

# Charlotte's Web

**Synopsis** *Charlotte's Web* is a story of a little girl, Fern, who raises Wilbur the pig, who is the runt of a litter. When Wilbur discovers that he will be killed to make ham and bacon, he becomes hysterical. Charlotte the spider saves Wilbur's life, and Wilbur saves the lives of Charlotte's children.

## Introduction: Explore Fiction

Explain that *Charlotte's Web* is a novel about true friendship. Say, *Although the message in the novel is very true, this is not realistic fiction because animals don't talk. Still the author was teaching his readers a realistic lesson about life when he wrote this book.*

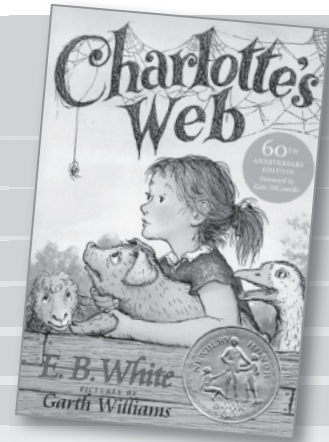
## Vocabulary

**Tier Two:** acute (148), adjourned (91), analysis (157), appalled (47), appetizing (123), astride (75), bestirred (75), blissful (7), complementary (158), commotion (18), compunctions (46), conspiracy (49), decency (46), dejected (30), delectable (61), desperation (167), detested (38), exertions (79), exterior (41), forlorn (171), frolic (29), garrulous (183), glutton (29), gratified (44), gullible (67), hankering (148), hysterics (51), inheritance (39), lacerated (125), lair (47), languishing (146), listless (136), meekly (161), mercilessly (103), miraculous (109), morsel (26), objectionable (35), oblige (57), particle (89), phenomenon (157), pummeled (125), salutations (35), schemer (140), scruples (46), sedentary (60), sensational (91), sentiments (165), specimen (5), vanished (10), stealthily (30), surly (74), thrashing (102), trifle (164), trill (62), unremitting (49), untenable (47), veritable (123), versatile (116)

**Tier Three:** biffed (125), gander (21), gosling (44), gyromatic (84), hullabaloo (22), manure (35), Navajo blanket (118), nectar (43), orb lines (92), radial lines (92), scythes (14), spang (80), spinnerets (56), truffles (61)

## Word Work

Introduce vocabulary in context as it appears within the book before or during reading. Ask students to read page 148 in *Charlotte's Web* and find the word *hankering*. Have a volunteer read the paragraph containing the word aloud. Ask, *With the information given in this paragraph, what do you suppose hankering means?* Follow the same procedure with *frolic* (p. 29), *salutations* (p. 35), *detested* (p. 38), *hysterics* (p. 51), and *gullible* (p. 67), asking students to read the page, find the word, determine its meaning, and share the context clues. You may want to have students look up each word in either a print dictionary or an online dictionary to clarify and confirm the meaning.



**Author:** E. B. White

**Genre:** Fiction

**Guided Reading Level:** R

## English Language Support

Offer realia, gestures, or photos to support the introduction of the new vocabulary. Provide photos or illustrations: *gander*, *gosling*, *Navajo blanket*, *orb lines*, *radial lines*, *scythes*, *spinnerets*, and *truffles*.

Point out that scientists have studied spider webs and have concluded that most spiders weave similar webs that have both orb lines and radial lines for strength. Explain to students that truffles are a kind of fungus that grows under the ground in the woods. They are often used in cooking and are considered a delicacy.

## Understanding the Text

**Literal:** *What is a runt? (the smallest animal in the litter) Why was Fern's father going to kill Wilbur? (He thought he would never bring much money when they sold him for slaughter.) Why did he not kill Wilbur? (Fern fought for the little pig and upset her father.)*

**Interpretive:** *Why did Templeton and Charlotte give in and go to the fair with Wilbur? Give reasons for your answers. (Each of them thought that the humans might do something to get Wilbur sold for bacon and ham, so Charlotte went along to continue to make Wilbur look good, and Templeton went along to spy for them.)*

**Applied:** *Did you ever have an experience like this, in which you thought of a person as mean or strange or scary at first, but later found out that he or she was very nice? Can you learn to like someone you originally disliked? How? Give reasons for your answers.*

## Phonics and Word Recognition

As students read, monitor their understanding of unfamiliar multisyllabic words. As needed, write these words on a whiteboard or chart paper, and guide students in breaking them into syllables. Use slashes to divide the words into syllables, and then model pronunciation. Have students echo your pronunciation.

## Fluency

Have students skim *Charlotte's Web* to find places in the text that demonstrate how Charlotte and Wilbur feel about each other when they first meet and how their feelings toward each other change as the story progresses. Ask volunteers to read aloud some of the sections that indicate how the friendship between Charlotte and Wilbur grew throughout the story to the end when Wilbur takes care of Charlotte's children as she took care of Wilbur and helped him. As students read aloud, monitor their reading to encourage them to read with expression.

## Reading Literature

Write the words *Major* and *Minor* on the board or chart paper. With the help of volunteers, list the names of the characters under the heading that best suits them. If students have difficulty discriminating between major and minor characters, ask the following questions: *Could the story have taken place without this character?* If the answer is "yes," that character is minor. Once the characters have been listed, talk about each one's role in the story. Begin with the major characters and talk with students about how their actions moved the story along to the end. With the minor characters, such as Lurvy, the lamb, or the gander, talk about how their actions added to, or dressed up, the story to make it more interesting.

## Writing

Have students create a Readers Theater script from a section of *Charlotte's Web* and perform it in class.