

## Shmanners 236: Beatrix Potter

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**Travis:** Why did the lonely man buy a rabbit?

**Teresa:** I don't know, why?

**Travis:** He wanted some-bunny to love.

**Teresa:** [laughs] It's *Shmanners*.

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

**Teresa:** And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy!

**Travis:** And you're listening to *Shmanners*.

**Teresa:** It's extraordinary etiquette...

**Travis:** For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

**Teresa:** Hello, dear.

**Travis:** Why are you so smiley?

**Teresa:** That was a very cute joke.

**Travis:** You liked that one?

**Teresa:** Yes, I did.

**Travis:** Yeah. Some-bunny to love.

**Teresa:** Some-bunny.

**Travis:** Some-bunny to love— I was pretty proud of that one.

**Teresa:** Absolutely!

**Travis:** I thought it was very sweet. Thank you. So, hi, everybody. Um, we're talking about Beatrix Potter.

**Teresa:** Indeed. Which is why the bunny joke.

**Travis:** I'm going to be— Because she wrote *Peter Rabbit*.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** I'm going to try really hard not to say Beatrice Potter.

**Teresa:** Right, because that's not... that's not her name.

**Travis:** Her name is Beatrix... Potter. Here's the thing. As so often happens when we go into a biography episode, I realize now... I know nothing—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —about her. Even when I said *Peter Rabbit*, I second-guessed myself. 'Cause I wanted to say Peter Cottontail? No, no, no, that's a song?

**Teresa:** Yes. Um, so you— she's in the zeitgeist, right?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** You have heard *of* Beatrix Potter, right? That name is familiar to you?

**Travis:** Well, you know— yes, I mean, yes.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** But I think that... as often happens sometimes with authors, with creators, *Peter Rabbit* is a more— like, I think that clicks more lights on in my brain than the name Beatrix Potter. Like, I recognize both. I know Beatrix Potter wrote *Peter Rabbit*, but I think *Peter Rabbit* is like, "Oh yeah, Peter— I know who *Peter Rabbit* is."

And it's like, Beatrix Potter— "Oh yeah, Beatrix Potter wrote *Peter Rabbit*."

Like, my only frame of reference for her is the thing that she wrote.

**Teresa:** Okay. So, the reason that I picked is that you and I, our current aesthetic is, like, cottage core. We are—

**Travis:** Um... yes. I— I would say my quarantine aesthetic has been—

**Teresa:** Yes, I said current aesthetic.

**Travis:** I mean, yes. But I wanna clarify, 'cause usually, like, I'm a rude dude with plenty of 'tude.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, but—

**Teresa:** In your cable knit sweater?

**Travis:** Hey, they don't know!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I might've been in a ripped-up tee with slashed up pants!

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** You don't have to— I'm wearing slippers, yes.

**Teresa:** And a cable knit sweater.

**Travis:** Okay! You don't need to—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** You don't need to blow up my spot like that!

**Teresa:** Well—

**Travis:** Just because I like to now bake bread and knit—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** You didn't—! [sighs] You didn't— they didn't know! Nobody out there knew, and now they're—[groans]

**Teresa:** Your Instagram followers knew. You're constantly—

**Travis:** But I have cool purple hair and pierced ears and... [fake sobbing]

**Teresa:** Alright. I picked her, um, for that reason, and also, our daughter Bebe has brought to me this collection of Beatrix Potter books, the *Peter Rabbit* books. Um—

**Travis:** It's like a *Peter Rabbit* universe, right?

**Teresa:** Kind of, yeah.

**Travis:** 'Cause you think of, like, *Peter Rabbit* as, like, a main character, but there's a lot of animals in this thing that, like, the stories are about.

**Teresa:** Exactly. My parents gave her one of our old book sets. It's like— it's got a little handle on it. It's very cute. I think it's got, like, four books, and they're all very easy to read, understand, lots of—

**Travis:** Lots of pictures.

**Teresa:** —pictures. She really enjoys it. In fact, she tried to, quote, "Read it back to me." Um, but there are a couple of things that when reading the books I did not remember were a part of the books. [laughs]

**Travis:** Like the fact that they're violent?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** They're only violent if you consider, uh, human-to-animal violence, right? Is there a lot of animal-to-animal?

