

HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT

A Garry Ginivan Attraction

Based on the books by Beatrix Potter

Incorporating the Tale of Peter Rabbit, Benjamin Bunny, Mr. Tod

This production is licensed by Frederick Warne & Co. Ltd, 2012.

Adaptation and Lyrics: Garry Ginivan
Original Score: Mark Jones
Set Design: Graham Mc Guffie
Costume Design: Mel Drummond

Characters: Beatrix Potter / Old Mrs. Rabbit
Peter Rabbit
Benjamin Bunny
Mr. McGregor / Mr. Tod
Old Mr. Bunny / Tommy Brock

Beatrix Potter started to write tales about a naughty rabbit called Peter in 1893. 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit' was published in 1902.

Students may be interested to know that Beatrix Potter actually owned a rabbit named Peter.

For further information on the life and art of Beatrix Potter, as well as worksheets, games, and recipes related to her books visit:

<http://www.peterrabbit.com/potters-world.asp>

The following activities can be used by teachers to enhance their students' experience of seeing HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT. Teachers should adapt activities to suit student levels. For example, some of the writing exercises can be done in illustration form.

These notes are arranged according to the following themes (with a wordsearch puzzle on the final page):

STORY MAKING	2
ISSUES	5
FAMILY AND FRIENDS	6
CRAFT	7
FOOD AND NUTRITION	9
NATURE	11
THEATRE	12

STORY MAKING

The focus of the following activities is on narrative and storytelling.

IMAGINE IF

Have students consider **what might have happened had certain things in the 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit' been different**, eg:

- What would have happened if Flopsy, Mopsy and Cotton-tail had gone into Mr. Mc Gregor's garden with Peter?
- What would have happened if Mr. Mc Gregor's cat had been friendly?
- What would have happened if Mr. Mc Gregor had caught Peter and Benjamin?
- What would have happened if the scarecrow in Mr. McGregor's garden had come to life?

Compile a list of 'What would have happened if ...?' questions for Peter Rabbit. Have students follow one or more "*What would have happened if ...*" questions and collaboratively **rewrite (retell) the story** accordingly. Stories can be retold in 3rd person narrative, or as characters from the story, and can be presented in written, illustrated or dramatised form.

Alternatively, have students write sequels for Peter and/or other characters from '*The Tale of Peter Rabbit*'.

WORD AT A TIME STORIES

Sit in a circle. Going around the circle, have students **make up a story, sentence by sentence, or word by word**, each student adding on to the story according to what the person before them has contributed.

Extension: Divide class into three groups. Have one group of students tell a story. Have a second group mime the story as it is being told. The third group can serve as an audience whilst also supplying relevant sound effects as required.

STORY ILLUSTRATION

Together with students, look at the illustrations by Beatrix Potter in the *Peter Rabbit* series. Discuss how well the illustrations of characters, locations and situations match their written descriptions.

Allocate or have students choose a story each (original tales or well-known ones). Ask students to **illustrate stories**.

View these and identify how effectively students' illustrations reflect their allocated or chosen stories.

Alternatively have students re-illustrate books in the *Peter Rabbit* series. Create a class library of picture books.

MESSAGES

In most cases, stories communicate messages or lessons through episodes that occur to characters in them.

Discuss *'The Tale Of Peter Rabbit'* and identify messages or lessons that the book/play communicates. **Have students consider what the story communicates about friendship, family, danger, getting along with others.**

POSTCARDS

In *'The Tale of Peter Rabbit'*, Peter visits Mr. McGregor's garden.

Together with students **make a list of other places** (real or imagined) **that Peter Rabbit might visit**. Where locations are real, have students locate these on world maps.

Have students consider the kinds of things that Peter may encounter on his travels, who he might meet, and what adventures he might have.

Have students **create post-cards written by Peter** and addressed to Peter's family or friends to let them know about his journey. Postcards can include snapshots/illustrations as well as original stamps.

Alternatively, create postcards to be sent by characters from other stories.

STORY TELLING

Discuss with students the skills involved in the telling of a story. Have students consider what qualities might hold a listener's interest, and what qualities might lose a listener's interest, eg. shuffling around, mumbling, fidgeting, speaking in a monotone, speaking too slowly/quickly, etc.

