

A
COMPANION
TO

Charlotte's Web

BY JOSEPH ROBINETTE

BASED ON THE BOOK BY E.B. WHITE



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The Herald-Times

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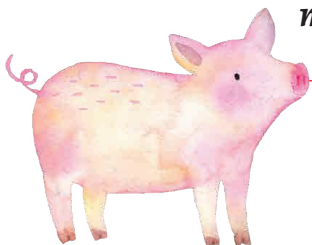
WHO ARE THE CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY?

Fern Arable	a young girl
John Arable	her father
Avery Arable	her brother
Homer Zuckerman	her uncle
Lurvy	a farm worker
Wilbur	a pig
Templeton	a rat
Charlotte	a spider
Goose	a farm animal
Gander	a farm animal
Sheep	a farm animal

A CARDINAL FOR KIDS STUDY GUIDE with MONROE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

When a girl named Fern saves a little pig named Wilbur, she opens the door to a world of friendship and adventure. Together, with the help of the wise spider, Charlotte, the Gander, the Goose, and even the sneaky rat, Templeton, Wilbur and Fern show the farm and the world just how extraordinary an ordinary pig can be! Based upon the beloved story by E.B. White, this one-act play was dramatized by Joseph Robinette.

To help students prepare for attending a live theater performance, see the handout “What to Expect When You See a Play” at mcpl.info/childrens/first-theater-experiences

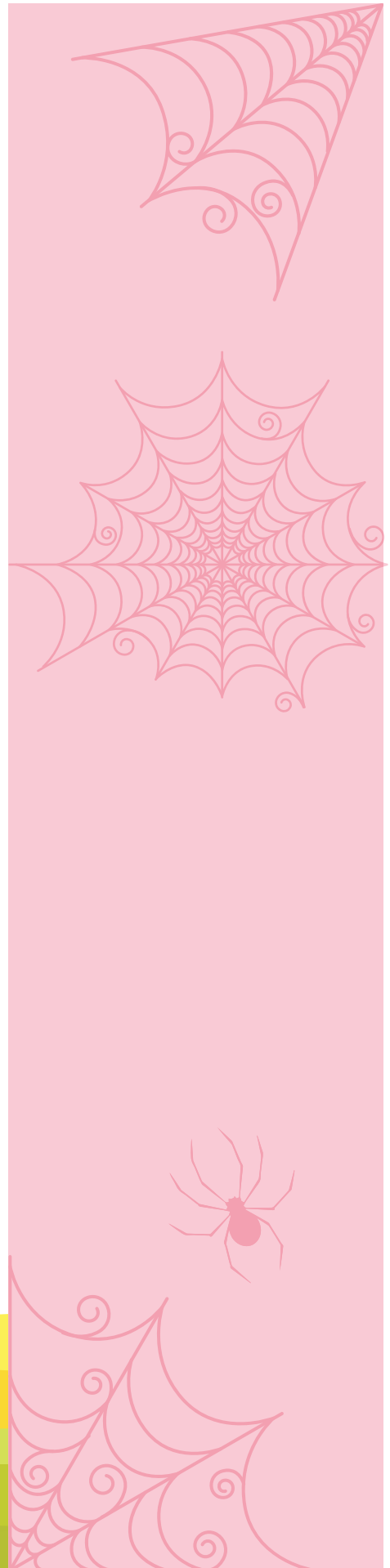
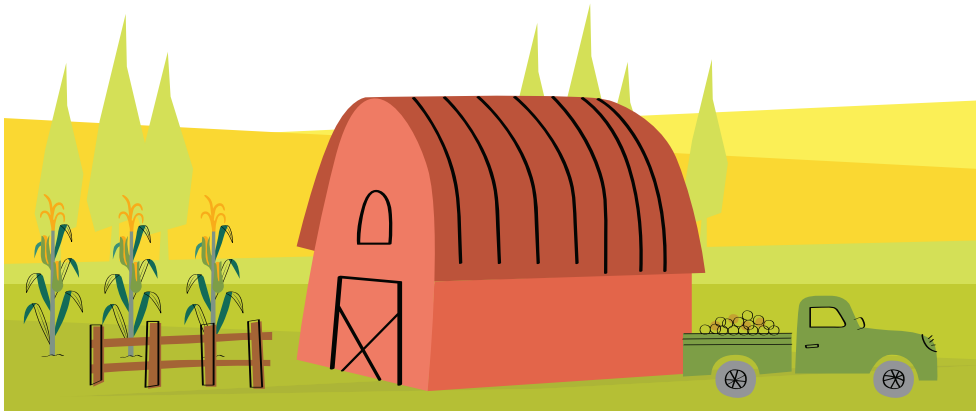


