EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Velveteen

Grades CD–3rd Grade

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Music and Lyrics by Molly Andrews-Hinders
Libretto by Molly Andrews-Hinders & Ananias Dixon
Additional Written Materials by Daniel Hahn & Treva Offutt
Orchestration and Musical Transcription by Matthew Dolan
Director: Joanna May Cullinan
Assistant Director: Ananias J. Dixon
Music Director: Anthony Trifiletti
Stage Manager: Tyree Franklin
Assistant Stage Manager: Kenedy Brooks
Choreographer: Jailyn Sherell Harris
Set Designer: Ian Petroni
Lighting Designer: Jeremy Benjamin
Costume Designer: Inda Blatch-Geib
Puppet Designer: Lady Bats Puppets
Props Master: Venchise Phillips
Producer: Daniel Hahn
Director of Education: Treva Offutt
Director of Production: Penny Zaletel
Line Producer: Molly Andrews-Hinders
Piano: Anthony Trifiletti
Bass: Jason Stebelton
Cello: Olivia Potash
Reeds: RJ Rovito
Drums: Justin Hart

CHARLESTON GAILLARD CENTER
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Photo credit Ben Giulivo and Grace Swank.

ABOUT THE SHOW

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Velveteen is a magical musical inspired by the beloved children's book *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams. The story follows a young girl named Lulu who has just moved in with her grandmother and is adjusting to a big change in her life. To comfort her, Gran gives Lulu a special toy, the Velveteen Rabbit, which soon becomes her treasured companion.

As Lulu and Velveteen grow together through imagination and play, the rabbit begins to wonder what it means to become "real." Along the way, Velveteen meets other toys and dreams of living outside with real rabbits. Through friendship, love, and belonging, Velveteen discovers that being truly loved is what makes someone real.[1]

With music, storytelling, and imaginative stage design, *Velveteen* brings this timeless tale to life for young audiences. The production explores themes of friendship, identity, imagination, and emotional growth, while encouraging students to reflect on the meaning of love, authenticity, and belonging.

Ben Giulivo & Grace Swank, "Velveteen: A New Musical," Holden & Arts Associates, accessed May 28, 2026, https://www.holdenarts.org/velveteen.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Velveteen is produced by Playhouse Square, a nationally recognized performing arts organization based in Cleveland, Ohio. Playhouse Square is known for presenting and producing a wide variety of performing arts experiences, including theater, music, dance, and educational programming for young audiences.[2]

As a nonprofit arts organization in one of the largest performing arts districts in the United States, Playhouse Square is deeply committed to arts education and creating meaningful experiences for students and families. The organization has commissioned and produced several original productions designed especially for young audiences, combining engaging storytelling, music, and visual design to make the performing arts accessible and inspiring for children.

Read more about Playhouse Square here

Ben Giulivo & Grace Swank, "Velv-Oct24-102,," Holden & Arts Associates, accessed May 28, 2026, https://www.holdenarts.org/velveteen.

WATCH

Velveteen trailer here
More from Playhouse Square

1. "Velveteen, A New Musical," Holden & Arts Associates, accessed May 28, 2026, https://www.holdenarts.org/velveteen.
2. "About," Playhouse Square, accessed May 28, 2026, https://www.playhousesquare.org/about-playhousesquare-main/about-playhousesquare.

CONNECT

CLASSROOM WORKSHOPS

Design Your Own Toy (Visual Arts/STEAM)
Grades CD–3
Students will design and create their own toy using a variety of art materials while exploring how artists and designers combine creativity, materials, and function. Through planning, building, and sharing their creations, students will express ideas and develop an understanding of how characters and objects can be brought to life through art.
Click here for the workshop

From Page to Stage—Reader's Theater
Grades 2–3
Students will bring *Velveteen* to life in a reader's theater by using voice, movement, and collaboration. Through rehearsal and performance with their classmates, students will develop expressive speaking skills and work together to portray characters and events in the story.
Click here for the workshop

Jumping Rabbit—Book to Ballet
Grades CD–3
Students explore how a story can be transformed into dance by learning basic ballet movements and using them to represent the journey of the Velveteen Rabbit. Through guided practice and creative choreography, students create movement sequences with a clear beginning, middle, and end. This lesson helps students understand how dancers use technique and imagination to tell stories on stage.
Click here for workshop

Soundtrack for a Story
Grades K–3
Students will listen to musical compositions and use their imagination to create visual story sketches inspired by what they hear. By comparing how different pieces of music influence their drawings, students will explore how musical elements like tempo and style can shape storytelling. This lesson prepares students to recognize how music supports and enhances the narrative in *Velveteen* at the Gaillard Center.
Click here for workshop

CONNECT

MEET MARGERY WILLIAMS

Margery Williams (1881–1944) was an English-born author best known for writing the beloved children's classic *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Born in London, she grew up in a family that valued reading and storytelling, which inspired her love of books and imagination from a young age.

