

# Pigs in Literature

**Grades 2-4**

**Written by Ruth Solski**  
**Illustrated by S&S Learning Materials**

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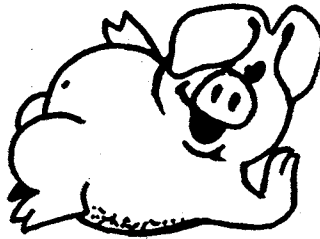
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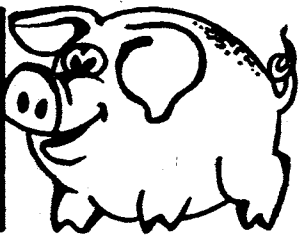
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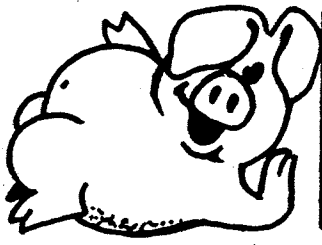


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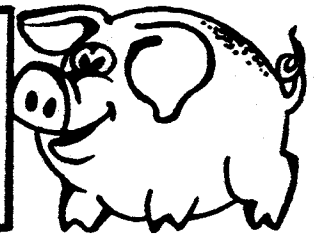


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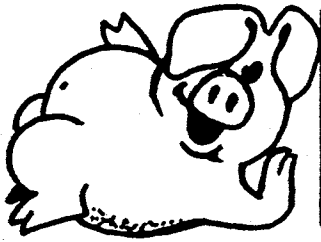
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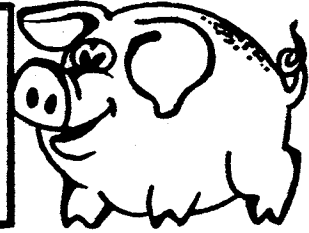
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## **Teacher Information**

### ***Breeds of Pigs***

There are many different breeds of pigs found on farms today. All of these breeds came from Wild Boar stock.

The Berkshire pig is black with white on its feet and on the tips of its tail. Its broad face bears a splash of white and a unique, short, upturned, pug-like snout. The pig's ears are erect and bent forward slightly. The British Royal Family kept a herd of Berkshire pigs at Windsor Castle at one time. Rich farmers would only raise Berkshire pigs and nothing else.

The Hampshire pig comes from England as well. It is a popular pig around the world. The Hampshire's black body is encircled at the shoulders with a white belt which includes the front legs as well. This pig has a straight snout, a narrow head and erect ears.

The Yorkshire pig comes from Yorkshire, England and is the most popular breed of all the breeds. Its long, large body is white or pink-white. Sometimes it has black spots.

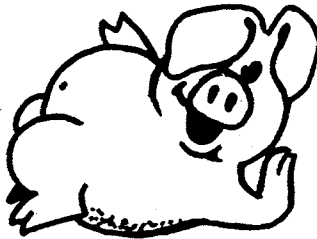
This breed is popular because a sow is able to produce many piglets. There may be ten or more piglets in a litter.

Yorkshire pigs cannot be left in the sun for too long as they sunburn very easily.

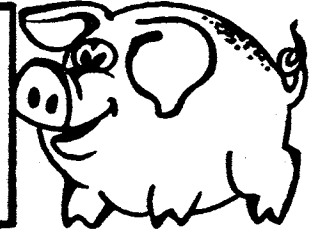
The Duroc is a red pig that originated from the United States around New York and New Jersey. The Durocs have drooping ears and their color may vary from light golden to dark mahogany. Many people believe that the Duroc is smarter than other hogs. The University of Kentucky researched the Duroc hog for five years and their studies prove that this pig is more intelligent than a dog.

The Poland China pig does not come from China or Poland. It originated in the state of Ohio in the United States. It looks are similar to a Berkshire but its ears droop down and its snout is straight.

It is very energetic and likes plenty of exercise. It is one of the largest breeds with males weighing up to 450 Kg (1 000 pounds) and sows averaging 400 Kg (900 pounds).



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Along with the Yorkshire, Duroc and Chester Whites, the Poland China pig is one of the most popular hogs in the United States.

The Spotted Poland China pig looks exactly the same as the Poland China pig except for the white patches on its coat. Sometimes there are paisley-like shapes on its coat so that it looks like it has been tie-dyed. Its ears droop like the Poland China but its ears are slightly larger.

There are many other breeds of pigs. The main difference between European and North American swine is that our pigs tend to fatten up faster.

### ***A Pig's Family***

Pigs are called many things depending on their sex, size and shape. A *boar* is a male pig. Male pigs are allowed to live longer than most pigs because it is used to mate with females to produce young.

A *sow* is a female pig and is used for breeding. It is gentler than a boar unless its young may be in danger.

The *piglet* is a baby hog from the time of its birth until it is eight weeks old. The piglet is weaned from the mother's milk at eight weeks.

A *shoat* is a weaned piglet and sometimes it is called a "weaner".

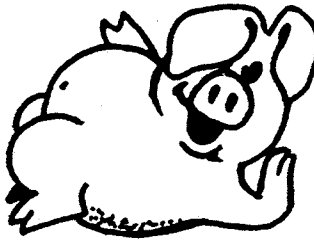
A female that hasn't had a litter is called a *gilt*.

A boar that has been desexed when it is a boar is called a *barrow*. Most young boars are neutered (desexed) because they are used for meat.

