

MOTHER MELANIA'S MONTHLY MISSIVE - Mar 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 - Enjoying a Challenge

Reading through Beatrix Potter's tales has reminded me of just how challenging the vocabulary in children's books often was in the early 20th century. This is particularly apparent in this month's tale, *The Tailor of Gloucester*. I had to look up two words in the first paragraph!

This isn't due just to the differences between British English of the 20th century and American English of the 21st. Potter herself remarks "Stuffs had strange names ... in the days of the Tailor of Gloucester." So, Potter's books are challenging, yet children over the decades have loved them.

Now, however, even adults may find these books too challenging to bother to read themselves, let alone read with their children. (I'm embarrassed to admit it, but I had to read this particular tale twice before I understood the main plot!) One reason for our current difficulties is that we have little appreciation for the joy of the struggle. That's a real shame because it's a joy indeed to struggle through a difficult task and succeed.

Some of us tutor at the local elementary school. One year, one of the sisters was working with a 6th-grader who was intelligent, yet had imbibed a belief that he was stupid. At first, he wouldn't try to learn because he was convinced that he couldn't. By the end of the school year, though, he remarked about a challenging assignment, "It was hard, but I did it!" In just nine months, he had gone from being nearly incapable of facing a challenge to enjoying one.

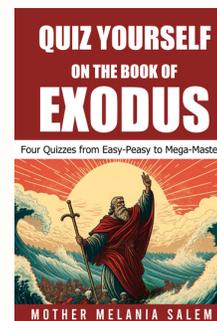
The last time we saw him, he was a confident teen who was well on his way to becoming a responsible and productive man.

If we want our children to grow up knowing the joy of the struggle, we first need to cultivate it in ourselves. No doubt we all have many areas of struggle. So, let's all pick one, and ask God for courage and joy in the midst of it. Then, indeed, we can enJOY the challenge because the One Who IS our Joy is there with us in the midst of it. And then, we will have done a hugely important thing for our children - teaching them by example. May God help us to do so!

Mother Melania's Book Update

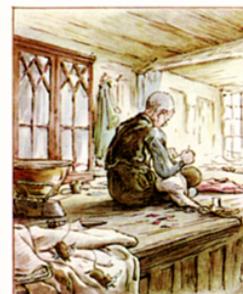
Quiz Yourself on the Book of Exodus is now available as a Kindle book for \$0.99 [here](#). If you could buy one and leave a review, we would greatly appreciate it.

Once I have finished the Torah (the 5 books of Moses), I plan to make the 5 books available in one paperback. I'm currently working on Leviticus. So, I have strong hopes of being done with the books of the Torah by June (I didn't say which year, though!)



Classic Kids' Books: The Tailor of Gloucester

The Tailor of Gloucester is the tale of an elderly, poverty-stricken tailor who has one last chance to make his fortune by sewing a satin waistcoat for the mayor's wedding day. However, he does not have enough twist (thread) to finish the last buttonhole.



He sends his cat Simpkin out for the twist, but in the meantime the tailor discovers mice that the cat has trapped for dinner and sets them free.

Simpkin, in a fit of pique, hides the twist and the tailor fears that he is ruined. Can the mice help?

Will Simpkin see the error of his ways? Read along with us and find out!

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

What's in the Back Pages?

- *Tailor of Gloucester* worksheets
- Scripture verse coloring page



THE TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER - Discussion Questions

- Who is the hero of the story?
 - Not clear. Remember that the hero usually changes for the better
 - Keep that in mind, and we'll revisit this question towards the end of the discussion
- What is the tailor worried about in early in the story? Why?
 - Making sure he can finish the mayor's special waistcoat
 - He doesn't have enough twist (thread) to finish the buttonholes
- What does the tailor ask his cat Simpkin to do?
 - Go out and buy bread, milk, and sausage AND enough twist to finish the waistcoat
- What does the tailor do that upsets Simpkin?
 - He frees the mice that Simpkin has trapped under teacups to eat later
- What does Simpkin do when he finds out the mice are gone? Why?
 - He hides the twist because he's mad at the tailor
- Why can't the tailor finish the waist coat?
 - He gets sick and can't finish sewing the pieces together
 - And he can't completely finish without the twist, which Simpkin has hidden
- Who does finish the waist coat? Why do you think they did it?
 - The mice. They were grateful to the tailor for saving them from getting eaten and maybe also for the little bits of material they used to make their own clothes
- Did the tailor purposely help the mice?
 - It's not clear. "Too narrow breadths for nought – except waistcoats for mice" probably just means he left very few scraps, not that he thought the mice would make themselves waistcoats!
 - And it's not clear WHY he let the mice out from under the teacups. It probably was from compassion, but he also got worried that his cat would get upset with him
 - YET, the mice were thankful and helped him out. They could easily have decided that he probably didn't MEAN to help them, but they were very kind towards him
- What happened on Christmas Eve?
 - The animals were able to talk so that some humans could understand them
- Which people do you think could understand the animals? Does this really happen?
 - Probably those with pure hearts who love God and love His world
 - No (at least I don't think so!!), but it's a lovely thought that shows that on the day of Christ's birth, the whole world rejoices
- How do the mice treat Simpkin? What do you think of that?
 - They keep teasing him because they know he can't get in to eat them
 - It's understandable, after all, he DID want to eat them
 - On the other hand, they COULD have decided to be kind (I'm not suggesting they let him in because cats DO eat mice, but at least not to tease him)