Have students come to the front of the class and explore relating stories (or other information) according to the following: making eye contact; looking down at the ground; speaking with animation; with no animation; with gesture; with no motion; pausing between phrases; speaking without pausing; speaking with a loud voice; soft voice; speaking very fast; very slowly; speaking with a flat voice; in a sing song manner; shuffling around; standing on the spot; speaking clearly and carefully; mumbling; standing with arms by the sides; fidgeting, etc.

Identify with students strengths and weaknesses of different qualities, and whether some kind of dynamic combination might serve the storyteller best of all.

Bearing the preceding exercises and discussion in mind, have students **tell a story** (*Peter Rabbit* or another children's story) to one another (3rd person narrative) **with the aim of keeping listeners' attention and interest**.

Extension activity: Have students tell stories again, but as if they were characters from the story (1st person narrative). This can be followed by Q & A interviews in which storytellers stay in character.

STORY INGREDIENTS

Cut out and shuffle all of the nouns from the table below, and place them face down on a table. One card is to be picked up and a nominated storyteller is to start to **tell a story about the word on the card**. Every few seconds another card is to be picked up, and the storyteller must add whatever is on the new card to the story that is already in progress. Stories can be told by one storyteller or collaboratively with a new storyteller adding to the story as each card is revealed.

STORY INGREDIENT CARDS:

rabbit	elephant	blanket
custard	carrot	map
cat	mirror	robot
sister	scarecrow	ballet shoe
tomato sauce	soap	blue paint
koala	rainbow	basket
diamond	key	fly
tractor	tea cup	ice cream
package	caterpillar	octopus
cactus	pond	bottle

ISSUES

The following conversation starters can be taken up to stimulate discussion relevant to issues in HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT. Students should have read *'The Tale of Peter Rabbit'* and/or seen the play to most effectively enter into topics.

Differences: In HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT, we learn that Tommy Brock (the badger) and Mr. Tod (the fox) do not get along. Nor do Mr. McGregor and rabbits get along. How could these characters have resolved their differences? What causes conflict between animals? What causes conflict between humans? What causes conflict between animals and humans? In each case, can differences be resolved? How?

Danger: In HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT, Peter's mother tells Peter *"You may go into the fields to play or you may go down the lane, but you may not go into Mr. McGregor's garden."* Why do you think Peter's mother does not want him to go into Mr. Mc Gregor's garden? How else could she have tried to stop him from going there? What is the best way for children to learn about and understand what is dangerous and what is not?

Fear: In HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT, Peter is frightened when he gets caught in a gooseberry net in Mr. McGregor's garden. What types of situations are frightening for children? What types of situations are frightening for adults? What is the best way to handle things when you feel scared?

Children's stories: Compare and contrast the situations, locations and characters in *'The Tale of Peter Rabbit'* with the situations, locations and characters in other children's stories, such as those by the Grimm brothers, Hans Christian Anderson, series such as *'The Arabian Nights'*, *'Harry Potter'*, *'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'*, *'Lord of the Rings'*, etc. What similarities/differences are there between stories? Which do students prefer? Why?

Consequences: In most storybooks, there are consequences that occur as a result of words, actions or events. What are the consequences that occur as a result of actions and events in PETER RABBIT? Hypothesise on the likely consequences (both positive and negative) of various actions in students' lives, eg. cheating in school, spending all one's pocket money on sweets, spending all one's time playing computer games, having pen pals, making prank phone calls, helping an elderly person, eating too much, eating too little, teasing a sibling or peer, etc. What can be learned from each example?

Research: Have students choose areas of interest to research that relate to HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT, eg. rabbits, foxes, badgers, cats, gardening, vegetables, etc. Have students find out more about their chosen area and prepare oral presentations on their findings to be given to the rest of the class.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The focus of the following activities is on caring for others.

FAMILY TREE

In HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT, we meet and learn about members of Peter's family: his mother, his father (who had been caught by Mr. Mc Gregor and baked into a rabbit pie), Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail, Benjamin, and Benjamin and Flopsy's baby bunnies.

Together with students, **draw a family tree** for Peter's family. Include those relatives that are known, and perhaps other family members students might like to imagine and name.

Have students create their own personal family trees including illustrations, captions and short stories or notes (true or fantastical) about each relative.

FRIENDSHIP

Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny are good friends (and cousins). Have students think about their friends and list, illustrate or dramatise the things that they like about their best friends. Have students address the following:

- **What makes a good friend?**
- What does it take to be a good friend?
- In what ways are you a good friend?
- How can people make new friends?

