

**chicago  
children's  
theatre**

# **BEATRIX POTTER AND FRIENDS STUDY GUIDE & ACTIVITY BOOK**

**Recommended for Grades Pre-K - 3**

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**JACQUELINE RUSSELL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

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**Based on the stories by Beatrix Potter  
Created by Will Bishop, Lara Carling, Kay  
Kron, Grace Needlman, and Ray Rehberg  
Directed by Will Bishop  
Co-Directed by Lara Carling  
Music Composed by Ray Rehberg and  
Charlie Malave  
Puppets Designed and Built by Grace  
Needlman**





## ABOUT CCT'S BEATRIX POTTER AND FRIENDS

Thank you for bringing your classroom or family to Chicago Children's Theatre's production of BEATRIX POTTER AND FRIENDS. Enjoy four classic Beatrix Potter stories, including the "The Tale of Peter Rabbit", "The Tale of Tom Kitten", "The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin", and "The Tailor of Gloucester", told with handmade puppets and original music. This study guide is intended to enrich your students' enjoyment of the production, while providing the opportunity to gain social-emotional learning skills from these timeless tales. We hope you enjoy all games and activities in this book.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To identify emotions and practice acting on empathy.
- To practice emotional regulation tactics when things don't go as planned.
- To explore why we sometimes experience a change of heart.
- To reflect on choices and consequences.
- To celebrate how made-up stories can help us be thoughtful about our real lives.
- To create our own adventure stories as a classroom community.

# THE TALE OF TOM KITTEN

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This story is about three kittens whose mom, Tabitha the cat, is having a very important tea party with other kitty friends. Tabitha dresses each kitten with the most beautiful clothes, and asks the kittens to please behave and use their manners to make sure the clothes are spotless for when their guests arrive. Tom Kitten, one of the three kittens, leads their siblings into a day of mischief and fun. They run into three ducks that help them in doing so, ultimately resulting in the three kittens losing their perfect clothes and upsetting their mom.



## QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Briefly discuss moments and images students remember from the play. Include the following questions:

- What important event was Tabitha the mom preparing for? How were some ways she got the Kittens ready?
- Have you ever had to dress up for an important event in your life? Did you stay clean or did you get your clothes dirty when you were not supposed to?
- What is a time-out? Have you ever been in a time-out? What did you learn when you were in a time-out?

## GAME:

**POISED CAT VS. CRAZY CAT:** In the Tale of Tom Kitten we saw how the three kittens were dressed up by their mom for an important tea party. Encourage your student to portray what a poised and behaved kitten would look like vs. what a crazy and playful kitten would look like. First allow your student to explore what a cat moves like; how does its tail move? Are all four paws on the ground? What sounds does a cat make when it is happy? What sounds does a cat make when it is sad? After practicing to be a cat, tell your student to "put imaginary fancy clothes on" and pretend to be an elegant kitten on its way to a tea-party. Does it walk on two paws instead of four? Does it move differently than a normal cat? Now tell your student to "loosen up" their imaginary clothes and pretend to be a crazy cat. Give them thirty seconds to a minute to run around and have fun. Ask them about the differences between the three ways they portrayed a cat. Which of the three ways did they like the most?

