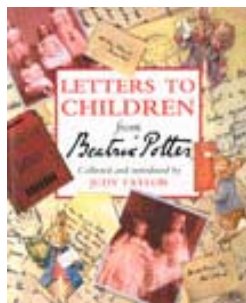


Beatrix Potter's "Little Letters"



Beatrix Potter is famous for her charming "little books" for children. But her writing for children includes more than just books.

She wrote a great many delightful letters, as well, replying to the many letters that children wrote to her from all over the world, often enclosing their own drawings, or sending presents.

These have been collected for us by **Judy Taylor**, Potter's British biographer, in a wonderful volume called **Letters to Children from Beatrix Potter** (Frederick Warne, 1992)

Of course, we all remember Miss Potter's most celebrated letter, written to her former governess's son: *My dear Noel—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.*

But Miss Potter also wrote other letters, often assuming the identity of her

storybook characters. Here is an imaginary exchange between Mrs. Josephine Rabbit (Peter's mother) and Mrs. Tiggy Winkle, the laundress.

Mrs. Tiggy Winkle
Cat Bells

Dear Madam,

Though unwilling to hurt the feelings of another widow, I really cannot any longer put up with *starch* in my pocket handkerchiefs. I am sending this one back to you, to be washed again. Unless the washing improves next week I shall (reluctantly) feel obliged to change my laundry.

Yrs. truly,
Josephine Rabbit

Mrs. Rabbit
Sand Bank
Under Fir-Tree

If you pleas'm.

Indeed I apologize sincerely for the starchiness & hope you will forgive me if you please mum, indeed it is Tom Titmouse and the rest of them; they do want their collar that *starchy* if you please mum my mind do get mixed up. If you please I will wash the clothes without charge

for a fortnight if you will give another trial to your obedient servant & washerwoman

Tiggy Winkle

Mrs. Tiggy Winkle
Cat Bells

Dear Mrs. Tiggy Winkle,

I am much pleased with the getting-up of the children's muslin frocks. Your explanation about the starch is perfectly satisfactory & I have no intention of changing my laundry at present. Nobody washes flannels like Mrs. Tiggy Winkle.

With kind regards,
Yrs. Truly,
Josephine Rabbit

There are a great many more "little letters" like these in Judy Taylor's charming volume, some of them illustrated with Miss Potter's pencil and watercolor illustrations. Also included are photographs of the miniature letters; each one, folded, becomes its own envelope, sometimes with a tiny stamp drawn in red crayon. Judy Taylor builds the collection around the stories of the children who received the letters, together with their photographs, so that we can read Miss Potter's letters in the context of the children whose lives were touched by her work.

The dumplings had been peeled off Tom Kitten, and made separately into a bag pudding, with currants in it to hide the smuts.

The Roly-Poly Pudding
By Beatrix Potter
1907

How to Make Roly-Poly Pudding

6 ounces of flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
4 ounces of sultanas or raisins
3 ounces of butter
Water

Sift flour and baking powder. Cut the butter into the flour until the butter is in pea-sized bits. Mix in the sultanas or raisins. Add water to make a paste stiff enough to roll out. On a floured board, roll to a 9x11" rectangle. Fold over. Put into a pudding or bag or roll in foil, sealing the edges well. Boil for about one hour.