



EDUCATION GUIDE



As the fifth oldest active children’s theatre in the nation, Youtheatre is dedicated to its mission to “educate, engage and entertain” through quality theatrical experiences. In 1934, Dr. Clive McAllister, president of the Old Fort Players (now the Civic Theatre), appointed a committee to create a junior or children’s theater branch of the organization. The committee established the philosophy that the new “Children’s Theatre” would develop poise, better diction, and self-esteem for children through dramatic instruction. They would give at least one play a year, and awaken enthusiasm in children for beauty in art and integrity in dramatic literature.

The first class began with an enrollment of a whopping 40 students, each of which paid just \$1.00 for 8 classes! The first production, “The Steadfast Tin Soldier,” was performed at the Majestic Theatre in Fort Wayne and had a cast of 75 young people. Tickets were only 10 cents for children and 25 cents for adults.

In 1954, the Majestic Theatre was deemed unsafe for children by the fire department and so the Children’s Theatre spent the next 10 years at various locations in the city. By the time it rejoined the Civic Theatre at the Old Palace Theatre, it had a new name, the “Fort Wayne Youtheatre.” In 1973, both organizations moved to their current home in the Arts United Center on E. Main Street in downtown Fort Wayne. The Youtheatre became autonomous in 1984.

In 1978, Broadway star Harvey Cocks became the Executive Director of Youtheatre. Even after retiring from that position, Harvey has remained as our Artist in Residence; and after 40+ years, he is still inspiring young actors and actresses! In 2010, he was joined by Leslie Hormann, who served as Executive/Artistic Director until 2018.

Youtheatre is currently managed by Executive/Artistic Director Todd Espeland, who came to us in 2018 after serving as Artistic Director of the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre. He is joined by Assistant Director/Director of Outreach Christopher J. Murphy and Administrative Assistant/Marketing Director Megan Ebbeskotte and a staff of outstanding local artists who serve as teachers, guest directors, choreographers, music directors and designers.

For over three quarters of a century, Youtheatre has produced classes, camps and theatrical productions for the artists and audiences of northeast Indiana. Recent productions include “A Charlie Brown Christmas,” “Frozen the musical” “Wind in the Willows” and “Treasure Island.” Our touring “Storybook Theatre” troupe takes literature-based shows into the community, performing in hospitals, libraries, community centers and more. In 2018, our Linda L. Ruffalo “Young Heroes of Conscience Series, which has spotlighted the likes of Anne Frank, Ryan White, Harriet Tubman and Ruby Bridges, won the “Mayor’s Arts Award.”



ELEMENTS OF A PRODUCTION

SET - the scenery pieces that form the area in which the performers act out the play. Sometimes scenery is very realistic, making the audience think they are inside a real house, for example. Other times the scenery is quite fanciful or limited. What different sets can you name in “Young Heroes of 2020?” What time and place does it look like?

LIGHTS - the lighting instruments that help to create the right atmosphere on the stage. Lights direct the attention of the audience to specific areas of the stage or to a specific performer. The lights may be different colors to add special effects such as nighttime or a storm. How do the lights in “Young Heroes of 2020” show changes in the time and place?

PROPS (Properties) - the objects performers carry to help them act out the story. Look for important props that help define character or place. Can you name a few?

MAKE-UP - the cosmetic bases, blushes, lipsticks, mascara and eye liners which helps the performer physically become the character he/she is playing. Make-up is also used to that the performers facial features can be seen clearly under the bright stage lights from a distance. Do you notice any special make-up in “Young Heroes of 2020?”

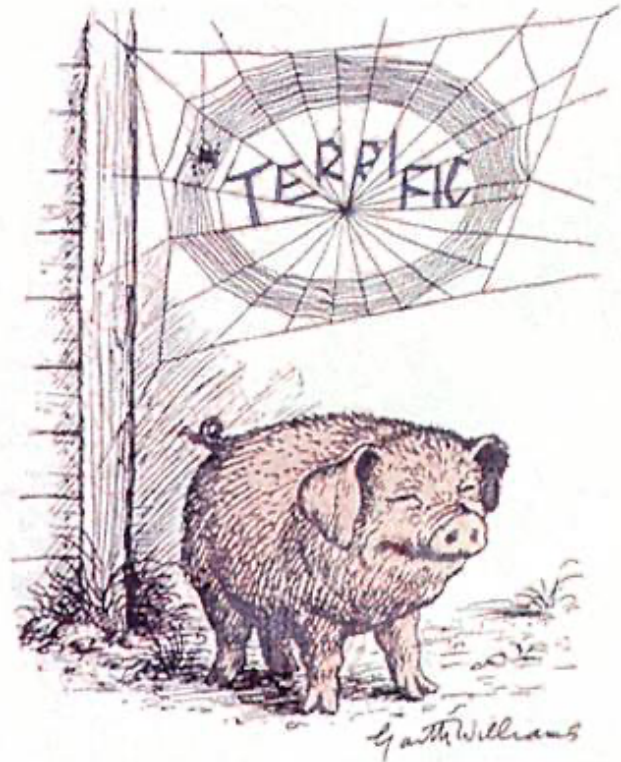
COSTUMES - the clothing the performers wear. Depending on the story being acted out, this clothing may be what a character of the time would have actually worn. It may also be very exaggerated or fantastic in the case a dream or a fairy-tale. Costumes help the audience know what a character is like or where and when he/she lived. Are the costumes drab or colorful? Do they look realistic? What do they tell you about the time and place?



