

The Tales of Beatrix Potter

8: The Tale of Mr Jeremy Fisher adapted by Jeff Capel

Once upon a time there was a frog called Mr Jeremy Fisher. He lived in a little, damp house among the buttercups at the edge of a pond. There was water everywhere in the house and it made the floors very slippery as it slopped against the walls and down the hallway. Mr Jeremy Fisher always had wet feet. But he didn't mind and, because he lived on his own, there wasn't anyone to tell him off for not wearing wellington boots.

One morning, Mr Jeremy Fisher opened the window of his little house and was pleased to see that it was raining. Large drops of rain splashed into the pond.

'Excellent!' he said. 'I will dig up some worms to use as bait and go fishing. I shall have a dish of tasty minnows for my dinner and, if I catch more than five fish, I will invite my friends Mr Alderman the Tortoise and Sir Isaac Newton to join me. But, as the tortoise is vegetarian, he prefers salad.'

Mr Jeremy put on a raincoat and a pair of shiny waterproof shoes called galoshes. He made a packed lunch of butterfly sandwiches, grabbed his fishing rod and set off with enormous hops across the lily pads to the place where he kept his boat.

The boat was round and green and very much like all the other water lily leaves on the surface on the pond.

'I know the perfect place to catch minnows,' announced Mr Jeremy Fisher. He took a reed pole and pushed his boat into the open water.

It was raining quite heavily now. Mr Jeremy stuck his pole into the mud and tied the green leaf boat to it. His fishing rod was a tough blade of grass and his fishing line was a strand of white horse hair. Mr Jeremy sat cross-legged and fastened a little red float to the end of the line and tied a wriggling worm to it.

Then he cast his line into the water and waited. And waited. And waited. For an hour he sat staring at the float and not one fish paid any attention to it. The rain trickled down Mr Jeremy's back. 'I'm getting rather fed up,' he thought, 'time for lunch, I think.'

He unpacked a butterfly sandwich from his basket and dangled his feet in the water. A black and yellow water beetle swimming beneath the lily tickled his toes so he crossed his legs again out of reach and carried on munching his sandwich.

Once or twice he heard rustles and splashes among the rushes at the side of the pond. 'Oh dear. I hope that is not a rat,' said Mr Jeremy, 'I think I'll go and fish somewhere else.'

This proved to be a wise decision. When the frog fisherman dropped in the bait, there was a bite immediately. 'A minnow! A minnow! I've caught a fish!' cried Mr Jeremy excitedly.



He stood up and tugged his fishing rod furiously with all his strength. But what a horrible surprise. He had not caught a smooth fat minnow at all. Instead, at the end of his line was Jack Sharp the prickly stickleback fish, covered in spines.

The stickleback flapped across the boat, snapping at Mr Jeremy and scratching him with his spines. Then the fish jumped back into the pond and a group of his friends lifted their heads out of the water and laughed at Mr Jeremy.

But this was only the beginning of Mr Jeremy's misfortune. As he sat sadly sucking his sore fingers, something far worse happened. An enormous trout, a fish as big as a whale compared with Mr Jeremy Fisher, leapt out of the water, seized the frog in his mighty jaws and dived down to the bottom of the pond.

'Ow! Ow! Ow! cried Mr Jeremy. 'Help!'

It looked like the end of Mr Jeremy Fisher. But, as luck would have it, trout do not like the taste of raincoats...not one bit. So, within a few seconds the big fish spat out Mr Jeremy, raincoat and all. The only thing he swallowed, accidentally at that, was his waterproof shoes.

Mr Jeremy Fisher floated back up to the surface of the water. He swam as fast as he could to the edge of the pond and scrambled on to the bank. Then he hopped home across the meadow with his raincoat in tatters.

'Thank goodness that was a trout and not a pike,' he said. 'They are even bigger fish with lots of sharp teeth. I would have made a very delicious snack!'

As he was putting some sticking plasters on his sore, pricked fingers he realised that in his panic to escape he had lost his fishing rod.

'Not that it matters,' he thought. 'I am sure I will never go fishing again'.

Although he could not serve them fish, Mr Jeremy invited his friends over for dinner anyway.

Sir Isaac Newton looked very smart in a black and gold waistcoat and Mr Alderman the Tortoise, being vegetarian, brought his own lettuce salad with him in a string bag.

Instead of a nice dish of minnows they had roasted grasshopper with ladybird sauce - which frogs consider a beautiful treat. And Mr Jeremy Fisher told his friends the story of how he'd been caught by a fish. He spread his arms wide and said 'It was this big!'