

Charlotte's Web

**Friday November 12, 2021 - Sunday
November 21, 2021**

**Fridays & Saturdays at 7:30 pm
Sundays at 3:00 pm**

2nd Street Stage

**Hannah Block Historic USO/Community Arts Center
120 South 2nd Street**



Adapted by Joseph Robinette. Based on the book by E.B. White.

The Children's Literature Association named this "the best American children's book of the past two hundred years," and Joseph Robinette, working with the advice of E.B. White, has created a play that captures this work in a thrilling theatrical presentation. The play tells the story of a livestock pig named Wilbur and his friendship with a barn spider named Charlotte. When Wilbur is in danger of being slaughtered by the farmer, Charlotte writes messages praising Wilbur in her web in order to persuade the farmer to let him live.

About the Thalian Association

Thalian Association Community Theatre is a non-profit, membership organization that's dedicated to enhancing the rich artistic environment of the Cape Fear region. Tracing its roots back to 1788, the Thalian Association Community Theatre was founded to provide arts education and bring the excitement of the performing arts to Wilmington, North Carolina. Today the Thalian Association Community Theatre produces five major productions annually on the Main Stage at historic Thalian Hall, offers a Youth Theatre program and professionally manages the Hannah Block Historic USO/Community Arts Center for the City of Wilmington. In 2007, the North Carolina legislature named the Thalian Association Community Theatre the Official Community Theater of North Carolina.



Character Review

Read the following descriptions of some of the characters in *Charlotte's Web*.

Wilbur: The main character, a pig who was the runt of his litter but turned out to be very clever. The story is told from Wilbur's point of view.

Charlotte A. Cavatica: A spider lives in Zuckerman's barn. She befriends Wilbur and spins words in her web to save his life. Her middle initial and last name is a play on the binomial name of her species, *Araneus cavaticus*. Commonly known as the barn spider, it is a common orb-weaver native to North America.



An image of the animals in Zuckerman's barn from the 1973 animated Hanna-Barbera film *Charlotte's Web*.



Templeton the Rat from *Charlotte's Web*, 1973.

Templeton: A rat who helps Charlotte and Wilbur, but only if he gains something from it. He serves as comic relief to the plot.

Fern Arable: John's daughter, who adopts Wilbur when he is a piglet. She visits Wilbur when he gets older and moves to her uncle's farm. Fern is the only human in the story who understands the animals' conversations.

John Arable: Wilbur's first owner and Fern's father.

Avery Arable: Fern's elder brother and John's son. Like Templeton, he is a source of comic relief.

Homer Zuckerman: Fern's uncle who buys Wilbur and keeps him in his barn. He has a wife named Edith and a farm hand named Lurvy.

Henry Fussy: A boy about Fern's age. Fern becomes fond of Henry.

Dr. Dorian: The family physician/psychologist consulted by Fern's mother.

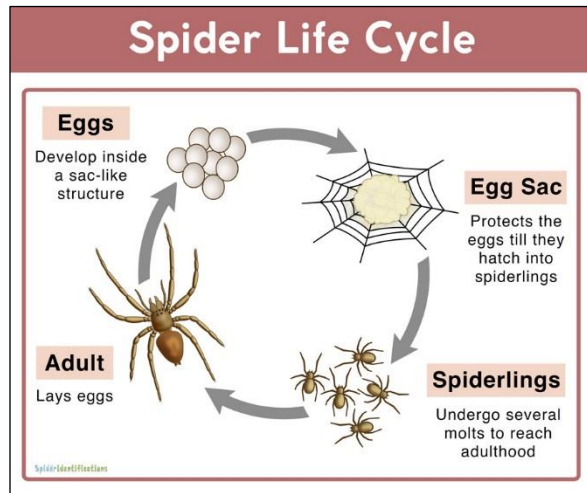
Uncle: A large pig whom Charlotte disdains for his terrible manners. He is Wilbur's rival at the fair.