When Peter loses his clothes in Mr. McGregor's garden, he feels very sad and upset. Have students address the following:

- How would you feel if a friend of yours was very upset?
- What would you say or do if one of your friends was upset because they had lost something (eg. a treasured toy), if their pet had died, if they had failed a test, etc?
- What are the best things about having good friends?

HELPING OTHERS

In THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT, Benjamin Bunny helps Peter Rabbit get his clothes back, and Peter helps Benjamin rescue his baby rabbits.

Have students **share stories about having helped others, or having been helped by others**. Have students discuss the following:

- When do people need help from others?
- How does it feel to help others?
- How does it feel when others help you?

CRAFT

The focus of the following activities is on making and creating.

BOARD GAME

Working individually or in small groups, have students **create board games** about adventures that Peter Rabbit and friends may have in Mr. McGregor's garden.

In doing so, encourage students to create a path through the garden that rabbits (players) must travel along in order to get to a final goal, eg. the back gate. Each step of the path should include incidents and things that rabbits might come across in Mr. Mc.Gregor's garden, eg. good or bad weather conditions, Mr Mc.Gregor's cat, yummy vegetables to eat, helpful friends, Mr. Mc Gregor and family, etc. These encounters should lead to players losing turns, getting free turns, having to go back several spaces, forward, etc.

Students can name and create an appropriate logo, packaging, and advertising for their games. They can also be asked to prepare detailed playing instructions. Have students **teach and play one another's games**.

A class library of original games for a variety of stories could be created.

HOUSES AND HABITAT

In THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT, we see the inside of Mr. Tod's house.

Discuss with students the types of things one might find inside the home of a fox like Mr. Tod.

Have students think about how the homes of Peter Rabbit, Benjamin Bunny, Tommy Brock (badger), and Mr. and Mrs. McGregor would look. What would they be made of? How would they be constructed? What might be inside? How would they differ from one another?

Sketch or make models of the homes of chosen or allocated animal and/or human characters.

Students can conduct tours through these homes, explaining the details of the construction and contents, and why they particularly suit the characters who live in them.

COUNTRY GARDEN NEWSLETTER

Have students **compile a newsletter for animal and/or human residents who live in and around the countryside** where the adventures of Peter Rabbit take place.

Together with students, decide what the name of the newsletter will be.

Consider what articles (written and/or illustrated) might appear in the newsletter, eg. local news and gossip (stories about Peter rabbit and/or other characters who live in the area), gardening safety tips, weather forecast, recipes (for animals or for people), cartoons, advertisements, advice column, country life crossword puzzles, etc.

Have students design the layout of the newspaper by laying out several large sheets of paper and deciding and marking out where each article should appear. Working individually or in small groups, have students prepare, illustrate, and write up individual articles to then be pasted onto the newspaper layout. Display and/or distribute the publication.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

The focus of the following activities is on healthy and sensible eating habits.

COOKING FOR MRS. RABBIT

In PETER RABBIT, Old Mrs. Rabbit is on her way to the baker to buy a loaf of brown bread and five currant buns.

Organise a cooking class in which students **make some of the foods that Mrs. Rabbit might buy at the baker's**, eg. currant buns, muffins, etc.

Create a recipe book for Mrs. Rabbit and family.

Simple recipe sites for muffins, buns, and tarts can be found at;

http://www.oldtimecooking.com/Recipes/Cinnamon_Buns.htm

Meat Eaters may like to look at recipes for rabbit pie. But, don't tell Peter!

WHAT AM I EATING?

One by one, have students pretend to be eating something that might grow in Mr. McGregor's garden, and see if classmates can guess what they are eating. Try this with other foods too, eg. ice-cold fizzy drink, hot chocolate, water, beer, thick-shake, pizza, spaghetti, watermelon, potato chips, a peach, sweet-corn, peanut butter sandwich, etc.

See if other students can **guess the food or drink** being tasted.

Discuss with students how it is possible to indicate that something being eaten is ice-cold, hot, sweet, sour, salty, bitter, hard, soft, juicy, thick, dry, spicy, poison, etc.

Alternatively, have one student come to the front of the class. Allocate or ask the student to decide on a particular food. Have others ask the student 'yes' or 'no' questions in order to see if they can guess what the food is. See if the class can do so in less than 10 questions.

Some questions to get students started:

- Is this food hard?
- Can people eat this food raw?
- Is this food healthy?
- Does this food grow on a tree?
- etc.

