

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

One-Act Touring Version

Based upon the story

by

E.B. WHITE

Dramatized

by

JOSEPH ROBINETTE



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

***** NOTICE *****

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to:

DRAMATIC PUBLISHING
P. O. Box 129, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR HIS AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved. *On all programs this notice should appear:*

"Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois"

©MCMLXXXIX by
JOSEPH ROBINETTE

Based upon the book "Charlotte's Web" by
E.B. WHITE

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(CHARLOTTE'S WEB)

ISBN 0-87129-389-7

Th
CHA

It
City,

This is the authorized small-cast touring version of
CHARLOTTE'S WEB.

It was first produced by Lincoln Center, New York
City, under the direction of Carey Perloff, in July, 1984.

Suggested Role Distribution for a Cast of Six

1st ACTOR

Wilbur

4th ACTOR

Arable

Templeton

Lurvy

2nd ACTOR

Charlotte

Mrs. Arable (off-stage voice)

Baby Spider (off-stage voice)

5th ACTOR

Homer

Sheep

Spectator

Judge

Avery

3rd ACTOR

Fern

Goose

Spectator

Judge

6th ACTOR

Narrator

Gander

Reporter (Carter)

Uncle (the Pig)

President of the Fair

The above cast may be performed by 4 Men and 2 Women, 3 Men and 3 Women (if the Narrator is played by a woman), or 2 Men and 4 Women (if the Narrator and Wilbur are played by women).

The cast may be expanded to a larger number, in which case the roles would be redistributed.

NOTE: The above distribution allows all actors at least a minute-and-a-half, often longer, to make necessary costume/character changes.

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

A Play in One Act
For Six or More Actors, with Multiple Casting

CHARACTERS

FERN ARABLE a young girl
JOHN ARABLE her father
AVERY ARABLE her brother
HOMER ZUCKERMAN her uncle
LURVY a hired hand
WILBUR a pig
TEMPLETON a rat
CHARLOTTE a spider
GOOSE farm animal
GANDER farm animal
SHEEP farm animal

NARRATOR

EXTRAS

REPORTER (Mr. Carter), SPECTATORS,
JUDGES, PRESIDENT of the Fair,
SPIDER (off-stage voice), UNCLE (a pig),
MRS. ARABLE (off-stage voice)

TIME: The present

PLACE: The Arable Farm; the Zuckerman Barn;
the County Fair

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING about *Charlotte's Web* (small-cast touring)...

"We very much enjoyed producing this version of *Charlotte's Web*. Our students brought it to life in a matter of days. The narrators kept us properly advised of where we were in the plot."

Lori Willis, St. John's Church, Prince Frederick, Md.

"A great vehicle for young adult actors and wonderful for community outreach."

*Donna Burke,
Glenbard North High School, Carol Stream, Ill.*

"It was well received by all our audience. Perfect cast size and running length for a touring production. Also—very popular title. Great sell for school groups."

*Rob Adams,
Dark Horse Theatre Co., Orefield, Pa.*

"Wonderful script/show. This is the third time we have done this show and it has always been a success with our actors and audiences. Perfect length for elementary-aged school children, and the integrity of the story loses nothing."

*Lou Fazzini,
All the World's a Stage, Clinton Township, Mich.*

"*Charlotte's Web* is a charmingly effective play that touches children as it educates them on the truths of friendship and sacrifice."

*Andrew Reed,
Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre, Mars Hill, N.C.*

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING about *Charlotte's Web* (small-cast touring)...

"We very much enjoyed producing this version of *Charlotte's Web*. Our students brought it to life in a matter of days. The narrators kept us properly advised of where we were in the plot."

Lori Willis, St. John's Church, Prince Frederick, Md.

"A great vehicle for young adult actors and wonderful for community outreach."

Donna Burke,

Glenbard North High School, Carol Stream, Ill.

"It was well received by all our audience. Perfect cast size and running length for a touring production. Also—very popular title. Great sell for school groups."

Rob Adams,

Dark Horse Theatre Co., Orefield, Pa.

"Wonderful script/show. This is the third time we have done this show and it has always been a success with our actors and audiences. Perfect length for elementary-aged school children, and the integrity of the story loses nothing."

Lou Fazzini,

All the World's a Stage, Clinton Township, Mich.

"*Charlotte's Web* is a charmingly effective play that touches children as it educates them on the truths of friendship and sacrifice."

Andrew Reed,

Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre, Mars Hill, N.C.

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

SCENE: *An open space in a farmyard.*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *In darkness, the sounds of a farm just before daybreak are heard: crickets, hoot-owls, whippoorwills, etc. The sounds may be on tape or produced "live" offstage by the actors. The lights come up faintly as the NARRATOR enters.*

NARRATOR (to AUDIENCE). Shhh! Listen to the sounds of the morning. Very, very early morning. So early, in fact, the sun isn't even up yet. Listen to the crickets...the hoot-owls...a frog down by the pond...a dog up at the next farm... And today there's another sound. It tells that something exciting happened during the night. (*Squealing of young pigs is heard off.*) Some brand-new pigs were born.

(*WILBUR, a pig, enters in wide-eyed amazement.*)

NARRATOR. Here's one of them right now—exploring his new home. His name is—well, actually, he doesn't have a name yet. For the moment, he's still just a little pig. But as you'll see, he isn't just any ordinary pig.

WILBUR. Who am I? Where am I? I've never been here before. (*A beat.*) I've never been *anywhere* before. Everything seems so strange. But I like it...I think.

NARRATOR. The new pig has been born here at the Arables' farm. Before long, we'll meet the Arables. We'll also meet the others—the people *and* the animals—who will play an important part in the little pig's life. (*A beat.*) Now, where should we start? Wait a minute. We've already started. It's early morning. We're at the Arables' farm. Some pigs were born during the night. And the sun is just beginning to come up. For now, that's all you need to know.

(The NARRATOR exits as the lights come up full. A rooster crows. Delighted, WILBUR looks off in the direction of the sound. He excitedly explores his new environment until he hears offstage voices. NOTE: FERN and MRS. ARABLE may appear, if desired, with the 2nd ACTOR playing MRS. ARABLE.)

FERN's VOICE (*off*). Where's Papa going with that ax?

MRS. ARABLE's VOICE (*off*). Out to the hoghouse.

Some pigs were born last night.

FERN's VOICE. I don't see why he needs an ax.

MRS. ARABLE's VOICE. Well, one of the pigs is a runt.

It's very small and weak. (*WILBUR looks about in alarm, then points to himself and mouths the word "me?"*) So your father has decided to do away with it. (*WILBUR runs to downstage corner in fear.*)

FERN's VOICE. I've got to stop him.

(FERN, a young girl, enters hurriedly.)

FERN. Papa can't kill it just because it's smaller than the others.

(FERN sees WILBUR. She looks at him lovingly for a moment, then starts toward him. JOHN ARABLE, Fern's father, enters from another direction carrying an ax.)

FERN (*shielding WILBUR who cringes behind her*). Papa, please don't kill it. It's unfair. (*WILBUR nods vigorously.*)

ARABLE. Fern, I know more about raising a litter of pigs than you do. A weakling makes trouble. Now run along!

FERN. But it's unfair. The pig couldn't help being born small, could it? (*WILBUR shakes his head.*) This is the most terrible case of injustice I ever heard of. (*WILBUR nods. FERN and WILBUR fold their hands pleadingly.*)

ARABLE (*after a pause*). Oh... All right. I'll let you take care of it for a little while. (*WILBUR collapses in relief.*)

FERN (*hugging ARABLE*). Thank you, Papa. (*She runs to WILBUR and pets him.*)

ARABLE (*or MRS. ARABLE, if she is onstage*). You can start him on a bottle, like a baby.

(AVERY, Fern's older brother, enters carrying an air rifle in one hand and a wooden dagger in the other.)

AVERY. What's going on? What's Fern doing over there?

ARABLE. Your sister has a guest for breakfast, Avery. In fact, for a little while, she's going to be raising that pig.

AVERY (*taking a closer look at WILBUR*). You call that miserable thing a pig? (*WILBUR turns his nose up at*

the remark.) He's nothing but a runt. (*WILBUR tries to draw himself up in a "he-man" pose, but is not very successful. AVERY laughs.*)

ARABLE. Come in the house and eat your breakfast, Avery. The school bus will be along in half-an-hour. (*He and AVERY exit, as well as MRS. ARABLE if she is onstage.*)

FERN. My very own pig. (*WILBUR smiles.*) Now, I have to name you. A perfect name for a perfect pig. (*She thinks for a moment.*) Fred. That's a good name...but not for you. Clarence...no, you don't look like a Clarence...Maximillion. Because you're worth a million to me... (*A pause. They BOTH laugh and shake their heads.*) Maybe I'm trying too hard. Let's see... Barney, Herman, Newton, Warren, Willie, Wilbur, William—(*WILBUR nudges her.*) Wait a minute. Wilbur. (*WILBUR nods. Trying it out.*) Willl-bur. (*WILBUR smiles and nods vigorously.*) Wilbur. What a beautiful name!

MRS. ARABLE'S VOICE (*off*). Breakfast, Fern!

FERN. I'm coming! I mean *we're* coming. Fern and Wilbur!

(*FERN takes Wilbur's hand, and they exit. The NARRATOR enters.*)

NARRATOR. Fern loved Wilbur more than anything. Every morning as soon as she got up, she warmed his milk, tied his bib on and warmed his bottle for him.

