



## The Tale of Hill Top Farm

*Susan Wittig Albert*

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## **The Tale of Hill Top Farm** Susan Wittig Albert

The author of *Peter Rabbit* and other creature tales, Beatrix Potter is still, after a century, beloved by children and adults the world over. In this first Cottage Tale, Albert introduces Beatrix, an animal lover who has just bought a farm in England's beautiful Lake District. As Beatrix tries to win over the hearts of her fellow villagers, her animal friends set out to solve a mystery all their own.

## **The Tale of Hill Top Farm Details**

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Author : Susan Wittig Albert

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## **From Reader Review The Tale of Hill Top Farm for online ebook**

### **Pamela Shropshire says**

This book, which is the first of an 8-book series, will definitely not be everyone's cup of tea. It is, however, mine. I don't recall reading her books as a child myself, but I did read and reread them to my children, and now to my grandchildren.

Set in the Cumbrian village of Near Sawrey, the real-life home of Beatrix Potter, as well as nearby Far Sawrey and Hawkshead (an ancient market town), this is the coziest of cozy mysteries, with a fictionalized Miss Potter as a character along with her animals and other animals of the village. The animals can talk to each other (I do believe that animals can communicate with each other, although not in speech as we understand it), but not to humans, although Miss Potter has a definite affinity with them. Humans and animals work together to solve 3 thefts that have occurred in the village.

There are a plethora of characters, both animal and human, and all are well-fleshed with personalities, faults and talents. Ms. Albert provides a Cast of Characters that will come in handy until you get acquainted with the villagers.

Although these stories are obviously fiction, they do contain historical facts about Miss Potter's life, and are well researched. Ms. Albert includes a bibliography of works that she consulted.

If you are a fan of Miss Potter and are interested in her life, or if you are an animal lover or a lover of village stories, then I recommend these books to you.

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### **Andree says**

Read this over the last few days.

It's not terrible, I'm not sure it completely works. The animals talking to each other borders on gimmicky. It's saved by the fact that they can only talk to each other and not humans.

Also, this was shelved in the mystery section, and the two predominant mysteries seemed to be what happened to the parish register, and who stole the school's roof repair fund. I mean, the lack of murder was refreshing, but there's also not a lot driving this.

On the other hand, I do find that I'm mildly curious about the little village, and I like Beatrix herself, so part of me suspects I'm going to end up reading the next one.

2017 Reading Challenge - A book from a non-human perspective

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### **QNPoohBear says**

In 1905, Beatrix Potter is a best-selling author mourning the loss of her fiance and trying to become

independent of her demanding parents. She has just bought Hill Top Farm in the Lakes District in Yorkshire. She loves the beauty and remoteness of the area and hopes to enjoy many getaways there. She can not yet take possession of the farm house for it is rented to the Jennings family, the tenant farmers. Miss Potter intends to stay with Miss Abigail Tolliver, a spinster in the village of Sawrey, but Miss Tolliver has just died unexpectedly and the village gossips believe it was murder. When Miss Potter arrives, the gossips have something else to talk about : the eccentric city woman who keeps wild animals as pets and wants to farm! Some of the locals are even downright hostile to Miss Potter but she endears herself to some of the ladies by befriending a young boy wrongly accused of stealing money from his school. Miss Potter also discovers that a valuable painting has gone missing from Miss Tolliver's house and the vicar can't find the parish register anywhere. A mysterious woman known only to Miss Tolliver arrives and shocks everyone for being more eccentric than Miss Potter. Miss Tabitha Twitchett, senior cat of Sawrey, formerly belonging to Miss Tolliver, enlists the aid of her canine and feline friends to solve some of the mysteries the stupid humans can't figure out. Meanwhile, Miss Potter's animal companions discover that the country is more exciting than they ever dared to dream.

This is a sweet, charming book that has the flavor of Beatrix Potter's novels and reminds me a lot of Cranford or Lark Rise to Candleford (for you PBS fans). There are twin villages populated by quirky, colorful characters. The story is very quiet. There are several mysteries to be solved and none of them are heart-pounding page turners but simple, ordinary things that are lost and need to be found in the usual ways.

I really liked the setting though I had a hard time keeping all the characters straight and kept referring to the cast list in the front of the book. I liked the the setting and the characters' actions felt realistic. No one was doing anything that someone from that time should not be doing, especially the female characters. Miss Potter is really a secondary character in the novel. The main characters are really the cats and Rascal, the Jack Russell Terrier. This book may not be to everyone's liking. The animals can talk to each other and even read and write. They can not talk to humans though.

