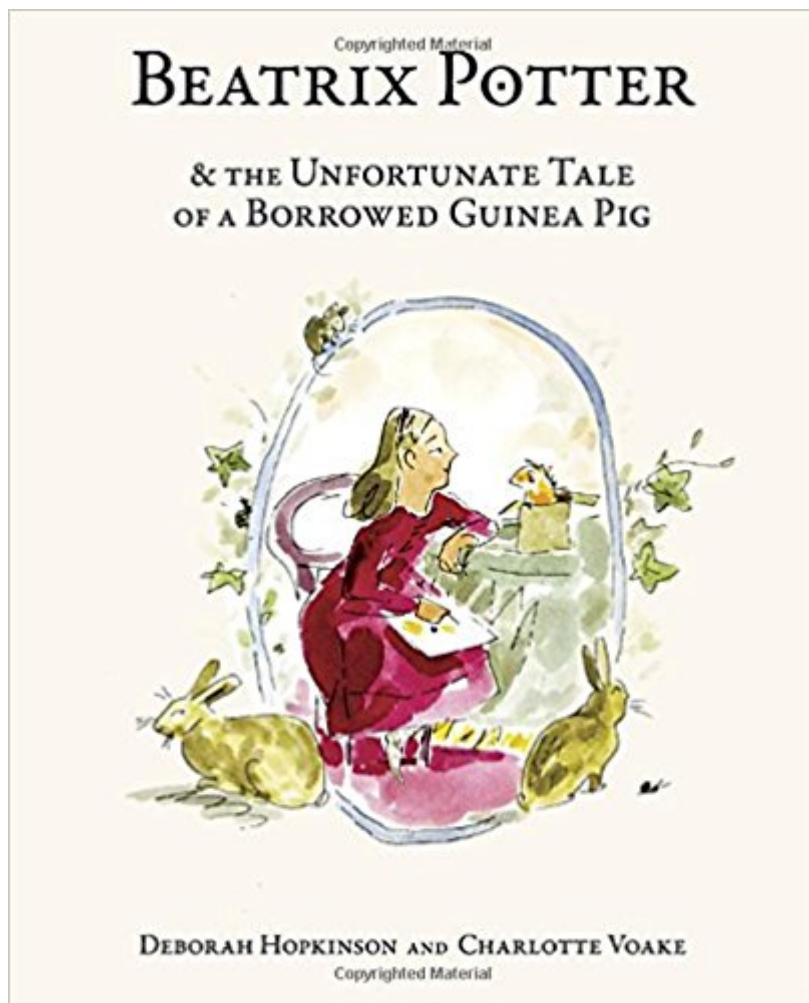




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Beatrix Potter And The Unfortunate Tale Of A Borrowed Guinea Pig



Synopsis

Published in time for the 150th anniversary of her birth, this story stars a young Beatrix Potter, creator of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and many other classic children's books. Master of the historical fiction picture book, Hopkinson takes readers back to Victorian England and the home of budding young artist and animal lover Beatrix Potter. When Beatrix brings home her neighbor's pet guinea pig so that she can practice painting it, well . . . it dies! Now what? Written in the form of a "picture letter," this charming, hilarious, and mostly true tale is a wonderful introduction to a beloved author/illustrator. An author's note includes photographs and more information about Beatrix Potter's life and work. "A charming, delightful homage." —Kirkus Reviews, Starred

Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD840L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 44 pages

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Language: English

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

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Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

"The use of invented dialogue makes this problematic as straight biography, but it is nevertheless a charming, delightful homage." —Kirkus Reviews, starred review

Deborah Hopkinson is the author of many highly acclaimed picture books, including *Annie and Helen*; *A Boy Called Dickens*; *Sky Boys: How They Built the Empire State Building*, a Boston

GlobeÆœHorn Book Honor Book; and Abe Lincoln Crosses a Creek: A Tall, Thin Tale, an ALA-ALSC Notable ChildrenÆœs Book. She lives in Oregon with her family. Visit her at deborahhopkinson.com. Æ Charlotte Voake has written and illustrated numerous picture books, among them Ginger and its prequel, Ginger Finds a Home. Her other titles include Tweedle Dee Dee and Hello Twins, a New York Times Best Illustrated ChildrenÆœs Book of the Year. She lives and works in the UK.

What a horrible story. Whilst the illustrations are beautiful, the story has no story at all but rather the tale of how Beatrix Potter has killed snails, how a bird ripped apart a bat and how it's ok to kill someone's pet if you become famous later. Not a bed time story at all. This is the stuff nightmares are made of.

