

# Theater at Monmouth 2016 Page to Stage Tour Teacher Resource Guide



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## From the Page to the Stage



This season, the Theater at Monmouth's Page to Stage Tour brings a world premiere adaptation of classic literature to students across Maine. *The Velveteen Rabbit* (grades PreK-8) was adapted to build analytical and literacy skills through the exploration of verse and playwriting, foster creativity and inspire imaginative thinking. *Page to Stage* Tour workshops and extended residencies offer students the opportunity to study, explore, and view classic literature through performance.

TAM's Education Tours and complimentary programming challenge learners of all ages to explore the ideas, emotions, and principles contained in classic texts and to discover the connection between classic theatre and our modern world.



Teacher Resource Guide information and activities were developed to help students form a personal connection to the play before attending the production; standards-based activities are included to explore the plays in the classroom before and after the performance.

The best way to appreciate classic literature is to explore. That means getting students up on their feet and physically, emotionally, and vocally exploring the words. The kinesthetic memory is the most powerful—using performance-based activities will help students with a range of learning styles to build a richer understanding of the language and identify with the characters and conflicts of the plays.



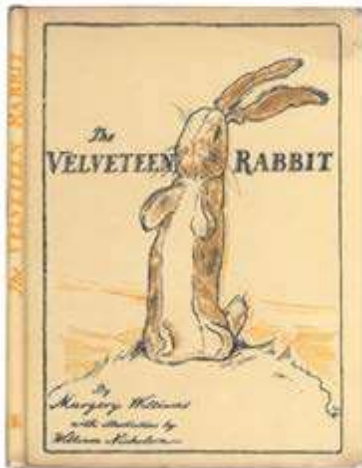
Thank you for taking some of your classroom time to teach your students about *The Velveteen Rabbit*! If you need more information to support your preparation for the production, please call 207.933.2952 or email us at [boxoffice@theateratmonmouth.org](mailto:boxoffice@theateratmonmouth.org).

Enjoy the show!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dawn McAndrews".

Dawn McAndrews  
Producing Artistic Director  
Theater at Monmouth

## About the Play: *The Velveteen Rabbit*



### THE STORY

One Christmas a young boy receives a stuffed, velveteen rabbit. The Velveteen Rabbit soon becomes the boy's favorite toy, and this companionship lasts until the boy falls ill with scarlet fever. The boy becomes too ill to play for a very long time; upon his recovery, he is sent to the seaside on doctor's orders. The boy wishes to take the Rabbit with him, but his doctor forbids him to take the diseased toy. Not only can he not take the Rabbit, but the doctor says it must be burned along with all the nursery toys in order to disinfect the house from the germs.

While awaiting the bonfire, in which the Velveteen Rabbit will be burned, the Rabbit cries a real tear. This tear brings forth the Nursery Magic Fairy. The Rabbit thinks he was real before, but the fairy tells him he was only real to the boy. She flies him to the woods, where he realizes that he is a real rabbit at last and runs to join the other rabbits in the wild.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Margery Williams Bianco always loved to write and draw. In 1901, she moved to London and published her first children's stories and her first novel *The Late Returning*. After WW1, Margery Williams Bianco brought her husband and children to the United States. In 1921, encouraged by her children, Margery wrote and published *The Velveteen Rabbit or How Toys Become Real*. Other successful books followed: *The Apple Tree*, *The Skin Horse*, *The Candlestick*, and *The House that Grew Smaller* are among some of the many books Margery wrote in the 1920s and 1930s.

*The Velveteen Rabbit or How Toys Become Real* was Margery Williams Bianco's most popular book. It has been republished and re-illustrated many times, and has been translated dozens of times all over the world. In 2007, the National Education Association named the book one of its "Teachers' Top 50 Books for Children."



### THEATER AT MONMOUTH ARTISTIC TEAM

Dawn McAndrews  
Ian Kramer  
Elizabeth Rocha  
Stacey Koloski  
Jim Alexander

Playwright  
Director  
Costume Designer  
Set Designer  
Lighting Designer



# When Toys Become Real

Or things every little girl or boy should know...

**Here is some background information that will help students better understand the story of *The Velveteen Rabbit*.**

1. Velveteen is a fabric made from cotton or a cotton-blend fabric, and is relatively inexpensive. It is woven in a single layer with an extra set of filling yarns that are cut to form short, closely set pile. Velveteen is available in solid colors, but can also be printed with plaid, floral, or paisley designs. It is very easy to sew and more durable than velvet.

2. Scarlet Fever is an illness caused by the same bacterial infection that can cause Strep Throat. Scarlet Fever gets its name from the red rash and fever it inflicts. Today this infection is not nearly as common as it was 100 years ago and is easily treated with antibiotics.

