



## The Tale of Peter Rabbit: 2nd Grade Book Guide

by Beatrix Potter

### Book Summary

Peter Rabbit doesn't listen to his mother's warning and gets himself into deep trouble! How will he escape Mr. MacGregor's garden?

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### Skills Focus [Back to Contents](#)

#### **LC.VR.c.2.2G:**

Makes predictions/hypotheses and makes/draws conclusions.

#### **LC.V.b.2.2G:**

Understands the meanings of and uses of new expressive vocabulary.

#### **LC.VR.c.3.2G:**

Explains thinking and reasoning (i.e., the why behind their ideas, predictions/hypotheses, conclusions, and their analyses of a text).

#### **Social-Emotional Connection:**

- Self-Management
- Responsible Decision-Making

#### **Essential Question:**

- Why are gardens important?



### Teacher Overview [Back to Contents](#)

In this classic tale, Peter Rabbit goes into Mr. McGregor's garden against his mother's advice and gets himself into lots of trouble! As a result, he has to deal with the consequences of his actions. Readers will enjoy following along on Peter's mischievous adventures.

This charming story provides opportunities to discuss respect, actions and consequences, and the importance of following instruction. Invite students to consider the choices Peter made compared to the choices of his siblings and the different consequences they encountered. Highlight the multiple-meaning words featured in the text during "After You Read" discussion.

#### **Funds of Knowledge:**

- A garden is an area of land where flowers, fruits, and vegetables are grown. Flowers, fruits, and vegetables are planted or placed in the ground to grow. They need water, sunlight, and even rich soil—dirt with lots of nutrients for the flowers to blossom and the fruits and vegetables to grow long enough to be ready to be eaten.
- In this story, Peter the Rabbit explores Mr. McGregor's garden and finds all kinds of different vegetables being grown: lettuce, french beans, radishes, parsley, cucumbers, cabbages, potatoes, onions. There are also different fruits being grown: gooseberries (a type of berry) and currants (a type of raisin).
- A gardener is a person who works in a garden. As a gardener, Mr. McGregor does NOT like rabbits in his garden. Rabbits will eat all the vegetables and fruit they find, leaving nothing left for the person who did all the hard work of planting and gardening to harvest or take up to eat for himself.
- Mischief is playful behavior or action that is silly, and sometimes annoying. It can be less playful and more irresponsible and thoughtless, even dangerous.

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- Being naughty is when someone or something is not behaving the way they should; they are being playful, silly, even annoying. Another similar word to “being naughty” is mischievous. In this story, Peter the Rabbit’s actions, behavior, and decisions are often naughty and mischievous.
- The title of this story (*The Tale of Peter Rabbit*) contains a homophone: a word that sounds the same as another word but is spelled differently and has a different meaning. Tale spelled “t-a-l-e” means a story, the story of Peter Rabbit. But tale spelled “t.-a-i-l,” Many different types of animals have t-a-i-l-s, including rabbits. Peter the Rabbit has a white fluffy t-a-i-l. This title then is a play on words: The tale or story of Peter, the rabbit with a white, fluffy tail.



### Vocabulary [Back to Contents](#)

**Words to Teach** – The words below are relevant across the text set and are regularly used in conversational English. Providing multiple exposures to these Tier Two words will encourage students to add these words to their everyday vocabularies.

Prior to your read-aloud, review the words with students and ask them to give you a “thumbs up” when they hear the word in the story or during the read-aloud discussion. This encourages active listening and allows you to visually assess focus and understanding.

Choose 4–6 words from the following list to focus on throughout your work on this theme.

- **garden:** an area of land where flowers, fruits, and vegetables are grown
- **plant//planting:** to place something in the ground like a seed to grow
- **mischievous:** playful behavior or actions that is silly, and sometimes annoying
- **naughty:** when someone or something is not behaving the way they should; they are being playful, silly, even annoying, mischievous to
- **frighten/ed:** to scare someone and make them afraid
- **accident:** something not-so-good or even bad that happens because of a mistake or error
- **implore:** to ask someone for something that you have to have or want or need right now
- **exert:** to use a lot of strength or energy to do something that is difficult or hard
- **wonder:** to be amazed by someone or something

#### When you come across a word in a story, you should:

- **Encounter:**
  - ◇ Acknowledge that students heard the target word with a thumbs up.
  - “Good listening! You heard the word \_\_\_\_\_.”
- **Explain:**
  - ◇ Share a student-friendly definition of the word.
  - ◇ Restate the word in the context of the book.
  - “In this story, the character is *dabbling* in food by trying something new.”

