

odc

 the  
**VELVETEEN  
RABBIT**

A TALE OF LOVE, LOYALTY & HOPE



**TEACHERS'  
GUIDE**

Photos by Andrew Weeks

## INTRODUCTION

Dear Teachers,

Welcome to ODC's dance theater production of *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Over the past three decades, I've worked with numerous third grade classrooms around the country, and in every classroom I encounter children with creative and unique ways of seeing the world. Some of them think metaphorically while others more logically and literally. For example, when I asked a classroom, "What is magic?" one student answered, "It is something that happens, but you don't know how." This is an incredibly clear, concise, and straightforward answer. Yet another student responded, "It's what comes out of my grandmothers chest," as she made a fanning motion with her hands. This is a specific poetic response.

As you work with your students I hope you allow them to access the art in the manner most natural to them, and that you validate the variety of their individual experiences. The point of view I usually bring into the classroom as I talk about the "Making of the Rabbit" is: I made my show this way, but how would you do it? For example, I tell them that while I chose to have classical music accompany the performance and Brian Wildsmith, a modern painter, design the costumes, they might instead choose hip hop and have a cartoonist design the costumes. I offer the children the role and responsibility of considering themselves the artist.

We hope that this curriculum guide will expand your students' experiences of *The Velveteen Rabbit* beyond the theater. We envision this document as a toolbox, offering you several methods to connect the performance and the book back to California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, and the Visual and Performing Arts for third grade students.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions please contact us. Your feedback will help us improve the Buddies for Bunnies program, as well as *The Velveteen Rabbit* educational experience.

Sincerely,

KT Nelson  
Co-Artistic Director  
Choreographer, *The Velveteen Rabbit*

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## DANCING CREATIVE EXERCISE/PROBLEM-SOLVING

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### Embodied Dance:

Velveteen Rabbit choreographer, KT Nelson, has developed interactive exercises to help children experience dance and the creative process. When she talks to a classroom of students about the making of *The Velveteen Rabbit*, Nelson explains that she is an artist who chooses to make her art in a certain way, and that they too are artists who can make their own artistic choices. We hope that some of the activities below will not only introduce students to dance and choreography, but also to their own aesthetic.

Please note that all these exercises have an audio visual guide online to help explain the activity: [www.odcdance.org/vrteachers](http://www.odcdance.org/vrteachers)

### Dancing through Numbers:

This is a relatively easy exercise to introduce your students to making movement.

The exercise requires a **demo team** of four students; the rest of the classroom will be an interactive audience. You can repeat the exercise several times so that all students can participate in crafting choreography.

1. After you have your team, start by selecting a run of 4 numbers.
2. Each member of the team selects one of the numbers and then creates a movement to represent that number.
3. The students each show the classroom the movements for their number.
4. The teacher whispers to the demo team a number combination (like 232, 134, or 441) and they execute that combination to the classroom without saying a word.
5. The classroom guesses what the number combination was.
6. Finally, other students can request number combinations for the **demo team** to execute.

Please note, this representation may come from a variety of approaches. One child might demonstrate the visual lines of a number, another might do the quantity the number represents—like 3 bounces for the number 3—and finally, a child might represent their feeling about the number with an intuitive motion.

### Dancing through Words:

This exercise is similar to the Dancing through Numbers exercise, but it is more complicated because the **demo team** has more students. If this seems too complex for your classroom, don't worry about capturing the language from the story, and simply spell fun words that only use three or four letters. You can repeat this exercise and choose different students to demonstrate.

1. Assemble a team of seven students (or the number of students that corresponds to the number of letters needed).
2. Select a series of words related to the story of *The Velveteen Rabbit*. We suggest a collection of words that share similar letters like: boy, bunchy, and bunny.
3. Each student creates a movement for a letter they select. If you use the words suggested above, you would have students create movements for the following letters: b, u, n, y, c, h, and o. Consider adding the letters "t" and "s" for a greater range of words.
4. Each student says their letter aloud and shows their movement to the classroom.
5. The instructor whispers a word (like "boy") to the demo team and they demonstrate it for the classroom without saying a word. The classroom tries to guess the word.
6. The classroom asks the demo team to spell other words from the letter combination.

### Dancing with Style: Informal versus Formal

When KT first goes into a classroom she discusses style. She chose the story of *The Velveteen Rabbit* because there were both formal and informal (or traditional and modern) approaches to the storytelling in the story. KT explains that she likes to mix these two different styles. KT then gives the students an exercise where they can feel the difference between formal and informal. Afterwards, they discuss which style they liked better and, most importantly, why.