In this delightful romp, the early life of Beatrix Potter, author and illustrator of the beloved *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, comes to life through beautiful watercolor illustrations and very Potter-esque prose in *Beatrix Potter & the Unfortunate Tale of a Borrowed Guinea Pig*. We are introduced to Beatrix Potter and her menagerie of pets when she is a young girl whose writing and drawing skills are blossoming. When she asks her next-door neighbor to borrow a guinea pig for a model, Miss Paget is most flattered when she chooses the most regal of her pigs, ÆfÆ Queen ElizabethÆ. With a promise to return Queen Elizabeth unharmed in the morning, Beatrix sets off to paint one of her most famous pieces of art. Disaster strikes when Beatrix gets distracted from her work and the young girl must break the news to her kindly neighbor. The tale comes to a close with a cheeky reminder to readers of what to do if you lend out a pet (youÆœll have to read the book to read the authorÆœs advice). *Beatrix Potter & the Unfortunate Tale of a Borrowed Guinea Pig* is written by Deborah Hopkinson who chose to write in a style similar to Beatrix Potter, known for developing ideas for stories from picture letters. The story itself contains some snippets of information about Beatrix PotterÆœs early life. While it is never explicitly mentioned, the author cleverly drops hints as to Ms. PotterÆœs privileged background. We learn that Beatrix Potter had an unusual menagerie of pets (including lizards, snakes, rabbits, hedgehogs, ducks, and birds) who often meet with tragic endings. You can imagine the fate of the guinea pig, IÆœm sure. At the back of the book, the reader is treated to the story behind a painting of a guinea pig by Beatrix Potter which sold for \$85,000 in 2011. The watercolor illustrations by Charlotte Voake are inspired by Beatrix PotterÆœs own style and are the highlight of the book. The

combination of full-page scenes depicting life at 2 Bolton Gardens in London, as well as the smaller pictures of Ms. Potter's many animals, and the re-creations of the picture letters illustrated by Potter herself really help to bring the story alive. Worthy of mention are the sturdy book cover and thick, tear-resistant pages making the book itself likely to withstand repeated page-turning. I must admit that I have mixed feelings about the book. Overall, I really enjoyed the presentation of the book (i.e., the gorgeous illustrations) and the writing style of the book as well as the story itself, but after reading the P.S. (Author's Note), I was disappointed. You see, the author changed Potter's age from 26 to perhaps around 10 (I don't believe her age is mentioned in the story). That really changed things for me. I can understand that the intent was to tell the (mostly true) story about this famous painting which sold for \$85,000 but when I read that she actually wasn't a little girl but a grown woman well I went "Oh." I felt misled. If I was reading the book to a child, I would just read the story and not share that piece of information with them. My Bottom Line: Overall, *Beatrix Potter & the Unfortunate Tale of a Borrowed Guinea Pig* is a light-hearted, whimsy-filled story using Beatrix Potter's classic story-telling prose and realist style of watercolor painting to capture the imagination of young readers. I recommend this book for children ages 5 to 10 and I think it would make a great read-aloud book for classroom teachers or school librarians.* This book was provided to me by the publisher in exchange for my honest review. All opinions expressed are my own. *

I enjoyed the matter-of-fact way young Beatrix's life in late 1800's London is portrayed. The reader meets a young girl walking rabbits on a leash and bringing a huge menagerie of wild animals into the house with apparently no adult intervention or repercussions. The pages reproduced from her diary (in translated form) are interwoven seamlessly, propelling the story to the main event. Her picture diaries bring to mind today's books such as *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Timmy Failure* and may serve to inspire a new generation of writer/artists. While, thankfully, I never killed any of my pets, the reality of such accidents feels realistic and sympathetic. But then I read the Author's Note. It is documented that Potter drew watercolors of guinea pigs around the time that this story is envisioned. However, Potter was 26 years old at the time, not a child. I had pictured a child's mistake as just that, a forgivable mistake borne of responding to her parents' call. The same actions committed by a 26-year old woman? Not as humorous. Would I have the same reaction if the author chose to focus on the death of the bat or family of snails Potter was also responsible for? Perhaps not. But thinking more and more on this plot point, I've decided that it is a great talking point for

children. Note: I received a review copy from Random House in exchange for my honest review. No other compensation was received. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

Summary: Told as a story letter (in a style similar to one Beatrix Potter used to use, this tale features a young Beatrix. Not surprisingly, she enjoyed keeping numerous pets, and even borrowing others pets, mostly for the purpose of drawing and painting them. She could be careless, though, and on one occasion, she forgot about a borrowed guinea pig, who proceeded to eat up most of her art supplies. Unfortunately, these proved fatal for the cute little animal, and Beatrix was forced to go confess her mistake. In an attempt at compensation, Miss Potter offered a watercolor drawing of the guinea pig, which was not received too graciously. Although the story is about a young girl, the author's note reveals that this incident happened when Beatrix Potter was 26 years old. **Pros:** This humorous tale includes quite a bit of historical information about Beatrix Potter's life and how she got her start writing and illustrating her famous books. The watercolor illustrations are clearly inspired by the Potter books. **Cons:** The whole killing the guinea pig thing is a little less of a chuckle when one finds out it was committed by a 26-year-old woman.

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