(*WILBUR enters wearing a bib and sucking a bottle.*)

NARRATOR. Everyday was a happy day for Wilbur. He was very contented living with Fern and the Arable family.

WILBUR. I love it here.

NARRATOR. No longer was Wilbur a runt. (*WILBUR pulls himself up.*) He was growing each day. (*Somewhat cockily, he strikes a pose.*) In fact, he was becoming quite a specimen of a pig.

WILBUR (*flexing his muscle*). I chalk it up to good, clean living.

ARABLE'S VOICE (*off*). Supper time, Wilbur.

WILBUR. And to good fattening food.

(*ARABLE enters carrying a bucket.*)

ARABLE. Okay, pig, it's time you graduated from a bottle to slops. Skim milk, potato skins, leftover sandwiches and marmalade drippings. (*WILBUR repeats each item after ARABLE with growing enthusiasm. He faintly swoons as ARABLE hands him the bucket, takes the bottle, removes the bib and exits. WILBUR quickly "drinks" from the bucket, stopping occasionally to "chew."*)

NARRATOR. Before long Wilbur was five weeks old.

WILBUR. I'd say it's about time for a birthday party.

NARRATOR. He was big.

WILBUR. Now let them call me a runt.

NARRATOR. And strong.

WILBUR. Anyone for arm-wrestling?

NARRATOR. And healthy.

WILBUR. Check out the pink in these cheeks.

NARRATOR. And he was ready to be sold.

WILBUR. For a pretty fair price, I'm willing to—*(A beat, then with panic.)* Sold!? Oh, no! *(The NARRATOR exits as WILBUR drops his bucket and collapses.)*

FERN's VOICE *(off)*. No, Papa, you can't sell him. You just can't.

(ARABLE enters, followed by FERN.)

ARABLE. He's eating too much. I can't provide for him any longer. I've already sold Wilbur's ten brothers and sisters. *(FERN runs to the trembling WILBUR. She sobs and embraces him.)*

FERN. Oh, Wilbur. Wilbur!

ARABLE *(after a beat)*. Oh, all right. Maybe we can call the Zuckermans. Your Uncle Homer sometimes raises pigs. And if Wilbur goes there to live, you can walk down the road and visit him anytime you like.

FERN. Oh, thank you, Papa. Thank you.

ARABLE. Come along. We'll call Uncle Homer. *(He picks up the bucket. FERN and WILBUR embrace in a great relief, then shake hands.)*

FERN. Can Wilbur come, too?

ARABLE. Why not? Maybe we'll let him make the call himself. *(He laughs as they start to leave.)*

FERN. It's not funny. He can talk, you know.

ARABLE. Oh, Fern. What an imagination!

(They exit. The scene changes to the Zuckerman barn. HOMER ZUCKERMAN enters carrying a trough and an armload of straw which he sets down.)

HOMER *(looking about)*. Dirt, spider webs. That pig oughtta feel right at home in this barn. *(Hammering is*

heard offstage. HOMER calls off.) Patch that fence up real good Lurvy. We don't want the pig to get out of the barnyard! I'd better slide this door back so he can't get in there where the cows are either. *(He slides a sizable door at R across an opening. A large spider web is revealed behind the door as it is moved.)* I still can't believe we're going to have a new pig around here. But Fern seemed so desperate to find a home for it, I just couldn't say no. Anyway, it won't be long till that pig's big enough to kill and eat.

FERN's VOICE *(off)*. Uncle Homer! Are you in there?
HOMER. Here they are. Come on in, Fern.

(FERN and WILBUR enter.)

FERN. Hi, Uncle Homer. I'd like you to meet Wilbur.

HOMER. Oh, he has a name, does he? *(He laughs.)* Well, here's your new home, pig, uh, Wilbur. Hope you like it. Fern, your Aunt Edith just opened a big can of peaches. Let's go in and have a dish.

FERN. Okay. Thanks. But let me stay with Wilbur just for a minute...till he gets used to his surroundings.

HOMER. Sure thing. *(He laughs and exits. For a moment FERN and WILBUR look about.)*

FERN. It's very nice here, Wilbur. *(He smiles.)* And I can come down and visit you almost everyday. *(He nods.)* Now I'd better go. I'll see you tomorrow. *(They wave to each other as FERN exits.)*

WILBUR *(after a beat)*. I know I'm going to miss living with the Arables, but this place doesn't seem too bad. It's a very large barn. And old, I'll bet. I like the smell. Hay and manure. Horses and cows. It has a peaceful smell...as though nothing bad could happen ever again

in the world. *(A beat.)* Fern was right. It is very nice here.

(WILBUR yawns, lies down and closes his eyes. A moment later, TEMPLETON, a rat, enters and regards the dozing WILBUR suspiciously.)

TEMPLETON *(out of Wilbur's earshot)*. So, this is our new resident. That's right. Relax and enjoy yourself—while you can. Oh, yes. They'll treat you very well. And fatten you up very nicely. Then suddenly one day you wake up and—*(He makes a slitting sign across his neck with his finger.)*—it's all over. Oh well, I will admit it's nice to have a pig around the place again. That means leftover slops for me. I'm sure you'll find it in your charitable little heart to share your food with dear old Templeton.

(TEMPLETON chuckles with a sneer, then creeps away as he hears the GOOSE and the GANDER entering. They circle WILBUR, studying him carefully.)

GOOSE. Hello, hello, hello.

WILBUR *(a bit startled)*. Who...who are you?

GOOSE. The Goose.

WILBUR. Oh. Hi, Goose.

GOOSE. And this is my friend, the Gander, Gander, Gander.

WILBUR. But I only see one Gander. You introduced me to three.

GOOSE. No, no, no.

GANDER. We tend to repeat, repeat, repeat ourselves.

GOOSE. Do you have a name...besides "pig"?

WILBUR. Yes. They call me Wilbur.

TEMPLETON's VOICE *(off)*. Wilbur? That's a pretty tacky name, if you ask me.

GOOSE. Well, nobody, nobody, nobody asked you.

WILBUR. Who was that?

GANDER. Templeton, the rat.

(TEMPLETON enters.)

TEMPLETON. In person.

SHEEP's VOICE *(off)*. What's all the commotion in here?

GOOSE. It's the old, old sheep.

(The SHEEP enters.)

GANDER. We have a new resident.

GOOSE. His name is Wilbur.

SHEEP. Oh, yeah. I overheard the Zuckermans discussing him.

WILBUR *(pleased)*. Discussing me?

SHEEP. They plan to keep you nice and comfortable.

And fatten you up with delicious slops.

WILBUR. Oh, I *am* going to like it here.

SHEEP. Just the same, we don't envy you. You know why they want to make you fat and tender, don't you?

WILBUR. No, I don't.

GOOSE. Now, now, now old sheep. He'll learn soon enough.

WILBUR. Learn what? *(A beat.)*

SHEEP. Oh, nothing. Nothing at all. Nice to meet you...
Wilbur. *(He exits.)*

WILBUR *(a bit concerned)*. My pleasure, I'm sure.

GOOSE. Well, I have eggs to hatch. *(She exits.)*
 TEMPLETON. And I have trash piles to raid. *(He exits.)*
 GANDER. Good—good—good night, Wilbur. Better get some rest after such a long day. *(He exits.)*
 WILBUR. Yes, thank you, I will. The animals seem nice ...I think. But I'm not so sure about Templeton. *(Another beat.)* And I'm a trifle concerned about the old sheep's remark. *(Slightly imitating Sheep's voice.)* "You know why they want to make you fat and tender, don't you?"... Well, I'm not going to worry about it just now. I'm much too tired.

(WILBUR yawns, lies down and closes his eyes. As the lights slowly dim, CHARLOTTE, a spider, comes out from behind the web. She carefully creeps over to WILBUR and smiles. NOTE: If desired, CHARLOTTE may remain offstage during the following speech. If so, only her voice is heard.)

CHARLOTTE *(quietly)*. Go to sleep, Wilbur. Go to sleep little pig.

(CHARLOTTE crosses back U and disappears behind the web. The lights are low. WILBUR is sleeping. The NARRATOR enters, and noises of thunder, lightning and rain are heard. The lights come up slowly as WILBUR stirs.)

WILBUR. Oh, no. Morning already. And it's raining. In my dreams I had made such grand plans for today.

Let's see.

NARRATOR. Six-thirty.

WILBUR. Breakfast.

NARRATOR. Seven o'clock.

WILBUR. A nap indoors.

NARRATOR. Eight o'clock.

WILBUR. A nap outdoors.

NARRATOR. Nine o'clock.

WILBUR. Dig a hole.

NARRATOR. Ten o'clock.

WILBUR. Fill up the hole.

NARRATOR. Eleven o'clock.

WILBUR. Just stand still and enjoy life.

NARRATOR. Twelve noon.

WILBUR. Lunch.

NARRATOR. One o'clock.

WILBUR. Sleep.

NARRATOR. Two o'clock.

WILBUR. Scratch itchy places against the fence.

NARRATOR. Three o'clock.

WILBUR. A visit from Fern.

NARRATOR. Four o'clock.

WILBUR. Supper.

NARRATOR. And four-thirty on—

WILBUR. Free time! *(A pause.)* I get everything all beautifully planned out, and it has to go and rain.

