try these exercises to introduce your students to the natural world around them.**

- **Where do animals live?** We see animals around us all the time, but we don't always see where their homes are. Take your students outside and ask them to sit under a tree. Who else is there? A tree can be an apartment building for many kinds of animals. Can they count the number of creatures they observe? Squirrels, birds, chipmunks, mice, ants? Can they imagine what their homes are like? Discuss with your students the habitat of their animal neighbors.
- **Rabbits!** Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny are from England and are called **European Rabbits**. These wild rabbits have grey/brown fur, long ears, large hind legs and fluffy white tails. Rabbits are social animals and like to live in colonies or warrens with up to ten family members. In North America, there are many breeds of wild rabbits: **cotton-tail rabbits** – brown/grey with white tails and medium ears; **jackrabbits** – enormous ears, longer hind legs and fur that changes with the seasons; **snowshoe hares** – with furry feet and color changing fur. Ask your students why they think rabbits have long ears and long hind legs. Why do they think some wild rabbits have fur that changes color with the seasons? What other kinds of rabbits have your students seen? **Domestic pet rabbits** are bred to be white, black, brown or multi-colored, large or dwarf, lop-eared or long eared. Does anyone in the class have a pet rabbit? What breed is it?
- **Outdoor Treasure Hunt.** Divide your class into two groups and send them on a treasure hunt. Each group will have a pad of paper and a pen and will make a list of what they find. They'll be looking for: **Numbers** – find leaves with 1/2/3/4/5/6 points; **Colors** – find examples in nature of red, yellow, blue, brown, green...and anything else; **Shapes** – find an example of a circle, square, rectangle, oval, star, spiral; **Textures** – find examples of hard, soft, wet, dry, prickly, smooth. Note: students should observe and record what they see but not pull leaves, pick plants, or eat berries!



Jeremy Fisher

## INTRODUCTION TO THEATER

Theater didn't develop overnight; it evolved slowly out of the practice of ritual. Primitive man developed certain rituals to appease the elements or to make things happen that he didn't understand (for example, to make crops grow or to have success in hunting). In Ancient Greece, similar rituals began in honor of Dionysus, the god of fertility, and would include choral singing and dancing. These rituals were so popular, that people began to choreograph, or plan out, the dances more carefully. The songs became more sophisticated, and eventually the rituals included actors speaking in dialogue with one another and with the chorus. Soon, writers wrote full scripts to be performed; entire festivals were organized in honor of Dionysus, and theater as we know it was born.

What makes a theatrical experience? Actors on a "stage" (which might be anything from a huge amphitheater to the front of a classroom) portray characters and tell stories through their movement and speech. But it's still not a theatrical experience until one more very important element is added. It's the presence of an audience—watching, participating, imagining—that makes it truly theater. Theater is the coming together of people—the audience and the actors—to think about, speak of, and experience the big ideas that connect us to our inner and outer worlds.

## INTRODUCTION TO MASKS AND PUPPETS

In this production of *Peter Rabbit™ Tales*, actors wearing animal **masks** portray all of the characters. Though masks are rare in American contemporary theater, they have been used since the very beginnings of theater. The early Romans used enormous masks that exaggerated human characteristics and enhanced the actor's presence in the huge amphitheaters of their day. Greek theater used masks that were human scale to designate tragic and comic characters. Masks have been used in the early Christian church since the 9<sup>th</sup> century and were revived during the Renaissance in Italy with the Commedia Dell' Arte. Theater throughout Asia has used masks to create archetypal characters, human and divine. In Balinese theatrical tradition, for example, masks keep ancient and mythological figures recognizable to a contemporary

Peter Rabbit



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audience, preserving a rare and beautiful culture. Though used differently in every culture, the mask universally facilitates a transformation of the actor *and* the audience.

In Enchantment's productions we sometimes include very large or very small characters in our stories, so we use **puppets** to portray them. Similar to masks, puppets also have a long and esteemed history. They have been used to represent gods, noblemen and everyday people as well animals and mythical creatures. In the history of every culture puppets can be found, from the tombs of the Pharaohs to the Italian marionette and the English Punch and Judy. The Bunraku Puppet Theater of Japan has been in existence continuously since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the early days of Bunraku, the greatest playwrights preferred writing for puppets rather than for live actors!

Puppets are similar to the mask in their fascination and power. We accept that this carved being is real and alive, and we invest it with an intensified life of our own imagining. Thus, puppets can take an audience further and deeper into what is true. Audiences bring more of themselves to mask and puppet theater because they are required to imagine more. Masks and puppets live in a world of heightened reality. Used with art and skill, they can free the actor and the audience from what is ordinary and mundane, and help theater do what it does at its best: expand boundaries, free the imagination, inspire dreams, transform possibilities, and teach us about ourselves.



Set model of Mr. McGregor's garden. Copyright© C. David Russell, Production Designer

## EXPERIENCING LIVE THEATER

### Preparing to See the Play

Audience members play an important role—it isn't a theater performance until the audience shows up! When there is a "great house" (an outstanding audience) it makes the show even better, because the artists feel a live connection with everyone who is engaged in the performance. The most important quality of a good audience member is the ability to be engrossed with what's happening on stage. Sometimes it's important to be quiet, but other times, it's acceptable to laugh, clap, or make noise!

Parents and teachers – **we welcome children's spontaneous reactions, enthusiasm and laughter!** An engaged, excited child behaves in relation to what's happening on stage. Although there are some simple guidelines that contribute to the best experience for the audience, we prefer that children are free to engage in the show spontaneously; it is our intent that they will be swept up in the magic of live theater and we believe that their behavior will be completely appropriate to that experience.

### A Few Simple Guidelines:

**Attention:** Theater is a shared experience. The performers focus their attention and energy on stage to share the play with the audience. The audience focuses their energy and attention on the play's action, supporting the performers so they can do their best work. Being attentive engages you in the performance and shows respect for the actors and the audience around you.

**Quiet:** Before the play begins there will be a recorded pre-show announcement asking everyone to turn off cell phones and refrain from unnecessary noise that might disturb their neighbors. The Theater is a very "live" space. This means that sound carries very well, usually all over the auditorium. Laughing and clapping are part of a live theater experience. But inappropriate sounds—whispering, rustling papers, or speaking—can be heard by other audience members and by the performers. This can distract everyone and spoil a performance. Please do not make any unnecessary noise that would distract the people sitting around you.

**Turn it Off:** The lights go down in the audience and up on the stage at the beginning of the play. If cell phones are still on, they light up the audience and are distracting to everyone. There is no video recording or photos allowed from the audience, so please, turn off all devices!

**Appreciation:** Applause is the best way for an audience in a theater to share its enthusiasm and to appreciate the performers. At the end of the program, it's customary to continue clapping until the curtain drops or the lights on stage go dark. During the curtain call, the performers bow to show their appreciation to the audience. If you really enjoyed the performance, you might even thank the artists with a standing ovation!



Flopsy, Benjamin and Bunnies

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Peter's jacket on the scarecrow





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