

Theatre IV Classroom Study Guide

2000-2001 Season



The Velveteen Rabbit

Based on the original book written by Margery Williams Bianco

Book by Tom Hammond

Lyrics by Ron Barnett & Tom Hammond

Music by Ron Barnett

What Is Real?

"What is REAL?" asked the beautiful, new Velveteen Rabbit of the wise and tattered old Skin Horse. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

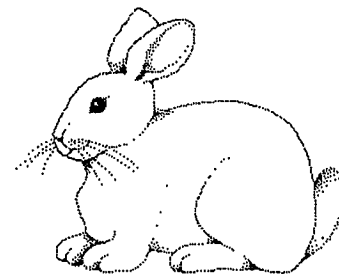
The power of childhood fancy, the pure light of unconditional love - these timeless forces illuminate our faithful rendering of Margery Williams' tale of friendship and the passing of time. A Christmas gift to a young boy, the Velveteen Rabbit lives in a nursery with many other toys and waits for the day that the boy will choose him as a playmate. During his stay in the nursery, the rabbit befriends the Skin Horse who explains how a toy really becomes Real.

One day the boy chooses the Velveteen Rabbit over all the other toys and they become inseparable. As time passes, the rabbit becomes worn and tattered but remains special to the boy. At the end of the play, the boy grows up and the rabbit, through the kind of special magic that only toys can experience, becomes Real, too.



Rabbits Revealed: the untold story

- Rabbits are often kept as house pets, they can live inside or outside and can be trained to do simple tricks.
- Rabbits vary in size from 2 to almost 20 pounds.
- Most rabbits have ears that stand up which can be as short as 2 inches in dwarf breeds. Lop rabbits have ears that hang down and include the longest-eared of all rabbits, the English Lop whose ears can be nearly 3 feet from tip to tip when extended outward.
- Rabbits live an average of about six years.
- Rabbits, once considered rodents, are now classified as Lagomorphs (gnawing mammal family) due to their two pairs of double incisor teeth located in their upper jaws.
- Rabbits are long-eared and short-tailed, with long hind legs and, usually, gray or brown fur.
- In their natural habitat, rabbits live in brushy areas and venture into fields at night to feed, eating grasses and other plant food.
- There are about 30 breeds of rabbits, broken down into 80 different varieties.
- Rabbits are generally very timid creatures.



Velveteen

Velveteen is a type of fabric with a short, dense pile surface and a smooth back, usually made of cotton. The fabric is man-made and strongly resembles velvet. Velveteen is heavier than velvet and is often used for draperies and bedspreads as well as women and children's clothing.

Margery Williams Bianco

Margery Williams Bianco was born in London, England on July 22, 1881. Most of her education was received informally at home, attending a small Convent School in Sharon Hill, Pennsylvania for only two years while her family was living in America. An avid writer, Margery Williams had two books published before her marriage in 1904. She had two children, Cecco and Pamela.

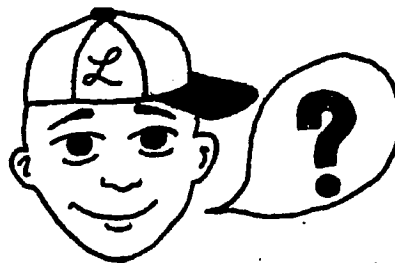
Most of her adult life was spent in London and Paris before the family moved to New York in 1921. While living in New York, Bianco wrote her first book for children, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, which was published in 1922. Many of her later children's books were illustrated by her daughter Pamela until her death on September 4, 1944.

Other books about friends:

A Bear Called Paddington by Michael Bond
The Adventures of Corduroy by Don Freeman
Alexander the Wind-up Mouse by Leo Lionni
Bunny Trouble by Hans Wilhelm
Dandelion by Don Freeman
Do You Want to be My Friend? By Eric Carle
No Roses for Harry by Gene Zion
Play With Me by Marie Hall Ets
The Pokey Little Puppy by Janette Sebring Lowrey
The Puppy Who Wanted a Boy by Jane Thayer
The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister
The Runaway Bunny by Margaret Wise Brown
Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak
Who Wants an Old Teddy Bear by Ginnie Hofmann

Scarlet Fever

In *The Velveteen Rabbit*, a young boy becomes quite sick with a disease that is little known in our lifetime called Scarlet Fever. Have you ever had a sore throat? Scarlet Fever is a really bad sore throat, only much more severe including a fever, headache, nausea, and a serious rash. These symptoms would last for a week or more with many lasting complications. Did you know that many, many years ago when people first started showing symptoms of the disease it was hard to treat? Now, with advancements in medical technology, scarlet fever has almost died out entirely!



Leonardo Didja Noe

Activities

1. Read the original book, The Velveteen Rabbit. Compare the similarities and differences between the book and Theatre IV's staged version.
2. Write a story about one of your toys from when you were younger. What would happen if that toy came to be Real one day? What kind of adventures might it go on? Use your imagination to create several different scenes and places for your toy.
3. In the study guide there are some facts about rabbits. What other facts can you find out about rabbits? Where do they live? What do they eat? How do they sleep? Collect books and photographs to explain the rabbits many habits. You may also want to spend some time thinking about the other animals that the rabbit might interact with. What might happen?
4. *The Velveteen Rabbit* has many wonderful and fun characters. Create puppets to depict your favorite characters. Make them from socks, paper lunch bags, paper plates, gloves, or any other materials you can find. Display your new puppets in the classroom.
5. Draw your favorite character or scene from *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Send your drawing to Theatre IV for our "From Stage to Page Art Contest." Theatre IV staff members will select several drawings to be used in future study guides. (One drawing per student. Please write name, grade, age, teacher, school, and school address clearly on the back of each drawing. Drawings will not be returned. Teachers will be notified by mail of selected drawings.) Please mail class drawings to: Theatre IV, Department of Education, 114 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23220.

Theatre IV is the second largest theatre for young audiences in the nation and is the Children's Theatre of Virginia. We encourage your comments about *The Velveteen Rabbit*, please send your letters to:

Theatre IV, 114 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23220

If you need to reach Theatre IV by phone, please call 1-800-235-8687.

Thanks to our Sponsors:

Theatre IV gratefully acknowledges the major supporters of our touring programs: The National Endowment for the Arts, the Virginia Commission for the Arts; The Cincinnati Institute for the Arts; The Ohio Arts Council; the E. R. & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation; and the Flagler Foundation.