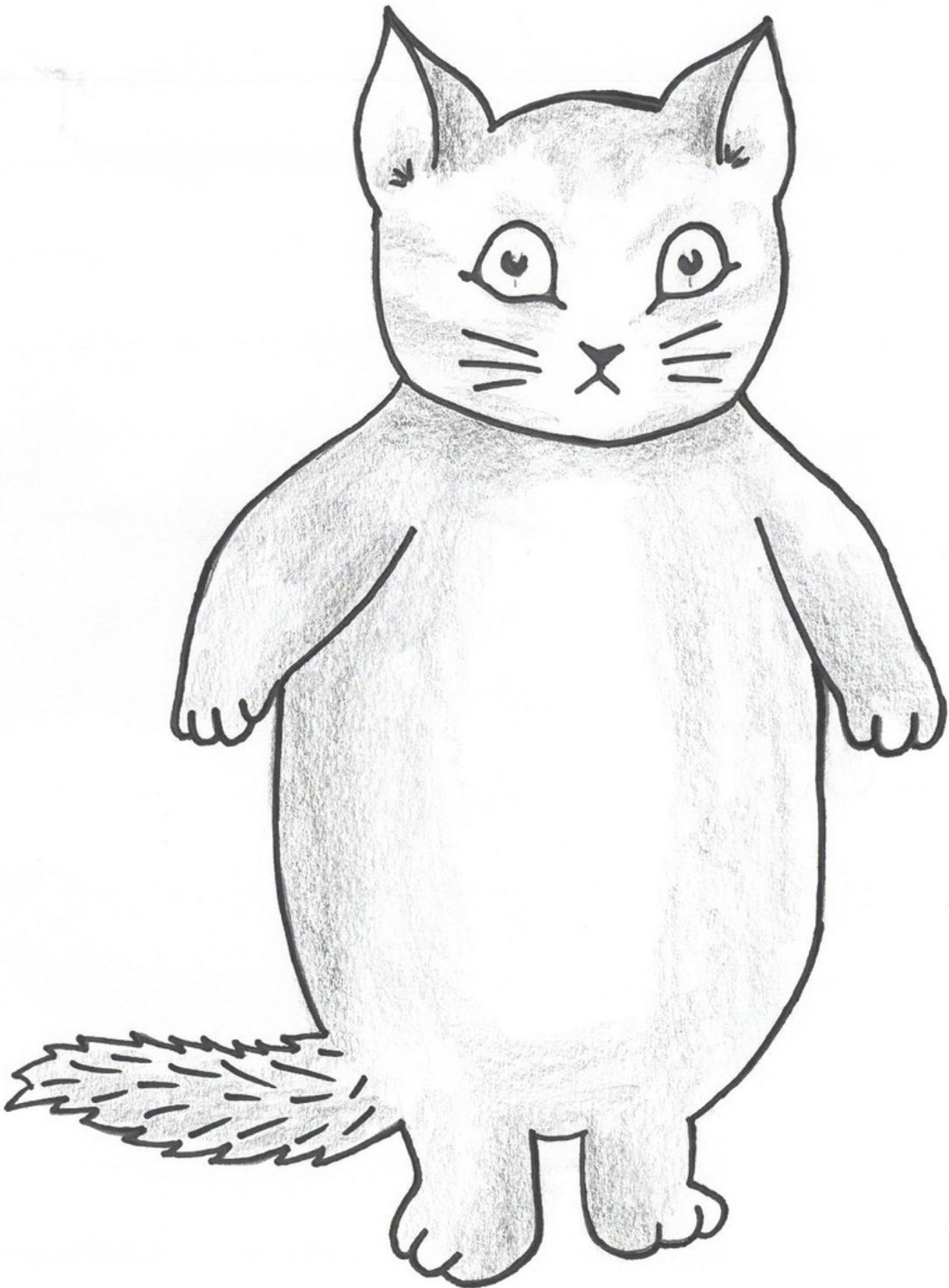


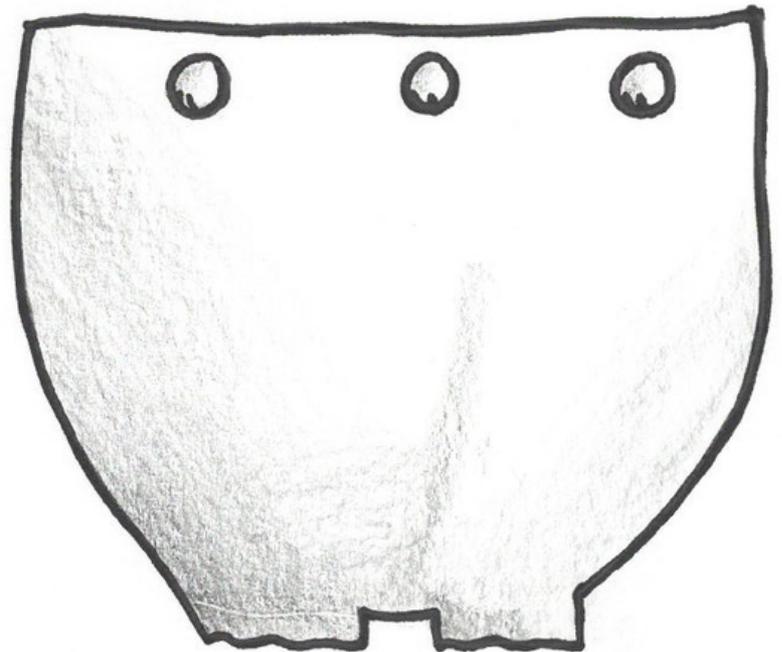
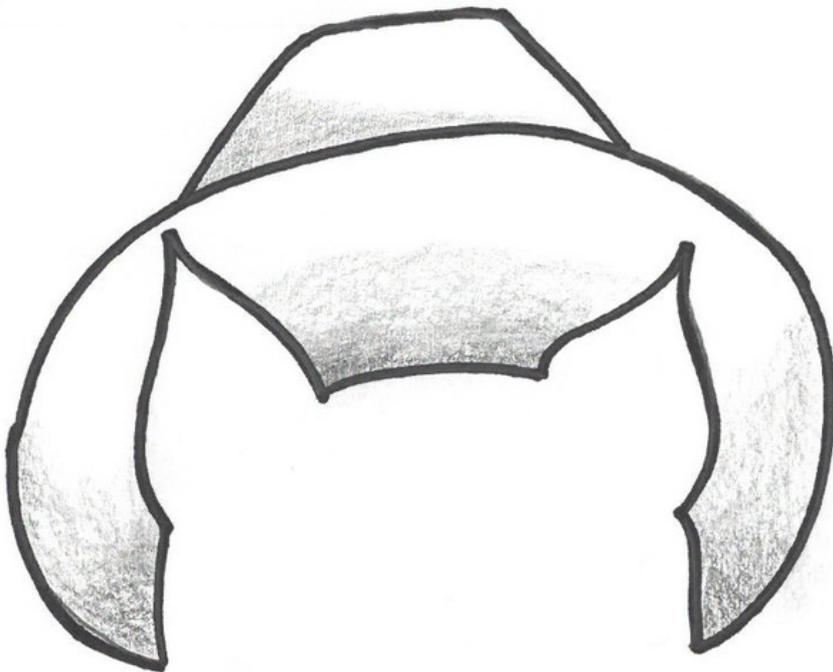