3. In 1985, *The Velveteen Rabbit* was adapted into a video recording and soundtrack. The video is narrated by Meryl Streep, with music by George Winston. It was even nominated for a Grammy Award!

4. A “Skin Horse” was a popular toy in the early 1900s. It was made of actual animal hide and stuffed full of sawdust so it could stand upright. The tail and mane were made with horse hair as well.

5. The Little Boy receives the Velveteen Rabbit as a Christmas present. That same year he also receives chocolate almonds and oranges. Oranges were once a popular Christmas gift for two reasons: they used to be an exotic treat not readily available in the United States and they filled out the toe of a stocking quite nicely!

6. *The Velveteen Rabbit* was illustrated by William Nicholson. Nicholson was a London-based artist who also illustrated stories by Rudyard Kipling, designed stained-glass windows for several churches, and took home a Gold Medal in the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics when art was considered a competitive event!



## Why Teach *The Velveteen Rabbit*?

*The Velveteen Rabbit* is one of the most famous pieces of Children’s Literature of all time. The story helps students experience themes of unconditional love and inner beauty. Many students relate to the Rabbit’s experience of being teased by the fancier toys and discovering that true between comes from within. The Velveteen Rabbit’s quest to become real reinforces the phrase “love conquers all.” By exploring the play’s context and background students discover historical and cultural lessons of the 1920s, scientific lessons about mammals, as well as examples of how authors use personal experience to create works of fiction.

## A Velveteen World: Children's Toys of the 1920's

Popular boys toys of the 1920's reflected the new and exciting cars, trucks and planes, and for girls modernized versions of traditional toys like dolls house and dolls.



Among the most outstanding successes of the 1920s were the transport toys; miniature planes, boats, cars and trains. In real life "modern" transport was still a luxury and people found the possibility of travelling to more destinations at greater speed really fascinating. The 1920s was the golden age of trains for the toy industry, triggering a

collecting craze which survives to this day. These early trains were sold as kits that were intended for self-assembly, different from the pre-built German models. Train collectors, children and adults alike, took this new hobby very seriously.

After trains came planes, boats, and cars. The main British model plane was FROG (Flies Right Off the Ground). Boats and yachts had been familiar and popular toys throughout the 19th century and early toy boats, including Noah's Arks, were often made for use with or without water. Much like today there was a huge variety of toys including Chemistry sets, Cristal Growing, Clockwork Toys, Planes, Trucks, Tractors, Buses, Power Boats, Steam Train Sets, Steam Engines, Musical toys, Character toys, Circus toys, pedal cars, and construction toys like Lincoln Logs and Tinkertoys. The materials for building these toys included tin, pressed metal, cast-iron, wood, and paper.



For those on a budget, traditional toys were still being made. Jokes, puzzles, magic tricks, and wind-up toys were inexpensive and popular. Toys were still gender oriented with girls playing with dolls, sewing kits, tea sets, cookers, and other miniature domestic appliances. Boys were given realistic chemistry, electrical, telegraphy, radio crystal, and engineering sets. Under the heading "educational toys" fell printing kits, typewriters, and puzzles.

A major change in the toy industry came about with the introduction of modern mass production methods and the invention of Polystyrene in 1927. Because Polystyrene is a tough, durable kind of plastic ideally suited to toy design, it ushered in a new world of toy development.

Although the modern style of Teddy Bear was developed around 1907 it was only in the 1920's that its popularity took off. The Knickerbocker Toy Company started in 1920 still makes teddy bears today. In the 1920s, musical bears and mechanical bears increased in popularity world-wide as well as bears that walked, danced, played ball, and even turned somersaults.



# All About Rabbits and Bunnies



Rabbits are small mammals with fluffy, short tails, whiskers, and long ears. There are about 30 species of rabbits around the world that live in many different environments. Of all the wild animals in the United States, rabbits are one of the most common. Cottontail rabbits, with their soft brown fur and white fluffy tails, are found in almost every state. They live in woods, grassy fields, near farms, and even in neighborhoods.

Rabbits belong to the Lagomorph order that also includes hares and pikas. There are over 45 different breeds of rabbits and one common misconception is that rabbits are rodents because they have incisor teeth that never stop growing. A male rabbit is called a buck, a female is called a doe, and their babies are called kits. Rabbits are herbivores (plant-eating) mammals.

## Family Life and Behavior

Rabbits will eat any kind of vegetable, tree bark, and herbs. A four-pound rabbit will drink as much water as a 20 pound dog. Rabbits can weigh up to 11 pounds. Maybe the grossest fact about rabbits is that they eat their droppings. They eat soft “cecotropes” (nutrient-packed droppings) that look like poop. The hard, round pellets you see are from the second round of digestion. Rabbits can't vomit, and they are very susceptible to over-heating and can suffer from a heat stroke. The only place a rabbit sweats is on the pads of its feet.

