

MOTHER MELANIA'S MONTHLY MISSIVE - Feb 2023

A not entirely random mix of reflections on life, coloring pages, thoughts about kids' books & updates on Mother Melania's books

Today's Reflection - Staying Safe in a Dangerous World

Before re-reading *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, I vaguely remembered it as a sweet kids' book. It does have its sweet moments, but it also has no-nonsense warnings of what may happen to little rabbits who disobey their parents. *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* (our focus this month) warns even more sternly of the results of impertinence, disrespect, and ungratefulness. Little Nutkin barely escapes with his life after a shocking attack, which I found unsettling. But why? Beatrix Potter is a universally esteemed children's author.

Why would her books unsettle me? Three things at least that I can think of.

First, most of us don't live very close to nature anymore. Potter was a well-respected naturalist, who was acquainted with both the beauty and the savagery of nature. Her animals reflect this rather than having a one-to-one correspondence with humans.

Second, for decades, the moral development aspect of children's literature has focused mostly on the 'soft' virtues. I do that, too. If I were to write a book about Squirrel Nutkin, I would stress the need for his friends to be patient, kind, forgiving, etc. while also underscoring his own need to recognize and change his ways.

Third, we live in an age of "helicopter parents," who try to protect their children from EVERYTHING. Yet, this often has the contrary effect, preventing children from learning how to handle everyday difficulties. So, they are defenseless when confronted with real life.

Beatrix Potter's approach is much closer to a traditional fairy tale than to modern children's books. Her cautionary tales, which ASSUME that children will be going out into a dangerous world, provide traditional wisdom on how to do that as safely as possible. Far better to do that than to leave our children unprotected against life.

I'm still not planning on writing a story in which a bunny may end up in a rabbit pie! Yet, I'm newly appreciative of the need for such stories. Beatrix Potter, God bless you!

Book Sale!!

When we started publishing my books, we set the price at \$7.99.

Later, we raised the price of new books to \$9.99, intending to raise the price of the others to \$9.99 also. We're set to do that on March 1

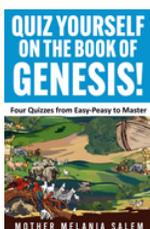
But FIRST, we are running a sale. All my \$7.99 and \$9.99 books are available at our bookstore from Feb 1-28 for \$7.50 (including tax, but not shipping).

mothermelaniaskidsbooks.com



Mother Melania's Book Update

Best Buddies: What's in a Name is now available both in Paperback and on Kindle. The Kindle version will be available free Feb 16-18 on Amazon. If you download it, would you please leave an Amazon review? It helps a lot!



I'm also working on a Bible Quiz series. Each quiz book consists of four 10-question quizzes, ranging from Easy-Peasy to Mega-Master. The back pages include the Easy-Peasy quizzes for both Genesis and Exodus. Try them out and let me know what you think!

Classic Kids' Books: The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin

Nutkin, his brother, and their cousins go to the island of Old Brown the owl to gather nuts. Unlike the others, who respectfully ask Old Brown's permission and bring him gifts, Nutkin offers Old Brown nothing except for impudent riddles. Finally, Old Brown has enough and Nutkin learns a very costly lesson. For more details, check out the worksheets in the back pages.



To buy *Beatrix Potter The Complete Tales* click [here](#). Or click [here](#) for a free copy of *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* only.

What's in the Back Pages?

- *Squirrel Nutkin* worksheets
- Quizzes on Genesis & Exodus
- Scripture verse coloring page