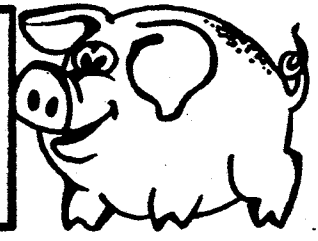
### ***Piglets***

A mother pig or sow usually has five litters of piglets a year. When a sow has young ones, she is said to be "*farrow*". Usually a sow will have six to ten piglets in each litter but some breeds have as many as twelve or more. A new breed of pig that is found in China may have up to thirty piglets.

At birth (called farrowing time), a piglet may weigh 1 Kg (2 1/2 pounds). A very small piglet is called a *runt*. When the piglets are born their eyes are open, unlike kittens or puppies. Only minutes after birth, they are romping around. As soon as they are born they claim one of the mother's teats. They nurse several



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times a day and consume about 9 litres of milk (8 quarts) in 24 hours.

Piglets are born housebroken and find the corner of the pen that is used for toileting. The mother pig uses the same corner. Pigs are naturally clean. Piglets are born with eight teeth called "needle" or "wolf teeth". There are two teeth on each side of the jaws and usually the farmer removes them so they won't hurt the mother during nursing or even hurt other piglets.

In eight to ten weeks, the piglets are weaned from the sow. They now eat regular food. The piglets begin to copy mother pig and root in the fields for grubs, snails, worms and plant roots. The piglets are now called *shoats* or *weaners*. The shoats are separated from the sow and placed in a nursery stall.

A pig may weigh 100 Kg (200 pounds) or more at six months and may be ready to send to the market. Pigs that are not used for meat reach their full growth in two years and may live to be twenty-five years.

The smallest adult pig may weigh in at 27 Kg (60 pounds) and a large male can weigh close to 350 Kg (800 pounds). Large pigs may be over 1 m (4 feet) at the shoulders and may be as long as 1.8 m (6 feet)

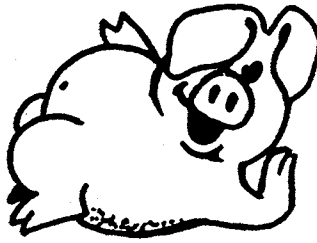
### ***Parts of a Pig***

Different breeds of pigs are found in many shapes and sizes. Their ears may droop or stand erect. Pigs' eyes are bright, clear and human-like. They often appraise humans with a bright, piercing gaze.

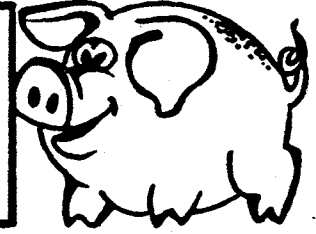
The body of a pig is rotund in shape with short, stubby legs. A pig's foot is called a hoof. On each foot are four even toes. The pig only walks on the middle toes. The outside toes are set higher and used only when the foot sinks into softer ground.

A pig's skin is thick and is often covered with coarse bristles. Pigs are found in various colors with different markings. A pig's tail is short and may be curly.

A pig walks with its head carried downward because it has a short, muscular neck. The pig's nose is long and mobile with tough reinforced cartilage. It is covered with sensitive pores and is an impressive digging tool and scenting organ.



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An adult pig has forty-four teeth. A pair of tusks is found between the front and rear teeth on both jaws. The tusks are longer in the lower jaw and well-developed in wild pigs.

Pigs cannot sweat through almost hairless skin and fat. High temperatures and direct sunlight can be fatal to an adult pig. A pig tries to wet its skin by wallowing. Pigs like clean wallows not mud holes, but in their instinct to survive, they will use sloppy mud holes or, if penned will wallow using their own excreta by rolling in their own mess. Pigs are dirty animals only when they are shut up in a pigsty or while seeking relief from the heat.

### ***Food For a Pig***

Hogs are excellent eaters and they will eat almost anything but they also know when to stop eating. Other animals such as horses will overeat and become sick. Hogs are trustworthy and are often let loose in fields to eat corn or other crops such as wheat, oats, barley and red clover. They eat selectively and make sure they get a well balanced diet.

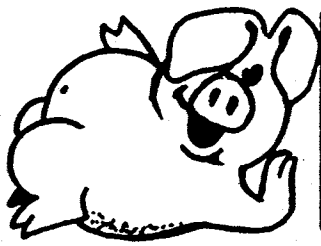
Hogs are not fed slop or swill that is sometimes shown in cartoons or on television. Garbage food is not nutritious and often causes disease. Farmers purchase commercially mixed hog foods which contain all the necessary nutrients to grow a healthy, meaty hog.

Pigs love to root. A pig sniffs out things to eat in the ground with its sensitive, powerful nose. Its nose is often used as a shovel to root up the food.

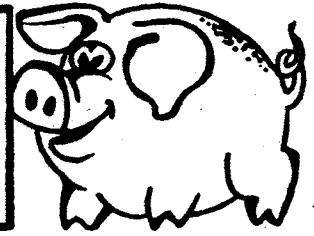
Pigs are omnivorous animals, meaning they eat meat and plants like humans. They enjoy eating snakes and worms and slurp them down like eating a piece of spaghetti. They will even eat poisonous snakes. The thick layer of fat stops the venom from reaching the bloodstream if they are ever bitten by a snake.

### ***Other Pig Facts***

- Columbus brought pigs to Haiti on his second voyage in 1493.
- Colonists brought pigs to Virginia in 1607.



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- Pigs symbolize greed, filth and an ally of Satan.
- Pigs are considered unclean animals.
- The flesh of pigs spoils easily in hot climates such as in the Middle east.
- Pigs have been honored as sacred creatures with gods and goddesses.
- Pigs grunt, cry and squeal.
- Pigs are mammals. They are warm-blooded animals with a backbone who nurse their young with milk made in their bodies.
- Pigs belong to the Ungulate family which means they are even toed.