Everyone needs a chair. Start with everyone standing.

1. Sit down
2. Cross your legs
3. Stand up
4. Walk around the chair
5. Sit down and at the same time gesture a "hello" (without talking)

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## DANCING CREATIVE EXERCISE/PROBLEM-SOLVING *CONTINUED*

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First, execute these events in a cool, calm, controlled and precise manner. This represents the “formal” style. Then, execute the same events in a loose, relaxed, weighted and imprecise manner to represent “informal” style. Afterwards, discuss which style of movement the students preferred and why.

### **LANGUAGE- Realizing the Language of the Author, Margery Williams**

KT often tells students that she loves how the story’s author, Margery Williams, uses the English language, because it makes her sentences witty and fun. She mentions phrases like, “Fancy all the fuss for a toy!”

Then KT asks the students to help her build a movement phrase based off one of those sentences.

1. The teacher creates a movement to represent the word “fancy.”
2. All the students repeat the movement for “fancy.”
3. The teacher asks a student to create a movement for the word “all.”
4. The teacher and the rest of the students then repeat the movement for “fancy” and “all.”
5. This continues until the teacher and the students in the class have made a movement for the entire sentence.



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# MEET THE CHARACTERS OF THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

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Characters are the people and animals involved in a story.



NANA



THE FAIRY



THE BOY



RABBIT



THE SKIN HORSE



THE CROCODILE

NAME

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## CHARACTER PROFILE

What does the character do to show his or her personality?

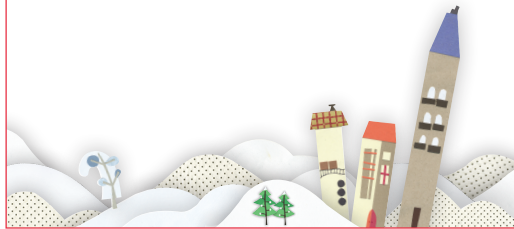
What does your character look like on the outside?

Character's Name

Draw a character

How does your character interact with other characters?

How does your character change, or what lesson does she or he learn?





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## COMMON THEMES IN DANCE, BOOKS, AND MOVIES

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Many dance performances, books, and movies have a theme, or a message, that is revealed as you watch the story unfold. Below are some common themes you'll see.

<b>Acceptance</b>	Stories with characters who respect and accept others' differences
<b>Courage</b>	Stories with characters who have the strength to overcome a fear or accept a risk
<b>Perseverance</b>	Stories with characters who never give up, even when facing difficult times
<b>Cooperation</b>	Stories with characters who work together to solve a problem or achieve a goal
<b>Honesty</b>	Stories with characters who find it is best to always tell the truth
<b>Kindness</b>	Stories with friendly characters who are generous and considerate of others, they try to help those who are feeling bad feel better
<b>Loyalty</b>	Stories with characters who trust each other and never turn their backs on their friends



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## THEME WORKSHEET #1

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**THEME:** A theme is the main idea or the central message in a story.

*What do you think the theme for **The Velveteen Rabbit** is?*

**VELVETEEN RABBIT THEME:**

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Fill in the boxes below. Write examples from *The Velveteen Rabbit* that back up and support your chosen theme.

**EXAMPLE 1:**

**EXAMPLE 2:**

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## THEME WORKSHEET #2

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**THEME:** A theme is the main idea or the central message in a story.

*What do you think the theme for **The Velveteen Rabbit** is?*

**VELVETEEN RABBIT THEME:**

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**Beginning:** What happens in the beginning of the story to support the theme?

**Middle:** What happens in the middle of the story to support the theme?

**End:** What happens at the end of the story to support the theme?

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## SETTING, CHARACTER, AND PLOT WORKSHEET

The setting is where and when the story takes place. The characters are those involved in the story. The plot is the sequence of events in the story. The setting can help shape the characters and the plot.

Think about *The Velveteen Rabbit* story and fill in the boxes below:

**Setting:**

**Describe a setting in the story**

**Describe a Character:**

**Describe another Character:**

**Plot: What happens in the story?**

**Beginning:**

**Middle:**

**End:**



## VELVETEEN RABBIT VOCABULARY – WORD MATCHING WORKSHEET

A choreographer is a person who creates a dance. The choreographer for *The Velveteen Rabbit* is KT Nelson. She works with the ODC dancers to tell the story of The Boy and his bunny with dance, music, and colorful costumes. KT also worked with a composer. A composer is a person who creates music. The dancers practice their moves during rehearsals so they can learn their dances and be ready for the performances. During the rehearsals, the dancers also practice dancing in their costumes and they practice being different characters. Characters are people, animals, or toys that have parts in dances, movies and books. In *The Velveteen Rabbit*, important characters are The Boy, Fairy, the Velveteen Rabbit, Nana, and the Skin Horse. *The Velveteen Rabbit* performances take place in a theater. Theaters are places people go to see dance performances, live music, and movies.

