Once upon a time, there was no such thing as children’s literature. When and if children learned to read, they read what grown-ups read. How then did writing for children as we now know it come of age? Why does the genre have such an enduring hold on our cultural imagination, even as it continues to provoke sharp debate over its greater purpose and value? Are classic children’s books like Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, The Wizard of Oz, The Wind in the Willows, Peter Pan, and The Cat in the Hat instructive or subversive, manipulative or liberating? In this course we’ll examine selections from three centuries of popular prose and verse written expressly for and about children as we investigate how this eclectic canon reflects evolving ideas about childhood, changing views about educating and enchanting young readers, and persistent disputes over what and how children should learn from books.
UNIT 1
Where to begin? How about with the ABCs.

In his 1934 check-list of New England Primers, bibliographer and bookseller extraordinaire Charles F. Heartman recorded more than 450 editions published between 1727 and 1830, many of these printed in editions of thousands of copies. According to Heartman, even before 1727 there were likely “many thousands” of New England Primers printed, none of which survive. The Primer, he writes, was “practically an institution. It was, next to the Bible, the ‘stock book’ in the bookshops of the towns and the general stores of the village.” Due to its small size, its relatively modest cost to contemporary buyers, and constant handling by “not too careful” children, few of these once very common volumes remained intact for even a generation. Though literally millions of copies were printed by the first decades of the 19th century, only a tiny fraction survive today.

From the beginning, The New England Primer contained elements to instruct in both the practice of reading, and the formation of a moral and religious character. The first American edition of The New England Primer is known to have been published in Boston during the 1680s; for more than a half-century afterward the Primer was virtually synonymous with Boston printing and Puritanism.

The imprints varied, but content was fairly standard: an introduction to letters and the alphabet, vowels, consonants, double letters, syllables, and words of one to six syllables in length (“Lamb,” “vile,” “In-fant,” “la-zy,” “Dam-ni-fy,” “God-li-ness,” “A-bo-min-na-ti-on,” “Pu-ri-fi-ca-ti-on”). All editions contained a series of wood engravings to introduce letters of the alphabet and join them to some concrete image in a rhymed verse. Over time, the most consistent of these verses was for the letter “A” – “In Adam's fall, We sinned all.”

UNIT 1
What are we talking about when we talk about children’s literature?

What is children’s literature? How did changing philosophical and cultural ideas about childhood give rise to the prolific historical spectrum of books aimed at educating and entertaining young readers? For our first classes we’ll read selections from an eclectic array of works published in English for children that reflect the emergence and evolution of the genre, including extracts from the New England Primer, Mother Goose, the Brothers Grimm, Edward Lear, and Lewis Carroll, among others. Our main primary text for this unit will be Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). As we contemplate these case studies in all their variety and detail, we’ll pay close attention to the significant questions they raise about what author Alison Lurie calls the “sacred texts of childhood” – how they shape our inner lives, why they have such staying power, and what they really teach us.

Passages from course readings

The great subversive works of children's literature suggest that there are other views of human life besides those of the shopping mall and the corporation. They mock current assumptions and express the imaginative, unconventional, noncommercial view of the world in its simplest and purest form. They appeal to the imaginative, questioning, rebellious child within all of us, renew our instinctive energy, and act as a force for change. This is why such literature is worthy of our attention and will endure long after more conventional tales have been forgotten.

*Alison Lurie, Don’t Tell the Grownups: The Subversive Power of Children’s Literature*

So I arrive at my personal defense of the uses of the imagination, especially in fiction, and most especially in fairy tale, legend, fantasy, science fiction, and the rest of the lunatic fringe. I believe that maturity is not an outgrowing, but a growing up; that an adult is not a dead child, but a child who survived. I believe that all the best faculties of a mature human being exist in the child, and that if these faculties are encouraged in youth they will act well and wisely in the adult, but if they are repressed and denied in the child they will stunt and cripple the adult personality. And finally, I believe that one of the most deeply human, and humane, of these faculties is the power of imagination: so that it is our pleasant duty, as librarians, or teachers, or parents, or writers, or simply as grownups, to encourage that faculty of imagination in our children, to encourage it to grow freely, to flourish like the green bay tree, by giving it the best, absolutely the best and purest, nourishment that it can absorb. And never, under any circumstances, to squelch it, or sneer at it, or imply that it is childish, or unmanly, or untrue.

