



**Welcome to Childsplay's
Resource Guide for
Teachers and Parents**

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.

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
Michael J. Eddy**

**Costume/Puppet Design
Rebecca Akins**

THE CAST

The Boy. Jannese Davidson
Nana/Lion. D. Scott Withers
Velveteen Rabbit. Katie McFadzen
Tin Soldier/Rabbit. Jon Gentry
Skin Horse/Rabbit. Andrés Alcála
Nursery Fairy/Model Boat. Kristin Hailstone
Narrator. Debra K. Stevens

This production is sponsored in part by:



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.

Curriculum Connections:

Page to stage – imagination – pretend play – Edwardian England – the power of love – childhood illnesses – transitions

Theatre Etiquette:

It's helpful to review the rules of theatre etiquette before seeing a show, especially since this may be the first live theatre experience for some of your students. Please take a moment to discuss the following pointers prior to seeing the performance:



~ Use the restroom before seeing the show as we do not have intermission during our school performances.

~ Stay seated during the performance.

~ Be respectful to the performers and other people in the audience by not talking during the performance. Remember, the actors can see and hear the audience just like you can see and hear them.

~ Appropriate responses such as applause or laughter are always welcome.

~ Food, candy, gum and beverages are not allowed in the theater.

~ Use of cell phones (including text messaging), cameras or any other recording device are *not allowed in the theater at any time!*

From the PAGE to the STAGE



When a playwright takes a book and *adapts* it into a play, he or she must answer many questions, including:

- Can this book be an effective play?
- Who are the most essential characters? What are the most essential events?
- How can I confine the action to the space of the stage?
- Do I need to suggest ways to stage certain actions, changes of location, etc.?
- Is there anything *not* in the book that should be in the play?

Theatres like to produce adaptations because typically the plays are based on well-known books that will bring in audiences. But almost always, books are not intended to be turned into plays, and so translating them into scripts can seem "unnatural" or awkward. The playwright must find what is "theatrical" about the book and concentrate on those elements in order to create a successful adaptation. Theatrical elements might include conversations between characters, supernatural or imaginary characters, actors playing more than one character, multiple events taking place at the same time in different areas of the stage, stylized movement, and use of masks or puppets.

Discussion Questions:

1. If you were a playwright, would you rather write an adaptation of an existing book or write an original play? Why?
2. Do you like seeing plays based on books you've read? Why or why not?
3. How are plays different from TV shows or movies? What are the limitations of a play (things that can't be done on stage)?
4. What parts of the book *The Velveteen Rabbit* do you think will be difficult to stage? Why?
5. What other books do you know of that have been turned into a play?



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 in the play 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.
- 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. For younger students, choose a scene from the book that you can play together as one group or in smaller groups.
- What does it mean to be real? How do you know when something is real?
- Do you have a favorite toy? How would you feel if it were taken away from you?

Vocabulary Words to Review:

splendid * bracken * mainsprings
* clockwork * mechanical * sawdust
* sensitive * shabbier * twitched * velveteen * china dog * scarlet fever * aviators * threadbare

Books by Margery Williams Bianco:

- *The Late Returning*. New York: Macmillan, 1902.
- *Spendthrift Summer*. London: Heinemann, 1903.
- *The Bar*. London: Methuen, 1906.
- *The Velveteen Rabbit; or, How Toys Become Real*. Illus. William Nicholson. New York: Doran, 1922.
- *Poor Cecco: The Wonderful Story of a Wonderful Wooden Dog Who Was the Jolliest Toy in the House Until He Went Out to Explore the World*. Illus. Arthur Rackham. New York: Doran, 1925.
- *The Skin Horse*. Illus. Pamela Bianco. New York: Doubleday, 1927.
- *The House That Grew Smaller*. Illus. Grace Paul. New York: Macmillan, 1931.
- *Winterbound*. New York: Viking, 1939.
- *Forward, Commandos!* Illus. Raffaello Busoni. New York: Viking, 1944.

About Rabbits:

Rabbits are fast-moving, big-eared mammals. There are about 25 different species of rabbits. They live in a variety of environments, including deserts, swamps, marshes, forests, grasslands, and prairies. Rabbits are found on every continent except Antarctica.



Life Span: Most rabbits live for about a year in the wild. They are hunted by dogs, foxes, bobcats, hawks, weasels, and eagles. They have a fast reproductive rate.

Anatomy: Rabbits range in size from 1 to 2 feet long. They have very big and powerful hind legs which they use for hopping and for digging burrows.

Diet: Rabbits are herbivores (plant-eaters). They eat grass, leaves, bark, and twigs.

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:

- There are three parts to a play: the *People*, the *Place* and the *Problem*. Can you identify each of these in the production?
- What was your 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 20th 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.

Art:

- 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:

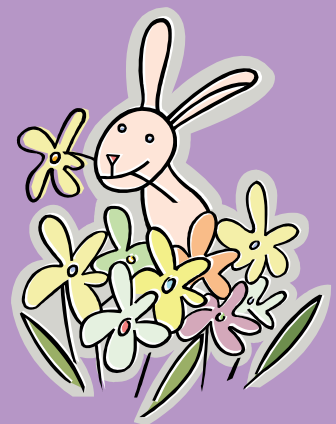
- Using the puppets you created, make a puppet play! Use *The Velveteen Rabbit* or stories that you wrote about the rabbit's life after he becomes real. Decide on a beginning, middle and ending for the story, discuss what the dialogue will be and then rehearse! Add music to underscore and then share 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?

