



*"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in your joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand..."*

*~From "The Velveteen Rabbit" by Margery Williams*

Seasons Greeting MBFS,

Welcome to a well-deserved Winter Break. You may know the children's story "The Velveteen Rabbit" is a story dear to me. For 18 years (since my dad's death in 1998), I have read it to 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students (as a teacher, and administrator) the day before the break begins. I read it to remind me of my dad and to remind me of my own humility and what it means to be real.

In the story a boy is given a stuffed rabbit at Christmas. The story comes from the perspective of the rabbit, who is told by the other toys in the boy's cupboard, that if he is loved enough, he will become real. The toys in the boy's bedroom come to life when the boy is asleep or away from his room. This theme is similar to the movie "Toy Story". It's fun to get inside the heads of toys to see what they do and talk about when the boy is not around. The boy loved his toys so much they became real to him (and the other toys in the bedroom knew that). The toys that were old and beat up and not as new and shiny as the other toys, they were the most-loved. The rabbit is first teased by the more modern toys in the child's bedroom because he had no cranks or springs or other mechanical parts. Then he's teased by real rabbits because he didn't look like a real rabbit. This made the rabbit sad and self-conscious. By the time the rabbit had become real, most of his hair had been loved off, his eye dropped out, he got loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand. What does it mean to be real?

*"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... Once you become real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always."*

*~From "The Velveteen Rabbit" by Margery Williams*

Adolescence is typically the time student's start worrying about how they look and what others think. We are typically faced with situations when students feel bad about themselves. Children are teased at some point by someone, some, more than others unfortunately. The story teaches that beauty is really not about how you look... it's about who you are, and when someone loves you for who you really are, the way you look doesn't matter.

As a New Year approaches, now is the time to reflect on our blessings, and recharge our spirits. Sometimes the only way to deliver these themes is through stories. "The Velveteen Rabbit" contains messages of how to love, being humble, and being real. I hope you will read this story sometime, as I do to remind myself. Wishing you and your family peace and joy, and lots of sunshine.

See you in 2017,  
Chris