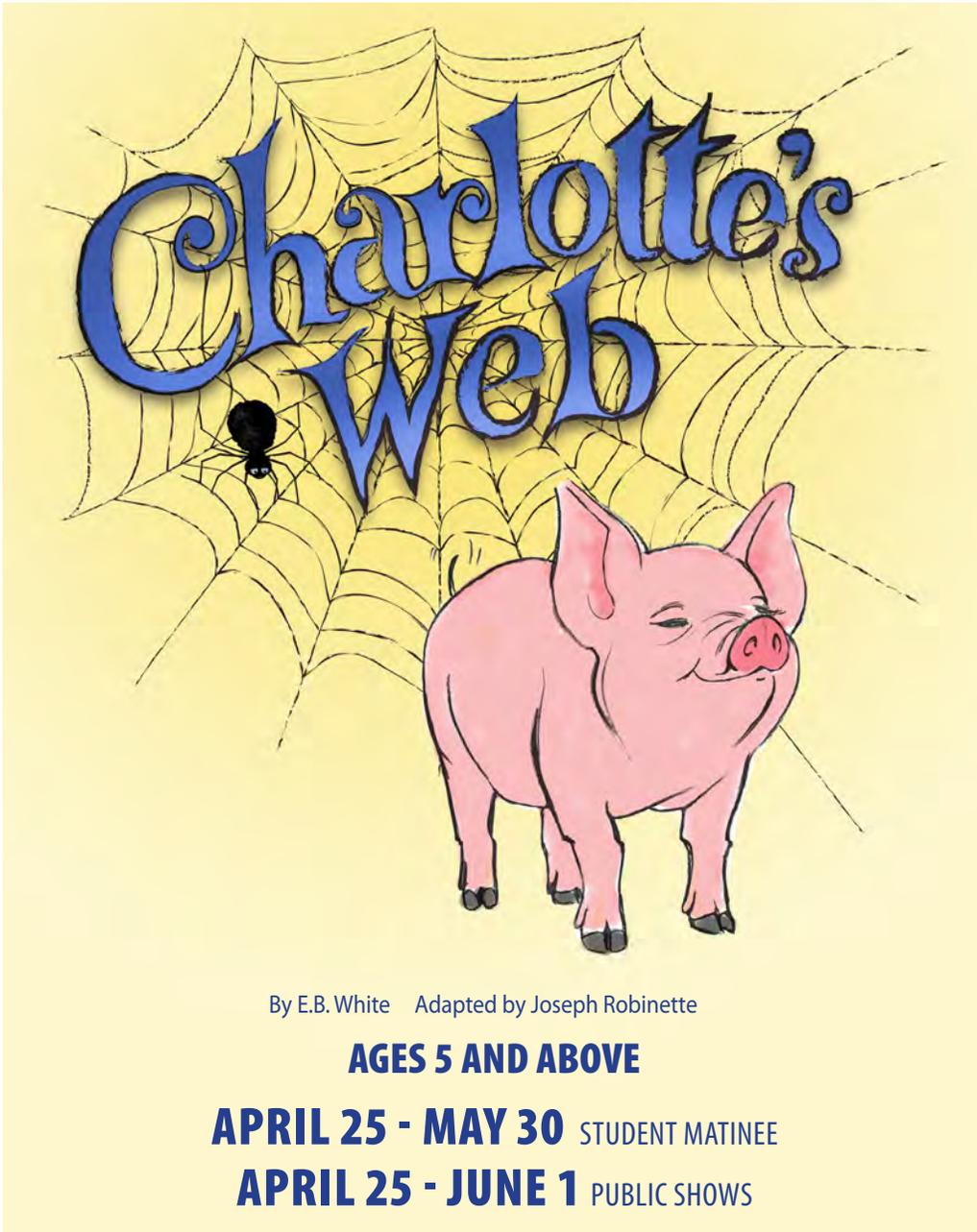


BEHIND THE CURTAIN

A CREATIVE & THEATRICAL STUDY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



As part of DCT's mission to integrate the arts into classroom academics, the ***Behind the Curtain Resource Guide*** is intended to provide helpful information for the teacher and student to use before and after attending a performance. The activities presented in this guide are suggested to stimulate lively responses and multi-sensory explorations of concepts in order to use the theatrical event as a vehicle for cross-cultural and language arts learning.