(After a final outburst of thunder and lightning, the NARRATOR exits.) I'm lonesome. And I know Fern won't come in such bad weather. Oh, *honestly*. I'm less than two months old and already I'm tired of living.

(LURVY enters carrying a bucket. He wears a raincoat and hat.)

LURVY. Morning, pig. My name's Lurvy. I'm Mr. Zuckerman's helper. I'm the one that feeds you. Time for

breakfast now. Skim milk, bits of doughnuts, wheat-cakes with maple syrup and custard pudding with raisins. *(He "pours" the slops into the trough.)* Yes sir, a meal fit for a pig! *(WILBUR sniffs it, then turns away.)* What's wrong with you? *(A beat.)* We must have a sick pig here. *(Calling off.)* Mr. Zuckerman! Come out to the barn. *(He exits.)*

WILBUR. It does look delicious. But I don't want food. I want love. I want a friend. Someone who will play with me.

CHARLOTTE's VOICE *(off)*. Do you want a friend, Wilbur? I'll be a friend to you. I watched you all night and I like you.

WILBUR. Where are you? And *who* are you?

HOMER's VOICE *(off)*. I think this will do the trick, Lurvy.

(HOMER, carrying a bottle and a spoon, and LURVY enter.)

HOMER. Now he won't like this medicine, so you hold him and I'll feed it to him. *(LURVY grabs WILBUR who protests.)* Come on, boy. This is sulphur and molasses. It'll cure what ails you.

LURVY. Okay, dose him up, Mr. Zuckerman. *(HOMER gives WILBUR, who gags, a spoonful of medicine.)*

HOMER. There, that wasn't so bad, was it? *(WILBUR makes a face and nods vigorously.)* I think I'll give you a second dose just for good measure. *(He forces another spoonful down WILBUR who gags again.)* Good work, Lurvy. That pig will be well in no time. *(He and LURVY exit. WILBUR catches his breath and clears his throat.)*

WILBUR. Attention, please! Will the party who just spoke to me make himself or herself known. *(A pause.)* Please tell me where you are if you are my friend.

(CHARLOTTE enters.)

CHARLOTTE. Salutations.

WILBUR *(excitedly)*. Oh, hello. What are salutations?

CHARLOTTE. It's a fancy way of saying "hello."

WILBUR. Oh. And salutations to you, too. Very pleased to meet you. What is your name, please? May I have your name?

CHARLOTTE. My name is Charlotte.

WILBUR. Charlotte what?

CHARLOTTE. Charlotte A. Cavatica. I'm a spider.

WILBUR. I think you're beautiful.

CHARLOTTE. Thank you.

WILBUR. And your web is beautiful, too.

CHARLOTTE. It's my home. I know it looks fragile. But it's really very strong. It protects me. And I trap my food in it.

WILBUR. I'm so happy you'll be my friend. In fact, it restores my appetite. *(He begins to eat from the trough.)* Will you join me?

CHARLOTTE. No, thank you. My breakfast is waiting for me on the other side of my web.

WILBUR. Oh. What are you having?

CHARLOTTE. A fly. I caught it this morning.

WILBUR *(choking)*. You eat...flies?

CHARLOTTE. And bugs. Actually, I drink their blood.

WILBUR. Ugh!

CHARLOTTE. That's the way I'm made. I can't help it. Anyway, if I didn't catch insects and eat them, there

It would soon be so many they'd destroy the earth, wipe out everything.

WILBUR. Really? I wouldn't want *that* to happen. Perhaps your web is a good thing after all.

CHARLOTTE. Now, if you'll excuse me. I'm going to have my breakfast. *(She exits behind the web.)*

WILBUR *(with uncertainty)*. Well, I've got a new friend, all right. But Charlotte is...brutal, I think. And blood-thirsty. How can I learn to like her, even though she is pretty — and very clever, it seems.

(WILBUR glances back at the web, then slowly lies down. The NARRATOR enters.)

NARRATOR. Wilbur was suffering the doubts and fears that often go with finding a new friend. But as the days passed by, he slowly discovered that Charlotte had a kind heart and that she was loyal and true. *(A beat.)* Spring soon became summer. The early summer days on a farm are the happiest and fairest of the year. Lilacs and apple blossoms bloom. The days grow warm and soft. And now that school was over, Fern could visit the barn almost everyday.

(The NARRATOR exits as FERN enters. The SHEEP, TEMPLETON and CHARLOTTE enter and greet her with animal sounds which soon give way to clear voices.)

FERN. Hi, everybody! *(She sits on a stool.)* Wilbur, here's a little piece of pineapple-upside-down cake for you. *(He applauds, takes it and begins to eat.)*

CHARLOTTE *(on a perch near the web, looking off)*. Attention, everyone. I have an announcement. After four

weeks of unremitting effort on the part of our friend, the Goose, the goslings have arrived. *(ALL applaud as the goslings chirp offstage.)* We're very happy for the mother. And the father is to be congratulated, too.

GANDER'S VOICE *(off)*. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We're as pleased as can be, be, be.

WILBUR. What a wonderful day. Brand new goslings and pineapple-upside-down cake.

TEMPLETON. By the way, Wilbur, I overheard the Zuckermans talking about all the weight you're putting on. They're very happy.

WILBUR. Good.

SHEEP. You know why they're happy, don't you?

WILBUR. You asked me that once before, but you didn't tell me why.

CHARLOTTE. Now, now old sheep.

SHEEP. He has to know sometime.

WILBUR. Know what?

SHEEP. Wilbur, I don't like to spread bad news. But they're fattening you up because they're going to kill you.

WILBUR *(dismayed)*. They're going to *what*? *(FERN is rigid on her stool.)*

SHEEP. Kill you. Turn you into smoked bacon and ham. It'll happen when the weather turns cold. It's a regular conspiracy.

WILBUR. Stop! I don't want to die. I want to stay with all my friends. I want to breathe the beautiful air and lie in the beautiful sun.

SHEEP. You're certainly making a beautiful noise. If you don't mind, I think I'll go outside where it's quieter. *(He exits.)*

WILBUR. But I don't want to die.

CHARLOTTE. Wilbur, quiet down. (*A beat as WILBUR tries to control himself.*) You shall not die.

WILBUR. What? Who's going to save me?

CHARLOTTE. I am.

WILBUR. How?

CHARLOTTE. That remains to be seen.

(*The GANDER enters.*)

GANDER. Excuse me, excuse me, excuse me. But all this noise is keeping the goslings awake.

CHARLOTTE. We'll try to keep it down. By the way, how many goslings are there?

GANDER. Seven.

TEMPLETON. I thought there were eight eggs. What happened to the other egg?

GANDER. It didn't hatch. It was a dud, I guess.

TEMPLETON. Can I have it?

GANDER. Certainly, -ertainly, -ertainly. Add it to your nasty collection. (*TEMPLETON exits.*) Imagine wanting a junky, -unky, -unky old rotten egg.

CHARLOTTE (*laughing lightly*). A rat is a rat. But, my friends, let's hope that egg never breaks. A rotten egg is a regular stink bomb.

(*TEMPLETON enters with the egg.*)

TEMPLETON. Don't worry. I won't break it. I handle stuff like this all the time.

AVERY's VOICE (*off*). Fern!

FERN. In here, Avery.

(*TEMPLETON sets the egg down by the trough and exits hurriedly. AVERY enters.*)

AVERY. Mother sent me to get you. You're going to miss supper.

FERN. Coming. Bye, everybody. And thank you, Charlotte, for whatever it is you're going to do to save Wilbur.

AVERY. Who's Charlotte?

FERN. The spider over there.

AVERY. It's tremenjus! (*He picks up a stick.*)

FERN. Leave it alone.

AVERY. That's a fine spider, and I'm going to capture it. (*He advances toward CHARLOTTE.*)

FERN. You stop it, Avery.

AVERY. I want that spider. (*FERN grabs the stick, and they fight over it.*) Let go of my stick, Fern!

FERN. Stop it! Stop it, I say! (*WILBUR waves to FERN that he has an idea. He rushes behind AVERY and kneels, then makes a "pushing" motion with his hands. FERN pushes AVERY over WILBUR, and AVERY falls into the trough. The GANDER exits.*)

AVERY. Help!

FERN. I warned you, Avery.

AVERY. That's not fair. You and Wilbur ganged up on me.

FERN (*wrinkling her nose*). What's that smell?

AVERY. I think we broke a rotten egg. Good night, what a stink! Let's get out of here.

(*AVERY and FERN quickly exit. TEMPLETON emerges from his hiding place.*)

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

TEMPLETON. My beloved egg. *(He gathers the pieces and exits crying.)*

CHARLOTTE. I'm glad that's over. I hope the smell will go away soon. *(A pause.)*

WILBUR. Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. Yes.

WILBUR. Were you serious when you promised you would keep them from killing me?

CHARLOTTE. I've never been more serious in my life.

WILBUR. How are you going to save me?