Aranea, Joy, and Nellie: Three of Charlotte's 514 children. Although they were born at the barn, all of them except Aranea, Joy and Nellie go their own ways by ballooning in the wind.



Wilbur and Templeton from the 2006 motion picture *Charlotte's Web*.

Science Activity – Spider Life Cycle



Read the following information about spiders and their unique life cycles.

Spiders aren't insects. Actually, spiders are in the same category as crabs, scorpions and ticks. They are predators with many different ways of hunting, and many are venomous. Some spiders create a web to trap insects. Others will actively hunt their prey, such as the Carolina wolf spider, considered the most aggressive.

Spider silk is

thought to be the strongest natural textile in the world. If the spider was the size of a human, the silk would actually be stronger than steel! Scientists are studying spider silk to see if we can duplicate it for things like bike helmets, bulletproof clothing and bandages.

1. **Egg** - The first stage is the egg stage. A female spider lays thousands of eggs. The eggs are wrapped in a silk egg sac. The eggs hatch in a short time.
2. **Egg Sac** - The second stage is the egg sac stage. The egg sac is made of silk and is usually white. Sometimes the female spider carries the sac on her back or in her mouth. Sometimes she hides the sac under a rock or attached to a plant.
3. **Spiderlings** - The third stage is the spiderlings stage. Spiderlings hatch from the eggs. They look like tiny adults. Some spiderlings are on their own and get no help from their mother. Other spiderlings climb onto their mother's back after hatching where she feeds them. Spiderlings jump off their mother's back when they are ready.
4. **Adult** - The last stage of a spider is the adult stage. Spiders sometimes die right after their spiderlings hatch. Adult spiders lay their eggs before Winter. Adult spiders spin webs to catch or hunt their prey.



Stage 1 - Eggs



Stage 2 – Egg Sac



Stage 3 - Spiderlings

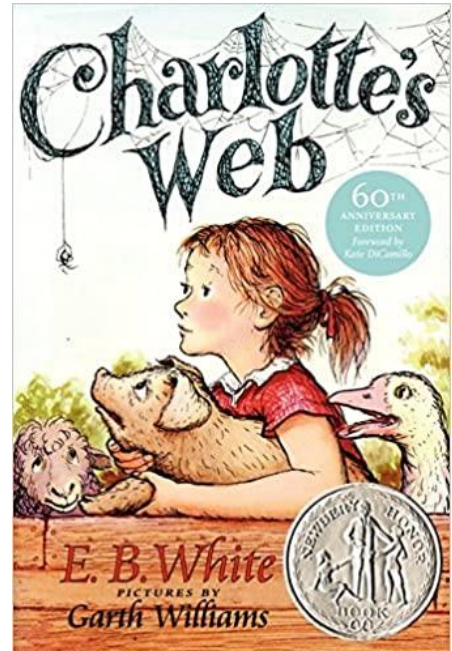


Stage 4 - Adult

Reading Activity

Read the following passage from *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White with illustrations by Garth Williams.

Fern loved Wilbur more than anything. She loved to stroke him, to feed him, to put him to bed. Every morning, as soon as she got up, she warmed his milk, tied his bib on, and held the bottle for him. Every afternoon, when the school bus stopped in front of her house, she jumped out and ran to the kitchen to fix another bottle for him. She fed him again at suppertime, and again just before going to bed. Mrs. Arable gave him a feeding around noontime each day, when Fern was away in school. Wilbur loved his milk, and he was never happier than when Fern was warming up a bottle for him. He would stand and gaze up at her with adoring eyes.



Cover of *Charlotte's Web*

For the first few days of his life, Wilbur was allowed to live in a box near the stove in the kitchen. Then, when Mrs. Arable complained, he was moved to a bigger box in the woodshed. At two weeks of age, he was moved outdoors. It was apple-blossom time, and the days were getting warmer. Mr. Arable fixed a small yard specially for Wilbur under an apple tree, and gave him a large wooden box full of straw, with a doorway cut in it so he could walk in and out as he pleased.

