

The Velveteen Rabbit
by Margery Williams

Classroom Favorites



Teacher's Guide by Linda Crosswhite

A Perma-Bound Production

STORY SUMMARY

The Velveteen Rabbit is a story about a young boy and his love for a stuffed rabbit. The Boy receives the Rabbit as a Christmas present, but puts it aside until his favorite sleeping toy cannot be found. The Velveteen Rabbit is then chosen to be the Boy's new sleeping toy, and the Boy grows to love it very much! The Rabbit learns from the Skin Horse, another nursery toy, what it is that makes you Real. The Rabbit longs to be Real. One evening, the Boy tells Nana that the Velveteen Rabbit is not a toy, it's Real! The Rabbit is so happy.

The Rabbit and the Boy share many fun times together. While on a picnic with the Boy, the Velveteen Rabbit sees and talks to two real rabbits. They don't understand why he cannot move, and he is embarrassed. Later, the Boy becomes very sick with scarlet fever. The Velveteen Rabbit stays with the Boy and helps him to get better. When the Boy is better, the doctor tells Nana to burn all the old toys, including the Velveteen Rabbit. But before that can happen, a magic fairy rescues the Velveteen Rabbit and turns him into Real! The Fairy explained that he was Real to the Boy because the Boy loved him, but now he would be real to everyone.

AUTHOR SKETCH

Margery Williams was born July 22, 1881, in London, England and died in 1944 in New York, New York. She married Francisco Bianco in 1904 and had two children. The last schooling she received was at the Convent School in Sharon Hill, Pennsylvania from 1896 to 1898. Her father believed that children should have little formal schooling, and none before the age of ten. Before that, he believed they should be taught to read and have access to books to learn independently.

Margery Williams was a novelist, translator and author of children's books. She was runner-up for the Newbery Medal in 1937 for *Winterbound*. *The Velveteen Rabbit* was written in 1922 and re-released in 1974, along with a motion picture adaptation. *The Velveteen Rabbit* was her first children's book. The story was based on toys from her own childhood and her children's. She was very concerned with writing quality literature that children would enjoy. "Nothing is easier than to write a story for children; few things harder, as any writer knows, than to achieve a story that children will really like."

SUGGESTED THEMES:

- toys
- rabbits
- love
- reality

SKILLS AND STRATEGIES:

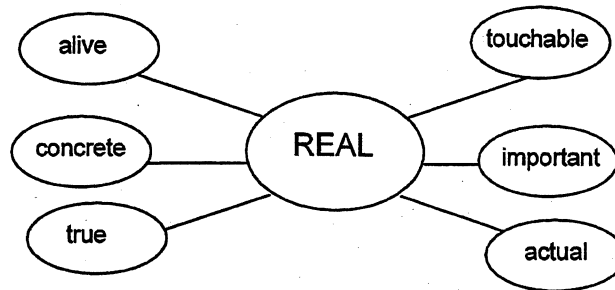
- Determining point of view
- Stating the main idea
- Using context clues to develop vocabulary

The following suggested plans and activities can be used with this book. You may choose to select and modify these to best meet the needs and interests of your students.

INITIATING THE READING EXPERIENCE

Building the background

1. Initiate a discussion about reality. Have the students brainstorm the meaning of the word "real." Record their responses on the board or a chart. Example:



2. Ask the students to bring their favorite stuffed animal or other toy to class. If they no longer have one, they can draw a picture of it. In small groups, give the students an opportunity to share their toy or picture of their toy and explain why it is their favorite. Encourage the students to give the other students the opportunity to feel and discuss the different fabrics and surfaces. Provide a piece of velveteen fabric for them to feel. Have them compare the feel of velveteen to the feel of the favorite toys.
3. Bring in a real, caged rabbit for the students to observe.
4. Invite a magician to perform for the class. Provide books on magic and magic tricks for the students to peruse. Discuss the concepts of magic. Have the students select a magic trick to perform for the class or to read and explain to the rest of the class.

Introducing the book

1. Display the cover of the book for the students. Have them locate the title, author and illustrator. Discuss the illustrator's choice of colors and the illustrations.
2. Direct the students to the title page. Discuss the alternate title and why the author might have added this.

3. Display the table of illustrations. Explain that this is a list of illustrations and not a table of contents of chapters. Compare this format to another book with a table of contents of chapters. Ask the students why they think the author chose to list illustrations instead of chapter titles.
4. Inform the students that there may be some words in this story that are unfamiliar. As they read the story, encourage them to write down these words and the sentences in which they appeared. This is important, because these new words will be used in the Skills and Strategies activity on vocabulary.