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- **Extend:**

- ◇ Provide an additional example of how that word might be used.
  - “You might *dabble* in a sport or activity as you try it out to see if you like it.”
- ◇ Ask students to say the word together.

**Words to Explain** – The words below appear in the story you are about to read—it is likely that students will need a brief explanation of them in order to truly comprehend the story. As you read the story, pause at each of the words below and define it briefly, pointing out clues from the story and illustrations that help you to understand the meaning of the word.

- **tale:** another word for story
- **currant bun:** a type of bread like a roll that is small and has small seedless raisins (currants)
- **lane:** a path or very small road
- **thief:** someone that steals or takes something that does not belong to them
- **gooseberry:** a small, green fruit that grows on a bush
- **gooseberry net:** a type of net that surrounds a gooseberry plant and keeps it safe from birds and other small animals that might try to eat its fruit
- **fortnight:** 14 days; two weeks
- **camomile tea:** a type of tea that treats upset stomachs made from camomile plant (a plant with scented leaves)
- **supper:** a meal you eat in the evening; another word for dinner
- **sieve:** a tool with mesh or tiny holes on the bottom to separate coarse from fine particles of materials or matter like dirt, sand, or flour



### Before You Read [Back to Contents](#)

Invite students to begin thinking by offering them opportunities to share what they notice and wonder about the book based on the title and cover with the following prompts:

Say: Today we are going to read the story, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. As we read and discuss this story, I want you to be listening for our vocabulary words. When you hear one, I want you to give me a thumbs-up!

- What are you curious about in this picture? What do you notice or see?
- What does it look like he is doing? What do you wonder about?
- What are you curious about based on the title?
- Do rabbits usually wear clothes? What does that tell you about the type of book this is?
- Have you ever seen a real rabbit? Does Peter look the same or different from a rabbit you have seen before?
- What are some things you do outdoors? To help? To play? To build? To investigate? To imagine?
- **Essential Question:** Why are gardens important?



### As You Read [Back to Contents](#)

Read the book aloud or play the accompanying audio while projecting, pausing to think aloud, define words in the text, and ask questions by using the following prompts:

#### Page 3

- **Think Aloud:** A story element often found in fairy tales or animal stories or folktales is the phrase, “once upon a time.” It encourages the reader to enter an imaginary or made-up world. When I read “once upon a time,” in this story, it lets me know immediately that this is a fictional story. I know this story will be imaginary, fanciful, and whimsical.
- Why do you think the author Beatrix Potter begins the story with “Once upon a time?”

#### Page 4

- **Pause and Ponder:** Let’s look at this picture closely. Does it look like Peter is listening to his mother carefully? How do you know?
- **Think Aloud:** Mrs. Rabbit telling Peter and his siblings about Mr. McGregor’s garden seems very important. It might be foreshadowing. Foreshadowing is when the author gives the reader hints and clues about what will happen later in the story.
- **Words to Teach:**
  - ◇ **Encounter:** Good listening! You heard the word *garden*.
  - ◇ **Explain:** A garden is an area of land where flowers, fruits, and vegetables are grown. Peter’s mother is telling her children to stay away from Mr. McGregor’s garden.
  - ◇ **Extend:** My grandpa has a small garden where he grows tomatoes in the summer. Let’s say the word *garden* together.

#### Page 5

- **Words to Teach:**
  - ◇ **Encounter:** Good listening! You heard the word *mischief*.
  - ◇ **Explain:** Mischief is playful behavior that is silly and sometimes even annoying. It can even lead to getting into trouble! Mrs. Rabbit told the little rabbits not to get into mischief.
  - ◇ **Extend:** A little mischief is being silly when you are playing with friends. Let’s say the word *mischief* together.
- What did Mrs. Rabbit mean when she told the little rabbits not to get into mischief? What might they do to get into mischief?

