

The Tale of Jemima Puddle Duck

by Beatrix Potter adapted by EveryReader

Adapted to Lexile Level 300





It looks funny to see ducklings with a hen.

This is the story of Jemima Puddle-Duck.

She was upset.

The farmer's wife would not let her hatch her own eggs.



Mrs. Rebecca Puddle-Duck was her sister-in-law.
She said, “I cannot sit on a nest for many days.
You cannot either, Jemima.
You would let the eggs get cold.”



“I want to hatch my own eggs.
I will do it by myself,” said Jemima.
She tried to hide her eggs.
But people always found them and took them away.



Jemima felt very sad.

She chose to make a nest far from the farm.

One fine spring day, she walked up the cart road and over the hill.

She wore a shawl and a bonnet.



At the top of the hill, she saw a wood.

It looked safe and quiet.

Jemima did not fly much.

She ran downhill and flapped.



Then she jumped into the air.
She flew well after that start.
She skimmed over the trees.
She saw an open place in the wood where the bushes
were cleared.



Jemima landed with a thump.
She waddled around to find a dry place for a nest.
She liked a stump near some tall flowers.
But a gentleman sat on the stump.



He read a newspaper.

He had sharp black ears and sandy whiskers.

He had a long, bushy tail.

“Quack?” said Jemima.



She tilted her head to one side.

The gentleman lifted his eyes.

“Madam, are you lost?” he asked.

He sat on his tail because the stump was damp.



Jemima thought he looked kind and handsome.
She said she was not lost.
She wanted a dry place for a nest.
“Ah, I see,” said the sandy-whiskered gentleman.



He folded his paper and put it in his coat.

Jemima complained about the bossy hen.

“How interesting,” he said.

“I would tell that hen to mind her own work!



As for a nest—there is no problem.
I have a sack of feathers in my shed.
You will be in nobody's way.
You may sit there as long as you like.”



He led her to a small, lonely house among the flowers.

It was made of sticks and chunks of grass and mud. Two broken pails stood one on another for a chimney.

“This is my summer house,” said the gentleman.



“My winter home would not suit you.”

A shaky shed stood behind the house.

It was made from old boxes.

He opened the door and showed Jemima inside.



The shed was full of feathers.

It was hard to breathe.

But it was soft and warm.

Jemima was surprised to see so many feathers.



But it felt nice.

She made a nest quickly.

When she came out, the sandy-whiskered gentleman
sat on a log with his newspaper.

He held it up, but he looked over the top at her.



He was so polite that he seemed sorry to let her go home.

He promised to take care of the nest.

He said he loved eggs and ducklings.

He said he would be proud to see a fine nest in his shed.



Jemima came every afternoon.
She laid nine eggs in the nest.
The eggs were greenish white and very big.



The foxy gentleman admired them.

When Jemima was gone, he turned them over and counted them.

At last Jemima said, “I will sit on the eggs tomorrow.

I will bring a bag of corn.



Then I will not leave the nest.

The eggs might get cold.”

“Do not bring a bag,” said the gentleman.

“I will bring oats.



Before you begin your long sitting, let us have a nice dinner.

Please bring some herbs from the garden and two onions.

We will make an omelet.

I will bring the fat for cooking.”



Jemima was simple and trusting.
She did not guess his plan.
She went to the farm garden.
She nibbled some herbs and picked two onions.



The farm dog, Kep, met her.

“What are those onions for?

Where do you go every day, Jemima Puddle-Duck?”
he asked.

Jemima was a little afraid of Kep.



She told him the whole story.

Kep listened with his wise head on one side.

He grinned when she told about the polite gentleman with sandy whiskers.

He asked where the house and the shed were in the wood.



Then he trotted to the village.

He looked for two foxhound puppies who were out with the butcher.

On a sunny afternoon, Jemima went up the road for the last time.

She carried the herbs and the two onions in a bag.



She flew over the wood.

She landed near the house of the long-tailed gentleman.

He sat on a log.

He sniffed the air and looked around the wood.



When Jemima landed, he jumped.

“Go look at your eggs, and then come in,” he said.

“Give me the herbs for the omelet.

Be quick!”



He sounded sharp and rude.

Jemima had never heard him talk like that.

She felt worried and not safe.

While she was inside, she heard quick feet behind the shed.



A black nose sniffed at the bottom of the door.
Then the door was locked.
Jemima was very scared.
Right after that came awful noises—barks, yelps,
growls, and howls.



There were squeals and groans too.
Nothing more was ever seen of that foxy gentleman.
Soon Kep opened the shed door and let Jemima out.
But the puppies rushed in and ate all the eggs before
he could stop them.



Kep had a bite on his ear.

Both puppies were limping.

Jemima went home crying for her lost eggs.

In June, she laid more eggs.



This time she was allowed to keep them.
Only four eggs hatched.
Jemima said it was because she was so nervous.
But she had always been a poor sitter.