Match the words to the correct definitions by drawing a line from the word to the right definition:

**Rehearsal** ●

● A place people go to see dance performances, live music, and movies

**Choreographer** ●

● Clothing that people wear to pretend to be someone or something else

**Theater** ●

● A person who creates a dance

**Character** ●

● A time to practice to get ready for a performance

**Costume** ●

● A person who creates music

**Dancer** ●

● A person who tells a story

**Composer** ●

● A person, animal, or toy that has a part in a dance, movie, or book

**Narrator** ●

● Someone who dances



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## VELVETEEN RABBIT VOCABULARY – WORD JUMBLE WORKSHEET

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Unscramble these words related to *The Velveteen Rabbit*:

EANDC	
EECSN	
REACHCRAT	
ORRNAATR	
CODIRCLE	
LVEENEVT	
BBRAIT	
RTEATHE	
VLOE	
RYIAF	

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## TEACHER'S KEY FOR VELVETEEN RABBIT VOCABULARY – WORD JUMBLE WORKSHEET

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Dance

Scene

Character

Narrator

Crocodile

Velveteen

Rabbit

Theater

Love

Fairy



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## THEATER VOCABULARY WORDS

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<b><u>Backstage</u></b>	The part of a theater which is not seen by the audience, including the dressing rooms, wings and the green room
<b><u>Box Office</u></b>	The place that sells tickets to a performance
<b><u>Cast</u></b>	The people who perform in a show
<b><u>Choreographer</u></b>	The person who creates dances and arranges movements for a performance
<b><u>Costumer</u></b>	The person in charge of the costumes for a show
<b><u>Stage Crew</u></b>	All the people who work together backstage on a show except the cast
<b><u>Director</u></b>	The person who provides the vision of how a show should be presented, who works with the actors on their roles, tells them where to move on the stage and is in charge of the rehearsals
<b><u>Downstage</u></b>	The part of the stage which is closest to the audience
<b><u>Dressing Rooms</u></b>	Rooms in a theater provided for the actors where they change their costumes and put on make-up
<b><u>Green Room</u></b>	A place for the performers to relax while waiting to go on stage
<b><u>House</u></b>	Used to describe the audience or as a short way of saying “Front of House”
<b><u>House Manager</u></b>	The person in charge of the theater auditorium and anything to do with the audience
<b><u>Offstage</u></b>	The area of the stage which the audience cannot see
<b><u>Orchestra Pit</u></b>	An area at the front of house, usually sunken, where the musicians and conductor work during a show
<b><u>Props</u></b>	Objects (except costumes or set pieces) that are used on stage by the actors or performers
<b><u>Rehearsal</u></b>	Repeated practice in preparation for a performance
<b><u>Set</u></b>	The setting of the stage for each act and all the physical things that are used to change the stage for the performance
<b><u>Upstage</u></b>	The area of the stage that is the farthest away from the audience
<b><u>Wings</u></b>	The areas of the stage that are to the sides of the acting area and are out of view. These areas are usually masked by curtains.





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## VELVETEEN RABBIT BOOK VOCABULARY

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*The Velveteen Rabbit* is an older book (published in 1922), with some language that are less common or even no longer in use today. Your students may require a more extensive conversation about the following vocabulary words:

<b>BURROWS</b>	a hole or tunnel dug in the ground by an animal to live in
<b>BRACKEN</b>	a type of fern with large triangular fronds and tough stems, native to tropical regions
<b>FOWL</b>	a bird used as food, such as a chicken
<b>FRONDS</b>	large leaves typically found on ferns
<b>MANTELPiece</b>	a shelf over a fireplace
<b>PARCEL</b>	a bundle or package
<b>QUEER</b>	odd or strange
<b>RUBBISH</b>	trash, garbage
<b>SCARLET FEVER</b>	an infectious disease which most commonly affects children, now treatable with antibiotics
<b>SHABBY/SHABBIER</b>	worn-out and threadbare, inferior in quality
<b>SNUB (SNUBBED)</b>	to ignore, dismiss or treat rudely
<b>SPLENDID</b>	magnificent
<b>THREADBARE</b>	worn away to reveal threads; worn out
<b>VELVETEEN</b>	a soft fabric that resembles velvet

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## VELVETEEN RABBIT THEATER ETIQUETTE: DISCUSSION TOPICS

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This may be the first time some of your students attend a live professional theater performance. You may want to take some time to discuss theater etiquette and present basic theater vocabulary.