This book would be best enjoyed with a cup of tea and a good English scone. Those who love Beatrix Potter's books will enjoy this story and want to learn more about the author.

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### **Jessie says**

I had recently watched the movie *Miss Potter*, with Renée Zellweger, so I had great images of English country life at the turn of the century and of the sweeping landscapes of the Lake Country of Britain to accompany this book. The author has a great grasp of small town America which seemed to translate well to turn of the century British village life. But as with her China Bayles novels, I did not get a sense of the greater landscape in which the novels take place. This is a shame as Beatrix Potter was such a great conservationist and champion of Lake District preservation.

### **MILD SPOILERS!!**

Lovely light mystery - no messy deaths or tawdry affairs, believable villagers, four intertwined mysteries, and a satisfactory conclusion. Its apparent that this is the beginning of a series as there was a great deal of exposition, although I feel sure all of the books will be stand alone. I was a bit disappointed that the characterization of Beatrix Potter remained rather shallow, except for a brief interior monologue about her parents. This was such a pivotal time in her life. And having the animals talk and interact with each other in a Potter-esque manner was a bit disconcerting at first. However, I changed my expectations and approached

the book as simply a light diverting read and that is exactly what this book turned out to be. I had no trouble with the author's transcription of Lake District dialect, but she thoughtfully included a glossary at the back of the book, along with a brief biography of Potter prior to 1905. There is a character list at the beginning of the book, which is a delightful read in itself, as well as a charming little map which one must view as "definitely not to scale."

Oh, and not to forget ... recipes at the back of the book!

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### **Bekka says**

4 1/2 stars - This is such a departure from the stuff I've been reading of late! I'm not sure if I'm just in the right mood for it, but I THOROUGHLY enjoyed this little book! This is the coziest of cozy mysteries - so much so that there's not even a murder to solve. What you get is an enchanting, charming story featuring a fictionalized Beatrix Potter and her new purchase of Hill Top Farm. This is almost like a children's story for grown-ups, but in the best meaning of the word - simple, but not simplistic. I loved the villagers and Beatrix herself. I really enjoyed how Albert used the animals throughout the story, and loved that they had their own mystery to solve. The author includes a biographical sketch of the real Miss Potter, and a nice bibliography for further reading. I very much look forward to reading the next installments of this series. If you're looking for a sweet, charming story with great settings and characters, then this is the book for you!

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### **Bayneeta says**

The plot and setting of this cozy mystery (Beatrix Potter buys a farm in the Lake District) were interesting, and Virginia Leishman's narration of the audio book really pulled me in and kept me listening. But I am not entranced nor charmed by talking animals in books aimed at adults. I do recognize that Potter made her living writing about talking animals who wore clothing, but her books were for children. Most of the animals in this book talked to each other, and were annoyed when humans couldn't understand them. But the rats not only talked, they gambled and wore clothing. At that point I nearly gave it up, but had only one more disc to go. Will not be reading any more of this series.

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### **Trisha Georgiou says**

A must read on a relaxing Sunday afternoon with tea.

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### **Emily Cullen says**

Some of the characters are real and some are fiction in this delightful tale set in England, 1905, when children's book author Beatrix Potter buys a farm in a small rural town. Beatrix is hoping to heal after the death of her fiancee but finds the quiet town is anything but when a villager dies unexpectedly. This was a charming cozy mystery and I admire the author's imagination. Susan Wittig Albert also writes the China Bayles mystery series for those who are familiar with it. I'm definitely looking forward to #2 in "The Cottage

Tales of Beatrix Potter" series!

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### **Sarah says**

Lake District, 1905. Absolutely charming! This is a delightful country cosy mystery, featuring Beatrix Potter, villagers of Far Sawrey and various "talking" animals. I very much enjoyed Miss Read's "Fairacre" and "Thrush Green" novels, also set in villages during the early part of the 20th century, and "The Tale of Hill Top Farm" reminded me of these, with the cosy mystery element added.

It really amazes me that Susan Wittig Albert, like Deborah Crombie, both Texans, can write such British novels! I shall definitely be reading more in this series, and heartily recommend it to anyone who would like to take a break from murder mystery thrillers and read something more relaxing and picturesque.

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### **Catie says**

\*\*3.5 Stars\*\*

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### **Tracy Terry says**

Part one in what I believe is a series of 8 books, whilst I felt that The Tale Of Hill Top Farm had many things to recommend it there were some things that troubled me.