*Ursula Le Guin, “Why Are Americans Afraid of Dragons?”*

Perhaps it is only in childhood that books have any deep influence on our lives. In later life we admire, we are entertained, we may modify some views we already hold, but we are more likely to find in books merely a confirmation of what it is in our minds already; as in a love affair it is our own features that we see reflected flatteringly back. But in childhood all books are books of divination, telling us about the future, and like the fortune teller who sees a long journey in the cards or death by water they influence the future. I suppose that is why books excited us so much. What do we ever get nowadays from reading to equal the excitement and the revelation in those first fourteen years?

*Graham Greene, The Lost Childhood and Other Essays*

We assume that writing for adults is the pinnacle of achievement, but what book changed your life? What stories made you think about the world? I couldn’t tell you much about what was in most books I read last month but I can tell you every character in *Howl’s Moving Castle*. Eva Ibbotson’s morality has become mine, Diana Wynne Jones has influenced how I write, the way Terry Pratchett talks about society helped me think about all those things.

*Robin Stevens, author of the Murder Most Unladylike series*

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1892 edition)
REQUIRED TEXTS

Canvas Course Reader: Most of the assigned reading for the course will be posted in PDF form on the course website. The following texts in online versions are also required reading.

Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking Glass
Seth Lerer, Children’s Literature: A Reader’s History, from Aesop to Harry Potter
Maria Tatar, The Classic Fairy Tales (Norton Critical Editions)
Harvard Guide to Using Sources: usingsources.lis.harvard.edu

Online links to course texts

➤ Seth Lerer, Children’s Literature: A Reader’s History, from Aesop to Harry Potter

Hollis link to electronic version
http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=40e9912a-cce0-4917-b892-7662b46e06640pdevesusmgr06&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZpZDBsZXRlZ84%3d&sid=40e9912a-cce0-4917-b892-7662b46e06640pdevesusmgr06&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZpZDBsZXRlZ84%3d&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZpZDBsZXRlZ84%3d

The complete contents of this course text can be read online or downloaded as a PDF. Because the book is a historical survey organized both chronologically and thematically, you can efficiently home in on particular topics and periods of interest.

Chapter titles include the following:
“Playthings of the Mind: John Locke and Children’s Literature”
“From Islands to Empires: Storytelling for a Boy’s World”
“On Beyond Darwin: From Kingsley to Seuss”
“Theaters of Girlhood: Domesticity, Desire, and Performance in Female Fiction”
“Pan in the Garden: The Edwardian Turn in Children’s Literature”
“Tape Your Pencil on the Paper: Children’s Literature in an Ironic Age”

Be sure to also consult the index and endnotes (which include Lerer’s source citations) for further leads.

➤ Maria Tatar, editor. The Classic Fairy Tales (Norton Critical Editions)

Examines the genre, cultural implications, and critical history of six classic fairy tales and presents twelve essays on the social origins and issues of gender and national identity present in many of these children’s stories. Also explores tales by Hans Christian Andersen, the Brothers Grimm, Oscar Wilde, Charles Perrault, Joseph Jacobs, Margaret Atwood, James Thurber, Roald Dahl, et al.

Hollis link to electronic version
https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Search/Home?lookfor=38520170&type=oclc&urlappend=
UNIT OVERVIEW

Unit 1

What is children’s literature? How did changing philosophical and cultural ideas about childhood give rise to the prolific historical spectrum of books aimed at educating and entertaining young readers? For our first classes we’ll read selections from an eclectic array of works published in English for children that reflect the emergence and evolution of the genre, including extracts from the New England Primer, Mother Goose, the Brothers Grimm, Edward Lear, and Lewis Carroll, among others. Our main primary text for this unit will be Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865). As we contemplate these case studies in all their variety and detail, we’ll pay close attention to the significant questions they raise about what author Alison Lurie calls the “sacred texts of childhood” – how they shape our inner lives, why they have such staying power, and what they really teach us.

The central writing assignment for this unit asks you to develop a close reading of a single text, the building block for much of the writing you’ll be doing in your other classes. Our focus will be on the steps and strategies that enable you to write an insightful and engaging essay based on a sound arguable thesis, as laid out in the Harvard Writing Program’s “The Elements of Academic Argument.”