Rabbits can mate when they are three months old and can have babies when they are six months old. They can produce four or five litters or 20 to 40 babies a year. Babies open their eyes at about 10 days and are weaned at between six to eight weeks. Rabbits feed their babies only for about five minutes a day and spend very little time in the warren. You may think this makes them bad parents but they stay away to keep the kits safe.



## Long Live the Rabbit!!!



The average lifespan of a rabbit is between eight to 10 years. Rabbits have a very good memory and long sensitive ears, which can turn in any direction and help to regulate their temperature. They have large eyes, a blind spot right in front of their face, and can see behind themselves without rotating their heads. They have 28 teeth, which keep on growing continuously throughout their life. Rabbits chew 120 times a minute and have over 17,000 taste buds in their mouth.

Rabbits are crepuscular, that is they are most active at dawn and dusk. A rabbit will sleep between eight and nine hours a day and they do not hibernate in the winter. When rabbits are happy, they perform a series of jumps, twists and runs, which is termed as binky. Rabbits require at least four hours exercise a day and can suffer from osteoporosis if they don't get enough. Rabbits can jump as long as 36 inches and higher and can run about 35 miles an hour. The predators of the rabbit are coyote, fox and wolves. A predator can literally scare a rabbit to death.

## Painting a Picture with Words

Metaphors, Similes, and Personification are writing tools that will make your writing better. All three of these literary devices are used in *The Velveteen Rabbit*.

- A **simile** is comparison of two different things, using the words “like” or “as.”
- A **metaphor** compares two different things by renaming one of the items.
- **Personification** is the technique of giving non-living things human characteristics.

**Below are examples you may have heard during the performance or remember from reading the original story. Can you determine if the statement is a metaphor (m), simile (s), or personification (p) by circling below?**

|  |     |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|-----|
| She came in swooping about like a great wind.                            | (s) | (m) | (p) |
| The boy’s bedclothes were like the borroughs a real bunny would play in. | (s) | (m) | (p) |
| The stuffed rabbit was naturally shy.                                    | (s) | (m) | (p) |
| The mechanical toys were arrogant and full of modern ideas.              | (s) | (m) | (p) |
| His eyes were a look of wisdom and beauty.                               | (s) | (m) | (p) |
| The back of him was made all in one piece, like a pin cushion.           | (s) | (m) | (p) |
| The wild rabbits danced in the grass.                                    | (s) | (m) | (p) |
| The thicket of raspberry canes grew like a tropical jungle.              | (s) | (m) | (p) |

**Now try writing your own! Write two metaphors, similes, and personifications about your experience at Theater at Monmouth’s production of *The Velveteen Rabbit*! Here is an example: *The Rabbit’s Fur look fluffy like billowing clouds.***

Simile #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Simile #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Metaphor #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Metaphor #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Personification #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Personification #2: \_\_\_\_\_



# BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

## 1. The Moral of the Story

Many of us grew up reading or listening to stories from the Bible, Aesop's Fables, Trickster Stories, or Grimm's Fairy Tales. An important aspect to all of these stories is that they have a moral—a lesson that the author wanted us to learn. Ask students to discuss the lesson they felt was communicated in the story of *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Ask each student to select a character from the story and write the lesson-learned from that character's perspective.

## 2. The Magic of Make-Believe

Ask students to list their favorite toys. Which ones did they have the longest? Do they forget about old toys when they get new ones? Do old ones look different than new ones? How? Discuss stories or films where toys come to life (*Toy Story*, *Pinocchio*, *Winnie the Pooh*, *Nutcracker*, etc.) What are some common themes? Which toys would they like to come alive? What would you they if they did?

## 3. Pass the Story, please

After reading the original story or watching a video, have students sit in a circle and pass a talking block or beanbag to indicate their turn. When they have the bag, they should add one sentence to tell what happens in the original story. Once the story has been completed then start to pass the bag again only this time, students may add to the story in whatever way they wish so long as the new story has a beginning, middle, and end—perhaps focusing on a specific social issue. Repeat as many times as the class' imagination will allow.

After this activity, discuss the following:

- What did students find easy/difficult/fun about the process?
- How did their stories change?
- What elements remained in each version?
- What did they add to make the story different?
- How did the moral of the original story relate to their contemporary lives, concerns, or issues?

## 4. Create Your Own Rabbit (Or Robot, or Rocking Horse, or Lion)

Now that you've read the original, it's time to create a toy from the Boy's room. Have students re-read the description of their favorite character and create a rabbit (or robot, or rocking horse, or lion) to match the description and their imagination. To ensure that their creation fits in the classroom, use the following guidelines.