THE TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER - Discussion Questions (cont.)

- What does Simpkin do towards the end of the story? Why?
 - He returns the twist so that the mice can finish the waistcoat because he's ashamed of acting badly when the mice were acting well
 - Remember, cats DO have to catch mice. In this fallen world, sad things happen, and one of them is animals eating other animals.
- What do we know now about the main characters?
 - The Tailor
 - He's the title character and the plot revolves around him.
 - He does seem to have compassion on the mice, although he becomes worried that he'll get in trouble with Simpkin
 - His character doesn't really change, as far as we can tell
 - The Mice
 - They save the tailor from disaster to repay his kindness (whether actually he meant to help them or not)
 - They're willing to work hard and long to make the waistcoat
 - They're not saints. They keep teasing Simpkin
 - Their character doesn't really change either, as far as we can tell
 - Simpkin
 - He gets angry (understandably enough) at the tailor for taking away his meal (the mice) and hides the twist, which could have ruined the tailor
 - He repents at the end and gives back the twist
 - He recognizes the goodness of the mice towards the tailor, although they teased him; so, he probably decides never to eat at least THESE mice
 - So, his character has definitely changed, and for the better
- So, who's the hero?
 - let your children make their case for who they think it is
 - if there is a hero in the technical sense, it would be Simpkin
 - But maybe this story is just about different characters learning lessons
 - the tailor learns that kind acts are sometimes rewarded in the most unexpected way; not to regret helping others, even when it looks like it might cause us harm ...
 - Simpkin learns to see goodness in those he would normally be enemies with; hiding the twist was not the best way to deal with being angry ...
 - Not sure if the mice learned a lesson, maybe that it's important to help others who have helped you (whether they meant to or not); maybe that Simpkin wasn't all bad

THE TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER - Discussion Questions (cont.)

- Has anybody ever done something really nice for you (like the tailor did for the mice and the mice did for the tailor)? What did (or could) you do in return?
 - Answers will vary
 - Ask God to bless them, help them when they need help, make something special for them, buy them a special gift, do something nice for somebody else that needs help ...
- Has anybody ever teased you (like the mice did to Simpkin)? What did (or could) you do?
 - Answers will vary
 - Ask God to help you forgive them; be kind to them (in some of the same ways as above); look for what's good about them; talk to somebody wise about the best way to handle the situation; look in your own heart to see if you were mean to them in some way first
- A VERY SERIOUS QUESTION THAT YOU MAY NOT WANT TO ADDRESS - What should you do if somebody ever tried to hurt you really bad or even kill you (like Simpkin wanting to eat the mice)?
 - Tell your parents (or if they're not there, whoever is in charge); call 911
 - NOTE - as Christians, we have God's grace to forgive even this, but I probably wouldn't talk directly about this to kids. Rather, if I thought there was a need to address this, I would read the Gospel where Christ on the Cross forgives those who killed Him & then the passage in Acts where St. Stephen dies commending himself to Christ and asking forgiveness for those who were stoning him to death
- Have you ever done something mean to someone (like Simpkin hiding the twist) and then felt bad about it? What did (or could) you do?
 - Answers will vary
 - Admit what you did and ask the person to forgive you; make it up in some way (return it, pay for it, fix it, etc.), go to confession ...
- Have you ever been in a situation like the tailor's that seems hopeless? What could you do?
 - See if there is something else you could do that you forgot about
 - Ask friends and family for help and advice
 - Pray to God for help and thank Him for all the help He has given you in the past

TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER - Vocabulary

Breadth - width; how wide something is

Crockery - pots, cups, etc. made out of clay

Gable - a triangular part of a house formed by two sides of the roof

Hearth - the floor of a fireplace; it is a symbol of home and family

Hinder - to make something hard; to get in someone's way

Lattice - a crisscrossed frame, usually made of wood or metal

Nought - nothing, zero

Penn'orth - a penny's worth (a penny used to be worth a lot more!)