**Teresa:** No, there's— but there's circle of life business going on here.

**Travis:** Oh yes, absolutely. Can I just say real quick, 'cause you mentioned it, when Bebe reads back it's really wonderful, because it only is the parts of the book that she remembers and cares about, and sometimes those get wildly exaggerated. And it's really wonderful.

**Teresa:** Um, and the thing that really sticks out in my mind is Peter's father was captured and baked into a pie.

**Travis:** He got et! He got et by McGregor!

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Let me tell you, folks. McGregor ain't the hero of these books.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Nope.

**Travis:** Farmer McGregor's the bad guy. [sighs]

**Teresa:** It's kind of like the fittest survive of these books.

**Travis:** Well, here's what's interesting. Especially, like, I think may— it's either the first one or, like, the main *Peter Rabbit* story people think of, right? Of him, like, breaking into Mr. McGregor's garden and stealing vegetables and, like, leaving clothes behind. And Mr. McGregor, like, uses the clothes to make a little scarecrow, right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm, yeah.

**Travis:** Peter is also not cool, in that, like, Peter has broken in and gets in trouble, he shouldn't have been there.

**Teresa:** Like, his mother has said, "Don't go in the garden." There's plenty of, like, fruits of the forest for them to eat. He's like—

**Travis:** This is not a Robin Hood thing. He didn't have to go in there to get food. He's in there havin' a whale of time and he, like, almost dies, and Mr. McGregor almost kills— neither one of 'em come out looking great.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Um, if you want to learn more about this story, you can visit [peterrabbit.com](http://peterrabbit.com), also Goodreads has some really nice articles, and there's a ton

of YouTube stuff about the Beatrix Potter attractions in England. Okay. So, let's go through the actual life of Beatrix.

**Travis:** Yeah. Enough about her creation. Let's focus on her. Was she a rabbit?

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** She was born a human. [laughs]

**Travis:** Oh! Interesting.

**Teresa:** On, uh, July 28th in 1886.

**Travis:** Oh, wow!

[static]

**Teresa:** Oh, quick correction here. I said 1886. I meant 1866.

[static]

**Travis:** You know... huh. I wouldn't have gue— I was sitting there thinking— 'cause I always try to figure out these people who I know very little about, what year I think they're born in. And when you said she was born in, my guess would've been, like, 1920.

**Teresa:** Nope.

**Travis:** Nope!

**Teresa:** Mm-mm.

**Travis:** Nope, nope, nope. Okay.

**Teresa:** 1886 to a classic, well-to-do Victorian family.

**Travis:** You know, I figured that, because the name Beatrix Potter... that's a name that I think you only give someone if you think, "We've got money." Right? Because, like—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Right? It's kind of a highfalutin'— Beatrix... Potter. Right? It has... it has some gravitas to it, right?

**Teresa:** Right. Her brother, Walter Bertram—

**Travis:** See?

**Teresa:** —was born six years later, and her parents— well, they were very... let's say overprotective, okay?

**Travis:** Hmmm.

**Teresa:** Um, they were keen to shelter her from the world.

**Travis:** Much like the mother rabbit in the books.

**Teresa:** Uh, I wouldn't say that the mother rabbit is overprotective. We'll get to that later.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, she was educated by governesses, and she was discouraged from fraternizing with children her age.

**Travis:** Aw, man! Bummer.

**Teresa:** Yeah. So, she lived kind of in an isolated little world. She didn't have a lot of prospects. They weren't— like, they weren't badly socially connected, but her parents were very keen on keeping— sheltering her from the world.

**Travis:** That's so interesting. Think about the time, right? When we, like, think about, you know, she would've been, what, 14 by 1900?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Right? I think about when you hit that age in the year 1900 everyone's like, "How do we get you married off?"

We've talked about before, right? This is Victorian-esque times, where marriage was the main way of social climbing. Of, like, "How do we connect our family with somebody upwards of us?" And so, to hear about a family where they're like, "We are not worried about that, we just want to keep you," kind of like, protected, I guess?