CHARLOTTE. Well, I really don't know. But I want you to get plenty of sleep and stop worrying. And I want you in bed without delay. *(WILBUR stretches out on the straw as the lights begin to dim.)*

WILBUR. Okay. Good night, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE. Good night, Wilbur. *(A pause.)*

WILBUR. Thank you, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE. Good night. *(The barn is now in shadows. WILBUR falls asleep.)* What to do. What to do. I promised to save his life, and I am determined to keep that promise. But how? *(A pause.)* Wait a minute. The way to save Wilbur is to play a trick on Zuckerman. If I can fool a bug, I can surely fool a man. People are not as smart as bugs. *(A beat.)* Of course. That's it. This will not be easy, but it must be done. *(She turns her back to the AUDIENCE.)* First, I tear a section out of the web and leave an open space in the middle. Now, I shall weave new threads to take the place of the ones I removed. *(She chants slightly.)*

Swing spinnerets.

Let out the thread.

The longer it gets,

The better it's read.

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

(She begins to "write" with elaborate movements, though her actions are deliberately indistinguishable.)

CHARLOTTE. Attach girl. Attach. Payout line. Descend. Complete the curve. Easy now. That's it. Back up. Take your time. Now tie it off. Good. *(She chants.)*

The message is spun.

I've come to the end.

The job that I've done,

Is all for my friend.

(She steps aside as a special light reveals the words "SOME PIG" written in the web. NOTE: The center part of the web may be affixed with velcro to the rest of the web. It can then be pulled off and discreetly discarded by CHARLOTTE. Underneath would be the now-exposed writing which is similarly velcroed over the next writing, and so on. Reading aloud.)

CHARLOTTE. "Some Pig." *(She smiles.)* Not bad, old girl, for the first time around. But it was quite exhausting. I'd better catch a little nap before daybreak.

(She exits behind the web. The lights begin to brighten as a rooster crows. WILBUR begins to stir. He is having a bad dream.)

WILBUR. No, no. Please don't. Stop! *(He wakes up.)* Oh, my goodness. That was a terrible dream. There were men with guns and knives coming out here to take me away.

(LURVY enters carrying a bucket. WILBUR retreats slightly.)

LURVY. Here you go, pig. Breakfast. Lots of good leftovers today. (He sets down the bucket.) Absolutely de—de—(He sees the writing in the web.) What's that? I'm seeing things. (Calling off.) Mr. Zuckerman! Mr. Zuckerman! I think you'd better come out to the pigpen quick! (He exits hurriedly.)

WILBUR (unaware of the writing in the web). What did he see? There's nothing here but me. (He feels himself.) That's it. He saw me! He saw that I'm big and healthy and—and ready to be made into...ham. They're coming out here right now with guns and knives. I just know it. What can I do! (A beat.) Wait! The fence that Lurvy patched up. Maybe it's loose again. I have to get out. I have no choice. It's either freedom...or the frying pan. (He starts to rush off.) Chaaaarrge! (He exits running. A crash is heard off.)

(CHARLOTTE enters, yawning.)

CHARLOTTE. What was that? Wilbur, where are you?

WILBUR'S VOICE (off). I'm free.

HOMER'S VOICE (off). Now, Lurvy, what could be so important that you had to drag me out here before I've finished—

LURVY'S VOICE (off). You'll see, Mr. Zuckerman. You'll see.

(LURVY and HOMER enter.)

HOMER. All I can see is—the pig's not here!

LURVY. What?

HOMER. Look out there in the chicken yard. (He points off.) He's escaped. Let's go!

LURVY. But...look at the spider web, Mr. Zuckerman.

HOMER. No time right now. Gotta catch that pig. (They exit.)

HOMER'S VOICE (off). Head him into the corner, Lurvy. Run him back this way!

CHARLOTTE. Oh, no.

(The GOOSE and GANDER enter.)

GANDER. What-what-what's all the fuss?

GOOSE. There's so much noise, noise, noise—

GANDER. The goslings can't sleep.

(Offstage noises are heard. WILBUR enters being chased by HOMER and LURVY.)

GOOSE and GANDER (cheering WILBUR). Go, go, go, Wilbur! Don't let them catch you! Run, run, run! (Etc. WILBUR does a U-turn and exits again, eluding his chasers who also exit. The chase is heard off.)

CHARLOTTE. Now stop this! Don't encourage him. If Wilbur does escape, he'll never stand a chance in the outside world. So, if he runs through here again, we've got to stop him. (The chase is heard coming closer.) Get set! Here he comes.

(WILBUR enters, running.)

WILBUR. I'll make it this time! I saw an open gate that leads to the woods. Thank you, everybody, for all

your—(The GOOSE and GANDER tackle him and hold him down.) What is this? Even my friends have turned against me! (HOMER and LURVY are heard off. WILBUR squirms as he is held down.) I'll not go down without a fight! I'll struggle all the way to the butcher block! I won't be bacon for anybody!

(HOMER and LURVY enter breathlessly. The GOOSE and GANDER quickly let go of WILBUR whose bravado quickly disappears as he cowers.)

HOMER. Well, you certainly gave us a run for our—
LURVY. Mr. Zuckerman. Mr. Zuckerman. Look! This is what I wanted to show you. (He points to the web. They ALL stare at it for a moment. WILBUR, the GOOSE and GANDER see it, too.)

HOMER (amazed). A miracle has happened on this farm.

LURVY. A miracle.

HOMER. "SOME PIG." I don't believe it. (WILBUR begins to regain his confidence.) You'd better hurry and take care of the chores, Lurvy.

LURVY. Sure thing, Mr. Zuckerman. (He exits.)

HOMER. I'm sure we'll have lots of visitors today when word of this leaks out. I've got to call the minister right away and tell him about this miracle. Then I'll call the Arables. But first, I've got to tell Edith. She'll never believe this. Edith! Edith! (He exits. WILBUR, the GOOSE and GANDER applaud and congratulate CHARLOTTE.)

WILBUR (himself again). Oh, Charlotte. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

CHARLOTTE. It seems to have worked. At least for the present. But if we are to save Wilbur's life, I will have to write more words in the web. And I need new ideas. Any suggestions?

GANDER. How, how, how about "PIG SUPREME"?

CHARLOTTE. No good. It sounds like a rich dessert.

GOOSE. How about "terrific, terrific, terrific"?

CHARLOTTE. Cut that down to one terrific and it will do very nicely. I think it might impress Zuckerman. How do you spell "terrific"?

GANDER. I think it's tee, double ee, double rr, double eye, double ff, double eye, double see, see, see, see, see.

CHARLOTTE. What kind of acrobat do you think I am?

GANDER. Sorry, sorry, sorry.

CHARLOTTE. I'll spell the word the best way I can. (The goslings are heard chirping off.)

GANDER. The goslings are hungry. I have to go find some worms, worms, worms to feed them. (He exits.)

GOOSE. He's such a good provider. (She exits.)

CHARLOTTE. Wilbur, if I am to save your life, I will need even more words. Maybe Templeton can help. Where is he?

WILBUR. Probably sleeping next door. (Calling out.) Templeton are you asleep in there?

TEMPLETON'S VOICE (off). How can anybody sleep with all this racket?

(NOTE: TEMPLETON may appear if the actor has time to make the necessary costume/character changes.)

WILBUR. Did you see the message in the web?

TEMPLETON's VOICE. It was there when I went out this morning. It's no big deal.

CHARLOTTE. It was a big deal to Zuckerman. Now I need new ideas. When you go to the dump, bring back a clipping from a magazine. It will help save Wilbur's life.

TEMPLETON's VOICE. Let him die. I should worry?

SHEEP. You'll worry next winter when Wilbur is dead and nobody comes down here with a nice pail of slops.

TEMPLETON's VOICE (*after a beat*). I'll bring back a magazine clipping.

CHARLOTTE. Thank you. (*A beat.*) Tonight, I will tear my web apart and write "Terrific." Now go out into the yard and lie in the sun, Wilbur. I need a little rest. I was up all night.

WILBUR (*leaving*). Thank you, Charlotte. You're the best friend a pig ever had. (*He exits.*)

CHARLOTTE (*smiling to herself*). Some pig. *Some pig.*

(*CHARLOTTE lies down for a nap as the lights fade. The NARRATOR enters.*)

NARRATOR. As the day went on, the news about the words in Charlotte's web began to spread throughout the county. People came from miles around to see the words on the web. News of the wonderful pig spread clear up into the hills where the farmers talked about the miraculous animal on Zuckerman's farm. Charlotte knew there would be even more visitors the next day. So that night, while the other creatures slept, she began to work on her web.

CHARLOTTE (*rises and begins to work*).

Swing spinnerets.

Let out the thread.

The longer it gets.

The better it's read.

(*She begins to "write."*)

NARRATOR. Spinning and weaving, she began to form the new letters. Again, she talked to herself as though to cheer herself on.

CHARLOTTE. Descend. Payout line. Whoa, girl. Steady. Now for the R.

NARRATOR. On through the night the spider worked at her difficult task. It was nearly morning when she finished.

CHARLOTTE.

The message is spun.

I've come to the end.

The job that I've done.

Is all for my friend.

NARRATOR. She then ate a small bug she was saving. (*CHARLOTTE mimes eating a bug.*) After that, she crawled behind the web and fell asleep.

(*CHARLOTTE exits behind the web as the NARRATOR exits. A light comes up on the web to reveal the word "TERRIFIC." A moment later, WILBUR enters yawning.*)

WILBUR. I can't believe I spent the entire day *and* night outside sleeping. Oh, well. It's very refreshing. Especially in the summer.

(LURVY enters with a bucket.)

LURVY. I'm afraid to look. I know it can't happen again. (He looks at the web.) But it did! "TERRIFIC." Another miracle! Mr. Zuckerman! Come quick. It's another miracle. (He exits.)