WHERE DOES THE PLAY TAKE PLACE AND WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The play takes place on a farm where a litter of pigs has been born. The farmer, Mr. Arable, is about to destroy the tiniest one, the “runt,” but his young daughter, Fern, asks him to give the pig to her instead. She takes over the bottle-feeding and special care required for such a little pig. She names the pig “Wilbur”—and he grows big and healthy.

Now that Wilbur is growing, Mr. Arable must sell him. Again at Fern’s urging, the pig is sold to her Uncle, Homer Zuckerman. Since the Zuckerman’s farm is just down the road, Fern can still visit Wilbur often. On the Zuckerman’s farm, Wilbur meets many new animals—Goose and Gander, Sheep, and Templeton the Rat—but without Fern around as much, he admits to feeling lonely. One night, a voice answers Wilbur’s wishes, and promises to be his friend. The next morning, Wilbur learns the voice belongs to a beautiful spider named Charlotte.

Although Wilbur is nervous about trusting Charlotte (she captures bugs in her web, so he thinks she’s “brutal”), he soon learns that Charlotte is his loyal and true friend when she devises a plan to save him from being killed and turned into food. Through her talent at weaving words into her web, Charlotte convinces everyone that Wilbur is “some pig.” Wilbur becomes famous and is ensured a long life in the barnyard. Unfortunately, Charlotte used up a lot of her energy to create the special words in her web, and she does not live long after helping Wilbur survive.



WHO WROTE THE STORY OF CHARLOTTE'S WEB?

The story *Charlotte's Web* was written by the American author E. B. White. Elwyn Brooks White was born on July 11, 1899, in New York, but he spent much of his life in Maine, where he lived on a farm and kept animals.

After graduating from college, White started writing for a magazine called *The New Yorker*. He wrote on a wide range of topics, from baseball to farming. He also wrote poetry and books for children, including *Stuart Little* and *Trumpet of the Swan*. As in *Charlotte's Web*, the animal characters in these books all talk and act like people, helping us learn about friendship and love.

When he was asked where he got the idea for *Charlotte's Web*, White said "I had been watching a big, grey spider at her work and was impressed by how clever she was at weaving. Gradually, I worked the spider into the story you know about friendship and salvation on a farm."

Young readers often asked Mr. White if his stories were true. In a letter to his fans, he answered "No, they are imaginary tales...but real life is only one kind of life—there is also the life of the imagination."

Before he died in 1985, White won numerous awards for his writings, including a Pulitzer Prize special citation, the National Medal for Literature, and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal from the American Library Association, which honored him for making "a substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children."



Watch a short video about E.B. White at teachingbooks.net/author_interview.cgi?id=16929

REFERENCES:

SCHOLASTIC: [HTTPS://WWW.SCHOLASTIC.COM/TEACHERS/AUTHORS/E--B--WHITE/](https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/authors/e--b--white/)

WORLD BOOK ONLINE: [HTTPS://WWW.WORLDBOOKONLINE.COM/STUDENT-NEW/#/ARTICLE/HOME/AR601120/CHARLOTTE'S%2OWEB](https://www.worldbookonline.com/student-new/#/ARTICLE/HOME/AR601120/CHARLOTTE'S%2OWEB)



WHAT KIND OF SPIDER IS CHARLOTTE?