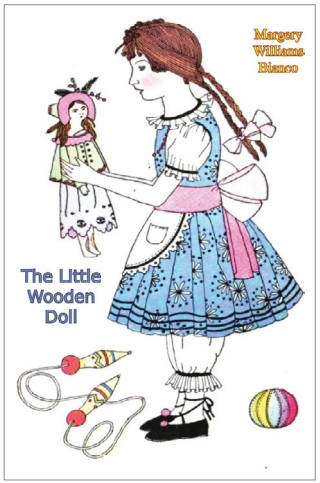
Williams began writing professionally as a young adult and published many stories and books throughout her life. In 1922, she published *The Velveteen Rabbit*, the story of a toy rabbit who dreams of becoming "real" through the love of a child. This book has remained one of the most cherished works in children's literature for generations.

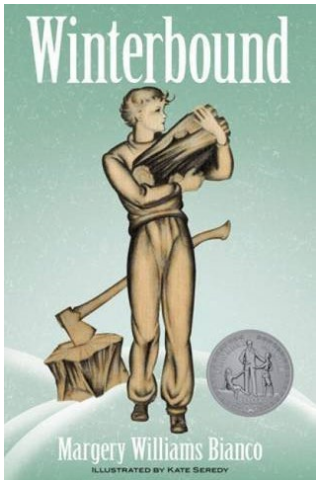
Margery Williams believed that stories could help children explore important feelings like love, friendship, and belonging. Her work continues to inspire readers around the world and has been adapted into theater, film, and performances like *Velveteen*, bringing her timeless story to new audiences.[3]

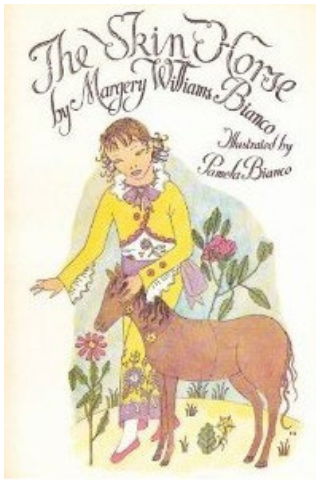
Learn more about Margery Williams here

"Margery Williams Bianco," Wordsworth, accessed May 28, 2026, https://wordsworth-editions.com/book-author/williams-bianco-margery/.

READ OTHER BOOKS BY MARGERY WILLIAMS







3. "Margery Williams," americanliterature.com, accessed May 28, 2026, https://americanliterature.com/author/margery-williams.

CONNECT

THE VELVETEEN RABBIT BY MARGERY WILLIAMS

The Velveteen Rabbit has remained popular for more than 100 years because its message about love, belonging, and growing up continues to resonate with readers of all ages.

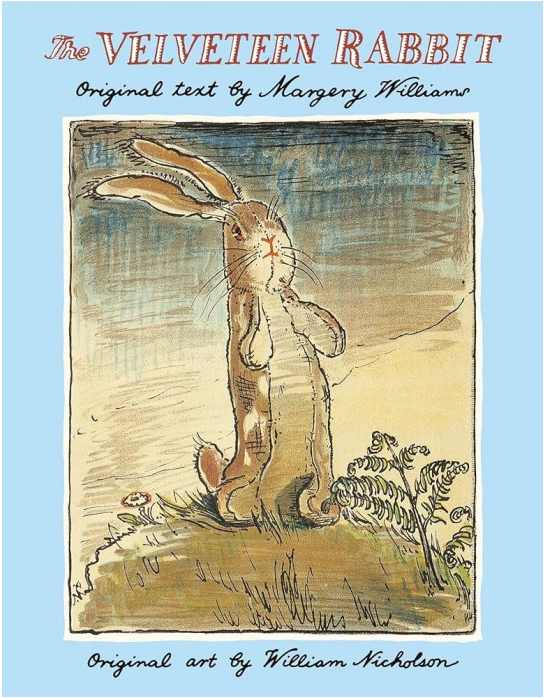
The story explores the idea that becoming "real" is not about appearance–it happens through love, friendship, and shared experiences. This theme helps children think about what makes relationships meaningful and how caring for others can change us.

What Does It Mean to be "Real"?
One of the central themes of *The Velveteen Rabbit* is the idea of becoming "real." In the story, Velveteen learns that becoming "real" happens slowly over time when someone loves you deeply and accepts you for who you are. As Velveteen spends time with Lulu, the rabbit begins to feel real because of the love and connection they share.

This idea encourages the reader to reflect on important questions:

- What makes a friendship special?
- How do we show someone we care about them?
- How can kindness help others feel valued?

WATCH
The Velveteen Rabbit read aloud



"The Velveteen Rabbit," Bookshop.org, accessed May 28, 2026, https://bookshop.org/p/books/the-velveteen-rabbit-the-classic-children-s-book-margery-williams/b1035474e4e27c26?ean=9780385077255&next=t&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=16235479093

EXPLORE

FROM BOOK TO STAGE

Many theater performances, especially here at the Gaillard Center, begin as stories in books. When artists adapt a book for the stage, they take the characters, themes, and important moments from the story and reimagine them through music, acting, costumes, and stage design.[4]

For a story like *The Velveteen Rabbit*, artists think about how to bring the characters and emotions to life in front of a live audience. During the performance, you may notice some of the story's dialogue turned into songs which help strengthen emotional depth; descriptive parts of the book may become movement or visual scenes; and sets and costume design create the world of the story on stage.

