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- Social studies:** World friends mini-unit project ideas – Culminating activities – In global terms – Elements of folktales
- English:** Friendly book report – Friendship quotes
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Charlotte's Web



by E. B. White

Summary

When Fern Arable learns that her father wants to kill the runt of the pig's litter, she begs him to reconsider. Mr Arable capitulates and allows Fern to raise the pig as a pet. Fern names the pig Wilbur and continues to visit him even after he is sold to Mr Zuckerman. Wilbur soon learns from the farmyard animals that he will be killed for food at Christmas time. Charlotte, a spider, hears Wilbur's mournful cries for help and devises a plan that will ensure Wilbur's life. With the help of Templeton, the rat, Charlotte is able to save the life of her good friend Wilbur by spinning different words on her web. When Mr Zuckerman reads the words, he is convinced that Wilbur is indeed a terrific pig. Charlotte's words and a special prize at the county fair assure Wilbur of a continuing, comfortable life on the farm.

The outline below is a suggested plan for using the various activities that are presented in this unit. You should adapt these ideas to fit your own classroom situation.

Sample plan

Day I

- Play friendly Bingo (page 11)
- Construct a Ways to be a friend web (page 5) and noticeboard (page 14)
- What's in friendship? (page 5)
- Spider web noticeboard (page 5)
- Read chapters I–IV
- Choose activities from page 8

Day II

- Read chapters V–IX
- Choose activities from pages 8–9
- Begin character charts (page 16)
- Research spiders (see page 7)
- Do a Spidery art activity (page 27)
- Complete Amazing spider facts (page 23)
- Do Spider science activities (pages 24–25)

Day III

- Read chapters X–XVIII
- Choose activities from page 9

- Add to Character charts (page 16)
- Draw spider webs (page 18)
- Choose a writing activity (page 21)
- Make edible spiders and webs (page 28)

Day IV

- Read chapters XIV–XVIII
- Choose activities from pages 9–10
- Do Believe it or not (page 17)
- Dance the tarantella (page 7)
- Complete selected critical thinking activities (page 20)

Day V

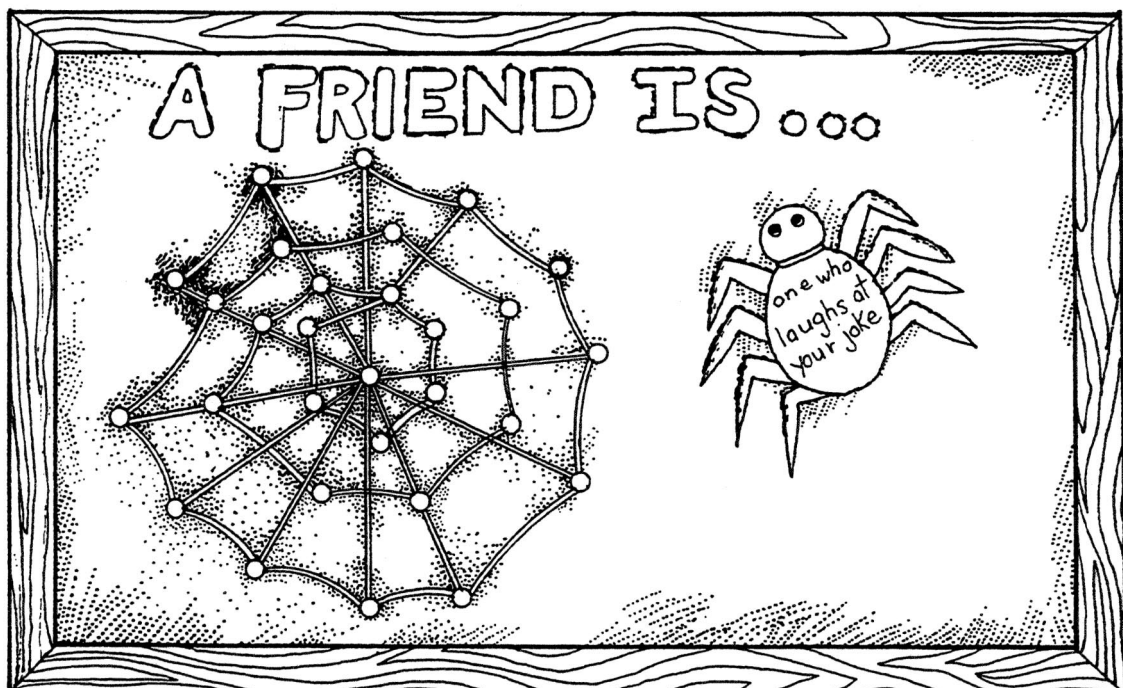
- Read chapters XIX–XXII
- Choose activities from page 10
- Do Story sequence (page 15)
- Complete salutations! Crossword (page 22)
- Write Friendly letters (page 26)
- Culminating Activity: Envelope books (page 29)