WILBUR (looking at the web). It's beautiful.

(FERN enters.)

FERN. Good morning, Wilbur. (He motions toward the web.) "TERRIFIC." Hooray for Charlotte! She did it again! (WILBUR shushes her.) Oh, she's still sleeping. It must have been a long night for her. (WILBUR nods.)

HOMER's VOICE (off). Edith, phone the reporter on the Weekly Chronicle and tell him what happened!

(HOMER enters, followed by LURVY.)

HOMER (looking at the web). Well, what do you know. There it is as plain as day. "TERRIFIC." What do you know!

LURVY (pointing to the web). Another miracle!

HOMER. We're going to have visitors all over the place today.

LURVY. I don't know where we'll put them. Yesterday, the driveway was practically full of cars and trucks.

HOMER. We can park the vehicles in the open field. John Arable said he and Avery will direct traffic.

LURVY. I'll go make up a couple of parking signs.

HOMER. Good idea, Lurvy. (LURVY exits.)

FERN. Does this mean you're not going to kill Wilbur, Uncle Homer?

HOMER. Wilbur's safe for now. As long as he's attracting all this attention. Anyway, who said anything about killing him?

FERN. But that's what happens to pigs. In the cold weather. The old sheep said—Uh, never mind.

HOMER. Fern, honey, your mother and daddy think you spend a little too much time with these animals. Maybe you should play with children your own age. Like Tommy Watson or Henry Fussy.

FERN. Tommy Watson? Ugh! Henry Fussy? Yuk!

HOMER. Well, it was just a thought. Let's go help your Aunt Edith. She'll be doing lots of baking for the visitors today.

FERN. Okay, Uncle Homer. 'Bye, Wilbur. See you later.

(FERN and HOMER exit. A moment later, CHARLOTTE enters, stretching and yawning.)

WILBUR. Oh, Charlotte. They're so excited about the new word. And they're expecting more visitors today.

CHARLOTTE. That's wonderful. But we still have to worry about the future. Your life is not secure yet.

WILBUR. I know. But I can face anything with a friend like you. Friendship is one of the most satisfying things in the world.

(TEMPLETON enters holding the lid of a soap flakes box.)

TEMPLETON. You'd better believe it, buster. And you'd better not forget the friendship of old Templeton who

just happened to be at the dump all night looking for words to save you.

(HOMER enters carrying a bucket. TEMPLETON ducks out of sight.)

HOMER. Sorry, pig. Lurvy got so excited he forgot to leave your breakfast this morning. *(He pours the food into the trough as WILBUR begins to eat.)* Mrs. Zucker-man threw in a whole fresh piece of apple strudel she's baking for the visitors. That's what you get for being a terrific pig. And I'll let you in on a little secret. If all this excitement continues, I might even think about taking you to the County Fair.

(He exits. TEMPLETON comes out of hiding.)

WILBUR. Did you hear that? The County Fair. That means I would get to live for at least another month.

CHARLOTTE. And maybe longer if you win a blue ribbon.

(The GOOSE enters and sees the web.)

GOOSE. Look, look, look at that! "Terrific." My word, I do believe that was my word.

CHARLOTTE. Indeed it was.

WILBUR. Charlotte, will you go to the Fair with me?

CHARLOTTE. I don't know. The Fair comes at a bad time for me. That's when I'll be making my egg sac and filling it with eggs. But right now I have to think about writing new words. What did you bring, Templeton?

TEMPLETON. It's from an empty package of soap flakes. And I'm not going back for any more. *(He hands her the box lid.)*

CHARLOTTE *(reading it)*. "With new radiant action." *(WILBUR and the GOOSE repeat the words approvingly.)* Wilbur, let's see if you're radiant. *(He responds to each command.)* Run about...jump into the air...roll over...and do a split. *(The OTHERS applaud.)* It may not be radiant, but it's interesting.

WILBUR. I feel radiant. I really do.

CHARLOTTE. Then radiant you shall be. *(WILBUR and the GOOSE cheer.)* I'd better start writing at once.

WILBUR. Poor Charlotte. This is so much work for you.

CHARLOTTE. I don't mind. You're a good little pig, Wilbur, and you deserve to live. Now, everybody stand in front of me, so the others won't notice that I'm writing if they come back before I finish. *(ALL make a line in front of her, standing on boxes, bales of hay, etc., if necessary. CHARLOTTE is now partially hidden.)*

Swing spinnerets.

Let out the thread.

The longer it gets,

The better it's read. *(She begins to write.)*

GOOSE. Templeton would need to go the Fair, too. Somebody, somebody, somebody has to run errands and do general work.

TEMPLETON. I'm staying right here. I haven't the slightest interest in fairs.

GOOSE. That's because you've never, never, never been to one. You'd love it. Every-every-everybody spills food at a fair. Popcorn, frozen custard, candy apples—

TEMPLETON. Stop! That's enough! You've twisted my whiskers. I'll go. (*WILBUR and the GOOSE applaud.*)

CHARLOTTE. Attach, ascend, repeat.

GOOSE (*looking back at CHARLOTTE*). Charlotte's working fast, fast, fast.

CHARLOTTE. I've pretty well got the hang of it now.

WILBUR (*glancing offstage*). Look, someone's coming. Two people.

GOOSE. I'll go see who it is, is, is. (*She exits.*)

WILBUR. Hurry, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE. I'm almost finished. Just have to cross the final T. Over to the right, payout line, attach.

WILBUR (*calling to the GOOSE*). Who is it?

GOOSE's VOICE (*off*). Looks, looks, looks like Mr. Zuckerman and a newspaper reporter. He's carrying a camera.

WILBUR. A camera? Do you think he's going to take my picture?

TEMPLETON. I doubt he's here to take my picture. Though he could do worse. (*Striking a pose.*) Look at that profile.

WILBUR. Quiet, Templeton. They're nearly here. Quickly, Charlotte, quickly!

CHARLOTTE. Repeat, attach...and finished. (*WILBUR and TEMPLETON quickly disassemble their "coverage." TEMPLETON and CHARLOTTE hide behind crates or boxes. In the web is the word "RADIANT."*)

HOMER's VOICE (*off*). Right this way, Mr. Carter. Here we are.

(*HOMER and CARTER, a reporter, enter.*)

HOMER. We're mighty honored to have the chief reporter of the Weekly Chronicle out here to cover this story.

CARTER. I'm mighty honored to cover it, Mr. Zuckerman. Why don't I get a picture of you and the pig together? (*He readies the camera.*)

HOMER. Sure thing. come here, boy. (*He poses next to WILBUR.*)

CARTER. Say cheese.

(*TEMPLETON appears, unseen by HOMER and CARTER.*)

TEMPLETON (*licking his lips*). Cheese? (*WILBUR frantically shushes TEMPLETON, who exits disgustedly.*)

HOMER. Cheese! (*CARTER takes the picture.*)

CARTER. That'll make the front page for sure.

HOMER. Good. I want everybody to see this terrific pig. Just like it says in the web.

CARTER. But Mr. Zuckerman. That's not what it says in the web.

HOMER (*looking at the web*). Glory be! There's a new word.

(*FERN enters.*)

FERN. Uncle Homer, Aunt Edith wants you to—(*She sees the web.*) Radiant.

HOMER. Radiant.

CARTER. Radiant.

HOMER. Well, sir. That does it. I have an announcement you can print in your newspaper, Mr. Carter. I'm going to enter this pig in the County Fair.

(WILBUR and FERN, who cheers, dance around. CHARLOTTE, unseen by the OTHERS, appears and waves to WILBUR, then hides again.)

HOMER. And if he can win a blue ribbon, I guarantee we'll never make bacon and ham out of him. (FERN and CARTER applaud.)

FERN. Can I go to the Fair, Uncle Homer? After all, Wilbur used to be my pig.

HOMER. We'll all go. We'll all need to help Wilbur win that blue ribbon.

CARTER. There'll be lots of competition. Lots of fine pigs.

FERN. But none as terrific as Wilbur.

CARTER (pointing to the web). Or as radiant.

HOMER. Yep, he's some pig, all right. (ALL laugh.)
Come on. Let's go to the kitchen for some fresh apple strudel and iced tea.

CARTER. Sounds good, Mr. Zuckerman.

(HOMER, CARTER and FERN exit. CHARLOTTE emerges from her hiding place.)

WILBUR. Charlotte, you did it. Thank you, thank you.

CHARLOTTE. Well, we got you to the Fair. But that's only half the battle.

WILBUR. Will you come with me Charlotte? Please.

CHARLOTTE. I'm not sure. I need to think about it. (A beat.) But first, I need some rest. This day has been particularly exhausting.

WILBUR. Of course, Charlotte. You've earned some peace and quiet. I'll be out in the sun taking a nap. (He exits.)

CHARLOTTE. I'm suddenly very tired. I know I won't be able to help Wilbur much longer. I'll have to lay my eggs soon. I do want them to hatch right here in the barn where it's warm and safe. (A pause.) But I'll take the chance anyway. I will go to the Fair with Wilbur. People will be expecting to see a word in the web. It may help him win. And he just has to win that blue ribbon. His whole future—if he's to have a future at all—totally depends on what happens at the Fair.

