

One hundred and ten years have passed since a naughty rabbit called Peter disobeyed his mother and went wandering off to Mr. McGregor's garden where he ended up nearly losing a lot more than just his blue jacket and his shoes. Since then, Peter's tale has been translated into more than thirty-five languages, and read and enjoyed by people all over the world. In our everyday lives we see Peter all around us, with his image printed on plates and cups, on pens and pencils, and even on garden tools. Surely there can be few people today who do not know who Peter is. He is quite possibly the most famous rabbit in the whole wide world.

Peter's creator was a woman called Beatrix Potter. When Potter drew pictures to illustrate her stories, she first did many preparatory sketches of animals. She would draw the animals seen from different perspectives, and would even sometimes draw their skeletons to get a better idea of their anatomy. When we look at Potter's pictures of Peter Rabbit, we feel that we are looking at a real rabbit and not a cartoon. Potter conveyed the emotions Peter and her other animals feel by skilful depiction of their bodies.

No doubt the most famous animal character to have come out of the USA is Mickey Mouse. Mickey may be a mouse in name, but he is clearly nothing like a real mouse in the way he looks and acts. He drives cars, he makes phone calls, and he even takes a ride in a spaceship. He is living in the modern world and is very much a product of the American dream. He believes the future will be good, and is not concerned about the past and what has gone before.

Compared to Mickey, Peter Rabbit might appear old-fashioned. The world he lives in is very different from the one we live in today. Perhaps this might be because he comes from England, a country where people tend to look to the past more than to the future. In England traditions are maintained and old things are lovingly preserved. This was particularly true of Beatrix Potter. She was determined to preserve the natural beauty of the Lake District in the northwest of England, and spent much of the money she made from her books buying land there. On her death she gave all her land to the National Trust on condition it be maintained unspoilt for future generations to enjoy.