SQUIRREL NUTKIN - Discussion Questions

- Who is Old Brown? What do you think about him in the beginning of the story?
 - An owl who 'owns' Owl Island
 - To me, he seems a bit cross and he doesn't suffer fools gladly
- Why did Nutkin and the other squirrels go to Old Brown's island?
 - To gather nuts (but Nutkin didn't help them, except maybe the first day)
- How did the other squirrels treat Old Brown?
 - They brought him presents every day and spoke very respectfully to him
 - Most of the presents were animals for Old Brown to eat - probably so that he wouldn't eat the squirrels!
- How did Nutkin treat Old Brown?
 - He brought no presents
 - He spoke disrespectfully to him and told him silly riddles
 - He acted worse and worse while trying to get Old Brown's attention
- What did Old Brown eventually do to Nutkin? Why?
 - He caught him and tried to skin him because Nutkin jumped on his head
- What happened to Nutkin then?
 - He got away, but he lost half his tail in the process.
- Did you see signs in the story that Old Brown was losing patience and was about to react?
 - He never said a word, but there are signs that he was getting very angry (he shut the door in Nutkin's face and later turned up his eyes in disgust at him)
- What did you think when Old Brown tried to skin Nutkin?
 - I was very surprised. I was thinking of him like I would think of an adult human (who might try to teach Nutkin a lesson, but not kill him)
 - But Old Brown is an OWL, not a human, and owls DO eat animals
- In this story, we meet Nutkin, his brother, and their cousins. Who isn't in the story?
 - Their parents
- How might the story have been different if Nutkin's parents were present?
 - They could have made sure he knew that Old Brown could be dangerous
 - They could have insisted that Nutkin behave properly or not go to the island
- What are some lessons Nutkin MAY have learned?
 - Be respectful
 - It's important to reciprocate (give somebody something in return for what they give you)
 - The world can be a dangerous place. Don't make it MORE dangerous by doing things you know that you shouldn't
- Do you think Nutkin DID learn those lessons?
 - He stopped telling riddles and maybe he stopped teasing dangerous animals, but he didn't learn to be respectful (he would throw sticks, shout, etc.)
 - Note that this kind of behavior is natural for squirrels. Sometimes we also have trouble outgrowing bad behavior that has become natural for us.
- Have you ever done something rude or unwise and got in trouble for it? What lessons did you learn from that experience?
 - Answers will vary

SQUIRREL NUTKIN - Vocabulary

Beck - a mountain stream

Bonny - attractive, beautiful

Bower - a pleasant shady place in the woods

Counterpane - a bedspread (out-of-date usage)

Dock - a type of small plant (also, a place to tie up a ship)

Flutter - to fly unsteadily

Gracious - kind and pleasant (also, showing divine Grace)

Groat - a small silver coin

Hackamore - a type of bridle for a horse (but used here just to sound funny)

Hazel - a type of shrub or small tree

Impertinent - disrespectful, rude

Nettle - a kind of small plant with stinging hairs

Ninepins - a kind of bowling game

Obstinate - stubborn

Plum pudding - a kind of pudding made with raisins, currants (sort of like raisins), and spices but NOT plums!

Red herring - a false clue [comes from a fox hunting practice of using smoked herring (which are red) to mask the fox's scent to confuse the hounds to keep the hunt going]

Rush - a type of plant that looks like grass (also, to move quickly)

Scuffle - a short, confused fight or struggle

Scutter - to move with quick, small steps

Wright - a maker or builder (e.g. shipwright, wagonwright)

SQUIRREL NUTKIN - Matching

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. Beck - d | a. a type of shrub or small tree |
| 2. Bonny - j | b. a kind of bowling game |
| 3. Bower - i | c. a pudding made with raisins, currants & spices |
| 4. Counterpane - m | d. a mountain stream |
| 5. Dock - g | e. kind and pleasant |
| 6. Flutter - o | f. a maker or builder (e.g. shipwright, wagonwright) |
| 7. Gracious - e | g. a type of small plant |
| 8. Groat - l | h. a short, confused fight or struggle |
| 9. Hackamore - r | i. a pleasant shady place in the woods |
| 10. Hazel - a | j. attractive, beautiful |
| 11. Impertinent - s | k. a false clue |
| 12. Nettle - q | l. a small silver coin |
| 13. Ninepins - b | m. a bedspread |
| 14. Obstinate - t | n. a type of plant that looks like grass |
| 15. Plum pudding - c | o. to fly unsteadily |
| 16. Red herring - k | p. to move with quick, small steps |
| 17. Rush - n | q. a kind of small plant with stinging hairs |
| 18. Scuffle - h | r. a type of bridle |
| 19. Scutter - p | s. disrespectful, rude |
| 20. Wright - f | t. stubborn |

SQUIRREL NUTKIN - Riddles

1. Riddle me, riddle me, rot-tot-tote! A little wee man, in a red red coat! A staff in his hand, and a stone in his throat; If you'll tell me this riddle, I'll give you a groat.

2. Old Mr. B! Riddle-me-ree! Hitty Pitty within the wall, Hitty Pitty without the wall; If you touch Hitty Pitty, Hitty Pitty will bite you!

3. A house full, a hole full! And you cannot gather a bowl-full!

4. The man in the wilderness said to me, 'How many strawberries grow in the sea?' I answered him as I thought good— 'As many red herrings as grow in the wood.'