Charlotte is a barn spider. Her scientific name is *Araneus cavaticus*. She is also known as an orb spider for the shape of the web that she spins.



Learn more about spiders from books at your library, or use your library card to connect to World Book Online at **mcpl.info/worldbook**. Type the word “spider” in the student version of this online resource to read about the parts of a spider’s body, how it makes silk, and to watch a video demonstrating how an orb spider spins its web.

Image from:

<https://spideridentifications.com/barn.html>



WHAT CAN YOU TALK OR WRITE ABOUT AFTER THE PLAY?

1. If you were Charlotte, what would you have written in your web about Wilbur?
2. Charlotte’s writing calls attention to Wilbur and helps to save him. What kind of writing can you do to call attention to something that matters to you?
3. Why did Charlotte like Wilbur so much? Why did she want to save him?
4. What qualities make someone a good friend?
5. Which characters in the play demonstrate “true friendship?” How do they show this?
6. Is Templeton the rat a hero or a villain in the story? Why?
7. In the beginning of *Charlotte’s Web*, Fern saves Wilbur from death. Would you have saved Wilbur too? Tell about a time when you stood up for someone smaller or weaker than yourself.
8. When everybody is at the county fair, Fern leaves Wilbur alone in his pen while she explores the sights (and food and rides). Why did she do this?
9. What is the difference between a farm animal and a pet? How are they similar?
10. Where does your food come from? Do you eat food from local farms?
11. Why do some people choose to become vegetarians? Do you think Fern is a vegetarian?
12. How is a spider like an acrobat? What can people use to hold themselves up above ground?

VOCABULARY WORDS

These words appear in the story of *Charlotte's Web*. How are they used in the play? Can you use these words in a sentence or story you write?

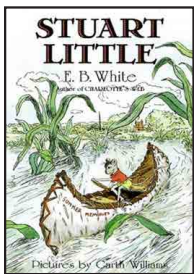
- runt** (ruhnt) – *noun*
an animal that is small compared to others of its kind or the smallest or weakest of a litter, especially of pigs or puppies
- injustice** (in-juhs-tis) – *noun*
unfairness or lack of justice; an unfair situation or action
- enchanted** (en-chan-tid) – *adjective*
a place or thing that is enchanted has been put under a magic spell or seems magical, as in an enchanted castle
- reconsider** (ree-kuhn-sid-ur) – *verb*
to think again about a previous decision, especially with the idea of making a change
- dejected** (di-jek-tid) – *adjective*
sad and depressed
- objectionable** (uhb-jek-shuh-nuh-buhl) – *adjective*
unpleasant and likely to offend people, an in objectionable behavior
- salutations** (sal-yoo-tay-shuns) – *noun*
greetings indicating respect and affection; regards
- detested** (di-test-id) – *verb*
if you detest something or somebody, you dislike that thing or person very much
- inheritance** (in-hair-it-ence) – *noun*
money, property, or a title received from someone who has died
- hysterics** (his-tair-iks) – *noun*
a fit of uncontrollable laughter or crying
- sedentary** (sed-en-ter-e) – *adjective*
not migratory, for example: sedentary birds, or doing or requiring much sitting
- gullible** (guhl-uh-buhl) – *adjective*
if you are gullible, you believe anything you are told and you are easily tricked
- descend** (di-send) – *verb*
to climb down or go down to a lower level
- radiant** (ray-dee-uhnt) – *adjective*
bright and shining, or someone who is radiant looks very healthy and happy
- aeronaut** (air-uh-nawt) – *noun*
a person who takes part in the science and practice of designing, building, and fixing aircraft
- versatile** (vur-suh-tuhl) – *adjective*
talented or useful in many ways, as in a versatile entertainer or a versatile tool
- paradise** (pa-ruh-dise) – *noun*
a place that is considered extremely beautiful and that makes people feel happy and contented, as in vacation paradise
- humble** (huhm-buhl) – *adjective*
modest and not proud
- languish** (lang-wish) – *verb*
to waste away, as in languish in prison, or neglected
- triumph** (trye-uhmf) – *noun*
a great victory, success, or achievement
- extraordinary** (ek-stror-duh-ner-ee) – *adjective*
very unusual or remarkable, as in an extraordinary skill
- sentiments** (sen-tuh-mehnts) – *noun*
opinions about a specific matter; thoughts or attitudes that are based on feelings or emotions instead of reason; tender or sensitive feelings
- deserted** (di-zert-ed) – *verb*
to leave or abandon someone or something you should stay with
- desperate** (des-pur-it) – *adjective*
if you are desperate, you will do anything to change your situation; dangerous or difficult, as in a desperate act
- hallowed** (hal-ohd) – *adjective*
sacred or holy