Essay 1: Close reading essay (4-5 pp)

Unit 2

Down the rabbit-hole went Alice, and ever since the field of children’s literature has grown curiouser and curiouser. What does the modern history of the genre reveal about its larger cultural influence and artistic significance? In Unit 2 we’ll consider a number of critical and scholarly perspectives on the purpose and value of writing for children of all ages, ranging from Bruno Bettelheim’s The Uses of Enchantment and Alison Lurie’s Don’t Tell the Grown-ups to essays on specific authors and issues by George Orwell, Ursula Le Guin, Harold Bloom, Marina Warner, and others. Primary texts for this unit will constellate mainly around classics from the proverbial “Golden Age” of children’s books, including readings from Louisa May Alcott’s Little Women, Mark Twain’s Tom Sawyer, L. Frank Baum’s The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, and Kenneth Grahame’s The Wind in the Willows, along with stories and verse by Robert Louis Stevenson, Beatrix Potter, Rudyard Kipling, A. A. Milne, E. B. White, and others.

For this unit, your main writing assignment will be to develop an essay in which one text is considered in relation to another (sometimes called a “lens” essay or a “test a theory” essay). We will focus largely on the basic elements of comparative analysis, including argumentative structure, organization of evidence, and counter-argument. We will again look at diagnostic and model examples of this mode of argument in action, with an emphasis on methods of analytical writing that provide the foundation for lucid critical thinking.

Essay 2: Comparative analysis (“lens”) essay (6-8 pp)

Unit 3

Wonderland. Neverland. Oz. Narnia. Middle Earth. Dictionopolis. Hogwarts. Now more than ever, exploring the realm of children’s literature inescapably leads us to where the wild things are. In our third and final unit, we’ll consider the broad impact of its masterworks in fantasy and adventure, social realism and dystopian allegory, zany humor and iconoclastic satire on social history and popular culture, which continue to prompt extensive discourse and debate over what such books tell us about our times and ourselves. As the curators of a current exhibit at the New York Public Library called “The ABC of It: Why Children’s Books Matter” propose in the show catalogue, taking children’s literature seriously reveals that “books for young people have stories to tell us about ourselves, and are rarely as simple as they seem.”

The primary writing assignment for our culminating unit will be for you to produce a research essay based on an original question, making appropriate use of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources for generating your research proposal may include texts from course readings as well as literary texts from books and anthologies; secondary sources can range from works of criticism and theory to reference manuals and interviews. Our principal resource for much of this unit will be the Harvard Guide to Using Sources, which spells out the academic procedures and standards for proper attribution and citation of multiple sources. We will also be consulting the Widener Library staff for guidance on conducting efficient online searches and locating various kinds of academic research material.

Essay 3: Research essay using multiple sources (10-12 pp)
CASE STUDY
Humpty Dumpty on words

Humpty Dumpty took the book, and looked at it carefully. ‘That seems to be done right—’ he began.

‘You’re holding it upside down!’ Alice interrupted.

‘To be sure I was!’ Humpty Dumpty said gaily, as she turned it round for him. ‘I thought it looked a little queer. As I was saying, that seems to be done right—though I haven’t time to look it over thoroughly just now—and that shows that there are three hundred and sixty-four days when you might get un-birthday presents—’

‘Certainly,’ said Alice.

‘And only one for birthday presents, you know. There’s glory for you!’

‘I don’t know what you mean by “glory,”’ Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. ‘Of course you don’t—till I tell you. I meant “there’s a nice knock-down argument for you!”’

‘But “glory” doesn’t mean “a nice knock-down argument,”’ Alice objected.

‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.’

‘The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things.’

‘The question is,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be master—that’s all.’

Alice was too much puzzled to say anything, so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again. ‘They’ve a temper, some of them—particularly verbs, they’re the proudest—adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs—however, I can manage the whole lot of them! Impenetrability! That’s what I say!’

‘Would you tell me, please,’ said Alice, ‘what that means?’

‘Now you talk like a reasonable child,’ said Humpty Dumpty, looking very much pleased. ‘I meant by “impenetrability” that we’ve had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you’d mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don’t mean to stop here all the rest of your life.’

‘That’s a great deal to make one word mean,’ Alice said in a thoughtful tone.

‘When I use a word do a lot of work like that,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘I always pay it extra.’

‘Oh!’ said Alice. She was too much puzzled to make any other remark.

‘Ah, you should see ’em come round me of a Saturday night,’ Humpty Dumpty went on, wagging his head gravely from side to side: ‘for to get their wages, you know.’