‘Won’t he be cold at night?’ asked Fern.

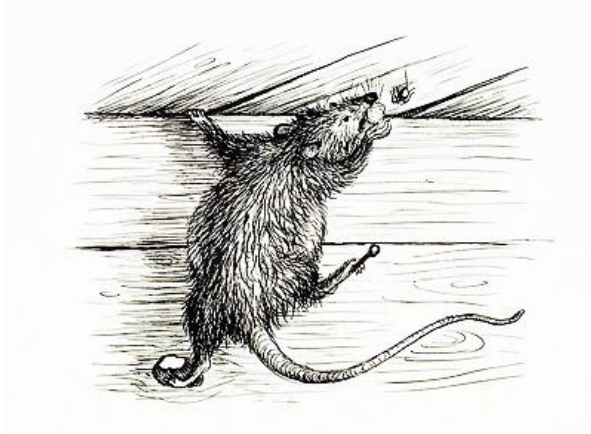
‘No,’ said her father. ‘You watch and see what he does.’



Fern and Baby Wilbur

Carrying a bottle of milk, Fern sat down under the apple tree inside the yard. Wilbur ran to her and she held the bottle for him while he sucked. When he had finished the last drop, he grunted and walked sleepily into the box. Fern peered through the door. Wilbur was poking the straw with his snout. In a short time he had dug a tunnel in the straw. He crawled into the tunnel and disappeared from sight, completely covered with straw. Fern was enchanted. It relieved her mind to know that her baby would sleep covered up, and would stay warm.

Every morning after breakfast, Wilbur walked out to the road with Fern and waited with her till the bus came. She would wave goodbye to him, and he would stand and watch the bus until it vanished round a turn. While Fern was in school, Wilbur was shut up inside his yard.



Templeton the Rat

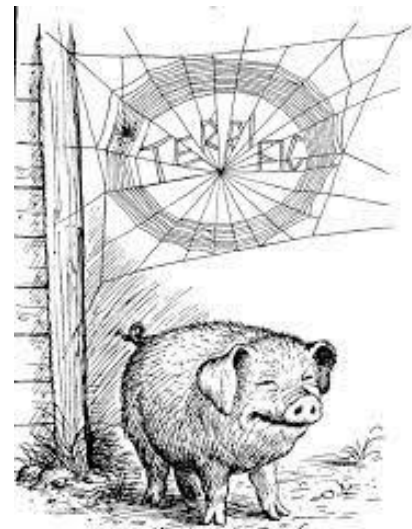
But as soon as she got home in the afternoon, she would take him out and he would follow her round the place. If she went into the house, Wilbur went too. If she went upstairs, Wilbur would wait at the bottom step until she came down again. If she took her doll for a walk in the doll carriage, Wilbur followed along. Sometimes, on these journeys, Wilbur would get tired, and Fern would pick him up and put him in the carriage alongside the doll. He liked this. And if he was very tired, he would close his eyes and go to sleep under the doll's blanket. He looked cute when his eyes were closed, because his

lashes were so long. The doll would close her eyes, too, and Fern would wheel the carriage very slowly and smoothly so as not to wake her infants.

One warm afternoon, Fern and Avery put on bathing suits and went down to the brook for a swim. Wilbur tagged along at Fern's heels. When she waded into the brook, Wilbur waded in with her. He found the water quite cold – too cold for his liking. So while the children swam and played and splashed water at each other, Wilbur amused himself in the mud along the edge of the brook, where it was warm and moist and delightfully sticky and oozy. Every day was a happy day, and every night was peaceful.

Wilbur was what farmers call a spring pig, which simply means that he was born in springtime. When he was five weeks old, Mr. Arable said he was now big enough to sell, and would have to be sold. Fern broke down and wept. But her father was firm about it.

Wilbur's appetite had increased; he was beginning to eat scraps of food in addition to milk. Mr. Arable was not willing to provide for him any longer. He had already sold Wilbur's ten brothers and sisters.