Overview of activities

SETTING THE STAGE

1. **Play a game of friendly Bingo** (see page 11). Students will learn more about one another and possibly establish new friendships based on interests and likes. Punch holes in the pages and place them in a three-ring binder. Add the book to the classroom library for all to read. Use the data gathered to make a class graph of favourite colours, books or snack foods.
2. **Construct a ways to be a friend web** (see page 14 for noticeboard directions). Have students write their name on a slip of paper; put all papers in a bag or box. Direct the students to draw a name; that is their secret friend for the day. Sometime during the day they must do at least one activity from the Ways To Be a Friend web for their secret friend. Spend some time at the end of the day discussing how it felt to be friendly, which deeds were performed the most, etc.
3. **What's in friendship?** Have the pairs from the previous activity work together to complete the fun worksheet on page 12.
4. **Build a spider web on a noticeboard.** Cover the background with black paper. To make the web, gather some clear or white map pins. Begin with one in the centre and continue outward in a spiral pattern (see diagram below). After the pins have been secured, tie one end of a length of white wool or string to the middle map pin. Wrap the wool or string once around each map pin; tie off on the last pin. Run pieces of wool or string from the centre pin to the outer pins to form pie-like wedges. Write a title for the noticeboard using white chalk or white cut-out letters. Have students make spiders of their own design or use the pattern on page 13. Some suggested writing assignments on pages 16 and 21 can be done on the spiders and added to the noticeboard. For more noticeboard ideas see page 14.





Overview of activities *(cont.)*

SETTING THE STAGE *(cont.)*

5. **Explain to students that they will be learning about friendship through two characters named Wilbur, a pig and Charlotte, a spider.** Have students discuss how a pig and a spider might become friends.

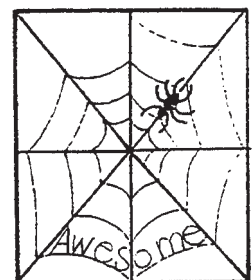
ENJOYING THE BOOK

1. **Read the book aloud or assign chapters to the students.** Before any reading has begun, group the students and give each group a copy of *Charlotte's Web*. Tell them to predict story events as they view each picture in the book. Have each group record its predictions and save them for comparisons after the text has been read.
2. **Select chapter by chapter activities** from pages 8–10.
3. **After reading *Charlotte's Web*, conduct a brainstorming session of story events.** List student responses on the board, chart paper or overhead projector. Compare these events with predictions made before the text was read. Follow up this activity with the Story Sequence worksheet on page 15. Pair or group students to work together to sequence events.

4. **Construct character charts.** A sample chart can be seen at the right. Complete directions are on page 16. Also on page 16 are five other comprehension activities to use throughout the unit.
5. **Believe it or not!** Some story events were things that could have happened on a typical farm, while other events were make-believe. Students can determine the difference on the worksheet, page 17.

CHARACTER: Templeton		
Physical features	Personality traits	Story events
grey	crafty	took the goose's bad egg
furry	selfish	carried the egg sac in his mouth
long tail	unfriendly	

6. **Draw spider webs.** Students can pretend to be Charlotte and draw a web of their own design. Then have them write a word – one that has not been used in the story – to describe Wilbur. A worksheet for this assignment can be found on page 18.
7. **Problem-solving skills.** Help students improve their maths problem-solving skills with the story problems on page 19. Set aside a daily block of time to focus on the steps to take when solving maths problems.
8. **Critical thinking.** Encourage and strengthen critical thinking skills and creative writing skills with any of the activities on page 20. Students can be paired or grouped to work together. Follow up with whole class or small group discussions.

