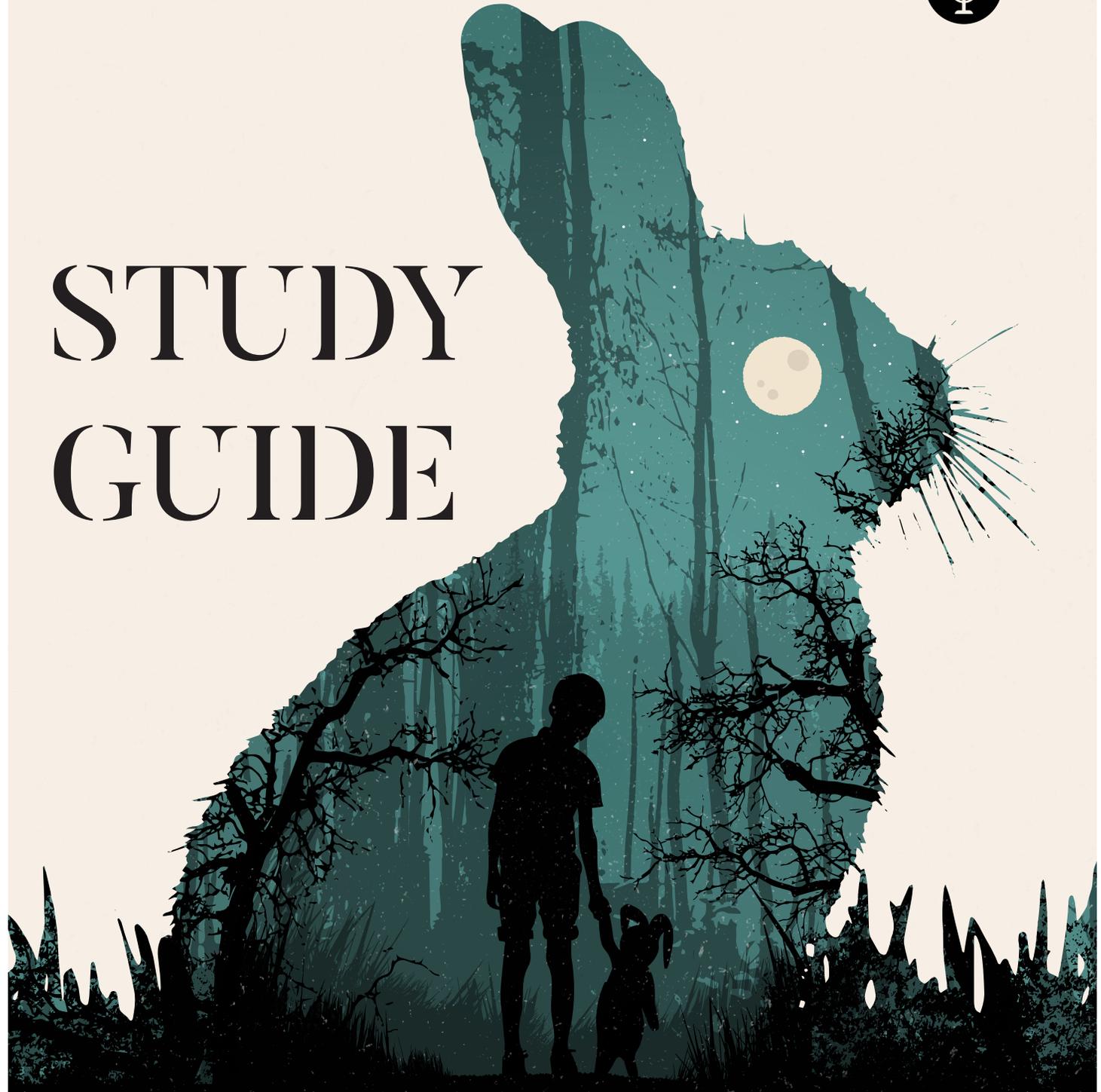


SEASON  
2020  
2021

NDSU THEATRE  
ARTS



# STUDY GUIDE



# THE Velveteen

RABBIT

By Philip Grecian  
From the book by Margery Williams

# The **Velveteen** Rabbit

A play in two acts by Phil Grecian based on the book by Margery Williams

This play guide is a resource designed to enhance your theatre experience. Its goal is twofold: to nurture the teaching and learning of theatre arts and to encourage essential questions that lead to an enduring understanding of the play's meaning and relevance. Inside you will find information about the plot and characters within the play, as well as articles that contextualize the play and its production at Theatre NDSU. Oral discussion, writing prompts, and group activities encourage your students and children to reflect upon their impressions, analyze key ideas, and relate them to their personal experiences and the world around them. These prompts can easily be adapted to fit most writing objectives. We encourage you to adapt and extend the material in any way that best fits the needs of your community of learners. Please feel free to make copies of this guide.

