

Play Analysis

Analysis of *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Dr. Lois Mueller, Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Kevin Del Aguila's adaptation of Margery Williams' children's classic easily connects with our first experience of emotional attachment. What child does not remember a favorite stuffed animal that shared their bed nightly and saw them through sickness and health?

The major theme is the importance of love. It is no coincidence that the nursery is the magical place where being loved and becoming real begins. It is the scene of the first connection to a person who loves you. Nanna loves the little boy as much as he loves the rabbit she gave him on Christmas morning.

Lessons learned are that love makes you feel alive. When someone loves you, you are always beautiful to them and it doesn't matter what others think, because being loved makes you feel good inside. We also are taught that being loved can take some getting used to but once you let it happen, it changes your life. Love even hurts sometimes, but it helps more than it hurts and is worth the trouble. Real love is forever, no matter how old or worn you become. It is not enough to be loved, you have to love back to be real. Just as the boy loved the rabbit, the rabbit returned his love, sticking by the boy when he needed him the most.

In a world that is filled with contrived "Reality" shows that blur the boundaries between what is real and what is not, *The Velveteen Rabbit* brings clarity, showing that it takes more than using the word real to make something real. Through the contrast of the unpretentious rabbit to the snobbery of the more sophisticated toys, we learn that simple is often better, and more real.

Children are taught by the grandfatherly wisdom of the Skin Horse, that seeing with your heart is different from seeing with your eyes. When people cannot see with their hearts, they often miss the truth. *The Skin Horse* teaches that feelings and intuition are important tools in deciphering reality. Truth is best arrived at by what is felt in the heart—something children sort out much better than adults, who, portrayed by large puppets, find this concept to be somewhat "mysterious."

Several sub-texts appear in the play. The first is being teased and challenged by peers who, much like the bunnies, focus only on the outside of a person and demand that everyone be the same to be accepted. The second is the fear of being laughed at if you are different. The third is that for things to be special, like Christmas, they can't happen every day, no matter how good they are.

Finally, through this delightful tale, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, Margery Williams helps children learn that they have to move on from childhood toys, but that they never have to give up the lessons about love they learned as a child. These lessons allow them to love and be loved as they grow to adults who see with their hearts.

Dr. Mueller/Lois is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist who works with children and their families as well as other adults. She has written an advice column for the Clearwater Sun Newspaper and has hosted a call-in advice radio program on Talk Radio WPLP, Pinellas Park and WPSO, New Port Richey. She has been quoted in numerous newspapers and magazines and on radio and TV programs as an expert in psychology. Dr. Mueller practices in Port Richey, Florida.