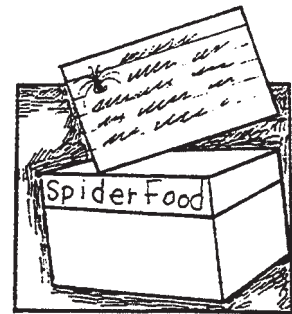




Overview of activities *(cont.)*

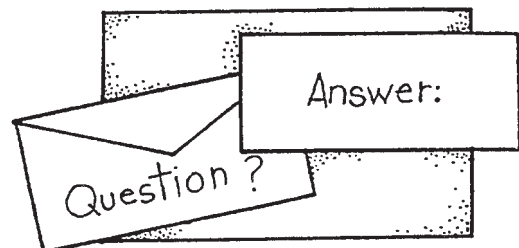
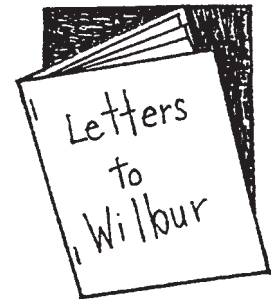
ENJOYING THE BOOK

9. **Creative writing.** Students can work alone, with a partner or within a small group on the writing projects found on page 21. Give students a choice of assignments to complete. Have them present their projects to the whole group when finished.
10. **Salutations!** Build students' word knowledge with this crossword puzzle. Have students work in pairs to complete this worksheet (page 22). Challenge them to create their own crossword puzzles using vocabulary from *Charlotte's Web*.
11. **Learn about spiders while reviewing basic multiplication facts.** Pair students to work together on the Amazing spider facts worksheet (page 23). Challenge students to research another spider fact. Have each student write their fact on an index card and place in a card file titled 'Spider facts'. Add to it as new spider facts are learned. For those who want to learn about spiders, have them do the Spider parts worksheet on page 24 or activities from More science, page 25.



EXTENDING THE BOOK

1. **Review the parts of a friendly letter before writing them** (see page 27). Give students a choice of assignments to complete. Collate the letters and staple together (or punch holes in the paper); add to the classroom library for all to enjoy.
2. **Dance the tarantella!** Share with students that a tarantula is a big, hairy, sometimes poisonous spider. One kind is from Italy. People there used to believe that lively dancing would cure the tarantula's bite. Play a version of the classic tarantella folk dance and have students invent their own dance to accompany the music.
3. **Spidery art.** Choose from three unique art projects on page 28. Use the finished projects to construct an eye-catching noticeboard.
4. **Yummy spiders are easy-to-make treats.** Turn funnel cakes into spider webs. Both recipes can be found on page 29.
5. **Making envelope books is a unique way to culminate your *Charlotte's Web* unit.** Students will enjoy writing, reading and solving riddles based on the story. These books will make a welcome addition to any library, too. Page 30 contains directions for making envelope books and also provides an alternative idea – shape books.





Chapter by chapter

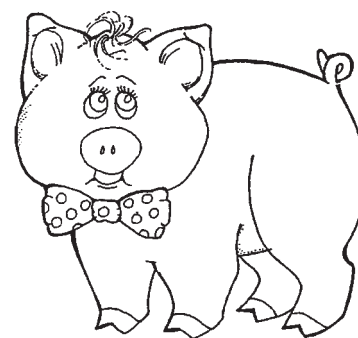
Most of the activities and projects outlined in the Sample plan and Overview of activities are intended for use after the whole book has been read. However, if you assign chapters to be read each day, you may want to reinforce this reading with chapter-specific activities. The plan below and on the next two pages outlines some chapter by chapter ideas you can use and adapt to fit your program.