(CHARLOTTE goes behind the web. For a moment the stage is empty. NOTE: An optional INTERMISSION may be used at this point. The NARRATOR enters, and, as he speaks, he rearranges the "furnishings" from the barn to suggest an area in the livestock locale at the Fair—especially Wilbur's pen and ample passage room around it. The UR web is removed, and another web is "hung" up L. NOTE: The setting may be changed during the Intermission, if used, and at the beginning of Act Two, the NARRATOR is revealed on stage.)

NARRATOR. The days of summer drifted on toward late harvesting and thoughts of school and the County Fair. (Carnival music is heard.) Everybody at the Zuckermans and the Arables got up early the day of the Fair. They fed Wilbur an extra special breakfast, gave him a warm bath, then loaded him into a crate filled with straw. They brought him to the Fair in the Zuckerman's truck. Of course, there were two other creatures in Wilbur's crate, too. Nobody but Wilbur—and maybe Fern—knew that Charlotte and Templeton had come along for the ride. Yes, it promised to be a couple of pretty exciting days at the County Fair.

(The NARRATOR exits. A moment later FERN enters leading WILBUR who is attached to a rope.)

FERN *(calling out)*. We're back from our walk!

(HOMER enters with a bucket.)

HOMER. Did you see most of the Fair?

FERN. Just where they keep all the animals. I can't wait to go to the midway and ride everything.

(ARABLE enters carrying a sign reading "Zuckerman's Famous Pig.")

HOMER. Bring the sign over here, John. Let me help you. *(He gives ARABLE a hand.)* Thanks for filling in for Lurvy.

ARABLE. My pleasure. It was good of Lurvy to stay at the farm and run things while we're here.

HOMER *(they lean the sign on a box or crate)*. "Zuckerman's Famous Pig." That oughta do the trick.

VOICE ON A LOUDSPEAKER. Attention please! Will the owner of a Pontiac car, license number H-2439, please move your car away from the fireworks shed!

FERN. Papa, can I have some money so I can go to the midway? Avery's already there.

ARABLE. That's because Aunt Edith agreed to take him. I'm not sure you should go by yourself.

FERN. Please, Papa.

ARABLE *(after a pause)*. Oh, all right. The Fair only comes once a year. *(He gives her some money.)*

FERN. Thank you, Papa. Bye, Uncle Homer. *(She exits.)*

ARABLE. Now hurry back. We'll be leaving in a little while. *Tomorrow's* the big day.

HOMER. Yep. That's the day when this little pig's gonna win that blue ribbon. *(WILBUR smiles.)* Let's look around a little while, John—while we're waiting for the others.

ARABLE. Good idea.

HOMER. Let's wander over to the cattle barn and see the Holsteins and the Guernseys.

ARABLE. Sure thing, Homer.

(HOMER and ARABLE exit. WILBUR yawns and goes to sleep. CHARLOTTE appears from behind a box or crate and looks about cautiously.)

CHARLOTTE. I thought they'd never leave. It's easier to hide in a barn than out in the open like this. I don't want anyone to see me until I've written in my web tonight. *(Somewhat sadly.)* It may be the last time I ever write. *(A pause.)* Templeton's out exploring. He promised to bring me back a word. I hope he cooperates. If I don't write a word, I'm sure Wilbur will have a difficult time winning that blue ribbon. *(She looks at the sleeping WILBUR.)* He's a cute little pig, and smart. But I'm sure there will be bigger pigs here. And even better looking ones.

(UNCLE, a large pig, enters sniffing around. A moment later he sees CHARLOTTE.)

UNCLE. Hi, there.

CHARLOTTE. May I have your name?

UNCLE. No name. Just call me Uncle.

CHARLOTTE. Very well...Uncle. You're rather large. Are you a spring pig?

UNCLE. Sure, I'm a spring pig. What did you think I was, a spring chicken? Haw, haw, that was a good one. Eh, sister?

CHARLOTTE. Mildly funny. I've heard funnier ones, though. What are you doing over here?

UNCLE. They're still working on my pen. I just walked away. They'll come after me when they see I'm gone. But I thought I'd wander around and look at the competition. *(He looks down at WILBUR.)* Well, no problem here. From what I've seen so far, I've got that blue ribbon all sewed up. But I won't needle you about it. *(He laughs.)*

VOICE *(off)*. Uncle! Where are you, Uncle?

UNCLE. Well, better be getting back. I've got to get spiffy for the crowds that will be coming to admire me.

So long, sister. *(He exits. WILBUR wakes up.)*

WILBUR *(drowsily)*. Oh, hi Charlotte. Where is everybody?

CHARLOTTE. Off to see the Fair.

WILBUR. Did I hear you talking to someone?

CHARLOTTE. A pig that's staying next door.

WILBUR. Is he better than me? I mean...bigger?

CHARLOTTE. I'm afraid he is much bigger.

WILBUR. Oh, no.

CHARLOTTE. He also has a most unattractive personality. He's going to be hard to beat. But with me helping you, it can be done.

WILBUR. When will you be writing the new word?

CHARLOTTE. Later on, if I'm not too tired. Just spinning this new web earlier today took a lot of my strength.

(Two SPECTATORS enter. CHARLOTTE eases to the background.)

1st SPECTATOR. Well, here's a good-looking fellow. *(Reading the sign.)* "Zuckerman's Famous Pig." *(WILBUR smiles.)*

2nd SPECTATOR. Look at his silky white coat. And his nice curly tail.

1st SPECTATOR. I think he's the finest pig we've seen today.

2nd SPECTATOR *(looking off)*. Let's go look at that pig over there. *(He exits.)*

1st SPECTATOR *(to WILBUR)*. I think I've heard of you. Aren't you that "radiant" pig who's supposed to be "terrific"? *(WILBUR smiles and nods.)*

2nd SPECTATOR *(off)*. Look over here at this pig. *(1st SPECTATOR exits.)* He's gigantic.

1st SPECTATOR's VOICE *(off)*. And he seems to be very confident.

2nd SPECTATOR's VOICE. He may get the blue ribbon after all.

1st SPECTATOR's VOICE. Well, let's go look at the horses and see if we can pick the winner over there.

WILBUR. Oh, dear. Did you hear that, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. Chin up, young friend. Those weren't the judges. They were merely the spectators. The judges are the ones who count.

(TEMPLETON enters carrying an article torn from a newspaper.)

TEMPLETON *(handing it over to CHARLOTTE)*. Well, here's your order.

CHARLOTTE. I hope you brought a good one. It is the last word I shall ever write.

WILBUR (*alarmed*). Charlotte, what do you mean?

CHARLOTTE (*studying the article*). Templeton, my eyes seem to be going. I'm having trouble reading this. What's that word?

TEMPLETON. Humble. (*Spelling it out.*) H-u-m-b-l-e.

CHARLOTTE. Humble has two meanings—"not proud" and "close to the ground." That's Wilbur all right.

TEMPLETON. Well, I hope you're satisfied. I'm not going to spend all my time delivering papers. I came to this Fair to enjoy myself.

CHARLOTTE. You've been very helpful, Templeton. You may run along now.

TEMPLETON. I'm going to make a night of it. The Goose was right. This Fair is a rat's paradise. What eating! What drinking! 'Bye, 'bye, my humble Wilbur. Fare-thee-well, Charlotte, you old schemer! This will be a night to remember in a rat's life. (*He exits.*)

WILBUR. Charlotte, what did you mean when you said this would be the last word?

CHARLOTTE. Shhh!

WILBUR. But, Charlotte..

(*HOMER enters. CHARLOTTE hides.*)

HOMER. Fern! Fern! (*He stops and looks around.*) Where on earth could that young lady be? (*Seeing WILBUR.*) Well, boy, I see you're awake. Hope you're all set for the big day tomorrow.

(*FERN enters.*)

FERN. Hi, Uncle Homer. Where is everybody?

HOMER. Waiting for you. We all met at the midway and decided to go back to the truck so we can be heading home. I told your daddy I'd look for you here while I was checking on Wilbur. Where were you?

FERN. Riding the Ferris wheel with Henry Fussy.

HOMER. Henry Fussy?

FERN. I met him at the midway. He even bought a ticket for me.

HOMER. Well, well. Your daddy will certainly be interested to hear that. Let's be going now.

FERN. Is Wilbur going to be safe here all alone?

HOMER. Sure. They have night watchmen to look after the animals after the people leave.

FERN (*petting WILBUR*). I'll be thinking about you tonight, Wilbur.

HOMER. Get lots of sleep, boy. The judges come around first thing in the morning. They may even get here before we do. (*He and FERN begin to exit.*)

FERN. I can't wait to tell Papa about my Ferris wheel ride with Henry. One time we stopped at the very top. I pretended I was scared—and Henry pretended he wasn't.

(*HOMER laughs as they exit. WILBUR waves wistfully as the lights fade slightly. CHARLOTTE appears from her hiding place.*)

CHARLOTTE. Well, I'd better be getting to work.

WILBUR. Is this really going to be your last word, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. I think so. I don't have much strength left. And tonight I have *another* job to do.

WILBUR. Is it something for me?

CHARLOTTE. No. It's something for *me* for a change.

WILBUR. What is it?

CHARLOTTE (*as the lights fade even more*). I'll tell you in the morning. (*Fireworks are heard in the background. Special lighting effects may accompany the sounds.*)

WILBUR. Listen.

CHARLOTTE. It's the fireworks. (*They listen for a moment. The sounds and lighting effects, if used, begin to fade.*)

WILBUR. This is the first night I've ever spent away from home. (*A pause.*) I'm glad you're with me, Charlotte. I never feel lonely when you're near.