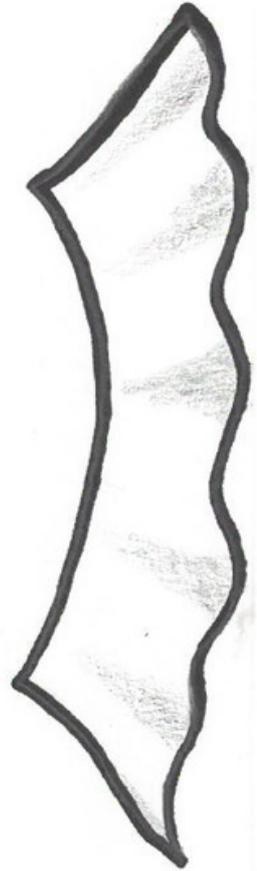
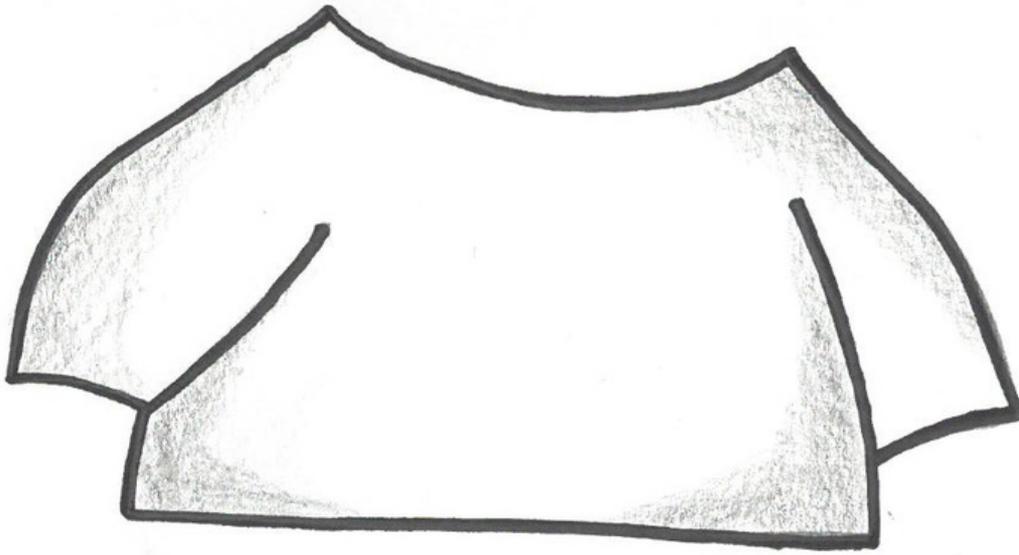
## ACTIVITY:

**DRESS UP THE KITTEN:** Can you help Tabitha the mom to dress up Tom Kitten? Use the coloring pages on the following page to color Tom Kitten's clothes in your favorite colors! Cut out each article of clothing and place them on top of Tom Kitten. Have fun and change it up every time!

# HELP TABITHA DRESS TOM KITTEN

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# THE TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER LESSON PLAN

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This story is about a cat who learns to work cooperatively with a group of mice after first acting out impulsively. This story introduces the experience of having a change of heart based on the feelings or actions of others.



## GAME:

**MEOW EMOTIONS:** In the story, Simpkin goes through a lot of emotions. Using only vocal expression, the actor Felix Mayes helps the audience understand how Simpkin is feeling. Lead the class to make their own cat noises together. Ask: What does a cat sound like when it's angry? When it's hungry? When it's calm and happy? When it's chasing a mouse? When it's scared?

## ACTIVITY:

**CHANGE OF HEART:** Ask the students to draw Simpkin's heart before and after he decided to help the mice. What has changed?



## QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Briefly discuss moments and images students remember from the play. Include the following questions:

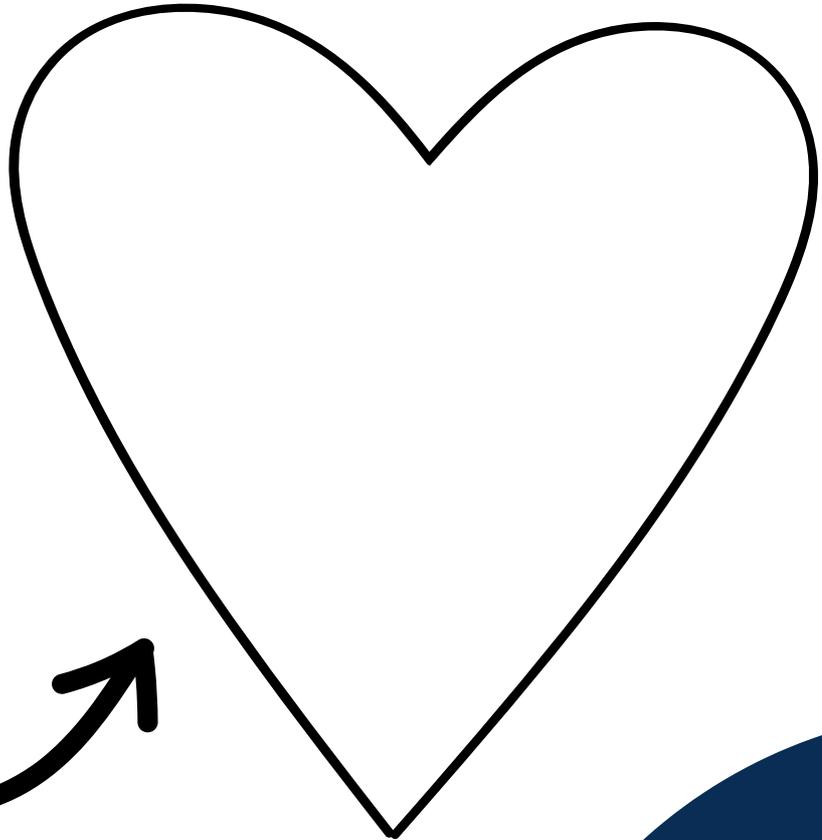
- At the beginning of the story, how did Simpkin feel about the mice? How could you tell?
- Why did Simpkin hide the thread?
- What was Simpkin's "big aha" moment? How did it change the way he felt about the mice? How did it change his actions?
- If this story continued and there was a "Simpkin Part 2," what do you think would happen now that the characters are friends?



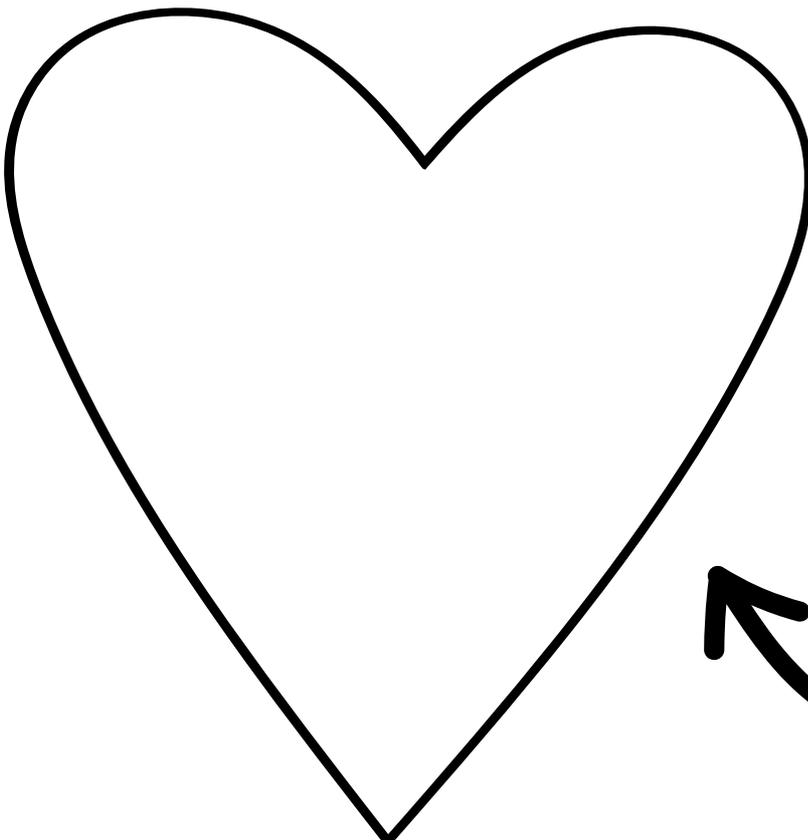
# SIMPKIN'S CHANGE OF HEART

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WHAT DID  
SIMPKIN'S  
HEART LOOK  
LIKE WHILE  
HE WAS  
ANGRY WITH  
THE TAILOR?



WHAT DID  
SIMPKIN'S HEART  
LOOK LIKE  
AFTER  
REGRETTED  
HIDING THE  
TAILOR'S  
THREAD?



# THE TALE OF SQUIRREL NUTKIN

This story is about a Squirrel named Nutkin, who barely escapes from an Owl named Old Brown. Nutkin and his friends go to Old Owl's tree every autumn to pick up some nuts each day. The naughty red Squirrel Nutkin has found joyous mischief from bothering Old Brown by saying riddles to him. With great patience, the Owl ignores Squirrel Nutkin over the days. However, there came a day where Old Brown could not stand it anymore; giving Squirrel Nutkin the fright of his life!

## QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Briefly discuss moments and images students remember from the play. Include the following questions:

- What was Old Brown allowing the squirrels to do that was very important to them?
- Do you think Squirrel Nutkin was being disrespectful to Old Brown? In what ways was Squirrel Nutkin disrespectful?
- Do you think the other squirrels should have stopped Squirrel Nutkin from being mischievous?



## GAME:

CAN YOU SOLVE THE FOLLOWING RIDDLE?

"Hum-a-bum! Buzz! Buzz! Hum-a-bum buzz!  
As I went over Tipple-tine  
I met a flock of bonny swine;  
Some yellow-nacked, some  
yellow backed!  
They were the very bonniest  
swine  
That e'er went over the  
Tipple-tine."

ANSWER: A Bee!

