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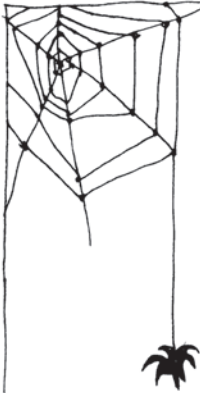
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*Dramatic Publishing*



# CHARLOTTE'S WEB

A Full-Length Play

Adapted from the book  
by **E. B. White**

By **Joseph Robinette**

*"You have kept  
its spirit and  
my intent.  
Congratulations  
and cheers!  
E.B. White*





SOME PLAY

## Charlotte's Web

*Based on the book by E.B. White. Adapted by Joseph Robinette.*

*Cast: 5 to 7m., 7 to 9w., flexible ensemble group.* The Children's Literature Association named this "the best American children's book of the past two hundred years," and Joseph Robinette, working with the advice of E.B. White, has created a play that captures this work in a thrilling theatrical presentation. The costumes and unit set may be simple or as colorful and elaborate as you wish; it's the story and relationships that make the show. All the enchanting characters are here: Wilbur, the irresistible young pig who desperately wants to avoid the butcher; Fern, a girl who understands what animals say to each other; Templeton, the gluttonous rat who can occasionally be talked into a good deed; the Zuckerman family; the Arables; and most of all, the extraordinary spider, Charlotte, who proves to be "a true friend and a good writer." Determined to save Wilbur, Charlotte begins her campaign with the "miracle" of her web in which she writes, "Some pig." It's the beginning of a victorious campaign which ultimately ends with the now-safe Wilbur doing what is most important to Charlotte. This is a beautiful, knowing play about friendship that will give your actors and your audience an evening of enchantment. *Unit set.*

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Charlotte's Web

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# **CHARLOTTE'S WEB**



**A Full-Length Play**

Adapted from  
the book by  
**E. B. White**

By  
**Joseph Robinette**



**THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY**

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(CHARLOTTE'S WEB)

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CHARLOTTE'S WEB  
*A Full-Length Play*  
*for Four to Nine Men, Five to Ten Women,*  
*Flexible Ensemble Group\**

CHARACTERS

FERN ARABLE . . . . .	a young girl
JOHN ARABLE . . . . .	her father
MARTHA ARABLE . . . . .	her mother
AVERY ARABLE . . . . .	her brother
HOMER ZUCKERMAN . . . . .	her uncle
EDITH ZUCKERMAN . . . . .	her aunt
LURVY . . . . .	a hired hand
WILBUR . . . . .	a pig
TEMPLETON . . . . .	a rat
CHARLOTTE . . . . .	a spider
GOOSE, GANDER, SHEEP, LAMB . . . . .	farm animals
CHORUS	
REPORTER, PHOTOGRAPHER, SPECTATORS,	
JUDGES, FAIRGOERS, ANNOUNCER,	
UNCLE (a pig), SPIDERS . . . . .	extras

*\*See Production Notes for flexible casting.*

TIME: The Present and The Past  
PLACE: The Arables' Farm; the Zuckerman Barn;  
the County Fair

## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING about *Charlotte's Web*...

“Wonderful writing—fully developed characters and wonderfully comic scenes. Expandable casting is always a great thing because our enrollment is usually high and we need a larger cast. Kids of all ages love this one.” *Carol-Ann Black, Allen Park, Mich.*

“Simple staging was an asset. Very true to original story. The chorus is an ingenious device for bringing in the poetic lyricism of E.B. White. Excellent production notes in script.”

*Larayne Watts, Willapa Players, Raymond, Wash.*

“The children involved loved the play. The children in the audience loved the play. There is a reason the classic tales live on for years—characters that are understandable; a story that speaks to the audience; and a positive message to learn.”

*Grace Sayers, Theatre Centre, Inc., DeLand, Fla.*

“It was well scripted—stayed very close to the book—and was well received by audiences. It sold out every show.”

*Kara Kemp, Actors Co-Op, Knoxville, Tenn.*

“*Charlotte's Web* is a superior adaptation.”

*Cynthia Zylak, Waterford Elementary School, Waterford, Pa.*

“*Charlotte's Web*...has been a delight to produce! It is true to its original novel, with all of the timeless characters and scenes included. It's ‘Some Play!’ ”

*Wendi Edwards, Twin Oaks Elementary, Leesburg, Ga.*

“Excellent storytelling. Very true to the original text.”

*Pamela Hendrick, Richard Stockton College of New Jersey,  
Pomona, N.J.*

“One of the best stage adaptations I have ever read. The production charmed audiences, children and adults alike.”

*Mark Carter, DS Productions, North Vancouver, B.C.*

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## ACT ONE

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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, whip-poorwills, etc. The sounds may be on tape or produced “live” offstage by the actors. The lights come up faintly as the CHORUS enters or is revealed onstage.

FIRST MEMBER (to the audience). Shhh! Listen to the sounds of the morning. Very, very early morning. So early, in fact, the sun isn’t even up yet.

