

Emily M. Shaffer

Dramaturg

The Velveteen Rabbit

Margery Williams

Margery Williams was born in London on July 22, 1881. Williams' mother was Florence Williams, who often went by Harper, and her mother was Robert William, a classical scholar and barrister, well known in his community. At the age of 7, Williams' father passed away, which led to her family having to leave London and come to the United States, eventually settling in rural Pennsylvania. Not long after settling in Pennsylvania, Williams enrolled in the Covenant School in Sharon Hill, which she attended until the age of 17. At the completion of her education, Williams returned to London to pursue a writing career, influenced by her father's passion.

Williams published her first novel in 1902, *The Late Returning*, being the first novel she wrote in her adult life at only the age of 19. Shortly after this first publishing came two more novels, *The Price of Youth* and *The Bar*. Following the publishing of *The Price of Youth* and *The Bar*, Williams went to visit her publisher, due to those novels being unsuccessful. On that visit, she meets Francesco Bianco, who is the manager of a book department. In 1904, the two married, to which Margery took a pause on writing to raise their children Cecco and Pamela. Eventually the family settles in Turin, Italy, where Bianco joined the Italian army to fight in World War 1. During her husband's absence, Williams turned to poet



Figure 1: Portrait of Margery Williams. Artist unknown.

Walter de la Mare for comfort and peace. Inspired by Mare's poetry, she wrote the essay *De La Mare* in honor of him. At the end of World War 1, the family moved to the United States due to the state of Europe, settling in Greenwich Village in New York City.

Margery Williams published *The Velveteen Rabbit* in 1922, which had immediate success with the public. The critics, however, wrote that the story was "too sentimental." It became an instant classic. Five years later, Williams wrote and published *The Skin Horse*, a tale following an

ill boy and his old toy horse, who eventually is made into a large version by an angel for the boy to fly away with.

Later in her adult life, Williams turned to writing young adult novels. A theme she stuck to without trying was young characters who were isolated from society. Williams received the Newberry Medal for her novel *Winterbound* in 1937, only one year after its publication. Another novel written her adult life is *Other People's houses*, published in 1939. *Forward Commandos!*, published in 1944, is Williams' last book. Soon after the book was published, Margery Williams became suddenly ill. After three days in the hospital, she passed on September 4th, 1944.

Sources

Jasmine, Taylor. "Margery Williams Bianco, Author of the Velveteen Rabbit." *Literary Ladies Guide*, 22 Aug. 2022, www.literaryladiesguide.com/author-biography/margery-williams-author-of-the-velveteen-rabbit/.

"Land of Tales – Where Children Become Readers." *Land of Tales*, landoftales.com/authors/2610-margery-williams.