CHARLOTTE. Thank you. That's what a friend likes to hear.

WILBUR. Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE. Yes?

WILBUR. Even if I don't win the blue ribbon...and the worst happens...I will never forget you.

CHARLOTTE. That's very nice of you to say. Now, go to sleep.

WILBUR. Good night.

(*WILBUR stretches out and goes to sleep. The NARRATOR enters.*)

NARRATOR. Before long, Wilbur was asleep. Charlotte could tell by the sound of his breathing that he was sleeping peacefully in the straw. (*CHARLOTTE goes to her web, and, with her back turned, she begins to work.*) By now, the Fair was quiet, and the people were gone. It was a good time for Charlotte to work. Though she was very tired, she worked quickly, for she had yet

another job to do. (*A pause.*) Before long, she finished writing in the web.

CHARLOTTE (*slowly*).

The message is spun.

I've come to the end.

(*A beat, as she catches her breath.*)

The job that I've done,

Is all for my friend.

NARRATOR. After she had written the new word in the web, she moved on to another project. (*CHARLOTTE moves away from the web slightly. Though she is largely obscured by the dim lights, her movements are now very elaborate and mysterious.*) It carried her far into the night. (*She climbs up and sticks an egg sac—a ball-like object—high up on the wall, then collapses and crawls into hiding.*) When she was finally finished, she was exhausted, and she fell into a deep, deep sleep. (*A pause.*) The first light of the next morning revealed the word in Charlotte's web. (*A light illuminates the word "HUMBLE."*) It was very early when the judges came around to determine the winners of the blue ribbon.

(*The other lights slowly begin to come up as two JUDGES silently enter. They observe the sleeping WILBUR, write on a score sheet, then exit in the direction of Uncle's pen. NOTE: The Judges' appearance is optional. If they do not appear, they will merely be referred to in the Narrator's preceding speech.*)

NARRATOR. The blazing orange sun slowly began to rise on the most important day of Wilbur's life. (*The*

NARRATOR exits. WILBUR wakens and yawns, then notices the web.)

WILBUR. Oh, look! There's the new word. Charlotte!

(CHARLOTTE enters.)

WILBUR. Thank you, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE. "HUMBLE." It fits you perfectly.

WILBUR *(looking at the egg sac)*. And what's that object up there? It looks like cotton candy. Did you make it?

CHARLOTTE. I did indeed. It's my egg sac. The finest thing I've ever made.

WILBUR. What's inside it? Eggs?

CHARLOTTE. Five hundred and fourteen of them.

WILBUR. You're kidding. Are you really going to have five hundred and fourteen children?

CHARLOTTE *(with a touch of sadness)*. If nothing happens, yes. Of course, they won't show up till next spring. I won't ever see my children. I may not even make it back to the barn.

WILBUR. Of course you will.

TEMPLETON'S VOICE *(off)*. What a night!

(TEMPLETON enters. His stomach is bloated.)

TEMPLETON. What a night! What feasting and carousing. I must have eaten the remains of thirty lunches.

Oh, it was rich, my friends, rich!

CHARLOTTE. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. You'll probably have an attack of acute indigestion.

TEMPLETON. Don't worry about me. I can handle anything. Wilbur's the one you should be worrying about.

CHARLOTTE. What do you mean?

TEMPLETON. I've got some bad news for you. As I came past that pig next door—the one that calls himself Uncle—I noticed a blue ribbon on the front of his pen. That means he won first prize. *(A pause.)*

CHARLOTTE *(softly)*. Oh, no. *(WILBUR sits down slowly. CHARLOTTE goes to him and puts her arm around him.)*

TEMPLETON. Wait till Zuckerman gets hankering for some fresh pork and smoked ham. He'll take the knife to you, my boy. *(WILBUR stares straight ahead.)*

CHARLOTTE. Be still, Templeton. Don't pay any attention to him, Wilbur!

WILBUR *(after a beat, still looking ahead)*. It's all right. *(Another beat.)* Whatever will happen, will happen. *(Gaining courage.)* I may not live as long as I'd like, but I've lived very well. A good life is much more important than just having a long life. So starting now I'm going to stop worrying about myself. There are more important things than just thinking about yourself all the time. Like you, Templeton. You didn't even notice that Charlotte has made an egg sac.

TEMPLETON. Egg sac?

WILBUR *(pointing to it)*. Up there. She is going to become a mother. For your information, there are five hundred and fourteen eggs in that peachy little sac.

TEMPLETON. Well, congratulations! This has been a night! *(He finds an out-of-the-way spot, covers himself with some straw or an old blanket and goes to sleep.)*

CHARLOTTE. I'm sorry about the blue ribbon, Wilbur. But you're being very brave about it.

WILBUR. Bravery is just one of the many things I've learned from you, Charlotte...my friend.

(*HOMER enters carrying a bucket.*)

HOMER. Good morning, pig. Here's a big, fresh breakfast for you. (*He empties the bucket into the trough, then sees the web.*) Well, what do you know about that—"Humble." Yet another miracle! You're sure to win that blue ribbon now. (*WILBUR turns away sadly.*) What's the matter, boy? And why aren't you eating anything?

FERN's VOICE (*off*). Oh, no!

HOMER. What is it, Fern?

FERN's VOICE. I can't believe it.

HOMER. Can't believe what?

(*FERN enters, near tears.*)

FERN. That pig over there has already won the blue ribbon.

HOMER. What? Have the judges been by already?

FERN. It's not fair. He won just because he's fat. I'll bet the judges are fat, too.

HOMER. There, there. (*He gives her a handkerchief and she blows her nose.*)

FERN. I'm just glad the others decided to come later.

HOMER. They'll be disappointed, too, when they get here. But at least the new word in the web might cheer everybody up.

FERN (*seeing the web*). "Humble." Oh, Charlotte, you did it again.

HOMER. Charlotte? Who's Charlotte?

VOICE (*off*). Zuckerman? Who's Zuckerman?

HOMER. Why, that's me. I'm Zuckerman.

(*The PRESIDENT of the Fair enters.*)

PRESIDENT. I'm the president of the Fair. Pleased to meet you. (*He and HOMER shake hands.*)

HOMER. What can I do for you Mr.—President?

PRESIDENT. You can get that pig of yours up to the grandstand as soon as possible.

HOMER. What for?

PRESIDENT. Didn't the judges tell you?

HOMER. They were already gone when we got here.

PRESIDENT. That pig of yours is getting a special award.

HOMER. What?

PRESIDENT. A special award. It's even more important than the blue ribbon.

FERN. Oh, Uncle Homer! (*They embrace.*)

PRESIDENT. And I'm going to make the presentation! If you don't mind, I'd like to practice my speech before I have to do it in front of the crowd.

HOMER. Sure, go right ahead.

PRESIDENT (*taking out some note cards*). Ladies and gentlemen, we now present Mr. Homer L. Zuckerman's distinguished pig. (*A beat.*) You can applaud. (*FERN and HOMER do so vigorously.*) Many of you recall when the writing first appeared mysteriously on the spider web in Mr. Zuckerman's barn, calling the attention of all to the fact that this was some pig. Then came the word "terrific." Next, the word "radiant" appeared in the web. And now, this very morning—the word "humble." Whence came this mysterious writing? Not from the spider. Needless to say, spiders can't write. (*FERN and WILBUR clear their throats.*) No, ladies and gentlemen, this miracle has never been fully explained. We simply know that we are dealing

with supernatural forces here, and we should all feel proud and grateful. (*He motions for FERN and HOMER to applaud, and they do so.*) Now, on behalf of the governors of the Fair, I take the honor of awarding a special prize of twenty-five dollars to Mr. Zuckerman. And a handsome bronze medal, which far outshines any blue ribbon, to this radiant, this terrific, this humble pig. (*FERN and HOMER applaud and cheer.*) I'll give you the money and medal at the real ceremony. Come along now. The crowds are already gathering at the grandstand. (*Straightening his tie.*) Do I look okay?

HOMER. Fine, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT. Gotta look better than fine today. Gotta look as good as him. (*Pointing to WILBUR.*)

HOMER. Oh, you do, Mr. President. You look—perfect as a pig.

PRESIDENT. A prize-winning pig. Follow me.

HOMER. We'll be right there. (*The PRESIDENT exits.*)

FERN (*embracing HOMER*). Uncle Homer, isn't this wonderful!

HOMER. We'll load Wilbur in the truck right now and take him to the grandstand. Then we'll go home directly from there. (*He gathers up the trough, the bucket, and the sign, then hands FERN a coin.*) Go call your daddy. Tell him to pick up your Aunt Edith and the others and get on out here. They've got to be present for this ceremony.

FERN. Sure thing, Uncle Homer. By the way, after the ceremony do you think I'll have time to ride the Ferris wheel with Henry Fussy?

HOMER. Henry Fussy? I think so. In fact, we'll make the time, if necessary. (*He laughs and exits.*)

FERN (*hugging WILBUR*). I'm so proud of you, Wilbur. I knew from the very first day you were—some pig. (*She exits.*)

WILBUR. Charlotte. Charlotte? Did you hear? Isn't it wonderful? (*A beat.*) Charlotte? Are you all right?