SECOND MEMBER. Listen to the crickets . . . the hoot-owls . . . a frog down by the pond . . . a dog up at the next farm.

THIRD MEMBER. And today there’s another sound. It tells that something exciting happened during the night. Some brand-new pigs were born. (The squealing of young pigs is heard.)

FIRST MEMBER. Here’s one of them right now — exploring his new home.



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

FIRST MEMBER. 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.

SECOND MEMBER. The new pig has been born here at the Arabes' farm. Before long, you'll meet the Arabes. You'll also meet the others — the people *and* the animals — who will play an important part in the little pig's life.

THIRD MEMBER. Now, where should we start? Wait a minute. We've already started. It's early morning. We're at the Arabes' farm. Some pigs were born during the night. For now, that's all you need to know. (The CHORUS MEMBERS exit 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.)

FERN (offstage). Where's Papa going with that ax?

MRS. ARABLE (offstage). Out to the hoghouse. Some pigs were born last night.

FERN (offstage). I don't see why he needs an ax.

MRS. ARABLE (offstage). 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 "me?") So your father has decided to do away with it. (WILBUR runs to a downstage corner in fear.)

FERN (offstage). 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.

(MARTHA ARABLE, Fern's mother, enters.)

MRS. ARABLE. Stop, Fern! Don't yell. Your father is right. The pig would probably die anyway. (FERN spots 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.)

MRS. ARABLE. Fern! (Hopelessly, to ARABLE.) John? (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.)

MRS. ARABLE. You can start him on a bottle, like a baby. I'll go look for one. (She exits.)

(AVERY, Fern's older brother, enters. He carries 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.

FERN (playing with WILBUR). I'm going to have such a good time with this little pig.

AVERY. Can I have a pig, too, Pop?

ARABLE. No. I only distribute pigs to early risers who are trying to rid the world of injustice. Let's eat. (He and AVERY exit.)

(MRS. ARABLE enters.)

MRS. ARABLE. Fern, honey, I found a baby's nursing bottle and a rubber nipple. I'll pour some warm milk in it. Bring your pig in, and give him some breakfast. Say, what's his name, anyway?

FERN. Why, I don't know.

MRS. ARABLE. Hurry along now. (She exits.)

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 . . . Maximilian. Because you're worth a million to me. (A pause. BOTH laugh and shake their heads.) Maybe I'm trying too hard. Let's see . . . Barney, Herman, Lawrence, Newton, Morris, Warren, Willie, Wilbur, William . . . (WILBUR nudges her.) Wait a minute. Wilbur. (WILBUR nods. FERN tries out the name.) *Willlll*-bur. (WILBUR smiles and nods vigorously.) Wilbur! What a beautiful name!

MRS. ARABLE (offstage). Breakfast, Fern!

FERN. I'm coming! I mean *we're* coming. Fern and *Wilbur*!  
(She takes Wilbur's hand, then they exit.)

(CHORUS MEMBERS enter from various locales.)

FIRST MEMBER. Wilbur.

SECOND MEMBER. Wilbur.

THIRD MEMBER. Wilbur.

FIRST MEMBER. Fern loved Wilbur more than anything.

SECOND MEMBER. 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. A moment later, FERN enters carrying her school books. She pats WILBUR on the head.)

THIRD MEMBER. After breakfast, Wilbur always walked out to the road with Fern and waited till her bus came. (FERN and WILBUR cross to the side of the stage.)

FERN. Now you be a good boy until I get home. (A bus horn sounds. *This may be done offstage or the sound may be*

*made by a CHORUS MEMBER.*) There's the bus. 'Bye, 'bye, Wilbur. I'll see you this afternoon. (She hugs WILBUR as the horn sounds again.) Coming! (They wave to each other as she exits. WILBUR slowly crosses to C and resumes sucking his bottle.)

FIRST MEMBER. Every day was a happy day for Wilbur.

SECOND MEMBER. And every night was peaceful.

THIRD MEMBER. He was very contented living with Fern and the Arable family.

WILBUR. I *love* it here.

(MRS. ARABLE enters carrying a bowl.)

MRS. ARABLE. Wilbur, you're getting big enough to have something besides just milk. Try this bowl of cornmeal mush and honey. (She hands the bowl to WILBUR, who eagerly sips from it. MRS. ARABLE removes his bib, takes his bottle, and exits.)

FIRST MEMBER. No longer was Wilbur a runt. (WILBUR pulls himself up.)

SECOND MEMBER. He was growing each day. (Somewhat cockily, WILBUR strikes a pose.)

THIRD MEMBER. He was becoming quite a specimen of a pig.

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

ARABLE (offstage). Suppertime, Wilbur.

WILBUR. And to good, fattening food.

(ARABLE enters carrying a bucket.)

ARABLE. Okay, pig, it's time you graduated to slops. Skim

milk, potato skins, leftover sandwiches and marmalade drippings. (WILBUR repeats each item after ARABLE with growing enthusiasm. He fairly swoons as ARABLE hands him the bucket, takes the bowl, and exits. WILBUR quickly drinks from the bucket, stopping occasionally to chew.)