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:

- 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.



The Velveteen Rabbit Booklist

Prepared with the help of Tim Wadham,
Member, Board of Directors, Association for Library Service to Children

When Toys Become Real

The Velveteen Rabbit: or How Toys Become Real by Margery Williams Bianco
Alexander and the Wind-Up Mouse by Leo Lionni
Phewtus the Squirrel by V. H. Drumond
Orson by Rascal



Imagination

The House at Pooh Corner by A. A. Milne
The Indian in the Cupboard by Lynne Reid Banks
Really Truly Bingo by Laura McGee Kvasnosky
Something for James by Shirley Isherwood

Pretend Play

Creating Clever Castles and Cars: Children 3-8 Make their Own Pretend Play Spaces
by Mari Rutz Mitchell
Toby, Who Are You? By William Steig
Snow Bears by Martin Waddell

Children's Classics

The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett
A Little Princess by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Power of Love/Friendship

The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Kate DiCamillo
Corduroy by Don Freeman
Emma Bean by Jean Van Leeuwen
Laura Charlotte by Kathryn Galbraith
Nothing by Mick Inkpen
The Teddy Bear by David McPhail

All materials are available through your local library. Check it out!

Websites of Interest

<http://members.iinet.net.au/~rabbit/rabfun.htm>
-Bunny fun and games page

<http://www.history.com/minisites/toys/>
-Great timeline of the history of toys

www.pabook.libraries.psu.edu/palitmap/bios/Bianco__Margery_Williams.html
-Margery Williams biography



Student Activity Page:

Today you saw a production of *The Velveteen Rabbit* performed by Childsplay. Here are some things to talk about and some activities to do now that you've seen the show!

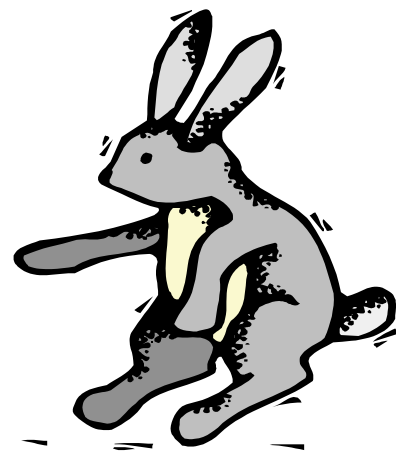
Talk to your family, friends and/or classmates about the play you just saw. Talk about the following:

♥Tell them about the story and the characters. How many characters can you remember? Which characters were puppets and which were live actors? Which character was your favorite and why? What was your favorite part of the play? The boy was played by a grown up, but do you know how they made the boy seem small?

♥The boy and the velveteen rabbit become the best of friends. Do you have a favorite toy? What is it? Have you ever lost a toy that you really loved? How did you feel?

♥Imagine that you take a trip to the seaside. Make a postcard to send to a friend. Draw a picture of the seaside town on one side. Write to your friend on the other side, describing your trip. Don't forget the address and a stamp!

♥Create a puppet from common objects (a sock, a clothespin, a toilet paper roll). Choose a character from the play and make your own version of a puppet for that character. Use crayons, markers, pipe cleaners, feathers, scraps of fabric or any other found objects that might be interesting to use. Now, create a puppet play! First, work on manipulating (moving) the puppet by having it look at another puppet while having an improvised (made up) conversation. Try to make your puppet walk, run or do other physical things. Then, decide on a short story that has some kind of problem in it and play it out a few times until you are ready to share with your friends and family!



Unscramble the following words!

nti dlrsoei _____

domle tba0 _____

ksni oshre _____

nynub _____

aann _____

ckis _____

eifrnd _____

ifrya _____

lrea _____

eevlvenet _____

Answers to The Velveteen Rabbit Word Puzzle:

The Toy Boat
Holidays
Exit
Valentine's Day
Enjoyed
Love
Violet
Eyes
Toys
Eve
Eight
Nana
Real
Airplane
Bunny
Bed
Ill
Theatre

Student Activity Page:

Try your hand at The Velveteen Rabbit Word Puzzle. Do it with the help of a friend or adult!

Clues:

1. Toy character in the play.
2. Christmas and Hanukkah are _____.
3. The _____ sign shows the way out of the theater.
4. _____ is February 14.
5. We hope you _____ the play!
6. This makes toys become real.
7. Purplish-blue color.
8. You use these to see with.
9. Things to play with.
10. The night before a holiday.
11. A number between seven and nine.
12. Character in the play who looks after the boy.
13. Love makes toys become _____!
14. The boy and his rabbit go flying in this.
15. Another name for a rabbit.
16. The part of the scenery that becomes an airplane.
17. The boy becomes _____ with scarlet fever.
18. Buildings in which plays are performed.

1. T _ _ _ _ _
2. H _ _ _ _ _
3. E _ _ _
4. V _ _ _ _ _ ' _ _ _ _
5. E _ _ _ _ _
6. L _ _ _
7. V _ _ _ _ _
8. E _ _ _
9. T _ _ _
10. E _ _
11. E _ _ _ _
12. N _ _ _
13. R _ _ _
14. A _ _ _ _ _
15. B _ _ _ _
16. B _ _
17. I _ _
18. T _ _ _ _ _

Answers to Scrambled Word Puzzle:

Tin soldier
Model boat
Skin soldier
Bunny
Nana
Sick
Friend
fairy
Real
velveteen

Color and Bunnies and the Butterflies