(Alice didn’t venture to ask what he paid them with; and so you see I can’t tell you.)

‘You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir,’ said Alice. ‘Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called “Jabberwocky”?’

‘Let’s hear it,’ said Humpty Dumpty. ‘I can explain all the poems that were ever invented—and a good many that haven’t been invented just yet.’

Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass – and What Alice Found There (1872)
The Gem and Magnet are sister-papers (characters out of one paper frequently appear in the other), and were both started more than thirty years ago. At that time, together with Chums and the old B.O.P., they were the leading papers for boys, and they remained dominant till quite recently. Each of them carries every week a fifteen- or twenty-thousand-word school story, complete in itself, but usually more or less connected with the story of the week before. The Gem in addition to its school story carries one or more adventure serial. Otherwise the two papers are so much alike that they can be treated as one, though the Magnet has always been the better known of the two, probably because it possesses a really first-rate character in the fat boy, Billy Bunter.

The stories are stories of what purports to be public-school life, and the schools (Greyfriars in the Magnet and St Jim's in the Gem) are represented as ancient and fashionable foundations of the type of Eton or Winchester. All the leading characters are fourth-form boys aged fourteen or fifteen, older or younger boys only appearing in very minor parts. Like Sexton Blake and Nelson Lee, these boys continue week after week and year after year, never growing any older. Very occasionally a new boy arrives or a minor character drops out, but in at any rate the last twenty-five years the personnel has barely altered. All the principal characters in both papers — Bob Cherry, Tom Merry, Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, Billy Bunter and the rest of them — were at Greyfriars or St Jim's long before the Great War, exactly the same age as at present, having much the same kind of adventures and talking almost exactly the same dialect. And not only the characters but the whole atmosphere of both Gem and Magnet has been preserved unchanged, partly by means of very elaborate stylization. The stories in the Magnet are signed ‘Frank Richards’ and those in the Gem, ‘Martin Clifford’, but a series lasting thirty years could hardly be the work of the same person every week. Consequently they have to be written in a style that is easily imitated — an extraordinary, artificial, repetitive style, quite different from anything else now existing in English literature. A couple of extracts will do as illustrations.

Here is one from the Magnet:

Groan!
‘Shut up, Bunter!’
Groan!

Shutting up was not really in Billy Bunter’s line. He seldom shut up, though often requested to do so. On the present awful occasion the fat Owl of Greyfriars was less inclined than ever to shut up. And he did not shut up! He groaned, and groaned, and went on groaning.

Even groaning did not fully express Bunter’s feelings. His feelings, in fact, were inexpressible.

There were six of them in the soup! Only one of the six uttered sounds of woe and lamentation. But that one, William George Bunter, uttered enough for the whole party and a little over.

Harry Wharton & Co. stood in a wrathful and worried group. They were landed and stranded, diddled, dishonored and done! etc., etc., etc.

Here is one from the Gem:

‘Oh cumberl!’
‘Oh gumm!’
‘Oooog!’
‘Urrgh!’

Arthur Augustus sat up dizzily. He grabbed his handkerchief and pressed it to his damaged nose. Tom Merry sat up, gasping for breath. They looked at one another.

‘Bai Jove! This is a go, deah boy!’ gurgled Arthur Augustus. ‘I have been thwown into quite a fluttah! Oogh! The wottahs! The wuffians! The feahful outsidahs! WOW!’ etc., etc., etc.

