



# Preview Guide for Teachers and Parents to Childsplay's Production of *The Velveteen Rabbit*

We hope you find this guide helpful in preparing your children for an enjoyable and educational theatrical experience. Included you'll find things to talk about before and after seeing the performance, classroom activities that deal with curriculum connections and education standards, and resource materials.

## A Word About Theater Etiquette...

Whether going to the theater or having theater come to you, there are a few important things to communicate to your students before seeing a play. Since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students, please take a moment to discuss the following prior to seeing the performance (3AT-R2).

- Stay seated during the performance.
- Remember that the performers can hear and see the audience just like the audience can hear and see the performers. Be respectful to the performers and other students in the audience by not talking and staying in your own space.
- Appropriate responses such as clapping or laughter are always welcome!

## The Story...

Margery Williams' classic story of a velveteen rabbit, who becomes real through the love of a boy, is brought to life in this adaptation by Brian Burgess Clark. The play opens on Christmas Day with all of the wonder and excitement of the season. The boy receives a beautiful velveteen rabbit, who is destined to become his best friend. On his first night in the nursery, the velveteen rabbit meets all the other toys (played by larger-than-life puppets) and learns about becoming real. Soon the velveteen rabbit and the boy are having adventures in Africa and flying through the clouds. When the boy becomes ill, his friend the velveteen rabbit must help him recover. After the boy is better, Nana declares all his toys must be burned because they are full of germs—even the velveteen rabbit. But, just before the velveteen rabbit is going to be put on the bonfire, the Nursery Fairy comes and turns him into a real rabbit.

## Before the Show....

Here are some pre-show activities and discussions to help prepare your students for the production.

- Ask your students if they have ever seen a play. How is a play different from television, video, radio or a movie?
- Talk to your students about using their imaginations to help make the puppets come alive. The audience is an important part of the production – without it, there could not be theatre.
- Each theatre production is a collaboration of many talented people. Have your students list as many people involved in the production of a play and the way they contribute to the play. Include the playwright, director, actors, scenic and lighting designers, costume designer, box office staff, ushers, and -- especially -- the audience (2AT-R4).
- Read the book *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams. Read the story aloud to the class. Next, make copies of the story (or parts of it) and assign speaking parts (the boy, Nana, toys, narrators) and have your class read it aloud like a radio play. Add sound effects!

## The Velveteen Rabbit

From the book by **Margery Williams**

Adapted by **Brian Burgess Clark**

Directed by **David Saar**

Original Music Composition  
**Alan Ruch**

Scenic Designer/Scenic Artist  
**Jeff Thomson, USAA**

Lighting Design  
**Marc Riske, USAA**

Costume/Puppet Design  
**Rebecca Akins**

### THE CAST

The Boy. . . . . April Monte  
 Nana/Lion. . . . . Dwayne Hartford  
 Velveteen Rabbit. . . . . Katie McFadzen  
 Tin Soldier/Rabbit. . . . . Jon Gentry  
 Skin Horse/Rabbit. . . . . Gordon Waggoner  
 Nursery Fairy/Model Boat. . . . . Kristin Hailstone  
 Narrator. . . . . Debra K. Stevens

Scottsdale Center for the Arts, December 2003

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• **Suggestions for fulfilling specific Education Standards denoted by abbreviations in parenthesis**

## After the Show...

We hope that after the show you will talk with your students about the play and use it in other areas of the curriculum.

## Discussion (3AT-R1, R2):

- There are three parts to a play: the *People*, the *Place* and the *Problem*. Ask your students to identify each of these in the production they have just seen.
- What was their favorite part of the play? Why?
- What other jobs do you think the *Nursery Fairy* performs?
- The boy in the play had a number of favorite toys which could be found in an early 20<sup>th</sup> century nursery. How are toys different now? If the play took place now, what might some of the characters be?

## Writing and Art:

- Write a simplified version of the story. Divide it into short sections, and have each student illustrate a section. Create a class book.

## Writing:

- Write a story about what happens to the Velveteen Rabbit after he becomes real. What does he do all day? Who are his friends?
- Write a story about the boy's trip to the seaside. Does he like his new rabbit? Does he miss the Velveteen Rabbit?

## Social Studies (1SS-F3):

- The boy was ill with scarlet fever. Talk about medicine and illnesses and how they've changed from the early 1900's until today.
- What other aspects of the play reflect changes in society? Consider clothes, toys, child rearing, holiday traditions and education.

## Art (1AV-R1):

- Using paper plates and elastic or string, make a rabbit mask! Cut out eyes and add ears (construction paper), nose, and whiskers (pipe cleaners).

- Choose (or assign) a character from *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Create puppets using paper bags, socks, cardboard cutouts and sticks, gloves or mittens, and art supplies like glue, tape, feathers, fabric or whatever! Share with the class.

## Creative Drama (1AT-F2, 1AT-F1, 1AT-R5):

- Using the puppets you created, make a puppet play! Use *The Velveteen Rabbit* or stories that you wrote about the rabbit's life after he becomes real. Decide on a beginning, middle and ending for the story, discuss what the dialogue will be and then rehearse! Add music to underscore and then share with another class or just with each other!
- Use voices, bodies and imaginations to become different animals! Try moving as a rabbit, butterfly, horse, lion, dog or other animal. How does your animal sleep, eat, run, walk and interact with others?

## The Velveteen Rabbit Booklist:

### Book on Puppets and Puppetry:

*Fingerpuppet, Fingerplays and Holidays*  
by Betty Keefe

*Storytelling With Puppets*  
by Connie Champlin

*Celebrate: Holidays, Puppets and Creative Drama*  
by Tamara Hunt

*Jm Henson: From Puppets to Muppets*  
by Geraldine Woods

### More Great Stories:

*The Story of Ferdinand*  
by Munro Leaf

*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*  
by Judith Viorst

*Where the Wild Things Are*  
by Maurice Sendak

*Corduroy*  
by Don Freeman

*Harold and the Purple Crayon*  
by Crockett Johnson



## Don't miss the rest of our fantastic season!!!

You have 4 more opportunities to see great Childsplay productions all presented at the Tempe Performing Arts Center in wonderful downtown Tempe!

**The Beauty Machine**  
January 10-18

**The Imaginators**  
February 21- March 14

**Power Play**  
January 24-February 15

**The Big Friendly Giant**  
March 27-April 18

For field trip bookings, call Robbie Daniels at  
480.350.8107

## Arizona's Academic Standards

Your visit to the theater and the preparation and follow up activities can involve many content areas from the Arizona Department of Education K-12 Academic Standards. Many of the suggested discussion topics and activities can be tied to several standards. For example, the Math activity on creating Story Problems can fulfill standards in the areas of math, language arts and the arts (theater).

To access the K-12 standards go to:  
[www.ade.state.az.us/standards/contentstandards.asp](http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/contentstandards.asp)

We are always looking for ways to help you prepare your students for the theatre experience and at the same time fulfill curriculum and standards requirements. If you have any suggestions as to how we might improve in this area, please email Katie McFadzen at [kmcfadzen@childsplayaz.org](mailto:kmcfadzen@childsplayaz.org)

We appreciate your input!

## About Childsplay...

We love to hear from our audience members! Send letters, pictures or reviews to:



Childsplay  
PO Box 517  
Tempe, AZ 85280  
Call us at 480-350-8101  
1-800-583-7831 (in-state)  
Email us at:  
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