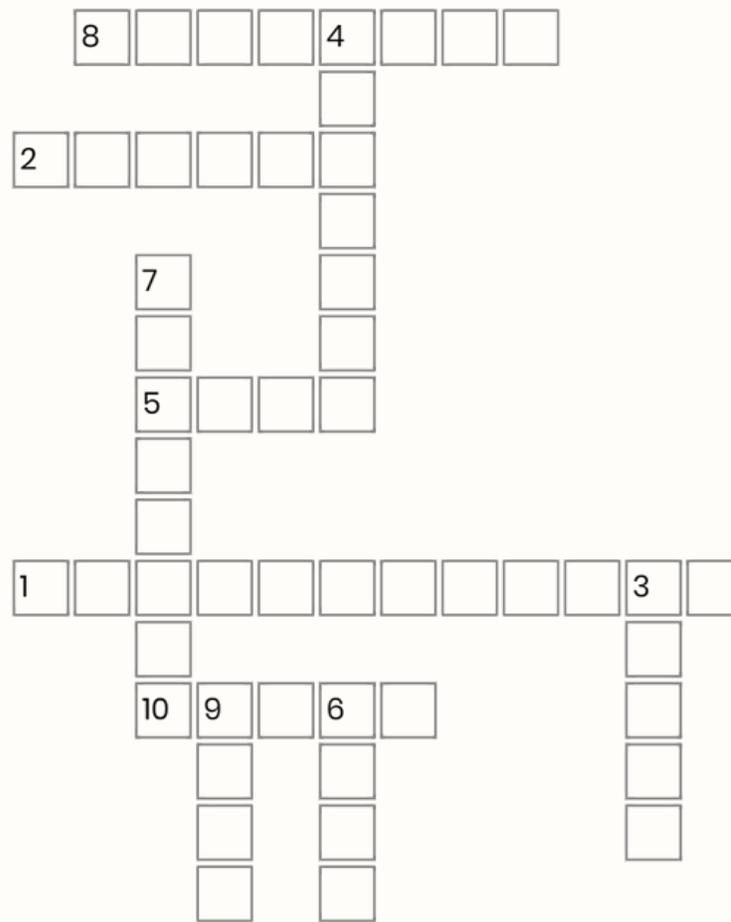
5. Old Mr. B! riddle-me-ree Flour of England, fruit of Spain, Met together in a shower of rain; Put in a bag tied round with a string, If you'll tell me this riddle, I'll give you a ring!

6. Hum-a-bum! buzz! buzz! Hum-a-bum buzz! As I went over Tipple-tine I met a flock of bonny swine; Some yellow-nacked, some yellow backed! They were the very bonniest swine That e'er went over Tipple-tine.

7. Old Mr. B! Old Mr. B! Hickamore, Hackamore, on the King's kitchen door; All the King's horses, and all the King's men, Couldn't drive Hickamore, Hackamore, Off the King's kitchen door.

8. Arthur O'Bower has broken his band, He comes roaring up the land! The King of Scots with all his power, Cannot turn Arthur of the Bower!

SQUIRREL NUTKIN - Crossword



Across

- [1] Nutkin's brother
- [2] Old Brown lived on an _____.
- [5] The squirrels came to Owl Island to gather _____.
- [8] The last day that the squirrels came to the island was _____.
- [10] After Nutkin escaped, he would _____ his feet, scold, and shout if anyone asked him a riddle.

Down

- [3] The squirrels sailed to Owl Island on _____ made of twigs.
- [4] Nutkin liked to tell _____.
- [6] The first gift the squirrels brought Old Brown was three _____.
- [7] Nutkin played _____ with a crab apple and fir-cones.
- [9] Nutkin escaped Old Brown by pulling so hard that his _____ broke in two.

SQUIRREL NUTKIN - Coloring Page



SQUIRREL NUTKIN - Coloring Page



Easy-Peasy Quiz on Genesis

1. What did God create on the first day?

- a. Fish
- b. Light
- c. Birds
- d. The moon

2. Who tricked Eve into eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

- a. Adam
- b. Noah
- c. The serpent
- d. Cain

3. Who killed his brother?

- a. Cain
- b. Abel
- c. Seth
- d. Jarod

4. Who was the oldest person who ever lived?

- a. Adam
- b. Enoch
- c. Methuselah
- d. Lamech

5. Who built the ark?

- a. Isaiah
- b. Abraham
- c. King David
- d. Noah

6. How long did it rain when Noah was in the ark?

- a. 4 days and 4 nights
- b. 40 days and 40 nights
- c. 4 months
- d. 40 years

7. Who was born to Abraham and Sarah when they were both very old?

- a. Esau
- b. Isaac
- c. Terah
- d. Jacob

8. Why did Lot's wife turn into a pillar of salt?

- a. She ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
- b. She helped Jacob trick Isaac
- c. She was disrespectful to Moses
- d. She looked back at Sodom