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## Plot Summary

The velveteen rabbit has one wish—to be real. But how? One night the toy fairy visits to give the velveteen rabbit that wish. The velveteen rabbit should be overjoyed, but she can't accept the toy fairy's offer. The boy who loves her is sick with scarlet fever and may die if she leaves. What will she do?

## About the Author:

### Margery Williams

Margery Williams was born in London, England in 1881. At the age of nine she moved to the United States with her mother and sister. From a young age, Margery displayed a vivid imagination and passion for reading. She graduated from school in her rural Pennsylvania town and knew she wanted to write. After writing several books for adults, Margery wrote her most famous book *The Velveteen Rabbit* in 1922. *The Velveteen Rabbit* has been adapted into productions for film, television, theatre, and dance.



Margery Williams in 1911.  
Ten years before writing  
*The Velveteen Rabbit*.

# Vocabulary

**Designer:** A person who decides what the costumes, set, lights, or sound are for a play.

**Incinerator:** A place where people throw garbage to be burned.

**Scarlet Fever:** A disease which harmed many children before antibiotics were widely available. Coughing, sore throat, and rashes are all symptoms.

**Skin Horse:** A wooden toy horse covered with calf skin which was smooth and soft.

**Velveteen:** A very soft fabric made to look and feel like velvet.



This is a skin horse made in the 1890's. It's over 130 years old!



**MADELYN SOULEK**  
(She/Her/Hers)  
Costume Designer

## Designing for *The Velveteen Rabbit*

In spring 2020, Theatre NDSU was about to perform *The Velveteen Rabbit* onstage in North Dakota. Then the coronavirus pandemic closed in-person performances and Theatre NDSU had to cancel the production. Now the show has new life as a radio play!

It is exciting to do a radio play, but what would the costumes have looked like? How about the set? What will you hear in the radio play that you wouldn't have heard onstage? Here to give us a peek at what might have been are the designers for *The Velveteen Rabbit*.

**Madelyn, you were the costume designer. What does a costume designer do?**

A costume designer finds specific characteristics of each character and uses the director's vision to create a costume that fits into the world of the play.

**When coming up with your ideas for costumes, where do you get your inspiration?**

I look at historical clothing to find my ideas. I take bits and pieces of what I like and combine them to fit the character.

*Continued*

## What was the most challenging part of *The Velveteen Rabbit* costume design?

It was most challenging to create a difference between the real rabbits and the velveteen rabbit. One was a toy, so I needed her to look like the real rabbits but different enough so you understood she wasn't real yet.

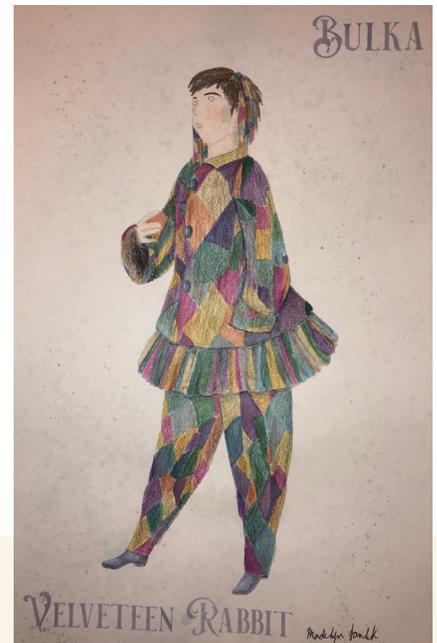
### DESIGN NOTES FROM MADELYN



"Since the velveteen rabbit is a toy, she needed to look slightly different from the "real" rabbits."



"The costumes for the rabbits are so elegant. They were one of my favorite designs."



"Along with the rabbits, my favorite character design was Bulka. It was a joy to create such a loveable character."

## Katie, you were the scenic designer. What does a scenic designer do?



**KATIE ANDREACHI**  
(She/Her/Hers)  
Scenic Designer

A scenic designer creates the atmosphere of the play. They create the set and make sure there are doors, furniture, or special hiding places for the actors to play with.

### When coming up with your ideas, where do you get your inspiration?

I usually look at the architecture of the time period the play is set in, and then I will look at the mood of the play.

### What was the most challenging part of *The Velveteen Rabbit* scenic design?

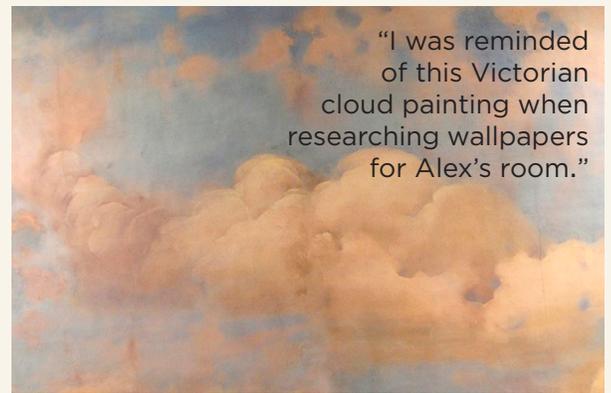
With all of the toy characters magically coming to life, it was difficult to find places for them to hide and pop out of on the set.