ENJOYING THE READING

Prereading: Setting the purpose for reading.

Have the children read to confirm their predictions and gain the meaning of the story.

Post Reading: Confirming, analyzing, synthesizing or evaluating the reading.

1. Encourage the children to share their feelings about the story.
2. Allow the students to confirm any predictions they might have made prior to reading the story.

Section 1 (pp. 1-20)

Prereading

Ask the students to predict what the story might be about, based on the cover illustration. In their predictions, they should include who the main character will be and from whose point of view the story might be told. Record their predictions. Have the students read this section to confirm their predictions.

Post Reading

1. Allow the students to confirm or reject their predictions formed in the Prereading activity.
2. Initiate a class discussion about how the toys in the nursery behaved. Why would the Velveteen Rabbit feel inferior to the other toys? Why do the other toys snub the Rabbit and make fun of him? How should they have behaved?
3. Discuss the importance of the Velveteen Rabbit's stuffing and fabric. How would things have been different if he were made of materials other than velveteen and sawdust? Would he have felt any better about himself? Why? How might the nursery toys have treated him?
4. In small groups of 4-5, have the students discuss the idea of nursery magic. What does it mean? Does it really exist? What is the Skin Horse's definition of becoming Real? Why might that hurt? How does it happen to the Velveteen Rabbit? How do you or did you make your toys come alive? Did they seem real to you? How did your favorite toys compare to those you did not like as much?
5. This is an appropriate time to teach the Skills and Strategies Activity on stating the main idea.

6. After reading this section of chapters, give the students an opportunity to select from Writing Activities 1 and 2, Math Activity 2, Social Studies Activities 1, 2, and 3, Art Activity 1, and/or Music/Drama Activity 2.

Section 2 (pp. 21-27)

Prereading

Ask the students to predict how things will be different for the Velveteen Rabbit now that he is Real. Record their responses and have them read to confirm.

Post Reading

1. Discuss the scene between the Velveteen Rabbit and the two real rabbits. As a class, have the students brainstorm the differences and similarities between real (being alive) and Real (being loved by a child). The students can also comment on which they would rather be and explain why.
2. In small discussion circles, have the students debate the reality of this section of the book. How can the rabbits talk? How can the Velveteen Rabbit communicate with the real rabbits? Explain how this might be another case of nursery magic.
3. Have the students discuss the concept of self-esteem. You may wish to prompt their discussion with the following questions:
 - What is self-esteem?
 - How does the Velveteen Rabbit feel about himself before this section? During? After?
 - How do the real rabbits affect the Velveteen Rabbit's self-esteem?
 - What might the Velveteen Rabbit do to improve his self-esteem?
4. This is an appropriate time to teach the Skills and Strategies Activity on determining point of view.
5. After reading this section of chapters, give the students an opportunity to select from Writing Activity 5, Social Studies Activity 4, Art Activities 2 and 4, and/or Music/Drama Activity 1.

Section 3 (pp. 28-39)

Prereading

Ask the students what they think might happen now that the Velveteen Rabbit has seen real rabbits. Record their predictions.

Post Reading

1. Initiate a class discussion about the Boy's illness and how the Velveteen Rabbit helps him through it. How did the Rabbit help the Boy get well? How was magic involved? How is the Rabbit dangerous now that the Boy is better? Why might the Rabbit have to be burned?

2. In small groups, have the students list all the magical events which have taken place in this story. Ask them to list the events in order from most magical to least magical. Next to the event, they can list a logical explanation for the event, or state that it is purely magical. The students can share their findings with the rest of the class.
3. After reading this section of chapters, give the students an opportunity to select from Math Activity 3, Social Studies Activity 5, Science/Health Activities 1 and 3, Art Activity 3, and/or Music/Drama Activity 3.

Section 4 (p. 40)

Prereading

Have the students predict what the Velveteen Rabbit will do now that he is a real rabbit. Record their predictions.

Post Reading

1. Initiate a discussion about the Velveteen Rabbit. Why did he come back to see the Boy? What has he been doing all this time? Did the Boy recognize him? How?
2. This is an appropriate time to teach the Skills and Strategies Activity on using context clues to develop vocabulary.
3. After reading this section of chapters, give the students an opportunity to select from Writing Activities 3 and 4, Math Activity 1, Science/Health Activity 2, and/or Music/Drama Activity 4.

TEACHING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES IN CONTEXT

Determining point of view

Explain to the students that the point of view of a story means who tells the story. Point out that the person who tells the story is usually involved in the action of the story. Point of view is usually first person or third person. When the main character refers to himself/herself as "I," then the story is written in first person. When the main character is referred to as "he" or "she," then the story is written in third person. Examples:

First Person:	I went to the store. I needed to buy some bread.
Third Person:	Robert went to the store. He needed to buy some bread.