Above are pictures from Youtheatre productions of *Willy Wonka* and *Lord of the Flies*.

Setting the Stage: Synopsis

After a little girl named Fern Arable pleads for the life of the runt of a litter of piglets, her father gives her the pig to nurture, and she names him Wilbur. She treats him as a pet, but a month later, Wilbur is no longer small, and is sold to Fern's uncle, Homer Zuckerman. In Zuckerman's barnyard, Wilbur yearns for companionship, but is snubbed by the other animals. He is befriended by a barn spider named Charlotte, whose web sits in a doorway overlooking Wilbur's enclosure. When Wilbur discovers that he is being raised for slaughter, she promises to hatch a plan guaranteed to spare his life. Fern often sits on a stool, listening to the animals' conversation, but over the course of the story, as she starts to mature, she begins to find other interests.



As the summer passes, Charlotte ponders the question of how to save Wilbur. At last, she comes up with a plan, which she proceeds to implement. Reasoning that Zuckerman would not kill a famous pig, Charlotte weaves words and short phrases in praise of Wilbur into her web. This makes Wilbur, and the barn as a whole, into tourist attractions, as many people believe the webs to be miracles. Wilbur is eventually entered into the county fair, and Charlotte, as well as the barn rat Templeton, accompany him. He fails to win the blue ribbon, but is awarded a special prize by the judges. Charlotte hears the presentation of the award over the public address system and realizes that the prize means Zuckerman will cherish Wilbur for as long as the pig lives, and will never slaughter him for his meat. However, Charlotte, being a barn spider with a naturally short lifespan, is already dying of natural causes by the time the award is announced. Knowing that she has saved Wilbur, and satisfied with the outcome of her life, she does not return to the barn with Wilbur and Templeton, and instead remains at the fairgrounds to die. However, she allows Wilbur to take with him her egg sac, from which her children will hatch in the spring. Meanwhile, Fern, who has matured significantly since the beginning of the novel, loses interest in Wilbur and starts paying more attention to boys her age. She misses most of the fair's events in order to go on the Ferris wheel with Henry Fussy, one of her classmates.

Wilbur waits out the winter, a winter he would not have survived but for Charlotte. He is initially delighted when Charlotte's children hatch, but is later devastated when most leave the barn. Only three remain to take up residence in Charlotte's old doorway. Pleased at finding new friends, Wilbur names one of them Nellie, while the remaining two name themselves Joy and Aranea. Further generations of spiders keep Wilbur company in subsequent years.

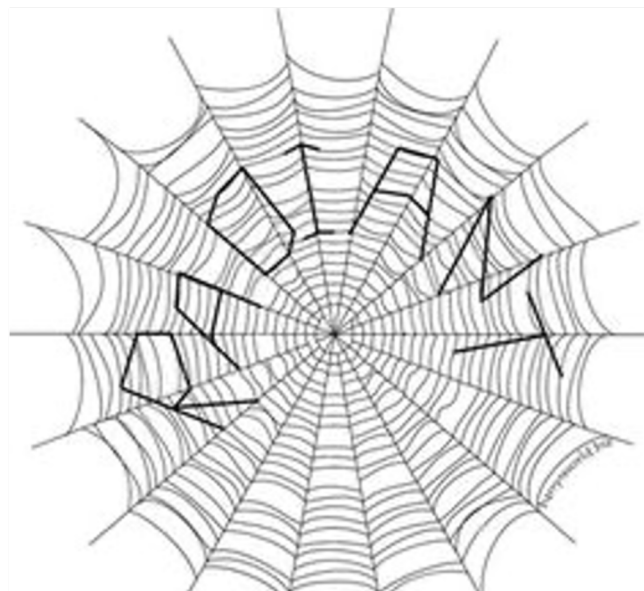


Put a word in someone else's web

Let a small group play Charlotte and Templeton for each other's Wilbur and decide a positive word to go in each other's web each day:

- Great _____ (fill in a noun): runner, climber, listener, reader, writer, artist, friend, helper, _____?
- Good work, well done, way to go, you are great at math.