“My favorite part of the scenic design was finding a balance between the magical world of Alex’s imagination, and the real world the adults live in. I had to build a room, but I could add lots of magic details like the cloudy sky wallpaper.”

### DESIGN NOTES FROM KATIE

“I was inspired by how nature was taking over this room. We couldn’t do this onstage, but nature does take over the set with the sky and floor.”



“I was reminded of this Victorian cloud painting when researching wallpapers for Alex’s room.”

**Corey, you were the sound designer in the spring and continued sound designing this fall as *The Velveteen Rabbit* has become a radio play. What does a sound designer do?**



**COREY CHRISTIAN**  
(He/Him/His)  
Sound Designer

A sound designer creates everything an audience hears. They help make things more believable to the audience.

**When coming up with your ideas for sounds and sound design, where do you go for inspiration?**

The world is full of sound, and I like using unique sounds in my design. For example, the scarlet fear sound is made from icebergs collapsing.

**You are the sound designer for the radio play too. What challenges have you faced working on the radio play?**

It has been a challenge creating a play by only using audio. So much of the action in the show will rely on sound cues to tell the story.

# Activities for Home and the Classroom

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- GRADES K-4** If you were a real rabbit, what would you look like? Draw yourself as a rabbit on a piece of paper. Teachers and parents can draw themselves as rabbits too!
- GRADES K-4** If you were a real rabbit, what would your home look like? With a parent or a teacher design your home and draw it out on a piece of paper.
- GRADES K-2** Rabbit Races! Have a teacher or a parent mark out a starting line (brand new), and a finish line (real toy). Then, with a parent or teacher saying go, hop like a rabbit to the finish line as fast as you can! In future races you can also gallop as a skin horse, dance like a ballerina, or move like a toy soldier. Be careful to give your friends plenty of space to move. Use your imagination with think of fun toys to move like!
- GRADES K-2** On your way home from school today, try and spot any rabbits out living their lives. Take a tally of how many you see and share it with a friend. If you ask a parent or a teacher nicely, they may even go looking for rabbits with you!
- GRADES 3-6** Write your own story about a rabbit. The rabbit can be real or imaginary. Halfway through writing your story exchange it with a partner. Now you are going to read their story and finish it for them!
- GRADES 2-4** Alex's relationship with the velveteen rabbit is very special. Write about a toy or stuffed animal that you feel very attached to. How does it make you feel to play with them? Share your story with a partner.
- WRITING PROMPT GRADES 3-6** *The Velveteen Rabbit* has a couple of moments that are sad. Alex is sick, the skin horse is old and breaks, and the velveteen rabbit gets taken away at the end to be burned. However, there is a happy ending to each moment of sadness. Both the skin horse and the velveteen rabbit become real animals and because the velveteen rabbit stays with Alex when they are sick the scarlet fever is scared away. Write about a time in the last year where you have been sad. Who or what helped comfort you as you were sad?
- DISCUSSION QUESTION K-3**

# Discussion Questions

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- GRADES K-6** The toys in Alex’s room come to life and talk. If you were a toy, what kind of toy would you be? Why? Describe your life as a toy.
- GRADES K-6** In *The Velveteen Rabbit*, Alex’s toys go on lots of adventures. What adventures do you and your toys go on? Turn to a partner and share about one of these adventures.
- GRADES K-6** In *The Velveteen Rabbit*, toys become real if they are loved and played with frequently. What toys do you have that you think are real because you love them so much? Discuss with a partner why you think some of your toys are real.
- GRADES K-6** *The Velveteen Rabbit* isn’t the only story where toys come to life. The tradition is as old as kids playing with toys and giving them names. What stories can you name where toys come to life?
- GRADES K-6** If you were a rabbit living at your home or yard, what place would you live in? If needed, look around your home or yard after school and find a couple of different places where a rabbit could make a nice home. Share your discoveries with a friend.
- GRADES 4-6** The fear that someone may become infected and getting infected with scarlet fever are some of the main conflicts in *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Thankfully, the velveteen rabbit helps support, love, comfort, and defend Alex during her illness. There are parallels between what Alex and the velveteen rabbit encounter in the play, and our own lives living through the COVID-19 pandemic. Just like the velveteen rabbit, we can love, comfort, and support those around us as we face the challenge of a pandemic. Discuss with a partner how you supported others or have been supported through the COVID-19 pandemic.