#### Page 7

- **Pause and Ponder:** What do you notice about this picture? That’s right, Peter is not with his siblings gathering blackberries. Where do you think he might be? Do you think he’s going to listen to his mother and follow her directions to only go into the fields or down the lane? Why or why not?

#### Page 8

- Was your prediction correct? Did Peter listen to his mother? What do you think is going to happen when Peter sneaks into Mr. McGregor’s garden?

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### • **Words to Teach:**

- ◇ **Encounter:** Good listening! You heard the word *naughty*.
- ◇ **Explain:** Being naughty is when someone or something is not behaving the way they should. Peter is being naughty because he is going to Mr. McGregor's garden even though his mother told him not to go there.
- ◇ **Extend:** I notice that Peter is squeezing under the gate to get into the garden. That lets me know that he is being very naughty. He is going somewhere he should not be **and** not listening to his mother. Let's say *naughty* together.

### Page 9

- How do you think Mr. McGregor is going to feel when he sees Peter eating the vegetables in his garden?
- Think Aloud: I'm noticing this is the same picture from the front cover. I wonder why this illustration was repeated.
- **Pause and Ponder:** Why do you think this illustration is repeated? Why is it on the cover and in the text?

### Page 10

- **Think Aloud:** Lettuces, French beans, and radishes are types of vegetables to eat. This lets me know that Mr. McGregor's garden grows lots of different vegetables. It is a vegetable garden.
- Why do you think he was feeling sick? What in the text gives us clues that Peter is feeling sick? (e.g., *text says it; he ate so much on the previous page; he is looking down, he is holding his stomach; he is looking for parsley to treat his upset stomach*)

### Page 11

- **Pause and Ponder:** How do you think Mr. McGregor is going to react when he sees Peter Rabbit in his garden? What do you think Mr. McGregor is going to do when he sees Peter Rabbit in his garden?

### Page 12

- What is a thief? Why is Mr. McGregor calling Peter a thief? What did he take that was not his? Is Peter really a thief (someone who steals or takes something that does not belong to them)?

### Page 13

- How do you think he feels about losing his shoes? Have you ever lost anything? How did it make you feel when you lost it/them? Does Peter feel the same way or does he feel differently?
- What do you think Mrs. Rabbit will say when she finds out Peter lost both his shoes in Mr. McGregor's garden?

### Page 14

- Oh no! His blue jacket! Was the gooseberry net meant to catch buttons on coats? What is its purpose (protect gooseberry bush from birds and animals that might eat its fruit)?
- Do you think he'll be able to get out of the gooseberry net before Mr. McGregor catches him? Why or why not? What do you hope happens? Why?
- If you were Peter, what would you do to try to get out of the gooseberry net before Mr. McGregor found you?

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### Page 15

- **Words to Teach:**

- ◇ **Encounter:** Good listening! You heard the word *implore*.
- ◇ **Explain:** To implore means to ask someone or something that you have to have or want or need right now. The sparrows are wanting Peter to do something.
- ◇ **Extend:** Often if I really want something, I'll try to explain why I need it when I implore or ask for it.

- **Words to Teach:**

- ◇ **Encounter:** Great listening! You heard the word *exert*.
  - ◇ **Explain:** To exert is to use a lot of strength or energy to do something that is difficult or hard. The sparrows want Peter to exert himself.
  - ◇ **Extend:** When I'm running outside, if the weather is hot I have to exert myself to keep running.
- What does it mean that the friendly sparrows "implored him to exert himself?"
  - What did they want from Peter? What did he need to do? Do you think they were trying to be helpful? How do you know?
    - ◇ "Implored him to exert himself" means that they were urgently telling him to try and get free of the gooseberry net.