**Teresa:** Well, no, not— not saying that marriage wasn't in her future, but nothing really more than marriage or looking after her old mother were really— like, those are the two futures for you so, like, no need to go out and make something of yourself. This is fine.

**Travis:** Gotcha, gotcha.

**Teresa:** So they didn't— the parents didn't really account for the fact that children pretty much always find a way, right?

**Travis:** Oh yeah. Life finds a way.

**Teresa:** Life finds a way. [laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, they— she and her brother developed a love for nature and artwork and— you know, this is also very Victorian, the botany sketches and things like that. They loved to draw and paint, and they had a ton of pets. So, mice, frogs, lizards, snakes, even a bat at one point.

**Travis:** Ooh!

**Teresa:** And of course, what the story's about, rabbits.

**Travis:** Hmm.

**Teresa:** Their first rabbit, Benjamin Bouncer...

**Travis:** Okay.



**Teresa:** Benjamin Bouncer?

**Travis:** Right? You— you can see—

**Teresa:** Yeah, totally.

**Travis:** —there is a direct line between naming a rabbit that and writing the *Peter Rabbit* books.

**Teresa:** Exactly, and you'll find an even closer one. Benjamin Bouncer loved to walk on a leash and eat buttered toast.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** And the next rabbit, Peter Piper—

**Travis:** [gasps] [whispers] Peter!

**Teresa:** —was Beatrix's favorite.

**Travis:** Obvs.

**Teresa:** Uh, he also liked to perform tricks and, again, loved to accompany Beatrix wherever she went on a leash.

**Travis:** I thought you were gonna say, "And again, loved buttered toast."

**Teresa:** [laughs] Well, probably. I think a rabbit will pretty much eat anything you hand it, right?

**Travis:** And I think everybody loves buttered toast.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** It's a pretty simple combination. Buttered toast.

**Teresa:** As was common in the Victorian era, she, by age 10, was a very gifted naturalist. Uh, and so this was the kind of thing that was encouraged at the time. They got her an art teacher—

**Travis:** Naturalist— this is what we were talking about, like, studying animals and plants and nature.

**Teresa:** And doing sketches and, like, scientific-type...

**Travis:** You know, what's interesting is in our modern day, I think the confusing thing— and this is what I'm trying to remember— I think naturist has become the new word for nudist.

**Teresa:** Oh!

**Travis:** And where naturalist is somebody who studies nature. And it's— you gotta be careful with those.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And I don't know that we're using them correctly, but we definitely mean the one where she studied nature. I do not know what Beatrix Potter's policy on nudity was.

**Teresa:** I don't know either.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** Um, so much so, she loved all of that kind of stuff, and their family took trips to Scotland, um—

**Travis:** Lotta nature there.

**Teresa:** —lotta nature. So much nature there.

**Travis:** It's, like, 80% nature.

**Teresa:** And this is where we find in her work the kind of outdoorsy whimsy of the British countryside, right? Um, so before all that happened, though, she really took to this science thing.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, she was invited to study fungi at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kew.

**Travis:** Hm!

**Teresa:** She produced not dozens but *hundreds* of detailed botanical drawings. She was very interested in their cultivation and growth, and this was her thing, right? She had a real talent for documenting nature. Um, so much so that there is a revered Scottish naturalist by the name of Charles Macintosh—

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Um, who encouraged her. So, she became kind of his... I wouldn't say assistant, but she was—

**Travis:** Protege?

**Teresa:** Sure! She was very talented at scientific illustration.

**Travis:** That was such a thing then, man. Like, it's a thing we don't think about now 'cause we have all these, like, HD digital cameras and stuff where you can take a picture a thousand times from different angles to capture a thing, but back then, that didn't exist. So, if you wanted to document, like, a new bird or a new animal or a new plant, you were drawing it, and you needed somebody who'd get the detail down, and, like, basically you needed somebody who could do, like, a photorealistic—

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** —drawing to study from.