BALANCED DIET

Have students list the kinds of things Peter Rabbit might find and feast on in Mr. McGregor's garden.

What foods do students think are the healthiest for rabbits (and for other animals) to eat? Together with students research the types and quantities of foods that different animals might eat every day.

Have students list the kinds of foods that humans eat. What foods do students think are the healthiest and the least healthy for humans to eat? What foods do students think are the tastiest?

Together with students make lists of foods according to food types:

FATS – DAIRY – VEGETABLE – FRUIT – MEATS – GRAINS.

Discuss how much of each type of food students think would be a good daily balance, and why.

Together with students create a 'Food Pyramid' poster. Examples can be found via a Google image search.

Working individually or in small groups, have students **devise meals that are a healthy combination of food types and also delicious to eat**. Students can be asked to create written or illustrated instructions on how to make their meals or snacks.

Prepare and sample recipes.

Extension activities:

- Compile student recipes to create a school or class cookbook.
- Video record students as they teach/demonstrate their recipes, and compile a school or class instructional cooking DVD.
- **Conduct your own school's 'Junior Masterchef'** episode/s (based on the Network 10 television program): Give individual students or small teams access to a pantry stocked with a selection of ingredients from which to create a culinary treat (or even a gourmet sandwich) to a set time limit. Food that students create can be tasted and assessed by an expert judge or judges, taking into account how the food is plated and served. The project could be video-taped and include eliminations, immunity, interviews, feedback and coaching from expert judges and celebrity guests (such as the school principal).

Some kids cooking websites follow:

<http://kidshealth.org/kid/recipes/index.html>

<http://familyfun.go.com/recipes/cooking-with-kids/>

<http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/content/recipes/favourites/kids-cooking/>

<http://www.homeandfamilynetwork.com/food/kids.html>

<http://www.kidspot.com.au/best-recipes/>

NATURE

The focus of the following activities is on flora and fauna.

ANIMALS

Several animal characters are represented in HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT.

Chose different animals and explore in sound and action how they would sleep, wake, yawn, travel from one place to another, collect or hunt food, eat, drink, play. Have students consider and explore how their chosen animals would move and sound if they were happy, angry, frightened, hungry, tired, etc.

How do the actions and sounds of each animal vary?

Play 'What Animal Am I?' One student uses sound and action to **represent a chosen animal**, eg. rabbit, mouse, rooster, cat, fox, bear, kangaroo, crocodile, snake, lizard, duck, monkey, elephant, seagull, puppy, etc. Students are to **guess the animal** being represented.

Alternatively, have one student come to the front of the class. Allocate or ask the student to decide on a particular animal. Have others ask the student 'yes' or 'no' questions to see if they can guess what the animal is. See if the class can do so in less than 10 questions.

Some questions to get students started:

- Do you have fur?
- Do you have 4 legs?
- Can you fly?
- Can you swim?
- Are you bigger than ... ?
- Are you smaller than ... ?
- etc.

Extension activities: Make masks and/or costumes for chosen animals; create a parade, or stories, or plays that involve animal characters.

These activities could lead to research and study pertaining to animal care, safety, cruelty, danger, etc.

MR. MCGREGOR'S GARDEN

In THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT, Peter explores Mr. McGregor's garden.

List with students what things one might find in Mr. McGregor's garden. Divide these into categories, such as flowers, food, tools, animals.

Create a model of Mr. McGregor's garden, or plan and **plant a real garden** in the school grounds. Students may wish to include a scarecrow wearing Peter's lost shoe/s and blue jacket.

If a real garden is planted, **cook a simple soup or vegetable dish from garden produce** for a special school lunch. Write up and/or illustrate the recipe.

THEATRE

The focus of the following activities is on theatre craft, creation, production, review and appreciation.

REVIEW

Have students discuss the following by way of reviewing HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT:

- Which part of HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT did you like best? Why?
- Why do you think Beatrix Potter wrote *'The Tale of Peter Rabbit'*?
- What messages does HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT give us? (eg. about friendship, listening to one's parents, danger, getting along with others).
- Comment on the skills of the performers in HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT. How long do you think it would have taken the performers to remember their lines and actions?
- What did you like about the costumes, sets, music, dancing and/or singing in HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT?
- Were there any parts of the show that you did not like? Why?
- Compare HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT with other live performances you may have experienced.
- Give HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT a mark out of 10. Explain why you gave the performance the mark that you did.