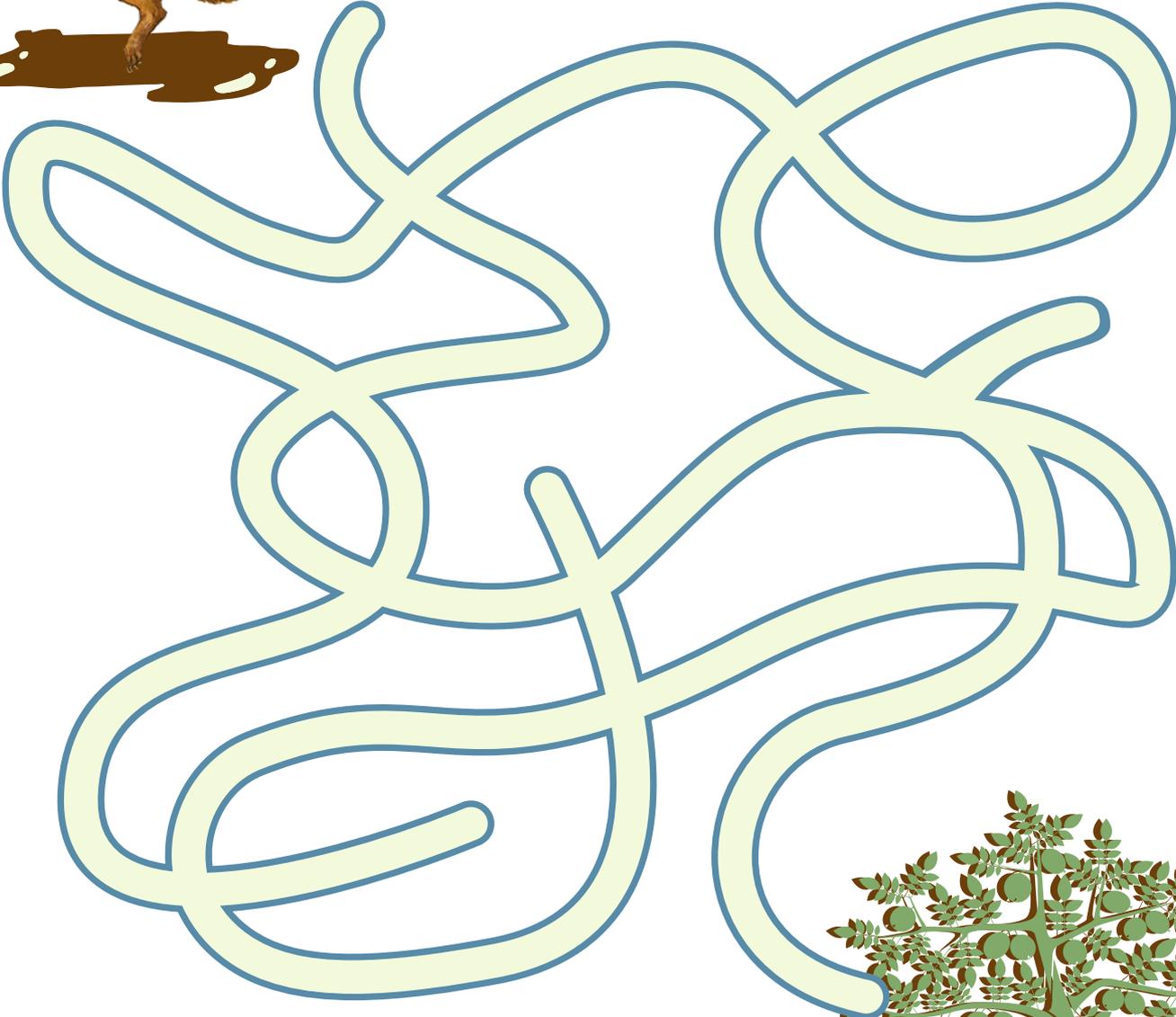


## ACTIVITY:

**HELP SQUIRREL NUTKIN REACH THE OWL:** In the Tale of Squirrel Nutkin, we learn that the Owl's tree is in the middle of a lake. Can you help him find his way through the waves and stones? Draw a line from the starting point all the way to Old Brown.

# HELP SQUIRREL NUTKIN REACH THE OWL

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# THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT

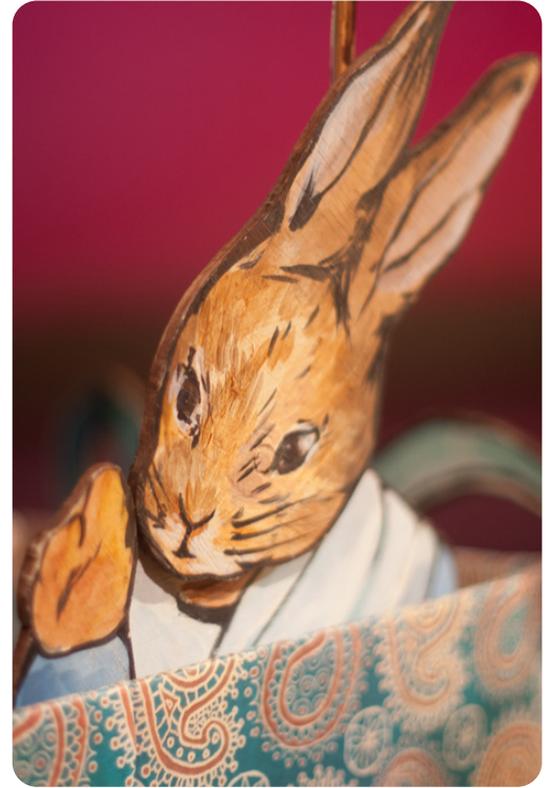
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This story is about a rabbit who disobeys his mother by going into a farmer's garden. He is chased by the farmer and gets lost, but is eventually able to find his way back home. This story helps us consider that in real life, choices have consequences, and that made-up stories give us the opportunity to experience danger in a safe way.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