When you see the performance of *Velveteen*, notice how the performers, music, and stage elements work together to transform a beloved book into a live theatrical experience. As you watch, reflect on how the performance is similar to or different from the story.

"Q&A with Velveteen, A New Musical composer Molly Andrews-Hinders," Playhouse Square, October 15, 2024, https://www.playhousesquare.org/news/detail/qa-with-velveteen-a-new-musical-composer-molly-andrews-hinders.

Notable Book to Stage Adaptations

There are many well-known examples of books or films that have become stage productions for young audiences, including *Charlotte's Web*, *Matilda the Musical*, and *The Lion King*. Each adaptation keeps important parts of the original story while using creative elements like music, choreography, and design to make the story engaging for a live audience.

When adapting a book or film for the stage, artists often:

- Condense the story to fit a performance time
- Add dialogue or songs to replace narration
- Use movement and staging to show action
- Design sets and costumes to create the world of the story

"The Lion King," Broadway Show Tickets, accessed May 28, 2026, https://www.broadway-show-tickets.com/musical/the-lion-king-tickets/.

4. Thomas R. Feller, "Adapting Novels to the Stage," EBSCO, 2024, accessed May 28, 2026, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/drama-and-theater-arts/adapting-novels-stage.

EXPLORE

OTHER FAMOUS LITERARY ADAPTATIONS

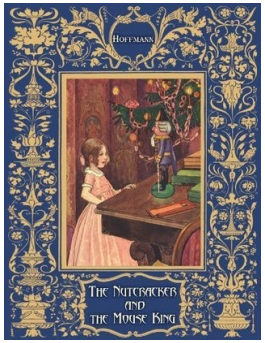
- ***Les Misérables:*** Adapted into one of the longest-running musicals in history after starting as Victor Hugo's 1862 novel.
- ***The Phantom of the Opera:*** Based on Gaston Leroux's 1910 gothic horror novel, it became a Broadway staple for decades.
- ***Wicked:*** Based on Gregory Maguire's novel, which itself reimagines L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.
- ***The Great Gatsby:*** F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic Jazz Era novel has been adapted into multiple formats, including a 2024 Broadway musical.

Kritika, "Wicked Broadway soundtrack: A complete guide to the setlist," Broadway Show Tickets, February 16, 2025, https://www.broadway-show-tickets.com/musical/wicked-tickets/soundtrack/.

EXPLORE

ADAPTING STORIES ACROSS ART FORMS

Stories can be adapted into many different art forms. Even though the story may stay the same, the way we experience it changes depending on the art form.



"The Nutcracker and the Mouse King," Goodreads, accessed May 28, 2026, https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/19012900-the-nutcracker-and-the-mouse-king.

Elise Bakketun, "The seven-headed Mouse King battles the Nutcracker in George Balanchine's 'The Nutcracker,' at Pacific Northwest Ballet Nov. 25-Dec. 28," The Seattle Times, December 12, 2016, https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/dance/holiday-dance-2016-16-nutcracker-performances/.

For example:

- Books can become movies, like *The Polar Express or How to Train Your Dragon*.
- Books can inspire dance performances or ballets, like *The Nutcracker*.
- Stories can even become music or songs, like "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch" inspired by *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.

WATCH

The Nutcracker Ballet: Waltz of the Flowers
The Polar Express read aloud
The Polar Express movie trailer
Cressida Cowell reads *How to Train Your Dragon*
How to Train Your Dragon movie trailer
How the Grinch Stole Christmas read aloud
"You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch" song

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Rotten Tomatoes Classic Trailers. “*How to Train Your Dragon* (2010) Trailer #1.” YouTube. April 18, 2018. 2 minutes, 15 seconds. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AKsAxrhqgM.

Royal Ballet and Opera. “Mouse battle scene from The Royal Ballet’s *The Nutcracker*.” December 28, 2021. YouTube. 1 minute, 9 seconds. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRayVFD1Njk&list=RDkRayVFD1Njk&start_radio=1.

StPeteArtisan. “‘You’re a Mean One, Mr. Grinch’ – Dr. Seuss.” December 20, 2011. YouTube. 2 minutes, 59 seconds. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Hj3U18FHgQ.

Toms Mucenieks. “Scott Joplin – *The Entertainer*.” April 2, 2019. YouTube. 4 minutes, 3 seconds. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSoXBkF832I&list=RDTSoXBkF832I&start_radio=1.

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Warner Bros. Entertainment. “*The Polar Express* trailer.” November 1, 2022. YouTube. 1 minute, 41 seconds. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0oyHtZiJJs.

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