

Excerpt terms and conditions



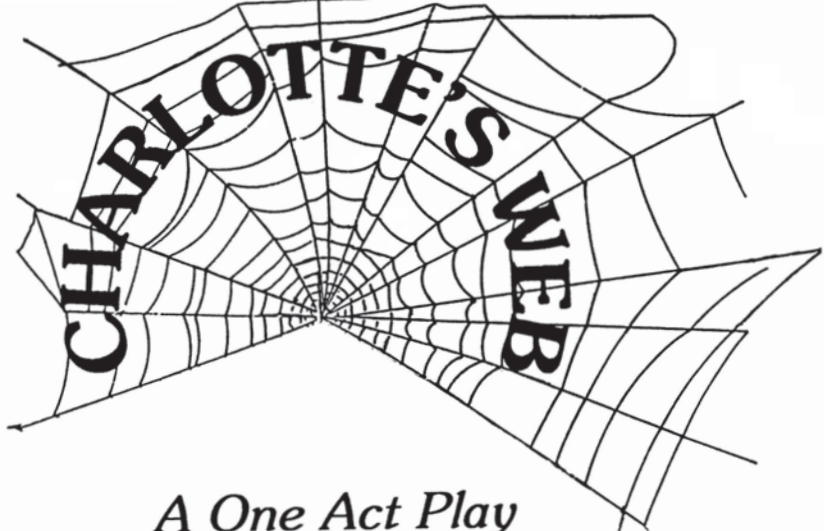
This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

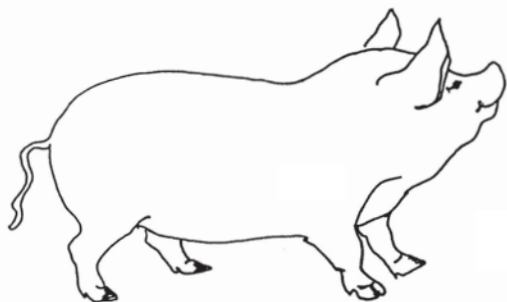
Dramatic Publishing



A One Act Play

*Based upon the story by
E. B. White*

*Dramatized by
Joseph Robinette*



↖ **The Dramatic Publishing Company**

*E.B. White's
Beloved Story...*

*Now available in a special
50 minute version.*

*This arrangement was
originally designed for the
Lincoln Center Theatre
tour, and requires only six
actors.*

*Due to the demand for
this One Act tourable ver-
sion, we have retired the
old manuscripts and
brought out this printed
edition.*

ISBN 13: 978-0-87129-389-3



9 780871 293893 >

www.DramaticPublishing.com

Code: C-63



printed on recycled paper

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

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.

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.)* Willli-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 fairly 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 ZUKERMAN 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 Arabes, 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