Briefly discuss moments and images students remember from the play. Include the following questions:

- What did Peter's mother tell him not to do? What consequences did Peter face for choosing to break the rules?
- Why did Peter's mother tell him to stay away from the garden?
- How do you think Peter's mother and sisters felt while Peter was missing, waiting for him to come home?



## GAMES

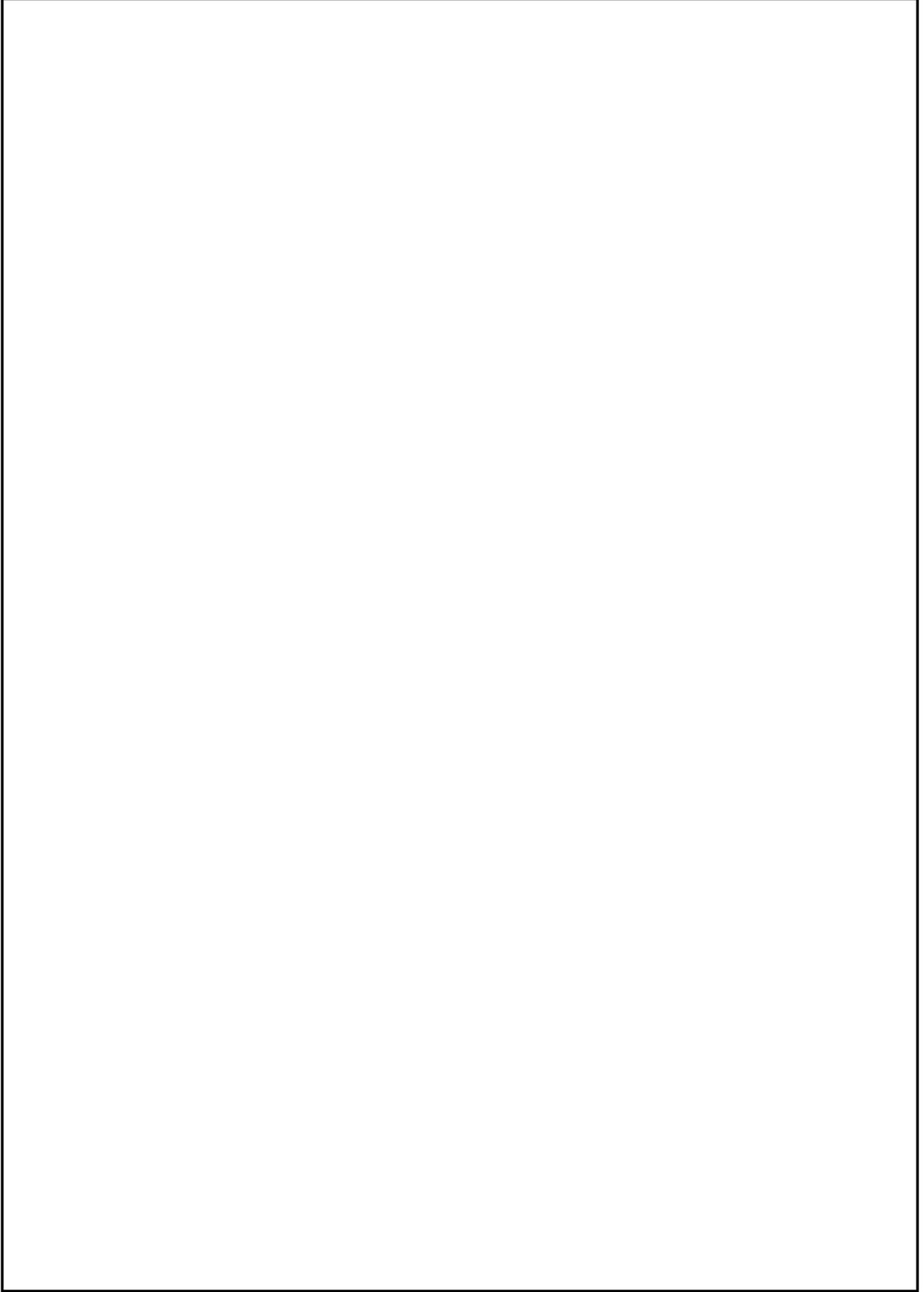
**INVISIBLE ADVENTURE:** For this game, everyone stands in place and performs the actions of a made up adventure as it unfolds. Instruct everyone to stand up and put on their invisible super hero gear. Tell them they're on a quest for something valuable and let them suggest what it is. Tell them that this valuable object is far away, across oceans, mountains, deserts, and possibly space. Tell them a forest has just grown up around them. Model running in place and have the students do the same. Say, "Alright, we're almost out of the forest, but I think I see an ocean coming up ahead, how are we going to get across the ocean?" Take a suggestion from one of the students and model the action they suggest. Once you get across the ocean, pick the next type of obstacle or landscape the class must traverse. Repeat until you're ready to find the object, at which point, find it!