**Teresa:** She loved—

**Travis:** Like Audubon, right?

**Teresa:** Yeah, yeah, like the Audubon, yeah.

**Travis:** That's the one everyone thinks about, Audubon.

**Teresa:** Um, she loved this so much she even wrote a scientific paper called "On the Germination of the Spores of Agaricinae."

**Travis:** Gripping.

**Teresa:** Uh, she submitted it to the Royal Botanical Gardens, but it was denied, probably because... she's a woman.

**Travis:** Oh, yep. Yep, yep, yep. Yep! Yep, yep, yep. [clears throat]

**Teresa:** I'm staring daggers at Travis like it's his fault. It's not his fault.

**Travis:** I didn't do— I wasn't there!

**Teresa:** Just the patriarchy.

**Travis:** I was impressed enough! Like, if anybody wrote any scientific paper ever I'd be like, "Yeah, you're in. I— I don't know what to tell you. I— this doesn't make any sense to me, so it must be good!"

**Teresa:** This was not her only scientific paper. She continued to do this scientific kind of exploration, but you probably haven't heard of it... 'cause she's a woman.

**Travis:** Hmm.

**Teresa:** Alright. So, let's go on to... the stories.

**Travis:** Oh, I'd love to. But first, how about a thank you note for our sponsors?

[theme music plays]

**Teresa:** *Shmanners* is sponsored in part this week by Native. With the holiday seasons right around the corner, we're all getting into the spirit and indulging in the sights and sounds, *and* scents...

**Travis:** That's my favorite part. Honestly, it's my favorite part.

**Teresa:** Of the season.

**Travis:** Yep.

**Teresa:** You love to do, uh—

**Travis:** Aspirational candles!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Aspirational candles. You gotta get candles for the next season. Not the current season. The *next* season, so you look forward to it!

**Teresa:** Exactly, and that's why my new deodorant selection was the peppermint selection.

**Travis:** Ooooh!

**Teresa:** It is so yummy. The candy cane gift set comes with all that. It's a great gift option. And Native is risk-free to try. Each product comes with free shipping in the US, plus 30 day returns and exchanges.

**Travis:** And it's made from natural ingredients you've heard of, like coconut oil and shea butter. It's vegan, and never tested on animals.

**Teresa:** You can give the gift of Native by going to [nativideo.com/shmanpod](https://nativideo.com/shmanpod), or you can use the promo code "shmanpod" at checkout to get 20% off of your first order. Make sure you order by December 7th if you want to get your products in time for Christmas. Now, one more time, that's [Nativideo.com/shmanpod](https://nativideo.com/shmanpod), or use the promo code "shmanpod."

**Travis:** S-H-M-A-N-P-O-D. We're also sponsored this week by Quip! Mm. Oh boy, do I love Quip. You know, sometimes... maybe you're heading to bed. Maybe sometimes you're just wakin' up. Maybe sometimes you just had a meal, and your teeth feel gross! It happens.

**Teresa:** You've got little Christmas sweaters on your teeth.

**Travis:** We've all been there. Your teeth feel fuzzy! It's gross. You may be grossed out hearing it. I know. That's why I love Quip. My teeth never feel cleaner than right after a good Quip brushin', or good Quip flossin', and a lot of that has to do, if I'm being honest, with the toothpaste, 'cause Quip toothpaste

continues to forever be my favorite. Now, here's the thing. That's great. I know what you're saying. "Travis, isn't that reward enough?"

Well, yes. That's why Quip is going above and beyond by rewarding you with their new smart electric toothbrush, and you actually earn actual rewards like free products, gift cards, and more. Basically, it connects to your phone via Bluetooth, and it's gonna keep track of your brushing. And as you brush, you earn points, and then you can use those points to get those rewards. And if you already have a Quip, you can just upgrade it with a smart motor and keep all the features you know and love. That's what you did, Teresa.

**Teresa:** That is what I did. The toothbrush with the Bluetooth was black. I did not like that. I liked my gold, so all I had to do was take the little Bluetooth motor out of the black toothbrush, put it in the gold toothbrush. Perfect!