Wilbur and Charlotte

'He's got to go, Fern,' he said. 'You have had your fun raising a baby pig, but Wilbur is not a baby any longer and he has got to be sold.'

'Call up the Zuckermans,' suggested Mrs. Arable to Fern. 'Your Uncle Homer sometimes raises a pig. And if Wilbur goes there to live, you can walk down the road and visit him as often as you like.'

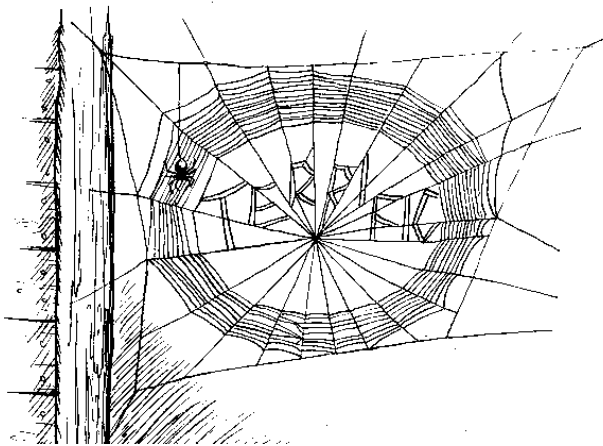
'How much money should I ask for him?' Fern wanted to know. 'Well,' said her father, 'he's a runt. Tell your Uncle Homer you've got a pig you'll sell for six dollars, and see what he says.'

It was soon arranged. Fern phoned and got her Aunt Edith, and her Aunt Edith hollered for Uncle Homer and Uncle Homer came in from the barn and talked to Fern. When he heard that the price was only six dollars, he said he would buy the pig. Next day Wilbur was taken from his home under the apple tree and went to live in a manure pile in the cellar of Zuckerman's barn.



Wilbur in the Zuckerman's barn

The barn was very large. It was very old. It smelled of hay and it smelled of manure. It smelled of the perspiration of tired horses and the wonderful sweet breath of patient cows. It often had a sort of peaceful smell-as though nothing bad could happen ever again in the world. It smelled of grain and of harness dressing and of axle grease and of rubber boots and of new rope. And whenever the cat was given a fish-head to eat, the barn would smell of fish. But mostly it smelled of hay, for there was always hay in the great loft up overhead. And there was always hay being pitched down to the cows and the horses and the sheep.



Charlotte and her web

The barn was pleasantly warm in winter when the animals spent most of their time indoors, and it was pleasantly cool in summer when the big doors stood wide open to the breeze.

The barn had stalls on the main floor for the work horses, tie-ups on the main floor for the cows, a sheepfold down below for the sheep, a pigpen down below for Wilbur, and it was full of all sorts of things that you find in barns: ladders, grindstones, pitch forks, monkey wrenches, scythes, lawn mowers, snow shovels, ax handles, milk pails, water buckets, empty grain sacks, and rusty rat traps.

It was the kind of barn that swallows like to build their nests in. It was the kind of barn that children like to play in. And the whole thing was owned by Fern's uncle, Mr. Homer L. Zuckerman.



Wilbur getting a bath

Mr. Zuckerman did not allow her to take Wilbur out, and he did not allow her to get into the pigpen. But he told Fern that she could sit on the stool and watch Wilbur as long as she wanted to.

