Charlotte's Web

By

E.B. White

A Novel Study
by Nat Reed
Charlotte’s Web
By E.B. White

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About the author: Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine of those years. For more information on his work and literature, please visit the websites www.reedpublications.org and www.novelstudies.org.

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Suggestions and Expectations

This 71 page curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one or two chapters of *Charlotte’s Web* and is comprised of four different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language and Extension Activities

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Many</em> of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the <em>Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5</em>, makes reference to a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language; b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure; c) compare and contrast two characters; d) determine how characters . . . respond to challenges; e) drawing inferences from the text; f) determining a theme of a story . . . and many others.*</td>
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Students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A *portfolio cover* is included as well as a *Student Checklist*.

**Themes** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include the preciousness of life, the importance of friendship and loyalty, determination, farm life, farm animals (pigs, sheep, geese), rats and spiders.
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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development
1. Locating descriptive words / phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homonyms
3. Identifying / creating alliteration
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify personification.
7. Working with anagrams.
8. Use of singular / plural nouns
9. Listing compound words
10. Identifying parts of speech
11. Determining alphabetical order
12. Identification of root words
13. Identify/create similes

Setting Activities
1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities
1. Complete a time line of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Identify the climax of the novel.
4. Five W’s Chart

Character Activities
1. Determine character traits
2. Protagonists
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Comparing two Characters

Creative and Critical Thinking
1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Conduct an interview
4. Write a description of personal feelings
5. Write a book review
6. Complete an Observation Chart
7. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities
1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Design an Information Card
Sixty years ago, on October 15, 1952, E.B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web* was published. It’s gone on to become one of the most beloved children’s books of all time.

*Charlotte’s Web* is the story of a little girl named Fern who loved a little pig named Wilbur—and of Wilbur’s dear friend Charlotte A. Cavatica, a beautiful large grey spider who lived with Wilbur in the barn.

With the help of Templeton, the rat who never did anything for anybody unless there was something in it for him, and by a wonderfully clever plan of her own, Charlotte saved the life of Wilbur, who by this time had grown up to quite a pig. [The Publisher]

E. B. White, the author of such beloved classics as *Charlotte’s Web, Stuart Little,* and *The Trumpet of the Swan,* was born in Mount Vernon, New York. He graduated from Cornell University in 1921 and wrote for *The New Yorker* magazine, then in its infancy. He died on October 1, 1985, and was survived by his son and three grandchildren.

He won countless awards, including the 1971 National Medal for Literature and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award, which commended him for making a "substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children."

During his lifetime, many young readers asked Mr. White if his stories were true. In a letter written to be sent to his fans, he answered, "No, they are imaginary tales . . . But real life is only one kind of life—there is also the life of the imagination." [The Publisher]
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Student Checklist

Student Name: ____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grade / Level</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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Name: ____________________________
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Chapter 1

Before you read the chapter:

The protagonist in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. One of the main protagonists of Charlotte’s Web is a very likeable eight-year-old girl, Fern, who lives on a farm. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting protagonist – one that you might never forget?

Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>injustice</th>
<th>untimely</th>
<th>distribute</th>
<th>miserable</th>
<th>prompt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>specimen</td>
<td>blissful</td>
<td>commanded</td>
<td>appetite</td>
<td>litter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. We found sitting by the canal to be a very ________________ experience.
2. After toiling hard all day long, the girls worked up a hearty ____________.
3. Sitting in the rain all day made the poor old dog very ______________.
4. When our teacher penalized the entire class for something Jon did, almost everyone felt they suffered a great ______________.
5. The clown’s arrival at the funeral was most ____________.
6. “Please ___________ these pencils evenly,” Mr. Jamieson ordered.
7. Which ____________ of butterfly do you think is most beautiful?
8. The ____________ of pigs was the largest the farmer had ever seen.
9. I find that the clerks in that store are always polite and ____________.
10. I thought the company president would have ____________ a larger salary.
1. Why do farmers sometimes kill the runts in a litter of farm animals?


b. What are your own personal thoughts regarding this practice?


2. Describe the setting of Chapter One.


3. Why do you think that Fern’s dad thought that saving the baby pig was foolishness?


4. What did Avery think of the idea of Fern getting a pig?


5. Avery was _______________ years old.


6. What did Fern feed the pig, and how did she feed it?


7. Fern decided to call the pig _______________.

A. How much do you know about pigs anyway?

Domestic pigs are the most plentiful large domesticated animal on earth, with a population of over two billion. Pigs are found on every continent except Antarctica. Pigs are omnivores (they eat meat and plants), and are raised for their meat and for the leather their hides can produce. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, investigate additional facts about this valuable animal. Below record three fascinating facts from your research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

B. Alliteration

Author often enjoy using alliteration – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. An example from Chapter One is “. . . forgive me for this foolishness.” (Although it is usually more effective if the words are all in a row – i.e. pretty Polly Parker.)

Using your imagination, create your own examples of alliteration from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The wail of an angry baby</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sound of a police siren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From your imagination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### C. Anagrams

An anagram is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word *PAN* can also form the word *NAP*. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:

a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters.

Each of the words in the left-hand column are found in the first chapter of our novel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Anagram</th>
<th>Clue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>earth</td>
<td></td>
<td>Someone who despises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>room</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marsh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>death</td>
<td></td>
<td>Despised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stove</td>
<td></td>
<td>Elects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>result</td>
<td></td>
<td>A muffled, crackling sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>name</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not nice to someone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now find three additional words from the first chapter which have interesting anagrams to see if you can stump a classmate.
Extension Activities

Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel.

Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of *Charlotte’s Web*. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1 2

3 4

5 6