COSTUME DESIGN

Inform students that characters in HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT include Peter Rabbit and his family (Old Mrs. Rabbit, Benjamin Bunny, Benjamin's father, Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail, and Benjamin and Flopsy's baby rabbits), Mr. McGregor, Mr. Tod, Tommy Brock, and also Beatrix Potter (the writer of the tales). Where possible compare how these characters are illustrated in the books with how they appeared in the live show.

Have students **design costumes** (or puppets) to represent each of the characters of another well-known children's story. Have students construct their costumes/puppets and show or model these to the class.

Students can **create performances** featuring their costumes/puppets.

Alternatively, students can *re-design* and create costumes for characters in HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT.

CHARACTERISATION

Ask each student to choose a character from a children's storybook that they know. Their challenge is to embody their chosen character. Encourage students to explore ways in which their character might sleep, drink, eat, walk, greet others, etc. In developing their characters, have students pay attention to how their posture, movement style, expression, breathing and voice may reflect their character's personality. (Using hats, props, fabric, costume items may be an option).

Have individual students perform short actions as their chosen character, eg. playing with a pet, trying to hide/look for something, eating a meal, etc. View these and comment on the character being portrayed. What is their age, size, disposition, temperament, etc. See if students can **guess which storybook character is being portrayed**. Hints may be supplied.

Extension:

Ask students to consider the kinds of situations their characters may find themselves in. Have students work in pairs and create conversations or interactions that could occur between their characters.

RADIO PLAY

Create a sound recording (radio play) version of *'The Tale of Peter Rabbit'* by Beatrix Potter.

To ensure that all students are involved in the recording, include and allocate recording responsibilities to each student; narrative voices, characters' voices, sound effects, background music, bridging music between scenes, as well as sound recording operator/s.

Rehearse and record the radio play.

SONGS

The characters in HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT sing and dance.

Working individually or in small groups, have students choose characters from other children's stories, and **make up simple songs and dances** for them to sing and/or dance that would enhance or advance their story were it to be turned into a musical piece of theatre. Songs can be made up using original or existing tunes. Practice, and perform/record songs.

STAGED FIGHTS

Where students have seen HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT, have students discuss why a fight choreographer may have been required to help stage and rehearse the slow motion fight sequence between Tommy Brock and Mr. Tod. Encourage students to consider issues of safety in this discussion.

Have students work in groups of three: two performers and one fight choreographer/director. Under the guidance of the fight choreographer, have groups **choreograph a slow-motion fight sequence** between two performers who might be human, animal or fantasy figures (eg. possums, snakes, sword-fish, knights, super-powers, extra-terrestrial beings).

View these fights. Discuss what worked and identify how they might be improved. Re-work the fights to incorporate sound. Where fights were performed safely and with precision, they can be sped up to a faster pace.

Where pairs performed safely and with precision, try choreographing fights with more than two combatants. Always begin working sequences in slow motion.

Music may be used for impact and also to help performers keep in time.

Students can create acted scenes that lead to and incorporate their choreographed fight sequences.

It may also be useful to discuss when and how conflict can be resolved in non-violent ways, eg. how Mr. Tod and Tommy Brock might have learned to get along.

STORY TO STAGE

Where students have seen HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER RABBIT, discuss what was involved in transforming *'The Tale of Peter Rabbit'* by Beatrix Potter into a live show.

Where students have experienced both the play and the book, identify differences between the two.

List and discuss other books that were turned into plays, ballets, films and/or cartoons, eg. *'Possum Magic'*, *'Wombat Stew'*, *'The Magic Faraway Tree'*, *'Harry Potter'*, *'The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe'*, *'The Little Mermaid'*, *'Sleeping Beauty'*, *'The Princess and the Frog'*, etc. Have students discuss which versions they like best and why.

Working as a full class (or in smaller groups) **transform a selected story** (well known or original) **from written form to theatrical form**. The production may include costumes, props, sets, posters, dances, songs, music, and sound effects.

PETER RABBIT WORDSEARCH

Look for the list of words on the grid and circle them

P	E	T	E	R	G
G	R	E	Y	A	A
A	P	A	T	B	R
T	L	X	O	B	D
E	A	T	P	I	E
Q	Y	C	A	T	N

RABBIT
PETER
CAT
GARDEN
GATE

EAT
PLAY
PIE
PET
BIT

ATE
TEA
GREY
PAT
TOP