### Page 16

- **Words to Explain:** A sieve is a tool that has a mesh or tiny holes on the bottom to separate coarse from fine parts of loose matter like dirt, sand, or flour. You might use this at the beach or in a sandbox.
- **Pause and Ponder:** Do you think that was a good tool to use to catch Peter? Why or why not? Do you think Mr. McGregor could have used something better to catch Peter? What ideas do you have? What would you have used?

### Page 17

- **Pause and Ponder:** Do you think hiding in the watering can was a good place to hide? Why or why not?

### Page 18

- Do you think Mr. McGregor would have found Peter had he not sneezed? Why or why not?

### Page 19

- Do you think Mr. McGregor will catch him? Why do you think that?

### Page 20

- **Think Aloud:** I'm wondering if Mrs. Rabbit and the other little rabbits have realized that Peter is missing. I thought Mrs. Rabbit would be away from home for a long time because she had an umbrella and a cloak. I don't know for sure how much time has passed during all of Peter's adventures.
- Do you think they are out looking for him? Why or why not?

### Page 23

- It seems like Mr. McGregor gave up looking for Peter and went back to doing work in the garden. What would you have done if you were Mr. McGregor? Would you have kept looking for Peter or gone back to working in the garden? Why?

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- Do you think Peter will be able to sneak past him without getting caught? Why or why not?
- If you were to give advice to Peter at this very moment what would you tell him?

### Page 24

- Phew! Safe at last! He did it! How do you feel about Peter Rabbit being able to escape Mr. McGregor's garden?
- What do you predict will happen next? What do you think will happen next? What makes you think that?

### Page 25

- Mr. McGregor hung up Peter's little jacket and shoes as a scarecrow to frighten the blackbirds out of his garden. How do you think that will frighten the blackbirds?
- What do you think about what Mr. McGregor did with Peter's coat? Do you think Peter will try to get his coat and shoes back?

### Page 26

- **Words to Explain:** That was the second little jacket he lost in a fortnight. A fortnight is two weeks or 14 days. Peter has lost two jackets in two weeks!
- **Pause and Ponder:** Is that a lot of coats to lose in 14 days? What does that tell us about Peter? Did Mrs. Rabbit seem upset with Peter for losing it? What do you think?.
- If you were Mrs. Rabbit, what could you have asked Peter about what happened to his clothes?

### Page 27

- **Pause and Ponder:** Why do you think Peter was not feeling well that evening? Do you think he'll feel better soon or will he need more time? Why do you think that? How would feel if you were Peter and had gone through such a frightening adventure in Mr. McGregor's garden?

### Page 28

- **Words to Explain:** Supper is another word for dinner. The other rabbits had bread, milk, and blackberries as a special treat for dinner. Why did Peter not have that for supper too?.
- Do you think it was fair that Peter did not get to enjoy the delicious supper with the other little rabbits? Why or why not?
- How was not enjoying the delicious supper with the other little rabbits a consequence for (or result of) Peter's actions?



## After You Read [Back to Contents](#)

Revisit the essential question based on new context from the story, and ask comprehension questions that reveal students' understanding by using the following prompts:

- Now that we have read this story and have learned more about Peter Rabbit and his adventures in Mr. McGregor's garden, let's reflect and discuss what we have discovered.
- Why were gardens important for Peter? For Mr. McGregor? For the other animals?
- Why are gardens important to me?



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- **Essential Question:** Why are farms and gardens important?
- Why do people create and build gardens? How do people take care of gardens? Why do people take care of gardens?
- **Sentence Starter:** I like *gardens* because \_\_\_\_\_.
- **Sentence Starter:** My favorite type of *garden* is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.
- If you were a gardener—a person who creates gardens and works in them—what would you be interested in planting? How would you want to deal with mischievous rabbits like Peter?
- Do you think Peter Rabbit will return to Mr. McGregor’s garden? Why or why not?
- Was Peter being respectful toward his mother by not listening and following her instructions? Why or why not?
- What would you tell Peter about why it’s important to listen to his mother and follow directions?
- What advice would you give Peter if he asked you if he should return to Mr. McGregor’s garden? What would you tell him and why would you tell him that?
- What were some of the consequences or results Peter faced after sneaking in the garden?
- Did Flopsy, Mopsy and Cottontail make good or bad choices throughout the story? What were the consequences?
- Do you think Peter learned a lesson from his misadventures in Mr. McGregor’s garden? What do you think this story’s message is?