Please use our suggestions as springboards to lead your students into meaningful, dynamic learning; extending the dramatic experience of the play.

Your Family Arts Center
DALLAS CHILDREN'S THEATER

Astonishing kids & families with the fun of Broadway-like plays & much more!

Dallas Children's Theater

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

A Creative & Theatrical Resource Guide for Teachers

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PlayCHARLOTTE'S WEB
Based on the book byE.B. White
Adapted byJoseph Robinette

Director of Production.....Artie Olaisen
Poster Art.....Kim Rae Lyle

DALLAS CHILDREN'S THEATER, one of the top five family theaters in the nation, serves over 250,000 young people from 196 zip codes, 146 cities and 78 counties and 32 states each year through its main stage productions, touring, educational programming and outreach activities. Since its opening in 1984, this award-winning theater has existed to create challenging, inspiring and entertaining theater, which communicates vital messages to our youth and promotes an early appreciation for literature and the performing arts. As the only major organization in Dallas focusing on theater for youth and families, DCT produces literary classics, original scripts, folk tales, myths, fantasies and contemporary dramas that foster multicultural understanding, confront topical issues and celebrate the human spirit.

DCT is committed to the integration of creative arts into the teaching strategies of academic core curriculum and educating through the arts. Techniques utilized by DCT artist/teachers are based upon the approach developed in *The Integration of Abilities and Making Sense with Five Senses*, by Paul Baker, Ph.D.

DCT founder and Executive Artistic Director, Robyn Flatt defines the artistic mission and oversees the operations of the organization, consisting of twenty-five full time staff members and more than 200 actors, designers, theater artists and educators.

See the last page for the TEKS that your field trip to Dallas Children's Theater satisfies!



CURTAINS UP ON PUTTING A PERFORMANCE TOGETHER

Every DCT performance you see is the result of many people working together to create a play. You see the cast perform on stage, but there are people you do not see who help before, during, and after every production.

The DIRECTOR

Determines the overall look of the performance.

Guides the actors in stage movement and character interpretation.

Works with designers to plan the lights and sounds, scenery, costumes and make-up, and stage actions.

The DESIGNERS

Plan the lights, scenery, costumes, make-up, sound, and actions to help bring the director's vision to life.

There are also designers who work to create the posters, advertisements, programs and other media for the performance.

The STAGE MANAGER

Before the performance, creates a cue sheet to guide the crew in getting things on and off the stage during the performances. During the performance, uses this cue sheet to direct people and things on and off the stage.

The CREW

Builds and operate the scenery, costumes, props, and light and sound during the performance.

The CAST

Performs and presents the story to the audience.

The AUDIENCE

That's right! There can be no performance without you- the audience. The role of the audience is unique because you experience the entertainment with the performers and backstage crew. You are a collaborator in the performance, and it is important to learn your role so you can join all the people who work to create this Dallas Children's Theater production.



CURTAINS UP ON THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

Watching a play is different from watching television or a sporting event. When you watch T.V., you may leave the room or talk. At a sporting event you might cheer and shout and discuss what you're seeing. Your role as a member of the audience in a play means you must watch and listen carefully because:

- You need to concentrate on what the actors are saying.
- The actors are affected by your behavior. Talking and moving around can make it difficult for them to concentrate on their roles.
- Extra noises and movement can distract other audience members.



Are you ready for your role in this performance?

Check the box next to the statements that describe proper etiquette for an audience member during the performance.

- Try your best to remain in your seat once the performance has begun.
- Share your thoughts out loud with those sitting near you.
- Wave and call out to the actors on stage.
- Sit on your knees or stand near your seat.
- Bring snacks and gum to enjoy during the show.
- Reward the cast and crew with applause when you like a song or dance and at the end of the show.
- Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything or disturb other audience members while you are being seated.
- Keep all hands and feet and items out of the aisles during the performance.

CURTAINS UP AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Attending a play is an experience unlike any other. Because a play is presented live, it provides a unique opportunity to experience a story as it happens. Dallas Children's Theater brings stories to life through its performances. Many people are involved in the process. Playwrights adapt the stories you read in order to bring them off the page and onto the stage. Designers and technicians create lighting effects so that you can feel the mood of a scene. Carpenters build the scenery and make the place of the story become a real place, while costumers and make-up designers can turn actors into the characters you meet in the stories. Directors help actors bring the story to life before your very eyes. All of these things make seeing a play very different from television, videos, computer games, or CDs and audiobooks of stories.