9. Who sold his birthright for something to eat?

- a. Isaac
- b. Shem
- c. Esau
- d. Gad

10. Whose brothers were so envious of him that they sold him into slavery?

- a. Joseph
- b. Lot
- c. Benjamin
- d. Abel

Easy-Peasy Quiz on Exodus

1. What were the Kings of Egypt called?

- a. Caesar
- b. Pharaoh
- c. Your Majesty
- d. Emperor

2. Who saved Moses when he was a baby?

- a. Pharaoh
- b. Aaron
- c. Pharaoh's daughter
- d. Jethro

3. Who spoke to Moses from a burning bush?

- a. Pharaoh
- b. Aaron
- c. Joshua
- d. The LORD (God)

4. Who was Moses' brother?

- a. Aaron
- b. Caleb
- c. Joshua
- d. Gershom

5. What was the tenth and last plague?

- a. Frogs
- b. Gnats
- c. Locusts
- d. The death of the first born

6. What did the Israelites put on their doorposts so that their firstborn would not die?

- a. The blood of a lamb
- b. An olive leaf
- c. A palm branch
- d. A piece of unleavened bread

7. What sea did Moses and the Israelites cross?

- a. The Mediterranean Sea
- b. The Sea of Galilee
- c. The Dead Sea
- d. The Red Sea

8. Where did God give Moses the Ten Commandments?

- a. The Red Sea
- b. Mount Sinai
- c. Pharaoh's Palace
- d. Midian

9. God gave Moses instructions to build ___?

- a. A boat
- b. A temple
- c. A tabernacle
- d. A store

10. While in the desert, the Israelites worshipped ___?

- a. A golden calf
- b. A silver falcon
- c. A brown cow
- d. A bronze dog

THE WORDS
OF A WISE
MOUTH ARE
GRACIOUS



BUT THE LIPS
OF A FOOL SHALL
SWALLOW HIM UP

Ecclesiastes 10:12

Can you think of a time that

- you said something kind or wise?
- you said something mean or foolish?
- What happened?
- What lessons did you learn?

SOLUTIONS

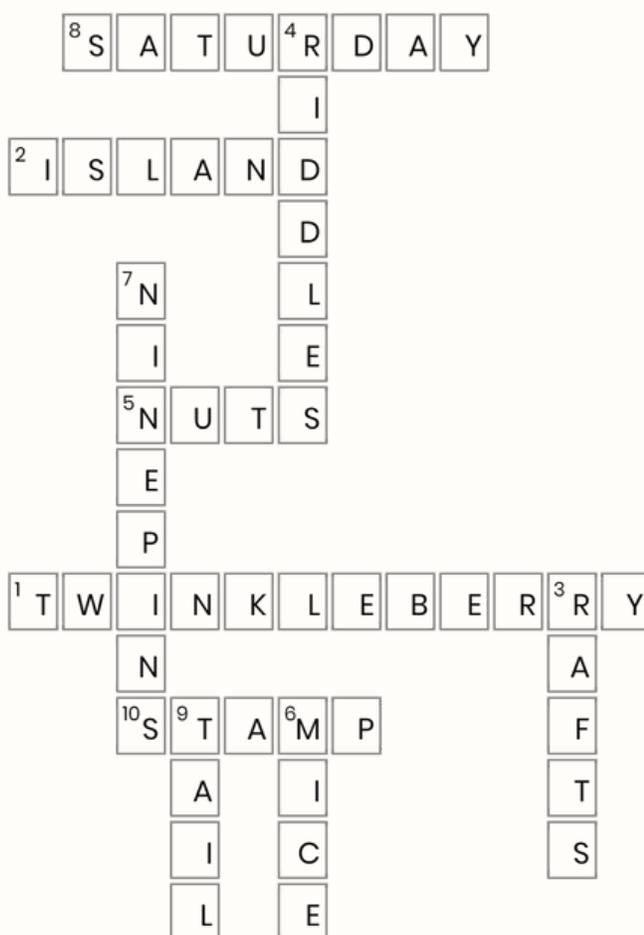
Squirrel Nutkin Matching

1 d, 2 j, 3 i, 4 m, 5 g, 6 o, 7 e, 8 l, 9 r, 10 a, 11 s, 12 q, 13 b, 14 t, 15 c, 16 k, 17 n, 18 h, 19 p, 20 f

Squirrel Nutkin Riddles

1 - cherry; 2 - nettle; 3 - smoke; 4 - none; 5 - plum pudding ; 6 - bee; 7 - sunbeam; 8 - wind

Squirrel Nutkin Crossword



Easy-Peasy Quiz on Genesis

1 b, 2 c, 3 a, 4 c, 5 d, 6 b, 7 b, 8 d, 9 c, 10 a

Easy-Peasy Quiz on Exodus

1 b, 2 c, 3 d, 4 a, 5 d, 6 a, 7 d, 8 b, 9 c, 10 a