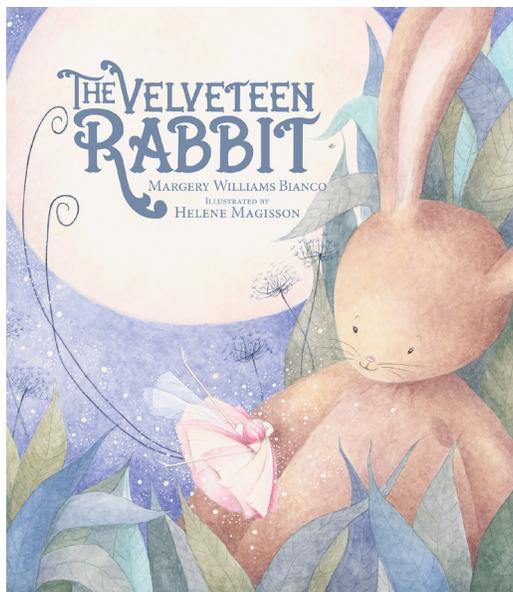


# TEACHERS' NOTES

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## THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

Written by Margery Williams Bianco

Illustrated by Helene Magisson

### ABOUT THE BOOK

First published in 1922, the classic children's story about a velveteen rabbit on a quest to become real through the love of his owner, is brought to life with new illustrations by Helene Magisson.

### AUTHOR BACKGROUND

Margery was an English-American author, primarily of popular children's books. A professional writer since the age of nineteen, she achieved lasting fame at forty-one with the 1922 publication of the classic that is her best-known work, *The Velveteen Rabbit*.

### ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND

Helene is a French-Australian illustrator who was awarded first prize in the illustration category of the 2013 CYA conference. *The Velveteen Rabbit* is Helene's first published book.

### EDUCATIONAL APPLICABILITY

*The Velveteen Rabbit* actively involves the imagination of the reader, and encourages empathy, understanding and self-awareness. It also brings into question what is 'real' in the book and allows room for interpretation as to the rabbit's final ending. Vastly popular, this beautiful story draws the attention of children, and encourages a sense of care, responsibility and emotional intelligence.

### DISCUSSION TOPICS

Before reading the book

1. What does the title tell us? Where is the rabbit? What do the children think the book will be about?
2. The cover image clearly shows the rabbit, but what does 'velveteen' mean? Do the children know what any of their toys at home are made from?

During reading the book



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1. Establish who the characters are: the Rabbit, the Boy, and the other toys. Talk about their expressions and how we know what they are feeling
2. Pause at unfamiliar terms and talk about what they mean: e.g. 'rigging', 'commonplace', 'brigands', 'bracken' etc

After reading the book

1. The Rabbit's inner wishes, thoughts and doubts are commonly referred to. For example, 'I don't feel like it,' said the Rabbit, for he didn't want to explain that he had no clockwork and 'I suppose you are Real?' said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive.' Talk about what these doubts mean, and why the Rabbit is feeling this way in each circumstance.
2. Ask the children to explain what happened to the Rabbit in the end; how did he know he was Real?

## ACTIVITIES

### Language

- With extracts from the book, ask questions about the text. For example:  
'Weeks passed, and the little Rabbit grew very old and shabby, but the Boy loved him just as much. He loved him so hard that he loved all his whiskers off, and the pink lining to his ears turned grey, and his brown spots faded. He even began to lose his shape, and he scarcely looked like a rabbit any more, except to the Boy.'  
Q. What does it mean by 'he loved him so hard that he loved all his whiskers off, and ... began to lose his shape?' Why does the Rabbit turn grey and fade?  
Q. Why do all the toys have to be burnt when the boy gets sick? What is the name of the sickness?  
Q. In this book, what does 'Real' mean? Why do you think it is written with a capital letter?
- Writing Exercise: Engage the class in a creative writing exercise where they must tell the story of a toy of their own. Emphasise the way they can make the reader feel how the toy feels.

### Physical and Visual Interpretation

- With a passage from the text, have the class bring part of the story to life with a dramatic reading; they could have a narrator reading the story, or divide the dialogue equally into characters.
- In different groups, allocate parts of the story and assign the children to illustrate it, using craft paper and materials or coloured pencils. Putting the artworks together chronologically will tell the whole story.

## MARKETING AND SELLING POINTS

- Original story with new illustrations
- Beautifully illustrated by first time illustrator Helene Magisson
- A charming and timeless story about the magic of love
- A classic rabbit tale for Easter



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