Hold a class discussion when you return from the performance. Ask students the following questions and allow them to write or draw pictures of their experience at DCT.

1. What was the first thing you noticed when you entered the theater? What did you notice first on the stage?
2. What about the set? Draw or tell about things you remember. Did the set change during the play? How was it moved or changed? Was there any space besides the stage where the action took place?
3. How did the lights set the mood of the play? How did they change throughout? What do you think "house lights" are? How do they differ from stage lights? Did you notice different areas of lighting?
4. What did you think about the costumes? Do you think they fit the story? What things do you think the costume designers had to consider before creating the costumes?
5. Was there music in the play? How did it add to the performance?
6. What about the actors? Do you think they were able to bring the characters to life? Did you feel caught up in the story? What things do you think the actors had to work on in order to make you believe they were the characters?

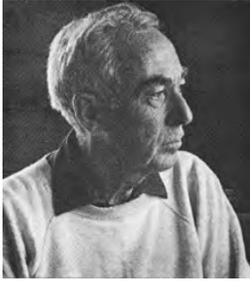


- Draw a picture of what the audience might look like from the stage. Consider your work from the viewpoint of the actors on stage. How might things look from where they stand?
- Write a letter to a cast member telling them what you liked about their character.
- Write how you think it might feel to be one of the actors. Are the actors aware of the audience? How might they feel about the reactions of the audience today? How would you feel before the play began? What about after the show ends?
- Which job would you like to try? Actor, Director, Lighting or Sound Crew Member, Stage Manager, Set Designer, Costume Designer, or another role? What skills might you need to complete your job?
- Choose a favorite story and draw or use the computer to create a program cover design for a theatrical adaptation of your story.

CURTAINS UP ON THEATER VOCABULARY

ACTOR	any theatrical performer whose job it is to portray a character
CAST	the group of actors in a play
CENTER STAGE	the middle of the stage
CHARACTER	any person portrayed by an actor onstage. Characters may also be animals, and sometimes things.
CHOREOGRAPHER	the person who designs and teaches the dances in a production
COSTUME DESIGNER	the person who creates what the actors wear in the performance
DIRECTOR	the person in charge of the entire production
DOWNSTAGE	the area at the front of the stage; closest to the audience
HOUSE	the area in the theater where the audience sits in the theater
LIGHTING DESIGNER	the person who creates the lighting for a play to simulate the time of day and the location
ONSTAGE	the part of the stage the audience can see
OFFSTAGE	the part of the stage the audience cannot see
PLOT	the story line
PROSCENIUM	the opening framing the stage
PROJECT	to speak loudly
PROP	an object used by an actor in a scene
SET	the background or scenery for a play
SETTING	the time and place of the story
SOUND DESIGNER	the person who provides special effects like thunder, ringing phone, or crickets chirping
STAGE CREW	the people who change the scenery during a performance
STAGE MANAGER	the person who helps the director during the rehearsal and coordinates all aspects of the lights, sound, and scenery with the actors during the performance
UPSTAGE	the area at the back of the stage; furthest from the audience

CURTAINS UP ON E.B. WHITE



Elwyn Brooks White was born in 1899 in Mount Vernon, New York in 1899. In 1911, *ST. NICHOLAS' MAGAZINE*, a popular magazine for young readers published one of his stories. "Now I am truly a writer," he wrote in his journal. He was twelve years old.

After graduating from college, he took a job with *THE NEW YORKER*. He soon became well-known for his poetry and essays. In 1936 White and his family moved to a little farm near the coast of Maine. *Charlotte's Web* was published in 1952.

"There's not much in the book *Charlotte's Web*," wrote one reviewer. "Only love, death, courage, hate, beauty, friendship, fear, revenge -- just everything in life."

E.B. White once explained how he came to write this story:

I like animals, and it would be odd if I failed to write about them. Animals are a weakness with me, and when I got a place in the country I was quite sure animals would appear, and they did.

A farm is a peculiar problem for a man who likes animals, because the fate of most livestock is that they are murdered by their benefactors. The creatures may live serenely but they end violently, and the odor of doom hangs about them always. I have kept several pigs, starting them in spring as weanlings and carrying trays to them all through the summer and fall. The relationship bothered me. Day by day I became better acquainted with my pig, and he with me, and the fact that the whole adventure pointed toward an eventual piece of double-dealing on my part lent an eerie quality to the thing. It used to be clear to me, slopping a pig, that as far as the pig was concerned I could not be counted on, and this, as I say, troubled me. Anyway, the theme of *Charlotte's Web* is that a pig shall be saved, and I have an idea that somewhere deep inside me there was a wish to that effect.