**Travis:** Now, I like the black toothbrush, 'cause it makes me feel like Darth Vader is brushing my teeth.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And I enjoy that. That's my thing. And it could be your thing, and you could start getting rewards for brushing your teeth today if you go to [getquip.com/shmanners](https://getquip.com/shmanners) right now and your first refill will be free. That's your first refill free at [getquip.com/shmanners](https://getquip.com/shmanners). That's G-E-T-Q-U-I-P, dot com, slash shmanners. Quip: better oral health made simple and rewarding.

[phone sound effects]

**Speaker One:** Listen, I'm a hotshot Hollywood movie producer. You have until I finish my glass of Kombucha to pitch me your idea. Go.

[slurping noises]

**Ify:** Alright! It's called *Who Shot Ya?* A movie podcast that isn't just a bunch of straight white dudes. I'm Ify Nwadiwe, the new host of the show, and a certified BBN.

**Speaker One:** BBN?

**Ify:** Buff black nerd!

**Alonso:** I'm Alonso Duralde, an elderly gay, and legit film critic who wrote a book on Christmas movies!

**Drea:** I'm Drea Clark, a loud white lady from Minnesota!

**Ify:** Each week, we talk about a new movie in theaters, and all the important issues going on in the film industry.

**Alonso:** It's like *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* meets *Cruising*!

**Ify:** And if it helps seal the deal, I can flex my muscles while we record each episode.

**Speaker One:** I'm sorry. This is a podcast? I'm a movie producer! How did you get in here?

**Drea:** Ify, quick! Start flexing!

**Ify:** Bicep! Lats! Chest!

*Who Shot Ya?* Dropping every Friday on [Maximumfun.org](http://Maximumfun.org), or wherever you listen to podcasts!

[music plays]

**Travis:** Okay. You were going to tell me a story.

**Teresa:** Let— let me—

**Travis:** Tell me of the rabbits!

**Teresa:** Let me weave you a yarn.

**Travis:** That makes me feel a little bit like Lenny. Lenny?

**Teresa:** Lenny?

**Travis:** Yeah, from *Of Mice and Men*, "Tell me of the rabbits."

**Teresa:** Ohhh, the rabbits.

**Travis:** "Tell me about the rabbits, George."

**Teresa:** Okay. So... one of her governesses, named Annie Moore, was very close to her throughout her life. Um, and *Peter Rabbit* came from a picture in a letter that Beatrix sent to Annie's son, Noel.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um... Beatrix loved this little boy, and would often write him tales of this silly little rabbit and all his woodland adventures.

**Travis:** This is, like, a recurring thing, right? Of a lot of, like, classic children's stories are someone telling a kid a story, and then going, "Hey, there's something to this!" Right? Like *Winnie the Pooh* and, like, *Peter Pan* and *Peter Rabbit*. I think *Wizard of Oz*.

**Teresa:** Very similar, yes. Here's the problem, though.

**Travis:** Oh!

**Teresa:** Publishers? Not a fan of our boy Peter.

**Travis:** Really?

**Teresa:** Yeah. Several publishers rejected it, and she was having trouble marketing her beautiful illustrated manuscript to the masses.

**Travis:** Do you think it was because she was a woman or because it was very, uh— what's the word I'm looking for? Very... agrarian?

**Teresa:** You know, it's... it's not— I think it's a combination of things. I think that you mentioned Peter Pan, right? They were probably all like, "We already got this Peter." Right?

**Travis:** "We already got a Peter. Peter's taken."

**Teresa:** Um, and also a woman, and also... I think that the whole, like, children's market had not been explored yet, because in this Victorian era, later



to the Edwardian era, I think that, um, children were supposed to be tiny adults, and you could tell your kid a story but, like, buying a book for them of these little kid stories, not really something that even doting parents did.

**Travis:** That actually shows, if you read a lot of, like, kids' stuff from the time, or even farther back if you think about, like, Grimm's fairy tales and stuff. They're dark, right? Like, they are very much, like, "We're not sugar coating a lot of this stuff. We expect you to deal with the fact that rabbits die." [laughs] Like, there's no euphemisms here, folks!