### **Pre-show questions and discussion topics:**

- How many of you have experienced a live theater performance? What did you see?
- What are some of the differences between going to the theater and watching television or going to a movie?
- Theater features live on-stage actors/dancers. They have spent many weeks rehearsing for the performance. What does it mean to rehearse?
- Have you ever been part of a production you had to rehearse for? What was it like?
- The audience is an important part of the performance. Why?
- During a performance, when should you be quiet and when can you make noise?
  - Discuss when to applaud
  - Laughter is a great response when something is funny.

It's helpful to review the rules of theater etiquette before seeing a show, especially since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students. Please take a moment to discuss the guidelines on the Theater Etiquette handout with your students.

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# VELVETEEN RABBIT THEATER ETIQUETTE: HANDOUT

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## HOW TO ENJOY A THEATER PERFORMANCE

Going to a theater to see a live performance is very fun. If you do the following things you'll enjoy the show and you won't disturb the people sitting next to you.

- Leave your backpack at school.
- Use the restroom before the show starts.
- Stay seated and remain still during the performance.
- Be respectful to the performers and other people in the audience by not talking during the performance. Remember, the performers can see and hear the audience just like you can see and hear them.
- Appropriate responses such as applause or laughter are always welcome.
- Food, candy, gum and beverages are not allowed in the theater.
- The use of cell phones (including texting), cameras or any other recording device is not allowed in the theater at any time.
- If you have to go to the restroom, or anywhere else, be sure to go with a teacher or an adult.

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## READING, WRITING AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

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### Pre-reading/Performance prompts

- How many of you have had a toy that you have loved like a friend?
- How important was that toy to you?
- How did that toy make you feel?
- Did you ever have a toy so special to you that it seemed real?
- Today, we are going to read about a boy and his favorite toy in the world.  
As we read, think about how the boy and his toy are feeling.

### Post-reading/Performance prompts

*How many of you have had imaginary friends or toys that you thought were real?*

- Why did you think they were real?
- Why did you stop thinking they were real?

### Other Discussion/Writing Topics:

The little Boy believes the Velveteen Rabbit is real, but the wild rabbits tell the Velveteen Rabbit that he isn't real because he doesn't do things real rabbits do. He doesn't smell right; he doesn't have hind legs, and he doesn't move the way they do. However, the Rabbit does do things that we may call real behaviors, such as crying, breathing, and having emotions.

***“What is REAL?”*** asked the Rabbit one day. ***“Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle”***

- Was the little Boy wrong?
- Were the rabbits wrong?
- Were either of them right? Why?
- Can you be made 'real' like the Rabbit?
- Is one set of behaviors more real than the others?
- Have you ever been snubbed?
- What is real?

### More Discussion/Writing Topics:

- If you were a toy, would you want to become real, why or why not?
- Think about your toys. Which toys are your favorites? Why? Do you forget about your old toys if you get new ones?
- Do you have any other connections with the story? Have you ever been sick and someone has cared for you? Have you ever taken care of someone who was sick?
- What do you think the story means? What is the main idea? What is the message?
- What were some of the relationships like in the story? Between the Skin Horse and the Rabbit? Between Nana and the boy? Between the toys and the Rabbit?
- What does magic mean to you?
- How did the rabbit change when he became real? Describe him when he was a toy, and then describe him as a real rabbit. What has changed?





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## USING COMMAS AND QUOTATION MARKS

### What would you say? What would you ask?

What would you like to say to the characters in *The Velveteen Rabbit*? Would you like to ask them a question? Would you like to tell them something? Write down what you would like to say to *The Velveteen Rabbit* characters.

Example:

#### Crocodile

I would ask the Crocodile, "Crocodile, why do you like to tease Nana?"

