



VICTORIAN ENGLAND: THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

SHARING STORIES:
Children's Book Illustrators



WHAT WE LEARNED:

- We learned how Victoria and Albert's growing family changed the era's ideas about childhood. Rather than looking at children as "adults in waiting" people began to view childhood as a special time of nurturing and flourishing.
- Because of these changing attitudes writers began to focus on creating imaginative tales specifically for children.
- Of course, such stories needed pictures, so we explored three of the era's groundbreaking illustrators—John Tenniel, Beatrix Potter, and Randolph Caldecott.

ART ACTIVITY: John Tenniel Watercolors

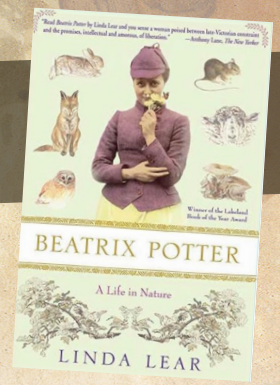
Today our middle school class explored Victorian children's literature. Not only were the stories of this time charming, but also the pictures that adorned their pages. Beatrix Potter, John Tenniel, and Randolph Caldecott are the great Victorian illustrators your student was introduced to today. After learning about their work, we borrowed the illustrations of Sir John Tenniel to create our own watercolor illustrations. We used graphite paper to transfer the images onto our paper and finished them by mixing colors and using watercolor painting techniques. We couldn't be happier with the finished works!



BOOK Nook

FOR Parents

Beatrix Potter: A Life in Nature
Written by Linda Lear



The art and personalities covered in these lessons highlight how the Victorian era's changing attitudes toward childhood launched a "Golden Age in Children's Literature." As one historian notes the innovative illustrators of this period turned "Art for the nursery into Art indeed." The lessons and activities presented are designed to inspire your child's curiosity and encourage further exploration into the wonderful world of children's book illustration.

EXPANDING THE VIEW: Victorian Pop-Up Books

This golden age of children's literature also included 3-D books. Although pop-up formats had been used for centuries, it was not until the Victorian era that they appeared specifically for children.

Days of Delight is a good example! Click [HERE](#) to see pictures from this 1896 book by Raphael Tuck & Sons.

Lane's *Telescopic View of The Great Exhibition* highlights another popular format in this genre. Click [HERE](#) to see pictures from this work. Notice that as you "open" the book the flat image becomes three-dimensional.

PAPER ENGINEERING Modern Pop-Ups

Robert Sabuda has been "crowned" the king of modern Pop-Up books: He notes that, "With the ability to hold a crayon, came the discovery that I was an artist. I spent hours, days and weeks drawing, painting, cutting and gluing. My bedroom was a constant whirlwind of pencil shavings, drippy paint brushes and mounds of paper scraps. My mother's pleas of 'when are you going to clean up this mess?!' went unanswered!" But it was a trip to the dentist that sent him on the life-long adventure of becoming a "paper engineer." Click [HERE](#) to watch the Reading Rockets interview "A Trip to the Dentist," to learn more!



Following the video, click [HERE](#) to visit Robert's website and learn how to create your own simple pop-up. You can also click [HERE](#) to learn about Leonardo da Vinci's Mechanical Knight!

THE ADVENTURES CONTINUE: Arthur Rackham

Due to artists like Tenniel, Potter, and Caldecott the Victorian period became known as the “Golden Age of Children’s Literature.” However, it would be artists like Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) who made sure their legacy of wonder would continue into our time. Arthur Rackham was the greatest of the late Victorian children’s book illustrators. His versions of *Grimms Fairy Tales*, *Rip van Winkle*, *Peter Pan*, and *Alice in Wonderland* are considered classics. Rackham died in 1939. The last book he illustrated was Kenneth Graham’s *Wind in the Willows*. “In the hands of artists like Arthur Rackham, children’s books attained levels of beauty, elaboration, and quality never equaled since” (Christopher Wood). Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the artist and to see his *Alice in Wonderland* illustrations.

CONNECTIONS AT HOME: Become a Mycologist!

Beatrix Potter loved exploring the natural world! She and her brother Bertram would take a journal on their long nature walks, filling the pages with detailed descriptions and pictures of what they discovered. Beatrix continued journaling into adulthood. These entries would create a path for Beatrix’s later success not only in literature but also in science. Although her literary fame is widely known, few realize that her mycology illustrations are still highly valued among those who study natural science.

Take a moment to review Beatrix’s life by watching this brief [VIDEO](#) produced by the British Council. Once you’ve finished, grab your journal and take a nature walk with a family member. Be sure to carefully describe and draw what you observe—insects, flowers, blades of grass, acorns, mushrooms, frogs, rabbits, mice, or whatever else suits your fancy! When you get home, study your entries then write and illustrate your own imaginative story. Be sure to share it with family and friends.

ADDITIONAL Resources

Click on the links below to read, create, and discover more:

- [Sir John Tenniel’s Alice in Wonderland](#), The Marginalian
- [Beatrix Potter: The Artist](#), Beatrix Potter Society
- [Under the Microscope](#), The Armit Museum and Gallery Library
- [Beatrix Potter Family Photos](#), Beatrix Potter Society
- [Drawing Famous Artists](#), Winged Canvas Video
- [Randolph Caldecott: The Man Who Could Not Stop Drawing](#), Scholastic
- [The Most Beautiful Pop-Up Books & Paper Engineering: A Collector’s Guide](#)
- [Maurice Sendak’s Weird and Wondrous Illustrations for “The Nutcracker,”](#) The Marginalian

Due to the changing nature of web resources, M&G strongly urges you as the parent to preview these sites before your child accesses them. The fact that these sites are available on this handout does not imply that M&G endorses their content from the standpoint of morals, philosophy, theology, or scientific hypotheses.