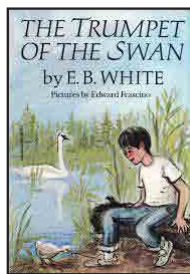
ENJOY READING, LISTENING, AND WATCHING THE STORY OF CHARLOTTE'S WEB

Monroe County Public Library carries multiple copies of the book and DVDs of movies based on the book. Listen to the story in both audiobook (on CD) and Playaway format, or download a copy in the eBook or eAudiobook format. The animated, musical version of the story also is instantly available on Hoopla—all free with your Library card!

Other Books for Children by E. B. White



Stuart Little



Trumpet of the Swan

Other Books About Bugs, Farm Animals and Farm Life

The Tiny Hero of Ferny Creek Library

by Linda Bailey

Eddie is a tiny green bug who loves to read and who lives behind the chalkboard in Mr. Wang's fourth-grade classroom. Encouraged by the brave deeds done by small creatures like Stuart Little and Charlotte from *Charlotte's Web*, Eddie comes up with a plan to save the school's library—a plan that requires all the courage one little bug can muster.

Audrey (cow): An Oral Account of a Most Daring Escape, Based More or Less on a True Story

by Dan Bar-el

Longing for a life filled with poetry and the green pastures beyond the farm where she is destined for the slaughterhouse, Audrey the cow enlists the help of human and animal friends to stage a daring escape.

Chicken Boy

by Francis O'Rourke Dowell

Since the death of his mother, Tobin's family life and school life have been in disarray, but after he starts raising chickens with his seventh-grade classmate, Henry, everything starts to fall into place.

Babe: The Gallant Pig

by Dick King-Smith

A piglet comes to Farmer Hogget's farm, where he is adopted by an old sheepdog and accomplishes amazing things.

The Adventures of a South Pole Pig: A Novel of Snow and Courage

by Chris Kurtz

Flora the pig ditches the sedentary life on the farm for an adventure in Antarctica, where she escapes the knife and lives her dream of pulling a sled with a team of dogs.