The Boy

The Velveteen Rabbit

The Real Rabbits

Nana

Fairy

Narrator

Skin Horse

Crocodile

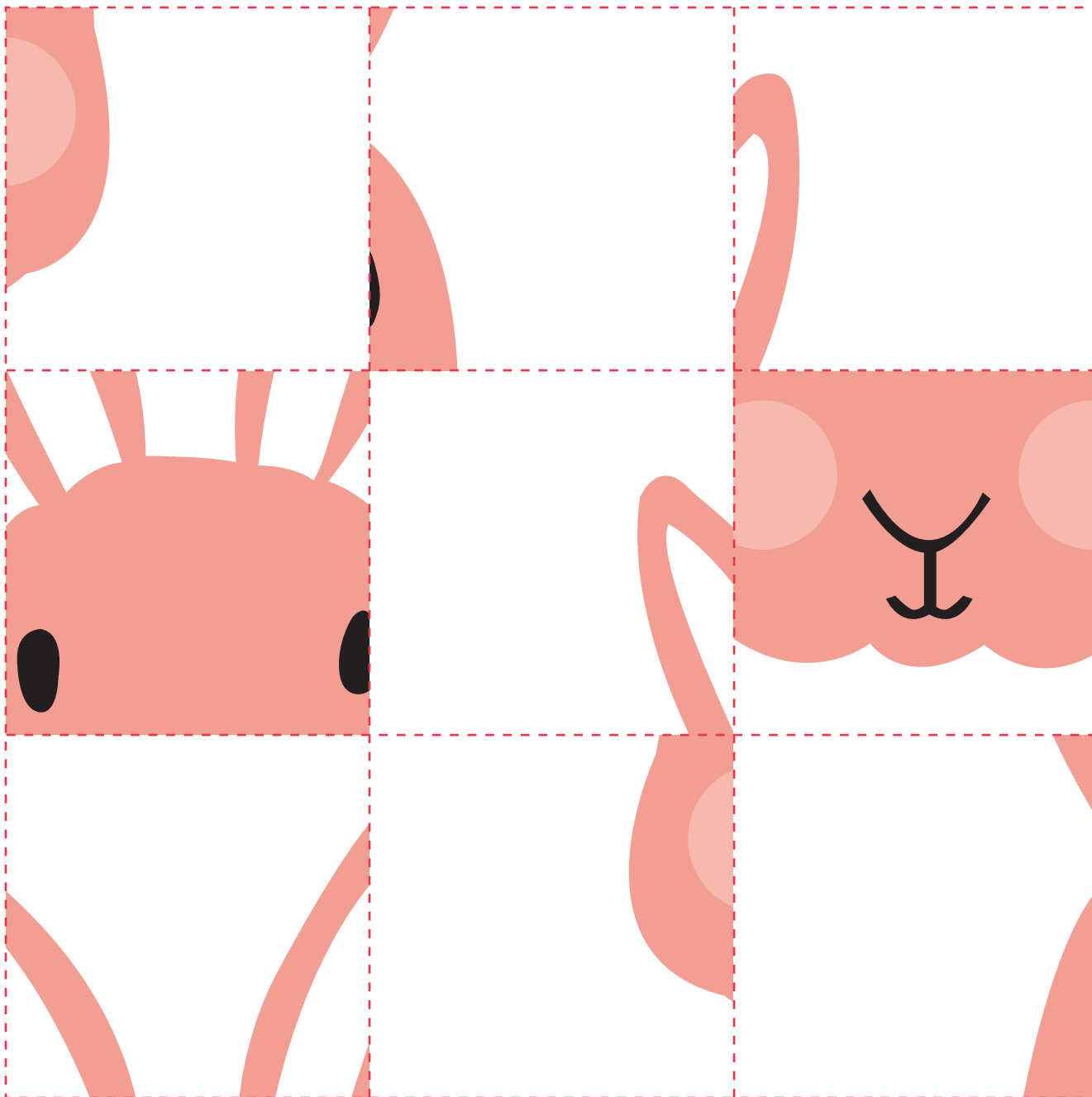


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## CLASSROOM-FRIENDLY CRAFTS: PAPER PUZZLE

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1. Cut the squares out.
2. Paste them together on a piece of paper to reveal the image.





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## CLASSROOM-FRIENDLY CRAFTS: MAKE A BUNNY OUT OF A CUP

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### Materials:

- Plastic Cup
- 2 Googly Eyes
- Pink and White construction Paper
- Black marker
- Glue

### Instructions:

1. Glue 2 Googly Eyes to the cup and draw eye lashes for your bunny with a black marker
2. Cut a circle from the pink paper for the bunny nose.
3. Cut two ovals from the pink paper for the insides of bunny ears.
4. Out of the white paper, cut two large ovals for ears (make sure they're bigger than the pink ovals) and two smaller circles for feet.
5. Draw toes and paw pads on the white circles to make the bunny feet
6. Glue the pink ovals on top of the white ovals for bunny ears.
7. Glue the bunny feet to the bottom of the cup.
8. Glue the bunny ears to the top of the cup.
9. Glue the pink nose to the center of the cup and draw on whiskers with the black marker.
10. Show your bunny off!