## ACTIVITY

**PUPPET BUILD:** CCT's BEATRIX POTTER AND FRIENDS features many handmade puppets. We can make our own puppets and backdrops out of paper (see image right). As individuals or in groups, have the kids create a paper 'backdrop' with an exciting location we saw in the play today, and an animal puppet version of themselves. If you were an animal from the Potter stories, which one would you be? Encourage each student to think of a single line or action for their puppet to say or do in the chosen location.



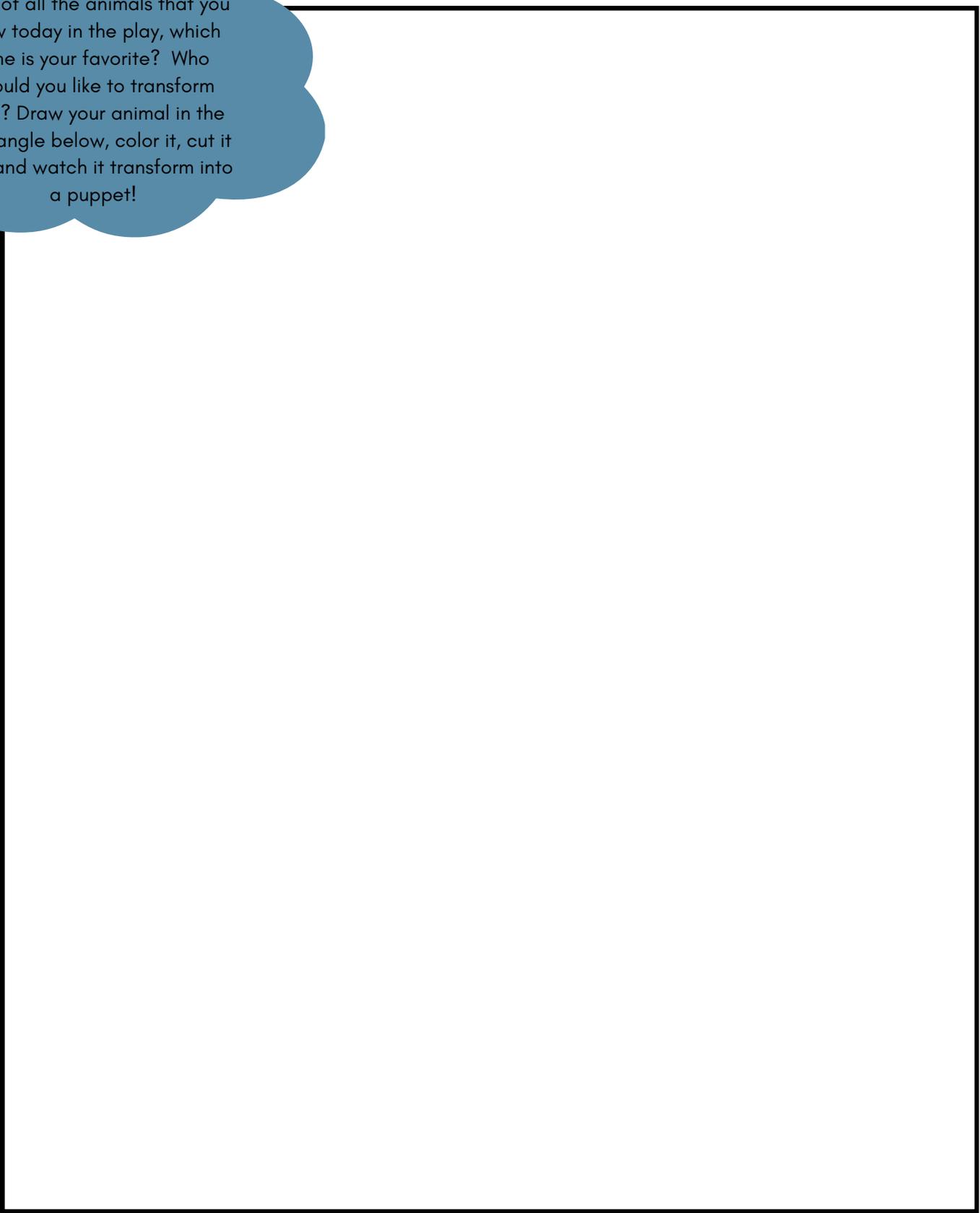
**USE THIS SPACE TO CREATE A PAPER BACKDROP**



# WHAT WOULD YOU LOOK LIKE AS AN ANIMAL FROM THE POTTER STORIES?

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Out of all the animals that you saw today in the play, which one is your favorite? Who would you like to transform into? Draw your animal in the rectangle below, color it, cut it out and watch it transform into a puppet!



# EXTRA GOODIES

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## VOCAB YOGA

### THE TALE OF TOM KITTEN

**Pinafore** – A sleeveless apron-like garment worn over a young girl's dress, typically having ties or buttons at the back.