The 3D character should be:

- No taller than 24 inches
- Be made of some type of paper
- Be securely fastened to a piece of string

Create a gallery, hang them from the ceiling, or arrange them in order of when the Rabbit encounters them as a walk-thru visual of the story.



## AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

### 5. What's the Message?

One message in *The Velveteen Rabbit* is that of empathy. Empathy is defined as the ability to identify with and feel other people's needs and concerns. Ask students how they felt about each character before the play, during the play, at the end of the play, and now. Discuss how and why their feelings toward each changed. Ask students how they show empathy for others at school in their actions and words. Ask them to be specific about what empathy would sound like and look like. Have the students stand in two lines facing each other and ask them to demonstrate how they show empathy without words and then with words. Make a chart on the board (Sounds Like and Looks Like at the top of each column) and track the examples of how they and other students demonstrate empathy in the classroom and on the playground.

### 2. Make Your Own Illustrations

Margery Williams' original publication of *The Velveteen Rabbit* included illustrations by William Nicholson. The plates were titled: *Christmas Morning, The Skin Horse Tells His Story, Spring Time, Summer Days, Anxious Times, The Fairy Flower, At Last! At Last!* Theater at Monmouth's adaptation is shaped around each of these illustrations as sections of the tale. Give students two pieces of paper divided into four quadrants. Ask students to draw an illustration for each section of the story and title it appropriately. The last box is for them to write the lesson they learned from the story and how it applies to their life today. Bind these into books and share with the class. Ask students to discuss how they each represented the characters, the places, and the magic? Write a list on the board of the lessons that were learned.

### 3. Making Toys Real

Ask students to discuss how the rabbit felt when she met the real rabbits. Why did she pretend she really had hind legs? How did the rabbit become real at the end of the play? What was the difference between what the Rocking Horse said was "real" and how the fairy her "real" at the end? Are they both real? Was there a time in your life when you wanted a toy or character in a book to be real? Ask students to pick a favorite toy/fictional character and create a scene where they come to life. Create small groups to create a scene together and present it to the class. Encourage the students to bring in props to enhance the scenes.

### 4. The Rabbits Journey

Mythologist Joseph Campbell felt that everyone followed the path of the "hero's journey"—encountering challenges in life, attempting to overcome them, and changing as a result of conquering them. Within a given journey, one finds many obstacles, barriers, and enemies, as well as friends, allies, and teachers. Trace the Velveteen Rabbit's "hero's journey" over the entire play. Discuss specific moments when she confronted obstacles, barriers, enemies, friends, allies, and teachers. As a class, create a timeline of her adventures and then break into groups and have each draw a box of comic strip of the journey. Be sure to include visuals of the events, places, and wildlife she meets along the way.

# RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

## Books on Fairytales and Folktales

- *The Velveteen Principles: A Guide to Becoming Real- Hidden Wisdom from a Children's Classic*, by Tori Raiten-D'Antonio. HCI: 2004.
- *The Uses of Enchantment: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, by Bruno Bettelheim. Knopf, 1976.
- *Fairy Tale in the Ancient World*, by Graham Anderson. Routledge, 2000.

## Books for Early & Middle Readers

- Aardema, Verna. *Who's in Rabbit's House? A Masai Tale*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 1990.
- Adler, Naomi. *The Barefoot Book of Animal Tales from Around the World*. Barefoot Books, 1996.
- Fleming, Candace. *Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!* Atheneum Books Young Readers, 2002.
- Gendron, Karen. *The Rabbit Handbook*. Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 2000.
- Potter, Beatrix. *The Complete Adventures of Peter Rabbit*. Puffin Books, 1984.
- Rylant, Cynthia. *Bunny Bungalow*. Voyager Books – Harcourt, Inc., 1999.
- Williams, Margery. *The Velveteen Rabbit*. (Adapted by Lou Fancher) Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2002.
- Waddell, Martin. *Tom Rabbit*. Candlewick Press, 2001.

## Recommended Web Sites

- <http://www.writepage.com/velvet.htm> Read the original text of *The Velveteen Rabbit, or How Toys Become Real* by Margery Williams Bianco.
- <http://www.rabbitweb.net> Wanted: real rabbits! Here's where rabbit owners meet and share information.
- <http://www.rabbit.org> The House Rabbit Society or lots information on rabbits.
- <http://www.historychannel.com/exhibits/toys/> The History Channel's *History of Toys and Games* has a timeline to trace the history of favorite toys and games.
- <http://www.bearmuseum.co.uk/> Learn about the history of Teddy Bears at the Bear Museum in Petersfield, England.

## Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy: Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

- Comprehension and Collaboration
  - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
  - Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
  - Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
  - Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
  - Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
  - Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.