In small groups, have the students determine from whose point of view the story is told. They may want to refer to the dedication page for a hint. Ask them to complete the point of view chart at the end of the guide. Each group can select a representative to share answers with the rest of the class.

Stating the main idea

Explain to the students the concept of the main idea of a chapter/story. After reading each section of the story, the students should write a one-sentence main idea about that section. Next, the students can create a chapter title for each section based on the main idea. The main ideas and sections can be written on the form at the end of the guide. Distribute these forms after reading the first section, and instruct the students to complete them as they continue reading the story. These can be shared with the rest of the class and/or voted on by the class to select the best title for each section. After completing the book, have the students determine the main idea of the story.

Using context clues to develop vocabulary

Have the students refer to the lists of unfamiliar or new words which they wrote while reading the story. Distribute a 3" x 5" note card to each student. Have the student write one unfamiliar word on the front of the card, along with the sentence in which it appeared. (Instruct them to leave space at the bottom of the card for the dictionary definition, which will be added later.) Next, have them turn the card over and predict the definition of the word based on the context of the sentence. (You may need to review this process a few times before the students do this on their own.)

Divide the students into small groups of 4-6. Provide each group with a dictionary. Have the students take turns looking up the definitions of their chosen words. These definitions can be written on the front of the cards. The students can confirm or change their predicted definitions based on the dictionary definition. Encourage each member of the group to read his/her word to the other members of the group and have them guess the definition based on the context of the sentence. Afterwards, the student can share the dictionary definition. These cards can be displayed on a bulletin board or placed in a class dictionary box, for future reference.

CONNECTING THE READING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

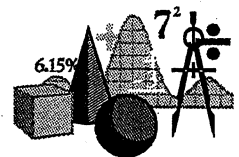
The following activities may be introduced after the story, integrated into the appropriate content areas or used as learning center activities.



Writing

1. Ask the students to write a narrative description of their favorite toy. The description should include when and why they received the toy, what the toy looked like, and why the toy was their favorite. These can be illustrated and displayed in the classroom.
2. Explain to the students that a dialogue is a written conversation. Dialogue should be written with quotation marks around it, and should identify who is speaking. Example: "I see Nana coming. Hurry and straighten yourselves," said the Skin Horse. Emphasize the importance of giving the dialogue meaning and telling a story. Divide the students into pairs. Have each pair of students write a dialogue between two toys.

3. Photocopy and distribute the sheet regarding the development of the Velveteen Rabbit at the end of the guide. Have the students write a description of the Velveteen Rabbit at the three stages in his life: toy, Real to the Boy, and real, live rabbit.
4. Divide the students into small groups of 3-5. Have each group write a skit for one of the sections of the story. Each member should write the dialogue or actions for a different character. If there are not enough characters, they may include a narrator and extra animals, toys, or moving props (trees, wind, etc.).
5. Encourage the students to make a card for someone they love. Review the format of a card: short phrase and illustration on the front and longer message or poem on the inside. Once the students have designed their cards on scratch paper, provide them with sheets of 8 1/2" x 11" white or colored construction paper, markers, crayons or paints and any other appropriate art media to create their cards.



Math

1. Assist the students in estimating how old the Velveteen Rabbit is in each of the sections of the story. For example, at the beginning he is new, in the second section he is a few months old, in the third section he might be about a year old, and at the end he is very old and yet brand new again. This can be extended by determining how long it might take to wear out a stuffed toy (i.e. wear off the fur, eyes fall out, nose rubs off, whiskers fall out, etc.). Students can share their own experiences with stuffed toys and how long they lasted before they started to fall apart.
2. Ask the students to bring in one of their favorite stuffed animals or dolls. Give each student an opportunity to weigh and measure his/her toy and record the weight, height, width and type of toy on a class chart. Example:

Student Name	Type of Toy	Weight	Height	Width
Maria	bear	1 lb.	10 inches	8 inches

This activity can be extended by providing samples of different stuffing (cotton, foam, sawdust, etc.) for the students to weigh and compare.