So, E.B. White was then faced with the dilemma of how to save the pig. He had been watching a spider spin her web and slowly the idea came to him. He actually kept a spider's egg sac in a box on his dresser. Soon the baby spiders were busily weaving among his brushes, comb and mirror.

Since 1952 over 6 million copies of *Charlotte's Web* have been sold. In 1976, when Publishers Weekly polled "teachers, librarians, authors, and publishers, asking them to name the ten best children's books written in America since 1776, *Charlotte's Web* was number one." For over 40 years, the story of a pig named Wilbur and a spider named Charlotte has captivated children everywhere.

Sources:

Collins, David R. *To the Point (A Story About E.B. White)* Carolrhoda Books, Inc., c. 1989
Elledge, Scott *E.B. White A Biography* W.W. Norton & Company, c. 1984
Gherman, Beverly *E.B. White Some Writer!* Atheneum, c. 1992

CURTAINS UP ON POSITIVE CHARACTER TRAITS.....

Charlotte and Wilbur each possess many positive character traits from which students can learn. Here are some examples for the students to be aware of before they come to the play.

Self esteem

"Well, I am pretty," replied Charlotte. There's no denying that. Almost all spiders are rather nice looking. I'm not as flashy as some, but I'll do.

Justice

Wilbur ate heartily. He planned to leave half a noodle and a few drops of milk for Templeton. Then he remembered that the rat had been useful in saving Charlotte's life. So he left a whole noodle instead of half.

Self-reliance

Far into the night, while other creatures slept, Charlotte worked on her web.... As she worked, her eight legs were a great help to her. So were her teeth.

Self-discipline

Ever since the spider had befriended him, he had done his best to live up to his reputation. When Charlotte's web said SOME PIG, Wilbur had tried hard to look like some pig. When Charlotte's web said TERRIFIC, Wilbur tried to look terrific. And now that the web said RADIANT, he did everything possible to make himself glow.

Loyalty

Charlotte: "you are 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."

Respect

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. It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Charlotte was both.

CURTAINS UP ON CREATIVE WRITING...

Have students create new stories with barnyard animals showing positive character traits.

Examples:

The Loyal Chicken

The Fair and Just Rooster.

The Respectful Horse

The Self Reliant Dog

After writing the stories, pair up the students to combine their stories. In "Charlotte's Web", two unlikely animals become friends. Try to encourage the students to pair up unlikely animal pairs.

Once you've combined the stories, take turns acting them out. This activity can also be done as a mime (acting with no sound). See if the other students can guess the animals and character traits they possess.

CURTAINS UP ON SEQUENCE...

Do you remember what happened in the play?
Number the following events in order.

_____ People came from miles around to see the words on Charlotte's web.

_____ 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.

_____ The 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.

_____ The end of summer brings many things. Late harvest. Thoughts of school. And the County fair.

CURTAINS UP ON PUNCTUATION...

Add the missing punctuation.

Did you know that sheep have special mouths___ A sheep does not have top teeth in front___ What's on the top___ There is a hard pad that makes it easy to bite off grass___ The big teeth in the back grind the grass___ That's some mouth___

How are sheep raised___ Sheep can be raised in open pastures or on farms___ Sheep live in groups called flocks___ Wow, flocks can have more than 2,000 rams, ewes and lambs___ The sheep eat grass, grain and hay___

Pigs were first raised in China___ They were brought to America by Christopher Columbus___ How smelly it must have been on the Santa Maria___ Do you think the first pigs were glad to be here___

Pigs have 44 teeth___ There are two large teeth that stick out from each jaw to form tusks___ Have you ever heard of a pig biting someone___ Pigs have a short tail and thick skin is covered with bristles___ Can you think of something that is made from those bristles___

What other animals do you know interesting facts about?

Write sentences using other animals.

Trade papers to have someone else add the punctuation.

CURTAINS UP ON MEMORY...

Who said that?

Match the line with the character.

1. Fern 2. Avery 3. Templeton 4. Charlotte 5. Wilbur

___ I'm sorry, Wilbur. I was in such a hurry to meet Henry that I forgot to tell you how proud I am of you. I knew from the very first day that you were some pig.