Both of these extracts are entirely typical: you would find something like them in almost every chapter of every number, to-day or twenty-five years ago. The first thing that anyone would notice is the extraordinary amount of tautology (the first of these two passages contains a hundred and twenty-five words and could be compressed into about thirty), seemingly designed to spin out the story, but actually playing its part in creating the atmosphere. For the same reason various facetious expressions are repeated over and over again; ‘wrathy’, for instance, is a great favourite, and so is ‘diddled, dishonored and done’. ‘Oooogh!’, ‘Grooo!’ and ‘Yaroo!’ (stylized cries of pain) recur constantly, and so does ‘Ha! ha! ha!’, always given a line to itself, so that sometimes a quarter of a column or thereabouts consists of ‘Ha! ha! ha!’ The slang (‘Go and cat coke!’, ‘What the thump!’, ‘You frabjous ass!’ etc., etc.) has never been altered, so that the boys are now using slang which is at least thirty years out of date. In addition, the various nicknames are rubbed in on every possible occasion. Every few lines we are reminded that Harry Wharton & Co. are ‘the Famous Five’, Bunter is always ‘the fat Owl’ or ‘the Owl of the Remove’, Vernon-Smith is always ‘the Bounder of Greyfriars’, Gussy (the Honourable Arthur Augustus D’Arcy) is always ‘the swell of St Jim’s’, and so on and so forth. There is a constant, untiring effort to keep the atmosphere intact and to make sure that every new reader learns immediately who is who. The result has been to make Greyfriars and St Jim’s into an
extraordinary little world of their own, a world which cannot be taken seriously by anyone over fifteen, but which at any rate
is not easily forgotten. By a debasement of the Dickens technique a series of stereotyped 'characters' has been built up, in
several cases very successfully. Billy Bunter, for instance, must be one of the best-known figures in English fiction; for the
mere number of people who know him he ranks with Sexton Blake, Tarzan, Sherlock Holmes and a handful of characters
in Dickens.

https://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/boys/english/e_boys

CASE STUDY
Maurice Sendak, Picture-Book Psychologist

Kenneth Kidd, "Wild Things and Wolf Dreams: Maurice Sendak, Picture-Book Psychologist"
The Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature. Edited by Lynne Vallone and Julia Mickenberg
This article combines cultural history with the insights of psychoanalytic theory, reading Maurice Sendak's Caldecott-winning
and controversial Where the Wild Things Are (1963) in relation to his larger oeuvre. It reviews Where the Wild Things
Are as a psychoanalytic treatise in picture-book form. Sendak's achievement in Wild Things comes not only from personal
genius but also from his complex engagement with psychological discourse. Wild Things has been embraced as a
psychological primer, a story about anger and its management through fantasy; it is also a text in which echoes of Freud are
audible. It is furthermore a highly successful experiment in picture-book psychology.
Hollis link: https://www-oxfordhandbooks-com.azp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195379785.001.0001/oxfordhb-
9780195379785-e11
Expos 20 Wizards & Wild Things
Links to Online Research Archives

Children's Literature Center
Library of Congress
http://www.loc.gov/rr/child/

*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* / By L. Frank Baum; With Pictures by W.W. Denslow.
Chicago; New York: G.M. Hill Co., 1900, c1899.
Page Turner -PDF (113.66MB) Bibliographic Information

Also see the exhibit: *The Wizard of Oz: An American Fairy Tale* A look at the creation of this timeless American classic and traced its rapid and enduring success to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the book’s publication.

**Interview with LOC Children’s Literature Center Chief**
This interview was conducted on August 23, 2010 by Kathryn Mendenhall [then Director of the Library’s Partnerships and Outreach Programs] and Sybille Jagusch [Chief of the Children’s Literature Center].

**Excerpt: KM: Could you talk about the Library’s children’s book collections?**
SJ: LC holds the premier research book collection of children’s literature in this country. There are more than 500,000 volumes, all scattered throughout the collection. In the early days children’s books arrived in an unsystematic fashion but after the Copyright Law of 1870 children’s books have come in a steady stream just like all other books. There are a number of special collections. For example, early children’s books are in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division; foreign language books are in divisions like Asian and others. There are also boxed and board games, sound recordings, maps, and original children’s book illustrations; books in braille, books with cds and other attachments, books that move and make a sound.
What makes this collection so unique is the fact that it is not selected. No one evaluates the content of a book. The collection holds everything from the beautiful to the bland, from the redundant to the controversial. It contains all the dreams and hopes, the goodwill and the prejudices of the nation. In addition, the children’s book collection is supported by an unparalleled collection of reference books, serials, maps, manuscripts, and databases. It is a researcher’s paradise.

https://www.loc.gov/rr/child/PDF/mendenhall.pdf

Page Turner - PDF (21.80) Bibliographic Information
How was childhood depicted in the literature of the 18th and 19th century, and how were perceptions of childhood different from those of today? Was children’s literature intended to entertain or instruct?

https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/themes/childhood-and-childrens-literature

**Anthropomorphism in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland**

Article written by: Martin Dubois  
Theme: Childhood and children's literature  
*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is crammed with animals: a grinning cat, a talking rabbit, an enormous caterpillar and countless others. Dr Martin Dubois explores anthropomorphism and nonsense in Lewis Carroll’s novel, revealing the literary traditions that underpin it - and those it inspired.  