FIRST MEMBER. Before long, Wilbur was five weeks old.

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

SECOND MEMBER. He was big.

WILBUR. *Now* let them call me a runt.

THIRD MEMBER. And strong.

WILBUR. Anyone for arm-wrestling?

FIRST MEMBER. And healthy.

WILBUR. Check out the pink in the cheeks.

ENTIRE CHORUS. *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 CHORUS exits as WILBUR drops his bucket and collapses.)

FERN (offstage). No, Papa, you can't sell him. You just can't.

(ARABLE enters, followed by FERN and MRS. ARABLE.)

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!

MRS. ARABLE (after a beat). Listen, everybody. I have a suggestion. Why don't we call the Zuckermans? Your Uncle Homer sometimes raises a pig. And if Wilbur goes there to live, you can walk down the road and visit him anytime you like.

FERN. Oh, yes. *Please*, Papa.

ARABLE (after a pause). That's not a bad idea, Martha. Come along. We'll call Uncle Homer. (He picks up the bucket.

FERN and WILBUR embrace in great relief, then shake hands.)

FERN. Can Wilbur come, too?

ARABLE. Why not? Maybe we'll let him make the call himself.

(He and MRS. ARABLE laugh as they start to exit.)

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

MRS. ARABLE. Oh, Fern. What an imagination! (ALL exit.)

(The scene shifts to the Zuckerman barn. A moment later HOMER ZUCKERMAN enters with his wife, EDITH, and LURVY, a hired hand. HOMER carries a pig trough and LURVY holds an armload of straw.)

EDITH. Homer Zuckerman, I want to know where you plan to keep that pig.

HOMER (setting the trough down). Right over here in the barn, Edith. Lurvy, go out there and patch up that piece of fence that's coming down.

LURVY (setting the straw down). Sure thing, Mr. Zuckerman. (He exits.)

HOMER. I'll slide this door back so he can't get in there where the cows are. (He slides a sizeable door at R across an opening. A large spider web is revealed behind the door as it is moved.)

EDITH. Well, I just hope this pig's not going to be more trouble than it's worth.

HOMER (completing the moving of the door). Now, I couldn't turn down Fern, could I? She seemed so desperate. (LURVY is heard hammering offstage.) Anyway, she only asked six dollars for it. When the pig gets big enough to slaughter, he'll

be worth a lot more than six dollars.

EDITH (cleaning up). Ugh. Dirt, spider webs . . .

HOMER. Perfect for a pig.

FERN (offstage). Uncle Homer! Aunt Edith!

EDITH. Here they are.

(FERN enters with WILBUR.)

FERN. Hi. This is Wilbur.

HOMER (laughing). Oh, he has a name, does he?

(LURVY enters.)

LURVY. All finished, Mr. Zuckerman. (He spots WILBUR.)

Well, here's our new boarder.

EDITH. Fern, honey, I just opened a big can of peaches. You come in and have a dish with us.

FERN. Okay, thanks. But let me stay with Wilbur just for a minute . . . till he gets used to his surroundings. (EDITH, HOMER and LURVY exit. For a moment FERN and WILBUR look about.) It's very nice here, Wilbur. (WILBUR smiles.) And I can come down and visit you almost every day. (WILBUR nods.) Now I'd better go. I'll see you tomorrow. (They wave to each other as FERN exits.)

WILBUR (after a beat, looking about). 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. (He yawns, lies down, and closes his eyes.)



(A moment later, a GOOSE enters, followed by a GANDER. 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 (offstage). 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, a rat, enters. He carries string, a tin can, and an orange.)

TEMPLETON. In person. (He stares at WILBUR.) Well, I will admit it's nice to have a pig around the place again. I haven't had delicious, leftover slops in an age.

WILBUR. But the slops will be for me.

TEMPLETON. I'm sure you'll find it in your charitable little heart to share your food with dear old Templeton. Especially if I make a nest right here beside your trough. (He arranges the straw at one side of the trough and buries the string, can, and

orange.)

SHEEP (offstage). What's all the commotion in here?

GANDER. It's the old, old Sheep.

GOOSE. And the little, little Lamb.

(The SHEEP and LAMB enter.)

GANDER. We have a new resident.

GOOSE. His name is Wilbur.

LAMB (unenthused). Oh, yeah. The pig.

WILBUR. You know about me?

SHEEP. We overheard the Zuckermans discussing you. They plan to keep you nice and comfortable.

LAMB. And fatten you up with delicious slops.

WILBUR (delighted). 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?

SHEEP (after a beat). Oh, nothing. Nothing at all. Nice to meet you . . . Wilbur. Lamb, mind your manners.

LAMB (not meaning it). Nice . . . to . . . meet . . . you . . . Wilbur.

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

GOOSE. Well, I have eggs to hatch.

TEMPLETON. And I have trash piles to raid.

GANDER. Good, good, good night, Wilbur. Better get some rest after such a long day.

WILBUR. Yes, thank you, I will. (GOOSE, GANDER, SHEEP, LAMB, and TEMPLETON exit.) The animals seem nice . . . I