**Teresa:** Uh, so she only got printed 250 copies for friends and family in 1901. So, the book was wildly successful, because all of those copies got sold.

**Travis:** Okay. So... she did 250, and they flew off the shelves.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And I'm hoping that the next thing you're going to tell me is then publishers were like, "Okay."

**Teresa:** Absolutely.

**Travis:** Okay, great. Phew!

**Teresa:** They were. So, uh, Frederick Warren and Co, one of the publishers who had initially rejected her, came crawling back. Um, and they reversed their decision and asked Beatrix instead to re-illustrate in color. So, they were like, "This is gonna be great. We need it colored so we can sell even more."

**Travis:** Isn't this always— like, when you hear about, like, the stories of a guy listening to a boy band and being like, "Ugh, this sucks!" And it's The Beatles?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** You know? And then, like, they pass on— I'm not saying Beatrix Potter is like The Beatles of the writing world, but man that happens a lot, huh?

**Teresa:** It sure does. So, it was published in October in 1902 and was an immediate best-seller! Um, people wanted more. And after Peter, she wrote things like *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin*.

**Travis:** Yeah, of course.

**Teresa:** And *The Tailor of Gloucester* the following year, and would continue to turn out amazing books as late as the 1930's.

**Travis:** And what's great is, like I said earlier about, like, the *Peter Rabbit*-verse or whatever, they all cross over, and it's like, this is Peter's cousin, he gets his own book. And then Peter and his cousin hang out together. And then Squirrel Nutkins comes over and hangs out with Peter. And so, like, when you're a kid, that's very exciting! When you get crossovers. When you're an *adult*, it's exciting to get crossovers!

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay. So, professional life, off the hook, going great. Personal life... mmm, not so much.

**Travis:** Yeah, you haven't mentioned. Did she marry?

**Teresa:** Uh, okay. So, let's go through it. She started dating the editor, Norman Warren, and although, you know, at the time, chaperoned of course, uh, a relationship started to bloom, but Beatrix's parents opposed the match. Uh, they wouldn't accept his proposal, because they decided his trade was too uncivilized. So, he was a workin' man, and they didn't—

**Travis:** Now, wait. Is this the editor for her book?

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, for all of the *Peter Rabbits* and stuff. The trade was uncivilized, and they I guess were hoping for a trust fund kid.

**Travis:** Hmm, yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, but Beatrix was like, "I got my own money now. I do what I want!"

**Travis:** It's so interesting to me, 'cause by this point she's, like, in her 30's, right? And so it's interesting to me that the parents would have— and I guess what

you're saying is they didn't, but that at, like, 35 there would be a point where it's just like, "Hmmm... I don't know, Beatrix." And like, "Guys. I'm 35."

**Teresa:** "I do what I want!"

**Travis:** "I'm marrying this dude."

**Teresa:** So, uh, her money allowed her to emancipate herself and get engaged to Norman in 1905. Unfortunately... Norman passed away only about a month later.

**Travis:** Oh, man!

**Teresa:** Yeah...

**Travis:** Dip!

**Teresa:** Uh, so once Norman was out of the picture, she again returned to nature. Uh, going back to, you know, her— her illustrative— illustrative? Illustrative past.

**Travis:** Yeah. Illustrious, and illustrative.

**Teresa:** Uh, and without a wedding on the horizon, she used that money to invest in farmland in the lake district, which she loved so much in her youth.

**Travis:** Tracks. Very much tracks, yes.

**Teresa:** Um, and so she became a staunch supporter of the National Trust, which was dedicated to preserving buildings and farms with the natural rural culture of the era, um, and, you know, she— during her lifetime, she bought a ton of farms and land, um, and was very active in carried for it. I'm sorry, caring for it. Um, so... she was raised to be a kind of, like, Victorian, Edwardian lady.

**Travis:** And she became a farmer.

**Teresa:** A farmer. [laughs]

**Travis:** Love it.

**Teresa:** She bred sheep, she, um, had a lot of farm animals, she won prizes for her sheep at local shows, and became the first elected female President of the Herdwick Sheep Breeders Association.