- I. **Questions for discussion or writing.** Why did Fern want to save the pig? Why did Mr Arable oppose keeping the pig? What is a runt? Describe how Fern fed Wilbur.

- II. **Comparisons.** Construct a chart or Venn diagram to show the likenesses and differences between caring for a baby and the way Fern cared for Wilbur.

Human	Animal
Drink from a bottle	Drink from a bottle
Wear nappies	Eat food scraps

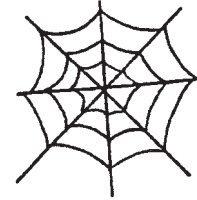
- III. **Draw a story map** (see page 68 for how-to's) showing the events of Wilbur's escape and capture. Or, draw a cartoon sequence of the same events.
- IV. **Dialogue.** No-one wanted to play with Wilbur – each animal had a different excuse. What if the animals had wanted to play with Wilbur? Rewrite the dialogue between Wilbur and each animal with a possible acceptance.
- V. **Role-play.** When Wilbur meets Charlotte, he is unsure of her. 'Charlotte is fierce, brutal, scheming, bloodthirsty – everything I don't like.' Pair the students. Have one partner in each pair play Wilbur; the other partner plays Charlotte. Direct Wilbur to voice his fears to Charlotte and have Charlotte respond. Reverse roles. Choose some pairs to perform their dialogue for the rest of the class.
- VI. **Writing topics.** Present the following topics to the students. Tell them to write two or more paragraphs on one of them. 1. Why are the early summer days on a farm '... the happiest and fairest days of the year'? 2. Pretend you are a gosling about to hatch. Describe your experience. 3. If you were Templeton, what would you do with the egg that did not hatch?
- VII. **Predicting.** Pair the students for this activity. Tell them that Wilbur reacts hysterically to the news that he is going to be killed and eaten. Charlotte announces that she will help him. Without reading any further, have the pairs make a list of possible ways they think Charlotte will help Wilbur. Set a time limit to the brainstorming and writing session. Have the pairs share their predictions with the class. Save the ideas for later reference.





Chapter by chapter (cont.)

- VIII. **Debate.** Fern's mother is worried about her because she has conversations with the farm animals. Fern's father, however, just thinks Fern has a lively imagination. Group the students in teams of six; have each team subdivide into halves. One half of the team will represent Mr Arable and the other half will represent Mrs Arable. Direct the teams to debate, as Mr and Mrs Arable, why or why not they should be worried by Fern's interest in the pig and the other farm animals.
- IX. **Research.** Wilbur tries to spin a web but painfully learns that it is an impossible feat for him. Spiders, on the other hand, know by instinct how to spin webs. Pair the students and direct them to research other animal instincts. Have them report their findings to the class.
- X. **Writing.** Give students a choice of writing topics. For example, How the goose egg saved Charlotte's life; Why people are not as smart as insects; How it feels to ride Mr Zuckerman's swing; Wilbur's delicious meal.
- XI. **Explanations.** Pair the students for this activity. Give them a choice of one of the following characters: Lurvy, Charlotte, Mr Arable or Fern. As that character, students are to explain how the SOME PIG web changed their life. Students in a pair may both choose the same character. To improve their listening skills, have the partner who is listening rephrase their partner's response. Reverse roles.
- XII. **Brainstorming.** Conduct a class meeting to brainstorm words or phrases that Charlotte could weave into her web. Students can play the parts of the characters in the book, if desired.
- XIII. **Vocabulary.** List some words from this chapter on the board. For example, radial, spinnerets, ascend, fetch, radiant, thrashing, aeronaut and thrushes. Pair the students. Direct them to find the words in chapter XIII and copy the sentence in which it appears. Then, in their own words, tell them to define each vocabulary word. If the context does not supply enough clues, have them use a dictionary.
- XIV. **Discussion.** In small groups, have the students discuss why they do or do not agree with Dr. Dorian's advice. Extend the discussion – tell the groups to talk about what advice they would give Mrs Arable if they were Dr Dorian.
- XV. **Drawing.** Instruct the students to draw a picture of Wilbur doing something to make himself radiant.



Words for web

smart
clean
a star

