The Tale of The Tale of Peter Rabbit

The Tale of Peter Rabbit began as a letter written in 1893 by Beatrix Potter to 5 year-old Noel Moore, the ailing child of one of her former governesses.

“My dear Noel, I don’t know what to write to you, so I shall tell you a story about four little rabbits whose names were Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Peter,” began the letter, which contained the essence of Potter’s first book.

Seven years later, Potter built on this letter and produced a manuscript with black-and-white illustrations. She submitted her work to several publishers who uniformly rejected it. Eventually, as a self-published book it caught the interest of the publishing house of Frederick Warne & Co. Warne asked Potter to produce additional color illustrations. The Tale of Peter Rabbit was published in October 1902.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit was the first in a series of 23 small books by Potter. The book sold for 1 shilling, a price Potter believed that children could afford. She was also an astute businesswoman who understood the value and potential of her literary creation. As well as writing books, she also designed toys based on her drawings for Peter Rabbit, wisely registering her design at the Patent Office in London in 1904.

On the centennial of its publication The Tale of Peter Rabbit has surpassed 250 reprints and has been translated into more than 35 languages.