**Travis:** Nice. This is a lot— I don't know why it makes me so happy when I hear about an author— and this isn't the right term but, like, practicing what they preach. But kind of like, "I write about farms and animals and stuff, and guess what? I own farms and animals and stuff!"

**Teresa:** [simultaneously] Animals and stuff!

**Travis:** Like, there's something about that that makes me so happy, because it—I think it's because it makes it very clear that they're not just writing about this thing 'cause they think it will sell. Like, that they're writing about the thing, and they'd probably write about whether anybody bought books or not. And that to me is always, like, the hallmark of passion, you know? Of just like, no, clearly she's walkin' the walk. She loves this stuff, right? She bought farms and animals!

**Teresa:** Speaking of passion, romance did finally come back into her life at age 46!

**Travis:** Oh boy, uh-huh.

**Teresa:** Which is very old for the time period.

**Travis:** For the time. If anybody's listening, for the time period.

**Teresa:** For the time period.

**Travis:** It is not very old, period. [laughs]

**Teresa:** Uh, she married—

**Travis:** It's very old for the period.

**Teresa:** For the period. She married a man named William Heelis, who was a local solicitor who assisted her in, you know, buyin' up all that property. Um, in 1912.

**Travis:** Okay. So, she married in 1912— yeah, 46 years. Wow.

**Teresa:** Yeah! So, let's dive a little further into the books.

**Travis:** The books.

**Teresa:** For a session.

**Travis:** Okay, great.

**Teresa:** Um, so the time in the lake district is when she created the most beloved books and characters. So, we've got Miss Twiggy Winkle the Hedgehog—

**Travis:** Of course.

**Teresa:** Who—

**Travis:** Great— hey, great name. Can we all agree?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Who showed a young girl named Lucy how to help do chores and care for farm animals.

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** We have Mr. Jeremy Fisher, a brave and accident prone—

**Travis:** [laughs loudly]

**Teresa:** What?

**Travis:** That's just two completely different names of, like, Twiggy Winkles, and Jeremy Fisher.

**Teresa:** [laughs] He was a brave and accident prone frog who goes on a harrowing fishing expedition across a pond that rivals the Odyssey, really. I mean, for a little frog.

**Travis:** Yeah, yeah. It's right up there.

**Teresa:** There's Benjamin Bunny, part of the *Peter Rabbit* set that we have.

**Travis:** Benjamin Bunny is *Peter Rabbit*'s cousin, right?

**Teresa:** Exactly!

**Travis:** If I remember correctly. Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, other beloved characters include Jemima Puddleduck—

**Travis:** Great name.

**Teresa:** Littlepig Robinson.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Samuel Whiskers.

**Travis:** Okay. I'm bettin' he's a cat.

**Teresa:** Uh, yeah. So, Flopsy Bunny is in— you know all of those people. Uh, animals.

**Travis:** 'Cause there's Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail, right?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** There's Peter, and Peter's siblings, Flopsy and Mopsy and Cottontail.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** As opposed to Peter Cottontail, who's different.

**Travis:** And then there's [deep voice] Jeremy Fisher.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Um, all of these characters were great for books, great for licensing, and finally in 1903, great for dolls. Toys!

**Travis:** Ohhh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Toyetic is the word for that, when something makes good toys. It's very toyetic. So, if you see things like GI Joe and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and He-Man, these were very toyetic things.

**Teresa:** There were tons of properties that came from all of these characters, like tea sets, bedroom slippers, board games, stuff like that. And she always felt— she felt so passionately about the characters and about the whole, like, story business that she made sure that all the merchandise was completely high-brow, like, loved the quality—

**Travis:** High end.

**Teresa:** High end.

**Travis:** VIP.

**Teresa:** Yes. And made sure that every one of her books released were small enough in size that a child could pick it up and read it.

**Travis:** Oh yes. Very, very important.

**Teresa:** That's why you may not find original anthologies, by the way. Um, you know, she I think lived a pretty good life for the time period.