Periwig - a kind of small wig that men wore in olden days

Pipkin - a small clay pot with a handle

Popkin - an old-fashioned affectionate term for a small child

Ravel - to undo, confuse, or complicate

Shuffle - to slide your feet; to mix things up

Skein - a long piece of thread or yarn that is wound into a coil

Snippet - a little piece; to cut into little pieces

Throstle - an old-fashioned term for a song thrush. Some common members of the thrush family are robins, bluebirds and nightingales

Trudge - to walk slowly with heavy steps, usually because you're tired

Threadbare - old and worn out

Vexed - annoyed, frustrated, or worried

Wainscot - strips of wood that line the bottom part of a wall

TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER – Matching

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1. Breadth | a. the floor of a fireplace |
| 2. Crockery | b. a crisscrossed frame |
| 3. Gable | c. an old-fashioned affectionate term for a small child |
| 4. Hearth | d. to slide your feet; to mix things up |
| 5. Hinder | e. a penny's worth |
| 6. Lattice | f. pots, cups, etc. made out of clay |
| 7. Nought | g. a little piece; to cut into little pieces |
| 8. Penn'orth | h. to walk slowly with heavy steps |
| 9. Periwig | i. a kind of small wig that men wore in olden days |
| 10. Pipkin | j. width; how wide something is |
| 11. Popkin | k. to make something hard; to get in someone's way |
| 12. Ravel | l. a small clay pot with a handle |
| 13. Shuffle | m. a triangular part of a house formed by two sides of the roof |
| 14. Skein | n. to undo, confuse, or complicate |
| 15. Snippet | o. annoyed, frustrated, or worried |
| 16. Throstle | p. old and worn out |
| 17. Trudge | q. a long piece of thread or yarn that is wound into a coil |
| 18. Threadbare | r. an old-fashioned term for a song thrush. |
| 19. Vexed | s. strips of wood that line the bottom part of a wall |
| 20. Wainscot | t. nothing, zero |

TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER - Word Search

(All the word search terms are tailoring terms, many are archaic.)

SOME IDEAS FOR USING THIS INFORMATION

1. Do an image search on the internet for these terms
2. Find out which fabrics and garments are still in use
3. Get a pattern for one of the garments and make it, using one of the fabrics



