CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

The Velveteen Rabbit

Margery Williams · *1922 · original English text (Project Gutenberg #11757)*

HERE was once a velveteen rabbit, and in the beginning he was really splendid. He was fat and bunchy, as a rabbit should be, with thread whiskers and ears lined with pink sateen. The first letter of "There" is missing in this file, a drop-cap left behind; quote the line as printed. The hosted text is Williams's original English, Project Gutenberg #11757. For grades K–2.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

How does a toy become Real, and how should a school read that becoming without making it only pretty, and without skipping the illness and the cost?

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real." "Does it hurt?"

The Skin Horse tells his story

The Skin Horse tells the Rabbit that Real isn't how you are made. It is a thing that happens to you when a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with. It can hurt. The Rabbit is loved, is worn, is nearly thrown away after a sickness, and is made Real at last. Teach the love, the wear, and the cost, for grades K–2. Quote this file, including the drop-cap opening "HERE was once."

KEY CHARACTERS

The Velveteen Rabbit
Splendid at first, then worn, then made Real

The Skin Horse
The truthful teacher, who knows that becoming Real can hurt

The Boy
The child whose love does the work

HOW TOYS BECOME REAL

> *"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real." "Does it hurt?"*
>
> The Skin Horse tells his story

Grades K–2
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

HERE Was Once

THE OPENING

In the beginning he was really splendid: fat and bunchy, spotted brown and white, with real thread whiskers and pink sateen in his ears. On Christmas morning he sits in the top of the Boy's stocking with a sprig of holly between his paws. This file prints "HERE was once," the T having been lost as a drop cap.

- Quote the opening as printed: "HERE was once a velveteen rabbit."
- The Christmas stocking is the first love, and it does not last the whole day.
- This is Williams, 1922, PG #11757, complete.
- For grades K–2.

> *"HERE was once a velveteen rabbit, and in the beginning he was really splendid. He was fat and bunchy, as a rabbit should be; his coat was spotted brown and white, he had real thread whiskers, and his"*
>
> The opening

02

The Skin Horse

HOW TOYS BECOME REAL

Real isn't how you are made, says the Skin Horse. It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real. Does it hurt? Sometimes.

- The sentences are exact, including "REALLY" as printed.
- The Skin Horse is always truthful.
- Teach this as the book's doctrine, not as a slogan only.
- The title page also calls the book How Toys Become Real.

> *"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real." "Does it hurt?"*
>
> The Skin Horse tells his story

03

Loved, and Worn

THE NURSERY DAYS

For a long time he lives in the toy cupboard or on the nursery floor, and no one thinks very much about him. Then the Boy loves him, and the velveteen is worn in the way the Skin Horse described.

- Being Real is not the same thing as being new.
- The mechanical toys snub him at first; they are not the book's teachers.
- Teach the wear as part of the love.
- K–2 can hear this without a lecture.

> *"HERE was once a velveteen rabbit, and in the beginning he was really splendid. He was fat and bunchy, as a rabbit should be; his coat was spotted brown and white, he had real thread whiskers, and his"*
>
> The opening

04

Anxious Times

THE SICKNESS

Illness comes into the nursery. The Rabbit who has been close to the Boy is in danger of being thrown away. The story does not stay only charming.

- Do not skip the anxious times. They are in the list of illustrations, and they are in the tale.
- Teach the fear of being discarded as the cost of having been loved.
- Tact; do not frighten, and do not pretend the danger is not there.
- Quote Williams, not a softened retelling.

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>
> The Skin Horse tells his story

05

At Last

THE CLOSE

The book's last movement is the becoming Real, after the cost. A school should finish the tale and should not stop at the Skin Horse's speech only.

- The illustrations include "The Fairy Flower" and "At Last! At Last!"
- Teach the close as the book writes it.
- Not a later film.
- Complete short tale, PG #11757.

> *"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real." "Does it hurt?"*
>
> The Skin Horse tells his story

Becoming Real | A Christmas Rabbit | Truth from an Old Toy | Love and Wear | A Cost

What to watch for as you read

GRADES K–2

1. This file's opening is "HERE was once a velveteen rabbit, and in the beginning he was really splendid." The first letter of "There" was lost as a drop cap; quote the line as printed.
2. Williams, 1922, PG #11757, also called How Toys Become Real. For grades K–2.
3. The Skin Horse: "Real isn't how you are made... It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real." It can hurt.
4. Do not skip the anxious times after the illness. Do not stop the lesson at the pretty speech only.
5. Not a later film or a softened retelling.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text (Project Gutenberg #11757), Project Gutenberg #11757, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/the-velveteen-rabbit/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.