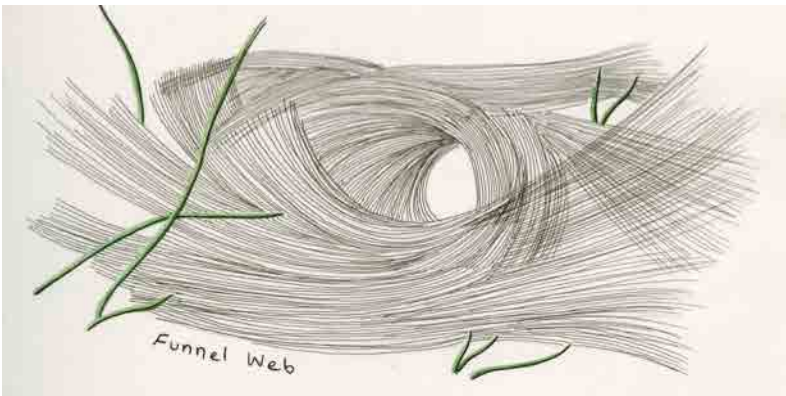
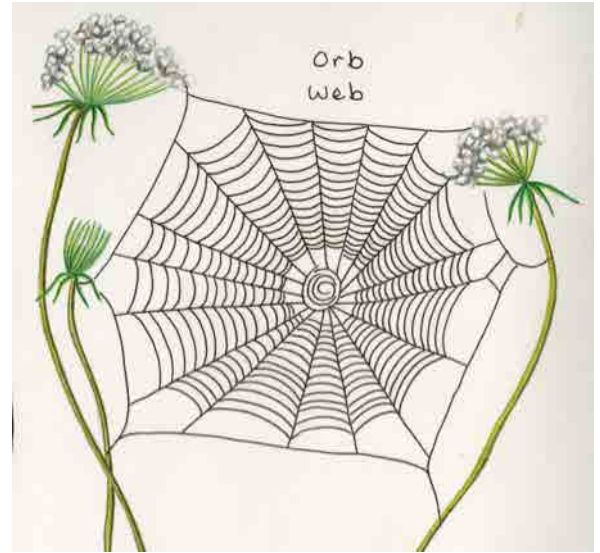
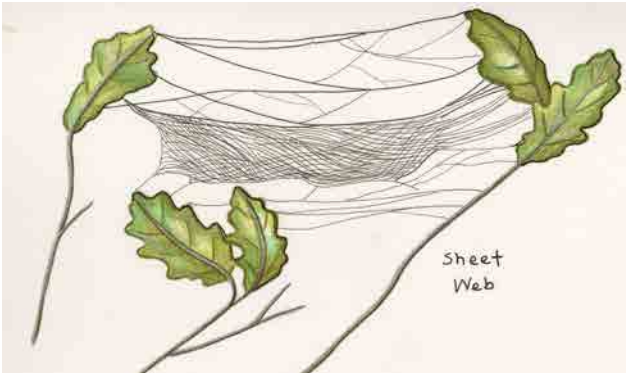
Fleabrain Loves Franny

by Joann Rocklin

Ten-year-old Franny is recovering from polio in the summer of 1952, the year that *Charlotte's Web* was published. She receives a handwritten note from an eloquent flea named Fleabrain who helps her overcome her loneliness and frustration. Heartwarming and humorous, the story is an homage to White's classic tale.



CIRCLE THE PICTURE OF THE WEB THAT MATCHES THE KIND OF WEB CHARLOTTE MAKES



Illustrations of webs by Rachel Diaz-Bastin from:
<https://baynature.org/article/spiders/>

DRAW A WEB YOU WOULD MAKE IF YOU WERE A SPIDER!

Charlotte's Web Word Search

BARN
CHARLOTTE
GOW
FAIR

FERN
GOOSE
HORSE
HUMBLE

RADIANT
SHEEP
SOME PIG
SPIDER

SPRING
TEMPLETON
TERRIFIC
WILBUR

W	F	C	O	E	H	Y	H	A
T	E	M	P	L	E	T	O	N
K	R	L	N	B	E	W	R	L
F	N	E	Q	M	C	O	S	J
A	L	R	G	U	L	C	E	K
R	I	T	M	H	P	I	R	T
C	H	A	R	L	O	T	T	E
P	J	S	P	R	I	N	G	R
S	R	A	D	I	A	N	T	R
P	B	F	O	G	Z	P	S	I
I	F	A	I	R	R	E	O	F
D	S	E	J	U	E	E	M	I
E	L	Y	B	K	S	H	E	C
R	O	L	A	T	O	S	P	E
V	I	D	R	G	O	J	I	D
W	E	S	N	Y	G	A	G	B

Charlotte's Web

REPRODUCIBLE ACTIVITY

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