(*CHARLOTTE appears.*)

CHARLOTTE. Yes. A little tired perhaps. But, I feel peaceful now that I know you will live safe and secure.

WILBUR. Oh, Charlotte. Why did you do all this for me? I've never done anything for you.

CHARLOTTE. You have been my friend. That in itself is a tremendous thing. After all, what's a life anyway? We're born, we live a little, we die. By helping you, perhaps I was lifting up my life a trifle. Heaven knows anyone's life can stand a little of that.

WILBUR. Charlotte, I would gladly give my life for you...I really would.

CHARLOTTE. I'm sure you would.

WILBUR. Charlotte, we're all going home today. Won't it be wonderful to be back in the barn again?

CHARLOTTE. I will not be going back to the barn.

WILBUR (*alarmed*). Not going back? What are you talking about?

CHARLOTTE. I'm done for. In a day or two I'll be dead.

I'm so tired I can't even crawl up to my egg sac.

WILBUR. Charlotte, Charlotte! My true friend.

CHARLOTTE. Come now, Wilbur, let's not make a scene.

WILBUR. I won't leave you alone to die. I shall stay, too.

CHARLOTTE. You can't. They won't let you. Besides, even if you did stay, there would be no one to feed

you. (WILBUR goes to the side of the pen and looks off-stage.)

WILBUR. I have an idea. But we have to do it quickly.

(WILBUR rushes to where TEMPLETON is hiding and awakens him.)

WILBUR. Templeton, Templeton! Wake up! Pay attention!

TEMPLETON. Can't a rat catch a wink of sleep?

WILBUR. Listen to me! Charlotte is very ill. She won't be coming home with us. I must take her egg sac with me. I can't reach it, and I can't climb. (Glancing off-stage.) If you'll get the egg sac for me, I'll give you first choice of everything in my trough every time Lurvy feeds me back at the barn.

TEMPLETON. You mean that?

WILBUR. I promise. I cross my heart.

TEMPLETON (after a beat). All right, it's a deal. (He climbs up to get the egg sac.)

WILBUR. Use extreme care. I don't want a single one of those eggs harmed. (TEMPLETON brings the egg sac to WILBUR.) Charlotte, I will protect it with all my might. Thank you, Templeton. Now you'd better go and hide in the crate if you want a ride back home.

TEMPLETON. You bet I'm going back home, now that I get first choice of everything in the trough. (He exits.)

HOMER's VOICE (off). Okay, boy, time to go to get your award!

WILBUR. Oh, Charlotte!

(WILBUR crosses quickly to CHARLOTTE and embraces her. HOMER enters carrying a rope. CHARLOTTE hides in the shadows.)

HOMER (tying the rope around WILBUR). Well, sir, it turned out to be a mighty fine Fair, after all. Mighty fine. Let's go, Wilbur. This will be a day you can tell your grandchildren about.

(WILBUR looks back and sees CHARLOTTE, who has appeared.)

WILBUR (sotto voce). Goodbye, Charlotte. Goodbye. (He waves to her as he and HOMER exit.)

CHARLOTTE. Goodbye, Wilbur. Thank you for saving my egg sac. (Faintly.) Thank you...and goodbye...my friend.

(The lights fade, leaving a special on CHARLOTTE who slowly waves. The NARRATOR enters.)

NARRATOR. Charlotte summoned all her strength and waved to Wilbur. She went back to her web and wrapped herself in it. (CHARLOTTE detaches the web, wraps it around herself and slowly exits.) And never moved again. (The faint sound of carnival music is heard.) Next day, as the Ferris wheel was being taken apart and the race horses were being loaded into their vans and the entertainers were packing up their belongings and driving away in their trailers, Charlotte died. (A pause.) The Fair Grounds were soon deserted. The sheds and buildings were empty and forlorn. The fields were littered with bottles and trash. Of the

hundreds of people that had visited the Fair, nobody knew that a gray spider had played the most important part of all. (*A beat.*) No one was with her when she died. (*A pause. He begins to "reset" the Zuckerman's barn. He gets the trough from just offstage and places it at C.*) Wilbur returned to his beloved barn. The animals were delighted with his success at the Fair. But everyone missed Charlotte very much. For the rest of the fall and all through the winter, Wilbur watched over Charlotte's egg sac as though he were guarding his own children. Patiently he awaited the end of winter and the coming of little spiders.

(*The NARRATOR exits. A moment later TEMPLETON enters and goes to the trough.*)

TEMPLETON. Oh, good. Wilbur hasn't eaten his breakfast yet.

(*TEMPLETON begins to eat. The SHEEP enters.*)

SHEEP. Wilbur hasn't eaten anything these past few days. He keeps waiting out in the yard for the eggs to hatch. (*A beat, as he watches TEMPLETON eat.*) Templeton, you would live longer if you ate less.

TEMPLETON. Who wants to live forever?

GOOSE's VOICE (*off*). You, you, you tell them.

GANDER's VOICE (*off*). No, no, no. You do the honors.

GOOSE's VOICE. Very, -ery, -ery well.

(*The GOOSE enters.*)

GOOSE. I am pleased to announce that the Gander and I are expecting goslings.

TEMPLETON. Again? It must be spring. Everything's sprouting.

SHEEP. Including your stomach.

(*WILBUR, wearing a medal, enters hurriedly. He carries the open egg sac.*)

WILBUR. They're here! They're here!

TEMPLETON. Who's here?

WILBUR. The spiders. They hatched. All five hundred and fourteen. Look! (*He points off.*)

GOOSE. They seem to be climbing up, up, up the rafters.

WILBUR. Yes. They're going up to where the breezes are blowing. Oh, look. They're floating away on little clouds of silk. Wait! Won't you please stay? (*Dejectedly.*) They're all leaving.

SHEEP. Happens every time.

WILBUR. Wait...please! (*Waving sadly.*) Goodbye! (*A beat.*) I'm glad they hatched. But I wish they would stay. Some of them anyway. I'm being deserted by Charlotte's children.

SHEEP. They have to live their own lives, you know.

WILBUR. Yes, I know. But I was just hoping...oh, never mind. (*A SPIDER's VOICE is heard offstage.*)

SPIDER's VOICE. Salutations!

WILBUR. Who said that?

SPIDER's VOICE. Me. I'm up (over) here. Three of us are staying.

WILBUR (*ecstatic*). This is wonderful! Wonderful!

SPIDER's VOICE. We like this barn. And we like you.

WILBUR (to the OTHERS). Did you hear that everybody? Three of Charlotte's children are staying.

SPIDER's VOICE. Where did you get that handsome medal you're wearing?

WILBUR. My medal? Well, it's a long story. And I'll tell you all about it. But right now, I'm going to take the medal off. *(He removes it from his neck.)*

ALL. What? Did you hear that? What does he mean? *(Etc.)*

WILBUR. To celebrate this very special day, I'm putting the medal where it rightfully belongs. Templeton, please hang it on that nail where Charlotte's web used to be.

TEMPLETON. Another favor?

WILBUR. This is the last one, I promise.

TEMPLETON *(taking the medal)*. I know—till the next one. *(He climbs up and hangs the medal on the nail.)* Like this?

WILBUR. Perfect. *(TEMPLETON climbs down.)* I hereby dedicate my medal to the memory of dear Charlotte whom I will never forget. *(ALL nod in agreement.)*

SHEEP. Very thoughtful of you, Wilbur.

GOOSE. None of us will ever, ever, ever forget her.

WILBUR. I will love her children and her grandchildren dearly, but none of them will ever take her place in my heart. She was in a class by herself. *(A beat.)* It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Charlotte was both.

(ALL turn and form a tableau, looking at the medal which is now lit by a special. All lights, except the one on the medal, dim. The NARRATOR enters.)

NARRATOR. Wilbur kept good his promise. He never, ever forgot Charlotte. Even years later, he fondly remembered his "true friend and good writer." Mr. Zuckerman took fine care of Wilbur all the rest of his days. And the pig was often visited by friends and admirers, for nobody ever forgot the year of his triumph—and the miracle of Charlotte's web.

(The lights fade to BLACKOUT.)

THE END

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

E(LWYN) B(ROOKS) WHITE (1899-1985) was born in Mount Vernon, New York. For many years, he was the contributing editor of *The New Yorker* magazine. His non-fiction work *The Second Tree from the Corner* (1954) earned the superlatives of one critic who termed him "the finest essayist in the United States." The critic continued: "He says wise things gracefully; he's the master of an idiom at once exact and suggestive, distinguished, yet familiar. His style is crisp and tender and incomparably his own." White is best known, however, for his children's books and, in 1952, he wrote *Charlotte's Web*. This work is one of the most popular children's books of all times. The Children's Literature Association, for example, named *Charlotte's Web* as "The best American children's book of the past two hundred years." Eudora Welty wrote of it: "The book has liveliness and felicity, tenderness and unexpectedness, grace and humor and praise of life."

For many years, White lived on the same farm in Maine where he wrote *Charlotte's Web*.

JOSEPH ROBINETTE is the author of more than twenty published plays and musicals, including "Anne of Green Gables," "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," "The Paper Chase," and "A Rose for Emily."

Recipient of numerous playwriting awards, Robinette was presented the 1976 Charlotte Chorpensing Cup given annually by the Children's Theatre Association of America to "an outstanding writer of children's plays who has achieved national recognition." Robinette currently resides in New Jersey where he is Professor of Speech and Theatre at Glassboro State College.