**Travis:** Oh, so we're wrappin' up! [laughs] You know what that means, folks! Oh, now we're talkin' in the past tense, sooo we're at...

**Teresa:** She is once quoted as saying, "If I had done anything, even a little, to help small children enjoy honest, simple pleasures, then I have done a bit of good."

She passed away in 1943—

**Travis:** There it is.

**Teresa:** —and left over 4000 acres of land, including 15 farms, to the care of Natural— Natchional— bleh— National Trust. I almost said Natural Trust, which is not a thing. National Trust.

Um, and so her legacy continues, not only in the literary world, but also in the beautiful landscaping... scenes that she loved so much to paint.

**Travis:** You know, also, I'd be willing to bet— well, as I often say on the show, that there's, like, literary scholars who could, like, really back this up— but I bet, because of her illustrative background, as you said, uh, and her, like, attention to detail, which you can really see in the illustrations that go along with, like, the *Peter Rabbit* books, that, like, it was a huge influence in the way people think of, like, illustrations in children's books, and the importance of them. Like, I guarantee you wouldn't have, like, Richard Scarry or even, like, Dr. Seuss if it wasn't for Beatrix Potter.

**Teresa:** I agree with that. Today, more than 2 million Beatrix Potter books are sold across the world every year. That means four books every minute.

**Travis:** Oh wow.

**Teresa:** Um, and, you know, they—

**Travis:** 'Cause there's only 525,600 minutes.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** We all know that.

**Teresa:** Thanks, *RENT*.

**Travis:** That's just a thing we all could never forget.

**Teresa:** And like my parents did, it continues to be passed on from generation to generation.

**Travis:** Well, that's just great. And you know what? This episode you could pass on to the current generation by sharing with a friend! If you learned something from this, if you thought, "You know what? I grew up with those books and this really taught me something about Beatrix Potter that I never knew," guess what?



That's probably true of your friends, so why don't you share it with somebody today? Share the link, tell 'em about the episode, anything you can do to help get the word out. We always appreciate— you know, word of mouth is the most important way to share a podcast. We don't really have, like, advertising in podcasting, so word of mouth means a lot to us. So, you can share it on Twitter, share it on Facebook, share it wherever people are gathering.

**Teresa:** And you can rate, review, and subscribe to us.

**Travis:** Uh, and we want to say thank you to Alex, our researcher.

**Teresa:** Of course.

**Travis:** Without whom we wouldn't be able to make this show. Thank you, Alex.

**Teresa:** She really enjoyed the YouTube videos specifically. She said that more than one made her cry.

**Travis:** Aww. Uh, we also want to say thank you to our podcast home, Maximumfun.org. You can go check out all the other amazing shows at Maximumfun.org. If you want to see the other McElroy projects, you can go to McElroy.family. If you want to see all the cool McElroy merch, McElroyMerch.com.

We should also mention, we've got a live show, a McElroy, *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* live show with *Sawbones* opening. It's a digital live show. It's a virtual live show, so you can watch it from wherever. That's going to be November 21st at 9pm. You can get tickets at live.themcelroy.family, uh, and come and hang out with us for what I'm sure to be, uh, a weird and wonderful time.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Who knows?

**Teresa:** I look forward to watching it.

**Travis:** Yes. Who else do we normally thank, Teresa?

**Teresa:** We always thank Brent "Brental Floss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to

Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, and you can— when we take questions from our listeners, you can ask those questions on our Twitter @shmannerscast.

Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners, which you can join if you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans.

And our topics are all taken from shmannerscast@gmail.com. Please keep submitting those topic suggestions. We love to get 'em. Keep submitting those idioms you'd love to hear from us. We've almost got another show ready.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And specifically, we are looking for non-US idioms. We're lookin' at—

**Travis:** Yes. Idioms from other countries.

**Teresa:** —we're lookin' at you, Britain and Australia.

**Travis:** Well, and everywhere else. And literally everywhere else.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** We're looking *everywhere* else.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And that's gonna do it for us. Join us again next week.

**Teresa:** No RSVP required.

**Travis:** You've been listening to *Shmanners*...

**Teresa:** Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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