### Adaptations [Back to Contents](#)

These adaptations are appropriate for all students, but are especially helpful for emergent multilingual learners, students with speech challenges, and students who might be shy or hesitant to speak up in larger groups.

#### For students needing additional support:

- Offer visual representations of vocabulary words. Put the words and corresponding pictures on index cards and have them visible for children to see and refer to throughout the story: reading and discussion.
- Create a thought web of ideas with the word Gardens in the center of the web. Encourage students to share their thoughts and ideas about the following questions:
  - ◊ Why are gardens important?
  - ◊ Why do people create and build gardens?
  - ◊ How do people take care of flowers, vegetables, fruit, and other plants in gardens?
  - ◊ Why do people take care of flowers, vegetables, fruit, and other plants in gardens?
- This can be an opportunity to introduce/re-teach multiple-meaning words to students. Define homophones and tell students that some words, although pronounced the same, have different spelling and different meanings. Then, have students draw pictures to portray the multiple meanings of words. Invite them to add other examples of homophones they have seen in their reading such as, dear and deer, be and bee, bare and bear. Provide the following examples from the text:
  - ◊ An example from the book is, “tale and tail.” In the title, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, the word “tale” means an imaginary story. The homophone, tail, sounds the same but is spelled differently and has a different definition.

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- ◇ Explore with students that this could be an intentional decision by the author, Beatrix Potter, to use tale instead of story in the title. Explain how since many different types of animals have t-a-i-l-s, including rabbits. Peter the Rabbit has a white fluffy t-a-i-l, the t-al-l-e is a play on words: The tale or story of Peter, the rabbit with a white, fluffy tail.

### For students learning multiple languages:

- Offer visual representations of vocabulary words. Put the words and corresponding pictures on index cards and have them visible for children to see and refer to throughout the story: reading and discussion.
- Encourage students to share what they know about gardens and what they would like to know and learn more about. Provide photos or images of different types of gardens. Make connections to the vocabulary words on the index cards and these additional pictures.
- Use **realia and video clips** to support student's understanding of vocabulary words or phrases and build deeper connections to the text set focus of gardens.
- Create a K.W.L. Chart with students around Gardens:
  - ◇ What I Know (about Gardens)
  - ◇ What I Want to Know (about Gardens)
  - ◇ What I Learned (about Gardens)
- Pair students as they are sitting at desks or a rug. Tell them they are partners and will share ideas. When you pose a question, first have pairs **turn and talk** to each other about their thoughts on the answer(s) to the questions. Give a minute or two to talk, then have everyone come back to the group and share what both partners said. This encourages careful listening and is an opportunity for children to rehearse their contributions before participating in a larger group. It also helps students to summarize and present the thoughts and ideas of others.
  - ◇ Provide students with a graphic organizer (T-chart or Venn Diagram) and ask them to compare and contrast Peter Rabbit and a real rabbit. Have them include the similarities and differences between the food, clothing, actions, home, etc. of a real rabbit and a fictional rabbit (Peter) in their organizer.



## Book Extension Ideas

Offer the following interdisciplinary opportunities to extend students' understanding of and engagement with the text:

- Discuss point of view and have students consider whose point of view the story is being told from. Then, have them write a short version of the story from Mr. McGregor's point of view.
- Write a letter! Using a friendly letter format, ask students to imagine they are Peter Rabbit and write an apology letter to Mr. McGregor as one of the consequences for sneaking into his garden.
- Discuss making good choices and the consequences of bad choices. Invite students to consider the events in the story and choose three bad choices Peter made in the text and the consequences of his actions. Then, have them "correct" those bad choices and consider what better choices he could have made. Students may draw and write their responses in a writing journal or on construction paper.
- Ask students what other "tales" they have read. Create a class graph recording what other tales students have heard. Create a Venn diagram mapping out the similarities and differences between these tales and the story of Peter Rabbit.