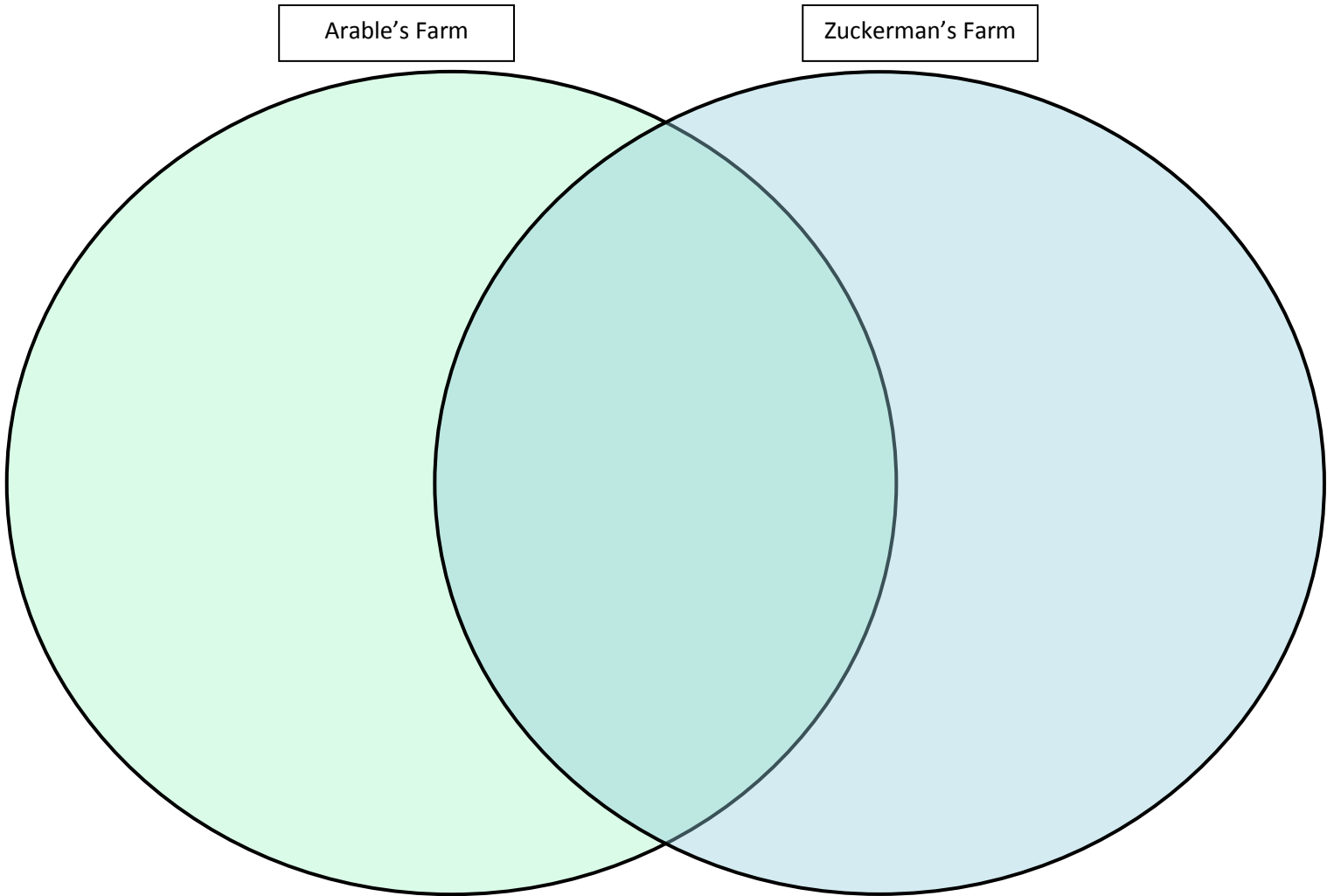
It made her happy just to be near the pig, and it made Wilbur happy to know that she was sitting there, right outside his pen. But he never had any fun – no walks, no rides, and no swims.



Fern on her stool in the Zuckerman's barn

Compare and Contrast

Using the descriptions in the passage above, compare Wilbur's time with Fern on the Arable's farm to Wilbur's life on the Zuckerman's farm. What is different? What is similar? How has Wilbur's environment changed? Record your comparisons using the diagram below.



Art Activity – Spiderwebs

What would you write on Charlotte’s web? Using the spiderweb template below, create your very own web design to describe Wilbur the Pig. Be sure to be creative with your colors and word choices!

