

Town Hall Theatre's
Charlotte's Web

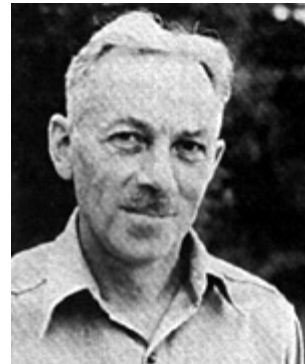
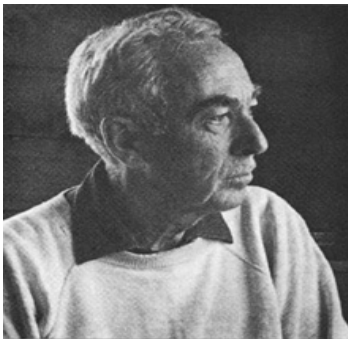
Teacher Resource Guide
Brittany Hinkle, Education Director

ABOUT THE PLAY

Charlotte's Web is one of the most famous and well-known children's books; it tells the tale of Wilbur, the smallest pig of a newly born litter of pigs. Because of his size the farmer plans to do away with him, thinking he won't survive the night. The farmer's kind-hearted daughter, Fern, come to the rescue of little Wilbur and raises him as her own pet.

When he gets to old for her to handle any more, Wilbur's off to the neighboring farm where he meets a friendly spider named Charlotte. Charlotte and Wilbur soon hear that his life is in jeopardy again! He has grown so large that he's ready to be made into bacon! Charlotte wants to help her newfound friend and devises a way for him to live by writing words in her web.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



E.B. White

Mr. White was born in Mount Vernon, New York as Elwyn Brooks White in 1899. He attended public schools there. He then went to college at Cornell University and graduated in 1921. After graduation, he worked in New York for a year, then traveled around the country. After trying many sorts of jobs, he began work at the new *New Yorker* magazine in 1924. He was happy in this job and wrote many poems, essays and stories for adults.

In 1938, E.B. White moved to the country. On his farm in Maine he kept animals, and some of these creatures got into his stories and books. E.B. White said he found writing difficult and bad for one's health, but he kept at it! He began *Stuart Little* in the hope of amusing a six-year-old niece of his, but before he finished it, she had grown up.

In 1945, he wrote his first children's book, *Stuart Little*. This book is about a mouse and all his adventures with a human family. *Charlotte's Web* was published in 1952. This book is a story about a friendship between a young pig and a spider. In 1970, E.B. White wrote another children's book, *The Trumpet of the Swan*. This book is about a boy named Sam, and his love of nature, and of a swan born without a voice.

E.B. White continued to write essays for adults until his death in 1985. Children and adults have made his children's books classics. They are enjoyed as much today as when they were written.

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PRE PERFORMANCE

PERFORMANCE SPECIFIC VOCABULARY:

(As listed in Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <http://www.m-w>)

Runt: an animal unusually small of its kind; the smallest of a litter of pigs.

Injustice: absence of justice: violation of right or of the rights of another: Unfairness.

Morals: the moral significance or practical lesson (as of a story). A passage pointing out, usually in conclusion, the lesson to be drawn from a story.

Bewilderment: the quality or state of being bewildered. A bewildering tangle or confusion.

Destiny: A predetermined course of events often held to be an irresistible power or agency.

Modest: placing a moderate estimate on one's abilities or worth, neither bold nor self-assertive: tending toward diffidence.

Pompous: having or exhibiting self-importance.

Humble: Not proud or haughty: not arrogant or assertive.

Forlorn: Sad and lonely because of isolation or desertion

Radiant: Vividly bright and shining.

THEATRE VOCABULARY LIST

(As listed in the Stage One educational tools website, www.stageone.com)

Acting: pretending to be a character.

Beginning, Middle, End: Three parts of a story.

Characters: A person portrayed in a drama novel or artistic piece.

Conflict: The struggle between the opposing forces, ideas or interests in a play.

Courage: The spirit that enable one to face danger and fear with confidence and resolution, bravery.

Dialogue: A conversation that takes place between two or more characters that expresses thoughts, feelings and actions.

Facial Expression: The manner in which an actor uses his or her face to portray an emotion.

Improvisation: Using a character to express thoughts and feeling or to act out a scenario without prior rehearsals.

Movement: How the actor uses his or her body to create a character.

Plot/Storyline: The action of the story, the development of the story, has a beginning, middle and end.

Point of View/Perspective: Feelings, opinions, and experiences that effect the reader's outlook.

Setting: Time and place where a story occurs.

Teamwork: Working together as a team.

Three tools of an actor: Voice, body and the imagination.

Vocal Expression: The way the actor uses his or her voice to express an emotion

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THEMES TO LOOK FOR

Courage

Friendship

Family

Growing Up

True friendship

Recognizing one's strengths

Teamwork

Overcoming fears

Respect for others

Good Sportsmanship

Overcoming one's weaknesses

POST PERFORMANCE

DISCUSSION

1. The theme of friendship is very strong throughout the play. We see several emerging friendships between the people and the animals. Look closely at these friendships, why do they work? Why don't they?
2. Which do you think are the strongest? Which do you think will last the longest? Do you have any friendships that resemble the bond between Charlotte and Wilbur?
3. What does the relationship between Fern and Wilbur remind you of? Maybe it reminds you of you and your mother, or your sister?
4. How do the actors use their bodies to portray animals? How would you use your own body to pretend to be a goose or a rat?
5. Did you like the costumes choices in the play? If you were the costume designer how would you dress each of the characters? Remember that Templeton the rat is sneaky so his costume must show that. Fern is young and motherly to Wilbur, so her costume could not be a fancy ball gown!

WRITING PROMPTS

1. What sort of qualities should a good friend have? Does Charlotte have these qualities?
2. Can you describe a time when you and another person used teamwork to overcome a situation? Can you think of more times in your everyday life when you could use teamwork?
3. How can you show respect for yourself, family members, teachers and friends on a daily basis? What sort of things can you do or not do?
4. What is a fear that you have? What sort of things can we do to help our self to not be afraid? Have you ever helped a younger sibling or friend to not be afraid of something you knew wasn't real?
5. How do you know that you are growing up? Do your parents give you more privileges? Do you get to ride your bike further than ever before? Do you get to stay up a half hour later?