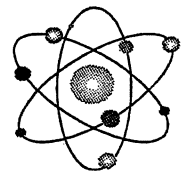
3. Have the students compare the differences between a stuffed and a real rabbit (i.e. height, weight, length of ears, whiskers, etc.). Example:

	Stuffed Rabbit	Real Rabbit
height		
weight		
length of ears		
number of whiskers		
size of tail		



Social Studies

1. Ask the students to discuss how the toys in the nursery behaved toward the Velveteen Rabbit, a new member of the nursery. (Example: The toys were not nice to the Rabbit, they made him feel unwelcome, etc.) Assist them in determining how this situation is similar to one in which a new student joins the class. Discuss how they might and should behave towards a new member in their class. Have the students brainstorm things they could do to make a new person feel more comfortable in a new class/school/town. Record these on the board or a chart.
2. Initiate a discussion about toys received as gifts, either for Christmas, another holiday or birthdays. What interesting or unusual gifts have the students received in the past? Why do people give gifts? Would the students like to receive a Velveteen Rabbit for a gift? How would they take care of it?
3. Invite the students to research Christmas or another holiday in which gifts are given. They should find out why gifts are given, what gifts are traditionally chosen, and how the gifts are presented. Students may share their findings in small groups or with the rest of the class.
4. Initiate a discussion about child care. Why do some people have others take care of their children? What is the difference between a baby-sitter, a governess, a nanny, and a daycare center? Which is in this story? Why does the Boy need a nanny? How is she involved in this story? How would the students like to have a nanny? Encourage them to share any experiences they may have had in a child care situation.
5. Initiate a class tradition of recognizing students who behave generously towards others. If a fellow classmate does something nice for another student, the student should write his/her name, the other student's name, and the good deed on a slip of paper. This slip of paper can be placed in a designated box. Each week, the teacher draws one slip out of the box. The student who is named on the slip can then wear an award, to be designed by the class. The award should recognize that the student has done something generous and made someone else feel special. Both the box and the award can be designed in Art Activity 3.



Science/Health

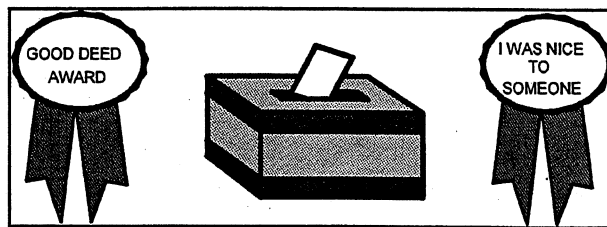
1. Initiate a discussion about scarlet fever and other childhood diseases. Divide the students into small groups and have each group select an illness to research and report on to the rest of the class.

2. Provide books with information about rabbits. Encourage the students to peruse these books and collect information about rabbits. Hold a class discussion about rabbits and give the students an opportunity to share any information they may have discovered about rabbits with the class.
3. Invite the school nurse or a doctor to speak to the class about childhood diseases and common illnesses. They should be prepared to share information about how the illnesses are contracted, treatment of the illnesses, and prevention.

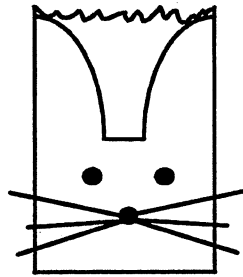


Art

1. Give the students an opportunity to paint a full color illustration of the Velveteen Rabbit, based on the descriptions and illustrations in the book. Provide watercolor paints, white sheets of paper, and brushes for the students to use for this activity.
2. Discuss the similarity between rabbits' tails and cotton balls. Divide the students into groups of four to six. Provide each group with cotton balls, glue, large sheets of butcher paper, crayons, markers and /or paint and brushes. Allow the students to draw a mural of rabbits, based on one of the scenes in the book containing real rabbits, and then add cotton balls for the tails. These can be displayed on the classroom walls or in the hallway.
3. Have the students create the items which accompany Social Studies Activity 5. First, have the students discuss and agree upon what should be written on the box and on a variety of awards. Once this has been decided, divide the students into small groups. One group can decorate the box, and the other groups can design one award per group. Provide the students with a box, construction paper, markers, crayons, scissors, glue, tape, and string or ribbon.

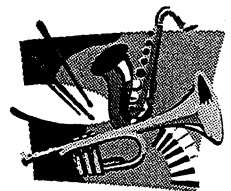


4. Give the students an opportunity to create paper bag bunnies for someone they care about. Provide small paper bags, buttons, pipe cleaners, scissors, markers and/or crayons. Instruct the students to lay the bags flat on their desks, trace out the space between the ears, cut this out, and then decorate the face. Next, they can open the bag and put a small gift, note or card in it. (Instructions for making a card are given in Writing Activity 5.). Example:



Drama

1. Divide the students into small groups. Give the students an opportunity to pantomime or act out the scene between the Velveteen Rabbit and the two real rabbits. They can also choose to act out another scene in this section, such as, the scene where the Rabbit finds out he is real, scenes of the Boy and the Rabbit playing together, and/or Christmas Day.
2. Ask the students to volunteer to read their dialogue of toys written in Writing Activity 2.