Not normally one to quibble about the use of American spellings - why should I be when so many of the books I read are by American authors - it did however seem incongruous to me that a book featuring the quintessentially British novelist, Beatrix Potter, should be riddled with such spellings (Color, Organize, Neighbor ..... I could go on but won't).

Not my main gripe though. Not something I will go into at any great length about here BUT given my views on keeping hedgehogs as 'pets' suffice to say the very mention did considerably mar my enjoyment of the book.

Anyway, pet hedgehogs aside. I loved the fact that the animals were given a voice (not that they were understood by humans you understand, only by each other), that their conversations were written in italics so that it was easy to identify that it was Crumpet the cat or Rascal the dog or one of the other animals who was speaking rather than any of the myriad of human characters who by the way almost without exception had such wonderfully quaint names.

A gentle, one could even say, genteel read set in the English Lake District (not 80 miles from where I live). Apart from the cosy mystery at the heart of the story I loved the biographical glimpses into Beatrix's life, of how the author managed to convey that here was a woman yearning for love and independence and yet, at the same time, in many ways a woman of her time, a woman who felt somewhat duty bound to obey her parents wishes.

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### **Sharon says**

Not my usual genre, but needed a change of pace. Because I've been to Hilltop and have read many B. Potter's bios, I found this an uplifting albeit unusual read. Not really enamored by animals talking (but for some that might be part of the charm).

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### **Johanna says**

While I place this in the mystery genre, it's a cozy mystery with a heavy emphasis on cozy. This book is more about an idyllic English village with thatched cottages, a bumbling vicar, several eccentric old maids, hard working farmers, prosperous ladies who gossip over afternoon tea, and beautiful gardens. The townspeople all know one another intimately, as do the animals. The animals are delightful. They eavesdrop, talk, lament that humans are too stupid to understand them, and generally save the day.

Beatrix Potter moves to the lovely village mentioned above with her two rabbits (Flopsy and Mopsy), her hedgehog (Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle), and her mouse (Tom Thumb). I loved the scenes in which she is gaining inspiration for her upcoming book, *The Tale of Jeremy Fisher*. I was amused by the way in which she sees animal characteristics reflected in people, and vice versa.

I can't wait to read the rest of the series!

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### **Prince William Public Library System says**

*The Tale of Hill Top Farm* is the first book in the extremely cozy mystery series *The Cottage Tales of Beatrix Potter*. These are my absolute favorite books to read. They let me wander around the charming English village of Near Sawrey, visit with my dear old neighbors and friends, share pots of tea, and hear the latest village gossip. The books are not particularly dangerous or suspenseful; they are just a wonderful place to spend your time while learning a bit about the life of Beatrix Potter. The story begins on a beautiful October morning in the Lake District village of Near Sawrey where our dear Miss Tolliver of Anvil Cottage is found dead in her cottage and the parish registry is gone missing. Foul play is suspected and Beatrix is determined to discover the truth behind these unhappy circumstances. All the while, she is struggling to live independently of her parents following the death of her fiancé, Norman Warne, and learn the ways of the villagers in this 1905 rural community. In the front of the book, there is a handy map and character list. In the back of the book, some of the villagers have kindly shared a few of their favorite recipes and the author has provided a glossary for those who don't know the meaning of such terms as "Daft ha'p' orth" and "tutting time." The books are "clean reading" and young high-level readers might find them enjoyable, too.

If you are an animal lover, dream of living in a quaint English village, and appreciate Beatrix Potter's "dear little books," you will surely enjoy this sweet mystery series. I suggest you make a pot of your favorite tea, then find your coziest reading spot and enjoy a magical visit with Beatrix and her various animal and human friends while they solve their latest mystery. Susan Wittig Albert is also known for her *China Bayles Mysteries* and, along with her husband under the pen name Robin Paige, the *Charles and Kate Sheridan*

Mystery Series.

Carole A.

[Click here to find the book at the Prince William County Public Library System.](#)

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### **Judy says**

Think fireplace cozy. A delightful tale of talking animals, Beatrix Potter and an English village. Beatrix Potter plays the part of unintentional sleuth when things turn up missing in the village. My audiobook had excellent narration.

This series is up there with Alexander McCall Smith's The Number One Ladies Detective Agency Volume 6 series for mysteries that I like. Thanks to my GR friend, MintyMedley for recommending!

4.5 stars

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