Chenille

Embroidery

Floss

Gauze

Lappet

Lutestring

Paduasoy

Pompadour

Ruffle

Satin

Silk

Skein

Stuff

Taffeta

Tambour

Thread paper

Tippet

Trim

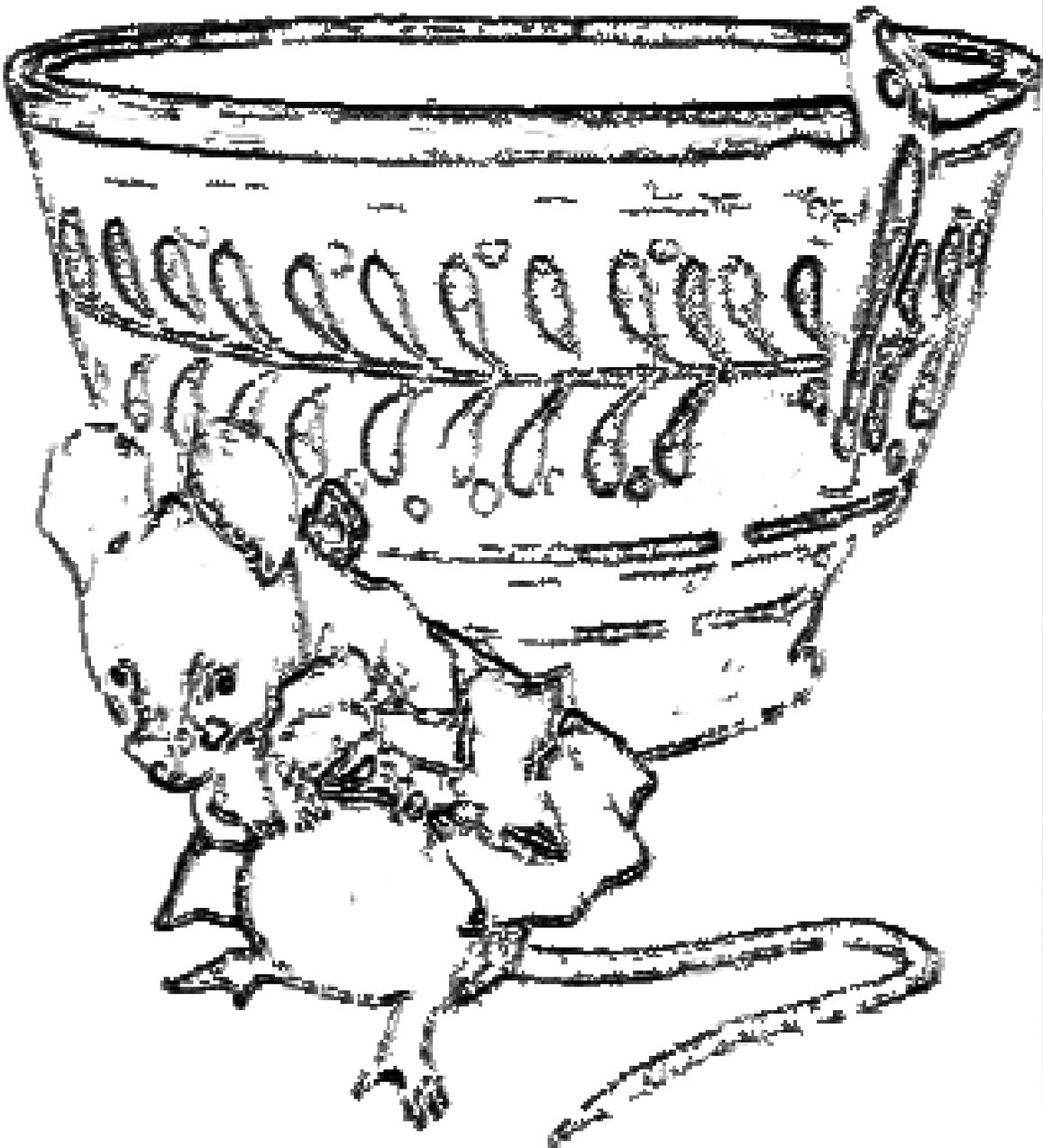
Waistcoat

Worsted

TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER - Coloring Page



TAILOR OF GLOUCESTER - Coloring Page

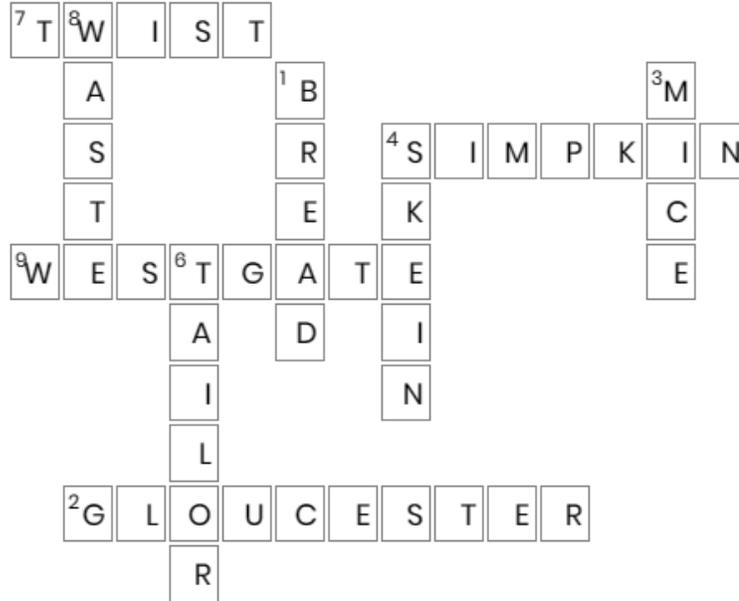


SOLUTIONS

