The Tale of Peter Rabbit

Part 1

Once upon a time there were four little Rabbits, and their names were Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail, and Peter. They lived with their mother in a sandbank, under the root of a very big tree.

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“Now, my dears,” said old Mrs. Rabbit one morning, “you may go into the fields or down the lane, but don’t go into Mr. McGregor’s garden: your father had an accident there; he was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor.”

“Now run along, and don’t get into mischief. I am going out.” Then old Mrs. Rabbit took a basket and her umbrella, and went through the wood to the baker’s. She bought a loaf of brown bread and five currant buns.

Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail, who were good little bunnies, went down the lane to gather blackberries, but Peter, who was very naughty, ran straight to Mr. McGregor’s garden, and squeezed under the gate! First he ate some lettuce and some French beans; and then he ate some radishes; and then, feeling rather sick, he went to look for some parsley.

But around the end of a cucumber frame, whom should he meet but Mr. McGregor! Mr. McGregor was on his hands and knees planting young cabbages, but jumped up and ran after Peter, waving a rake and calling out, “Stop, thief!”

Peter was very, very frightened; he rushed all over the garden, for he had forgotten the way back to the gate. He lost one of his shoes among the cabbages, and the other shoe among the potatoes.

After losing them, he ran on four legs and went faster, so that I think he might have gotten away—except that he got caught by the large buttons on his jacket. It was a blue jacket with brass buttons, quite new.

Peter gave himself up for lost, and cried big tears; but his sobs were overheard by some friendly sparrows, who flew to him in great excitement, and begged him to try to escape.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit (Part 2)

Mr. McGregor came up with a bucket to catch Peter. Peter, however, was a sneaky little bunny, and he escaped just in time, leaving his jacket behind him. He rushed into the toolshed and looked around—and then jumped into a large can. It would have been a perfect hiding place—except it was full of cold, cold water!

Mr. McGregor was quite sure that Peter was somewhere in the toolshed, perhaps hidden under a flowerpot. He began to turn them over carefully, looking under each. Presently Peter sneezed—“A-choo!”

Mr. McGregor was after him in no time and tried to put his foot on Peter, who jumped out of a window, tipping over three small plants. The window was too small for Mr. McGregor, and he was tired of running after Peter. He went back to his work.

Peter sat down to rest; he was out of breath and trembling with fright, and he had no idea which way to go. Also, he was very wet from sitting in that can.

After a time he began to wander about, going lippity—lippity—not very fast, and looking all around. He found a door in a wall, but it was locked, and there was no room for a fat little rabbit to squeeze underneath.

An old mouse was running in and out over the stone doorstep, carrying peas and beans to her family in the wood. Peter asked her the way to the gate, but she had such a large pea in her mouth that she could not answer. She only shook her head at him. Peter began to cry.

Then he tried to find his way straight across the garden, but he became more and more puzzled. Presently, he came to a pond where Mr. McGregor filled his water-cans. A white cat was staring at some goldfish.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit (Part 3)

She sat very, very still, but now and then the tip of her tail moved as if it were alive. Peter thought he should go away without speaking to her; he had heard about cats from his cousin, little Benjamin Bunny.

He went back towards the toolshed, but suddenly, quite close to him, he heard the noise of a hoe—scr-r-ritch, scratch, scratch, scritch. Peter hid underneath the bushes.

But soon, when nothing happened, he came out, climbed up on a wheelbarrow, and looked around. The first thing he saw was Mr. McGregor hoeing onions. His back was turned toward Peter, and beyond him was the gate.

Peter got down very quietly off the wheelbarrow, and started running as fast as he could go, along a straight walk behind some bushes. Mr. McGregor caught sight of him at the corner, but Peter did not care. He squeezed under the gate and was safe at last in the wood outside the garden.

Mr. McGregor hung up the little jacket and the shoes to frighten the blackbirds. Peter never stopped running until he got home to the big tree.

He was so tired that he lay down on the nice soft sand on the floor and shut his eyes. His mother was busy cooking; she wondered what he had done with his clothes. It was the second little jacket and pair of shoes that Peter had lost in only a couple weeks.

I am sorry to say that Peter was not very well during the evening. His mother put him to bed and made him some chamomile tea; and she gave some to Peter!

“One tablespoonful to be taken at bedtime.”

Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail, however, had bread, milk and blackberries for supper.

The End

Editing tasks for Peter Rabbit

1. First, read through this version of Peter Rabbit and find all of the characters (you should find at least 10; this includes two that are mentioned but don’t actually appear in this story).
2. Do all of them speak? If not, can you add some speaking for each one?
3. What might Flopsy say? How about this: “Yea!!! I love current buns!”
4. What might the white cat say?
5. What might the sparrows say?
6. Change Peter’s thoughts into speaking: “He was out of breath and trembling with fright.” in part 12 might become: “Whew! What a horrible old man—I’m lucky to get away.”
7. Are there other things that might speak? For example, what might the wheelbarrow say when Peter climbs up on it/him/her?
8. Are there places which have too much description? Might you change those into dialogue? For example, check part 4 when Peter is eating.
9. If you change this into a modern story, for example, how might it change? If I rewrote this as a “modern” story, for example, all the rabbits would have cell phones and Mr. McG would be an organic, vegetarian farmer who couldn’t possibly eat rabbit meat…so Peter’s father might be enslaved as a pet rabbit in the McG’s house.
10. Other things or places?