**Moral and instructive children’s literature**

Article written by: M O Grenby  
Theme: Childhood and children's literature  
Professor M O Grenby looks at the ways in which children’s literature of the 18th and 19th centuries sought to improve its young readers, combining social and moral instruction with entertainment.  
https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/moral-and-instructive-childrens-literature

**Fiction for children in the first 40 years of the 20th century**

Article written by: Alison Bailey  
Theme: Fantasy and fairy tale  
From Edith Nesbit to Enid Blyton, Alison Bailey traces the development of children's fiction in the first four decades of the 20th century.  

**Narnian portals**

Article written by: Sally Bushell  
Themes: Fantasy and fairy tale, Literature 1900–1950  
Many fantasy novels feature portals, thresholds that allow characters to transition from one world to another. Professor Sally Bushell explores C S Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia* series, focussing on the use of the door as a portal that allows children to enter Narnia.  
https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/narnian-portals
Every so often, an apparently simple topic leads you so far beyond Wikipedia that you find yourself dug way down deep into an online rabbit hole.

Pun intended. And, case in point: Beatrix Potter.

It's easy to assume that Potter's stories, which seem sweet at first glance but can be quite disturbing (think Mr. McGregor baking Peter's dad into a pie; that terrifying scarecrow wearing Peter's own clothes; the list goes on) were some kind of early 20th-century Scooby-Doo precursor, and that the person who wrote them must be a moralistic finger-wagger who's trying to teach those meddling kids a lesson.

Not so! Born in London on July 28, 1866, Potter wrote 30 books, none of which are strict morality tales. Instead, they're vignettes of specific, well-characterized animals, and some of the most memorable and enduring characters in children's literature. One reviewer cites the books' "zany nihilism" and correctly calls McGregor a sociopath.

We've picked out just a few facts about Potter that may surprise you. (Spoiler alert: The rabbit hole ends at Kate Middleton!) Take a look at dozens of her illustrations in our Digital Collections, check out her books in our catalog, and learn more about her life with biographies and more books about the writer herself.
1. She wasn't all bunnies and kittens. Potter wrote other children's books, including a retelling of the Bluebeard the Pirate story; a posthumously published folktale called Wag-by-Wall; and a semi-autobiographical fairytale, *The Fairy Caravan*, which wasn't published in her home country because she felt it was "too personal."

2. She kept a secret diary, which you can now read online. Starting as a teen, Potter kept an intensely detailed journal written in code. It wasn't cracked until 20 years after her death. [Check out this edited version as an ebook.](#)

3. She was successful in her own lifetime. Unlike many women in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Potter was well known and well regarded as an author and illustrator. The first installment in the series, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, was published in 1902 and sold well. After that, Potter published multiple books every year for decades. She also [merchandised](#) her work successfully, with everything from dolls to wallpaper.

4. She was a dedicated environmentalist. Practically singlehandedly, she created the beautiful Lake District in northwest England. Originally from the county of Cumbria, which is in the Lake District, Potter owned farms and practiced land conservation for much of her life. When she died, she [left her considerable estate](#)—4,000 acres of land and over a dozen farms—to the U.K.'s National Trust.

5. She bred sheep and helped save a whole breed from extinction. Hardy, the historic [Herdwick sheep](#), brought to England by Vikings. It's true!

6. Kate Middleton is related to her. The Duchess of Cambridge is Potter's distant cousin. An art history teacher also [told the media](#) that Kate's family received several original hand-painted illustrations.
The mission of The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, a non-profit organization in Amherst, Massachusetts, is to inspire a love of art and reading through picture books. A leading advocate in its field, The Carle collects, preserves, presents, and celebrates picture books and picture book illustrations from around the world. In addition to underscoring the cultural, historical, and artistic significance of picture books and their art form, The Carle offers educational programs that provide a foundation for arts integration and literacy.

The Carle houses more than 11,000 objects, including 7,300 permanent collection illustrations, three art galleries, an art studio, a theater, picture book and scholarly libraries, and educational programs for families, scholars, educators, and schoolchildren. Educational offerings include professional training for educators around the country and four onsite graduate programs in Children's Literature in collaboration with Simmons University.

Virtual Tour: A Peek Inside the Eric Carle Museum
https://vimeo.com/342744581