___ What a night! What a feasting and carousing. A real gorge. I must have eaten the the remains of thirty lunches. Oh, it was rich my friends, rich.

___ Pop, can I eat some of Wilbur's slops someday?

___ Stop! I don't want to die. I want to stay with my friends. I want to breathe the fresh air and live in the beautiful sun.

___ Attention everyone. I have an announcement. After four weeks of unremitting effort on the part of our friend, the Goose, the Goslings have arrived.

CURTAINS UP ON ANIMAL BEHAVIOR...

Make a list of ways that Wilbur behaves like all pigs and ways that he behaved in an unusual way.

COMMON PIG BEHAVIOR

UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR

CURTAINS UP ON STORYTELLING...

We know the story of Charlotte's life but what about her children?
Pretend that you are one of Charlotte's babies.

Write a journal entry about some of your adventures.

DEAR JOURNAL,

CURTAINS UP ON SCIENCE...

E.B. White did a lot of research to make Charlotte a real spider. There are about 30 thousand different kinds of spiders. Charlotte is a barn spider, *Araneus cavaticus*. The first spider lived about 300 million years ago.

What other kinds of spiders have you heard of? Are any of them dangerous?

Spiders are not insects.

Insects have:

Three body parts

Six legs

Antenna for touch and smell

Two big eyes with three smaller eyes

Spiders have:

Two body parts

Eight legs

Spinnerets for spinning silk

Eight eyes

Draw an example of an insect and a spider. Label each part.

Draw a spider web and create a secret message inside.

CURTAINS UP ON ILLUSTRATION...

**Can you re-tell the story of Charlotte's Web using only pictures?
Use the back of this page if you need more room.**

Can you create a comic strip about Wilbur?

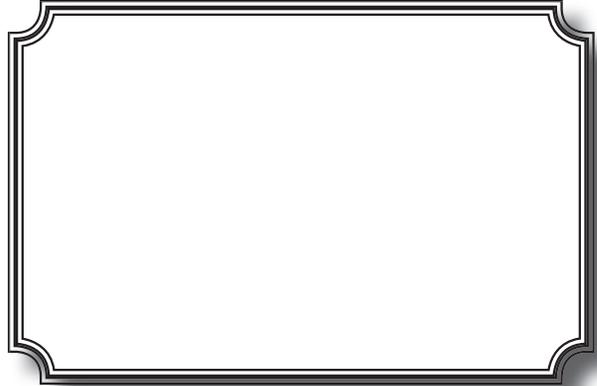
CURTAINS UP ON FAMILY ALBUMS...

Charlotte can write words in her web. What if other animals did things that humans can do? Draw a family photo of these unusual animals.

Sewing Sheep



Scientific Horses



Cooking Pigs



Exercising Cows



Ballerina Goats



Musical Chickens



CURTAINS UP ON SUGGESTED READING...

Bailey, Jill	<i>The Life Cycle of a Spider</i>
Bender, Lionel	<i>Spiders</i>
Dewey, Jennifer Owings	<i>Spiders Near and Far</i>
Gibbons, Gail	<i>Spiders</i>
Jennings, Terry	<i>Junior Science: Spiders</i>
Lexau, Joan M.	<i>The Spider Makes a Web</i>
Ryder, Joanne	<i>The Spiders Dance</i>
Simons, Jamie and Scott	<i>Why Spiders Spin</i>
Spinelli, Eileen	<i>Sophie's Masterpiece</i>

T.E.K.S. satisfied by CHARLOTTE'S WEB

117.4 - Theatre, Kindergarten.

K.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

A - Begin to identify appropriate audience behavior.

B - Respond to dramatic activities.

117.7 - Theatre, Grade 1.

1.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

A - Identify appropriate audience behavior.

B - Respond to and begin to evaluate dramatic activities.

117.10 - Theatre, Grade 2.

2.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

A - Identify and apply appropriate audience behavior.

B - React to and begin to evaluate dramatic activities.

117.13 - Theatre, Grade 3.

3.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

A - Evaluate and apply appropriate audience behavior consistently.

B - Evaluate simple dramatic activities and performances.

117.16 - Theatre, Grade 4.

4.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.

A - Identify and apply appropriate audience behavior at performances.

D - Compare theatre artists and their contributions.