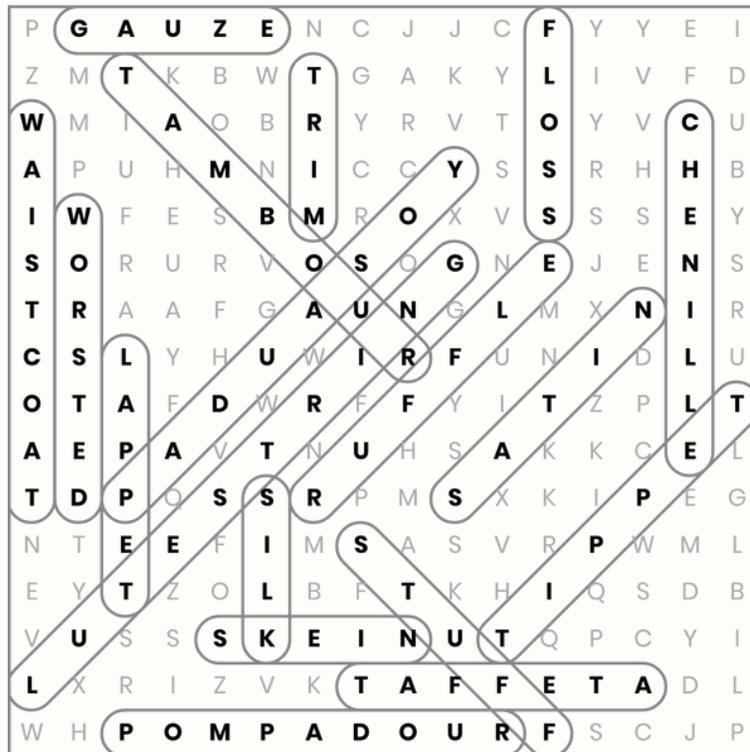
Tailor of Gloucester Matching

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

Tailor of Gloucester Crossword

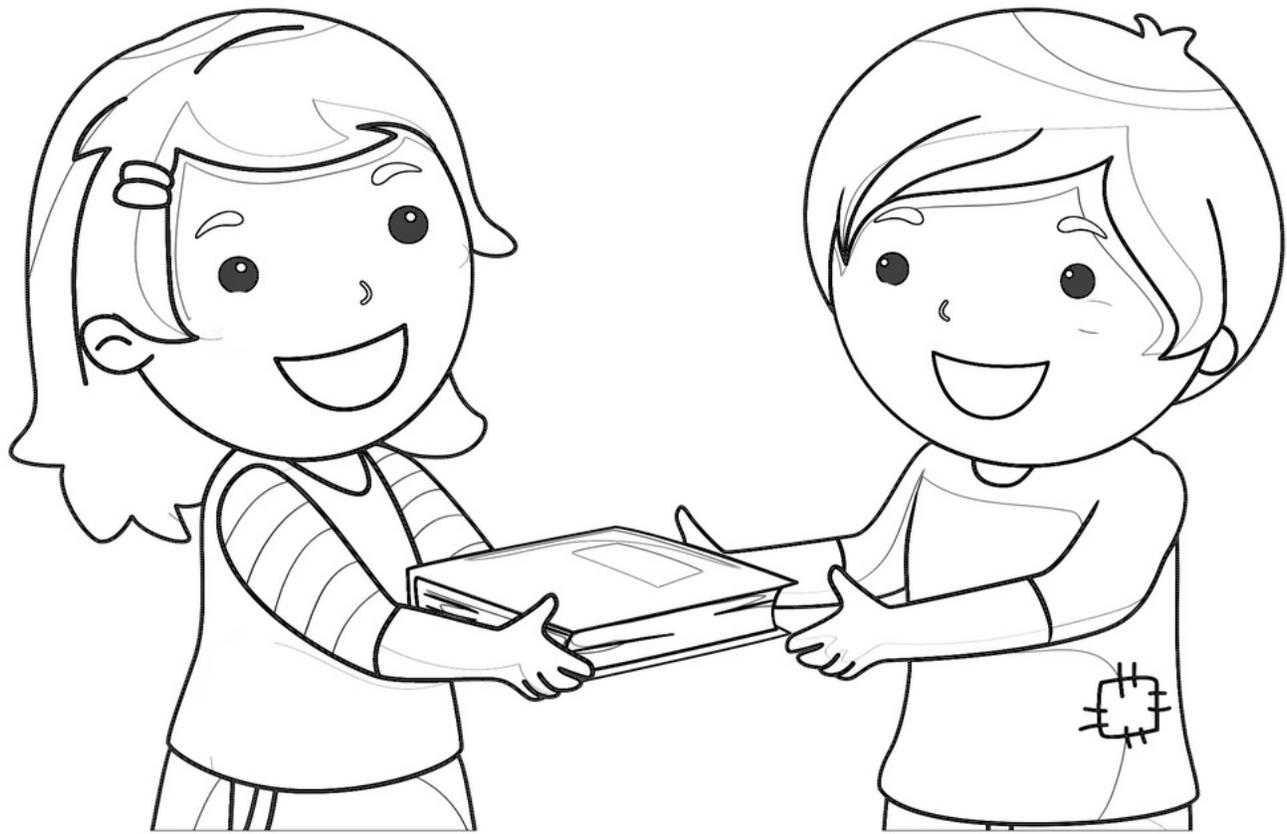


Tailor of Gloucester Word Search



Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 7:12



**Name 3 things that you wish other people would do for you.
Pick at least one of them and do it for somebody else.**