Music

1. Have the students use a familiar tune to write a song about their favorite toy. Example:
Susie had a teddy bear,
Teddy bear, Teddy bear,
Susie had a teddy bear,
It's coat was soft as silk.
(This can be sung to the tune of "Mary Had A Little Lamb.")
2. Play recordings about rabbits and any other songs about toys or topics related to this book. Allow the students to move freely during these songs.

EVALUATING THE READING EXPERIENCE

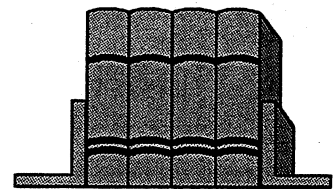
- Keep a teacher's journal of those strategies that best helped the students understand the story.
- Record the children's behaviors and learning by jotting these on "Post-its." These comments can later be transferred to a journal containing daily comments on the students.
- Prepare a chart to record the completion of the projects for each of the students.
- Record the students' responses as they briefly retell the story or specific sections.
- Collect a piece of each child's writing to evaluate.
- Develop a criteria for evaluating student work or refer to established forms of evaluation to assess the projects and activities completed.

Culminating Activity:

Host a tea party. Students can bring their favorite stuffed toy or doll. They can assist in planning – take turns reading stories and sharing anecdotes about favorite toys. You may also wish to show the video tape of *The Velveteen Rabbit* for the students.

RELATED READINGS

Ada, Alma Flor, *Unicorn Of The West*
Baily, Carolyn, *Little Rabbit Who Wanted Red Wings*
Berenstain, Stan & Jan, *Berenstain Bears Meet Santa Bear*
Brown, Mark, *What do You Call A Dumb Bunny?*
Brown, Margaret Wise, *Goodnight Moon*
Dubowski, Cathy East, *Pretty Good Magic*
Galbraith, Kathryn Osebold, *Laura Charlotte*
Gauch, Patricia Lee, *Uncle Magic*
Hoban, Lillian, *Arthur's Honey Bear*
Lionni, Leo, *Alexander And The Wind-Up Mouse*
Michels, Tilde, *Rabbit Spring*
Potter, Beatrix, *Complete Adventures Of Peter Rabbit*
Reid Banks, Lynne, *Magic Hare*
Waber, Bernard, *Ira Sleeps Over*
Wyler, Rose & Ames, Gerald, *Magic Secrets*
Zed, Betty, *Children's Medical Encyclopedia* (Student Edition)



Student Name _____ **Date** _____

Complete the following chart with information about the point of view of the story.

What character is in every scene of the story?
Is the story told in first person or third person?
Who do you think is telling this story? Why?
How did the dedication page give you a clue about the point of view?
Why do you or don't you think the person/animal telling the story is reliable?
Who else could have told this story? What might be different about this story if someone else were telling it?
Why do you think the author chose to tell the story in this way?

Student Name _____ **Date** _____

After you read each section of the story, write the main idea in the spaces provided. Next, create an original chapter title for each section.

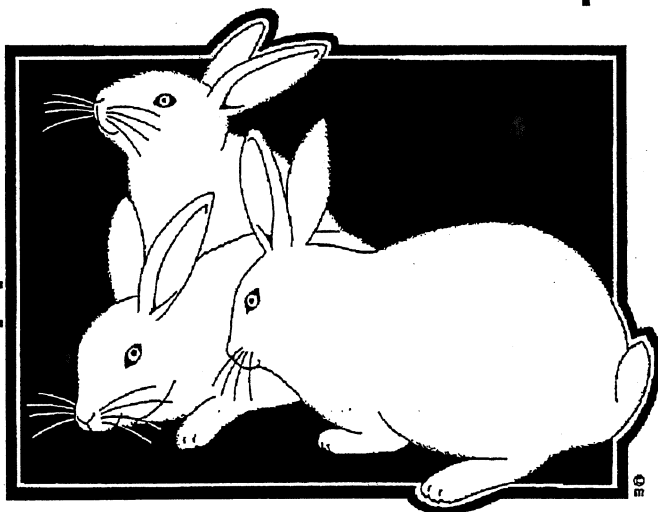
Main Idea	Title

Student Name _____ Date _____

Write a description of the Velveteen Rabbit at the three stages in his life: when he is just a toy, when he is Real to the Boy, and when he becomes a live rabbit, real to everyone.

toy

Real to Boy



real to everyone





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