**Tucker**– A piece of lace or linen worn in or around the top of a bodice or as an insert at the front of a low-cut dress.

**Smear** – A coat or mark (something) messily or carelessly with a greasy or sticky substance

**Fern** – A flowerless plant which has feathery or leafy fronds and reproduces by spores released from the undersides of the fronds. Ferns have a vascular system for the transport of water and nutrients.

**Articles** – A particular item or object.

### THE TALE OF MR. JEREMY FISHER

**Autumn**– The third season of the year, when crops and fruits are gathered and leaves fall, in the northern hemisphere from September to November and in the southern hemisphere from March to May.

**Oar** – A pole with a flat blade, pivoting in an oar lock, used to row or steer a boat through the water.

**Bow** – A knot tied with two loops and two loose ends, used especially for tying shoelaces and decorative ribbons.

**Impertinent** – Not showing proper respect; rude

**Whir** – (especially of a machine or a bird's wings) make a low, continuous, regular sound.

**Peep** – Look quickly and furtively at something, especially through a narrow opening.

### THE TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER

**Tailor** – A person who makes and fixes clothing.

Motion: Mime sewing by hand.

Sentence: The tailor made the coat.

**Silk** – Very smooth and expensive fabric made by silk worms.

Motion: Slide your hand down your arm as if feeling a smooth silk sleeve.

Sentence: They felt very fancy in their silk clothes.

**Furious** – Extremely angry.

Motion: Shake clenched fists up and down.

Sentence: I was furious when recess ended early.

**Sparrow** – A kind of bird.

Motion: Flap your hands like little wings.

Sentence: The sparrows chirp every morning.

**Guilty** – Feeling bad after doing something wrong.

Motion: Hunch your shoulders.

Sentence: He felt guilty for being mean to his friend.

### THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT

**Frightened** – Very afraid.

Motion: Crouch down and shake with an exaggerated fearful facial expression.

Sentence: I was frightened by the storm.

**Unfortunate** – A way to describe something unlucky happening.

Motion: Point both thumbs down.

Sentence: It was unfortunate the store closed before we got there.

**Tremble** – Shake with fear or nervousness.

Motion: Cross your arms in front of you and tremble.

Sentence: I trembled with fright.

**Suddenly** – When something happens quickly without warning.

Motion: Mime a quick "surprised" face.

Sentence: Suddenly, he saw the gate.

**Brew** – To prepare tea or coffee by mixing it with hot water.

Motion: Mime pouring liquid into a cup and sipping it.

Sentence: It smells so good when my dad brews coffee.

# EXTRA GOODIES CONT.

## BEATRIX POTTER FUN FACTS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Beatrix Potter based her characters on animals she kept as pets. The "real" Peter was a rabbit named Peter Piper. Beatrix Potter loved her pet rabbit Peter, and he went everywhere with her for nine years. She even took Peter for walks on a leash! In her schoolroom at home she had rabbits, hedgehogs, frogs, mice, and even a bat! **What's your favorite animal?**

Beatrix Potter originally wrote "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" as an illustrated letter to her friend's son Noel, who was ill at the time, and needed some cheering up! It had lots of pictures of rabbits. **What's your favorite thing to draw?**

Beatrix Potter published her first book, "The Tale of Peter Rabbit," all on her own when she was 36 years old. **What's your favorite book?**

Beatrix Potter was an artist and a scientist, drawing and studying the world around her. She wrote a scientific paper on fungi (mushrooms), proposing her own theory on how they reproduce, which was presented on her behalf at the Linnean Society, which at the time did not allow women at their meetings. Mushrooms are delicious. **What's your favorite food?**

In 1903, Potter designed and created the very first Peter Rabbit doll. She sewed the doll using cotton fabric and used brush bristles for whiskers. **Do you like to make things?**

In CCT's BEATRIX POTTER AND FRIENDS, Ray Rehberg, our composer, plays 3 instruments. **Do you play an instrument? If not, what would you like to play?**

When Beatrix Potter was a little girl, games like jump rope, marbles, yo-yos, follow the leader, and tug of war were popular. **Do you have a favorite game or sport?**

Beatrix Potter was an award-winning sheep farmer and in 1943 was the first woman elected President of the Herdwick Sheep Breeders' Association. A sheep could be a nice pet. **What kind of pet would you like if you could have any creature, real or imaginary?**



## JOKES

What sports do cats play? Hairball.

What kind of shoes do mice wear? Squeakers.

Why are frogs so happy? They eat whatever bugs them!

What kind of books do rabbits like to read? Stories with hoppy endings!

What do you get when you cross a frog and a bunny? A ribbit!

What kind of music do bunnies like? Hip Hop!

How do you know carrots are good for your eyes? Because you never see rabbits wearing glasses!

**STUDY GUIDE CREATED BY KAY KRON, ELIJA EILER, AND MARIA CLARA OSPINA**

**THANK YOU AGAIN FOR BRINGING YOUR CLASS OR FAMILY TO CHICAGO CHILDREN'S THEATRE'S PRODUCTION OF BEATRIX AND FRIENDS! WE HOPE YOU ARE ABLE TO CREATE BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES THAT WILL LAST A LIFETIME!**