

大東文化大学文学部英米文学科主催  
第4回高校生翻訳コンテスト課題

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On September 4th 1893, Beatrix Potter sent a letter to a young boy called Noel. Beatrix was twenty-seven years old at the time and Noel five. Beatrix was spending her summer holidays with her parents and her younger brother at Eastwood House in Scotland. Noel was the son of Beatrix's former governess Annie Carter, and he was sick in bed in London. In her letter to him Beatrix wrote, "I don't know what to write to you so I shall tell you a story about four little rabbits whose names were Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Peter." In her story she wrote about a naughty rabbit who ignored his mother's warning not to go into Mr. McGregor's garden and who nearly ended up getting put into a pie as a result. Beatrix hoped that her picture letter would help cheer Noel up.

Encouraged by friends who saw the picture letter, Beatrix decided to see if she could get the story of Peter Rabbit published as a picture book. But alas, nobody was willing to help her. So she decided to publish it herself. In December 1901 *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* was published. Two hundred and fifty copies were printed. All but one of the pictures in the book were in black and white.

Suddenly Beatrix's luck changed. On the very day her book came out, the London publisher Frederick Warne offered to publish her book as long as she agreed to add colour to all of her pictures. Beatrix agreed, but she was adamant that three conditions should be met: the book should be small enough to fit into a child's hand; it should be cheap enough for a child to be able to buy a copy out of his or her pocket money; and there should be no compromise concerning the colours in the finished book.

In October 1902 the first copies of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* showing Peter in his blue jacket appeared in London bookshops. It was not long before more copies were having to be printed, such was the success of Beatrix's little book. Almost overnight, Beatrix Potter had become a bestselling author of picture books for children.