What other words praise someone's effort and gives them something to strive for? Charlotte uses terrific and radiant. What specific, positive words could you use?



About the Author

E.B. White, in full **Elwyn Brooks White**, (born July 11, 1899, Mount Vernon, New York, U.S.—died October 1, 1985, North Brooklin, Maine), American essayist, author, and literary stylist, whose eloquent unaffected prose appealed to readers of all ages.

White graduated from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, in 1921 and worked as a reporter and freelance writer before joining *The New Yorker* magazine as a writer and contributing editor in 1927. He married Katherine Sergeant Angell, *The New Yorker's* first fiction editor, in 1929, and he remained with the weekly magazine for the rest of his career. White's essays for *The New Yorker* quickly garnered critical praise. Written in a personal, direct style that showcased an affable sense of humor, his witty pieces contained musings about city life, politics, and literature, among other subjects. White also wrote poems, cartoon captions, and brief sketches for the magazine.

His three books for children—*Stuart Little* (1945, film 1999), *Charlotte's Web* (1952, film 1973 and 2006), and *The Trumpet of the Swan* (1970)—are considered classics, featuring lively animal protagonists who seamlessly interact with the human world. In 1959 he revised and published a book by the late William Strunk, Jr., *The Elements of Style*, which became a standard style manual for writing in English.

In 2003 *Charlotte's Web* was listed at number 170 on the BBC's The Big Read poll of the UK's 200 "best-loved novels." Based on a 2007 online poll, the National Education Association listed the book as one of its "Teachers' Top 100 Books for Children." It was one of the "Top 100 Chapter Books" of all time in a 2012 poll by *School Library Journal*. In 2010, the New York Public Library reported that *Charlotte's Web* was the sixth most borrowed book in the library's history. It has won a Newbery Award and a Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal.

Recommended Reading

Here are some recommendations for further reading.

A Boy Called Bat by Elana K. Arnold, **Little Dog, lost** by Marion Dane Bauer, **Bless this Mouse** by Lois Lowry, **Stuart Little** by E. B. White, **Masterpiece** by Elise Broach



IT’S ALL ABOUT CHARACTER...

Characters in Charlotte’s Web

Wilbur: Sensitive and vulnerable, Wilbur is born a runt and saved from an untimely death by Fern who subsequently looks after him until he is five weeks old. He is pampered and babied by her and is completely content when he is surrounded by Fern's love. When he is then taken from her, he is very lonely until he finds love when he meets Charlotte. Wilbur experiences a whole range of emotions on his journey through the novel and his life is saved twice by two devoted friends. He is forever grateful to Charlotte’s kindness in particular and does the only thing he can think of to repay her – he looks after her egg sac.



Charlotte: Charlotte is cool and collected. She is practical, beautiful, skilled and unsentimental. She can't bear Wilbur crying, saying that she can't stand 'hysterics'. She is clever and loyal to her friends - she is the first to comfort Wilbur by assuring him she will save him when he finds out that he is to be killed at Christmastime.

She is the artist of the novel and through her creativity manages to manipulate the events that take place. Her love for Wilbur pushes her to save his life and she manages to produce a miracle – she singlehandedly manages to make the humans see in Wilbur what she sees: a ‘terrific’ and ‘radiant’ ‘humble’ pig.

Throughout the tale she mothers Wilbur and looks after him as if he were her own. She works tirelessly to save him and even though she is dying at the end of the novel, she motivates herself to write the word that will secure his safety.

Templeton: Templeton is the rat that lives under Wilbur's trough. Before Wilbur meets Charlotte, he passes his time talking to Templeton and although it is 'not the most interesting occupation in the world it [is] better than nothing.'

Templeton describes himself as 'a glutton but not a merrymaker'. Crafty and selfish, he collects and stores bizarre odds and ends and is happy to dig a tunnel to Wilbur's trough and eat his food but never offers to give anything in return.

Asked to go to the dump to look for new words that Charlotte can write in her web, Templeton responds "Let him die...I should worry." He is completely selfish and cares not a bit for Wilbur's well-being - sadly for him, he has no idea about friendship. He is persuaded to find words only with the promise of food - he is reminded by the sheep that if Wilbur dies, there will be no slops for him to steal. Similarly, at the fair, he is persuaded to retrieve Charlotte's egg sac on the promise that he will be given first choice of the slops forever after.

Nevertheless, Templeton plays a crucial role in the story by finding the words and retrieving the egg sac. Although he does so reluctantly, he has a large impact on what happens to Wilbur in the end.

Who is your favorite character in Charlotte’s Web? Why? Chances are they are your favorite because of their character traits.

Character traits are made up of **physical traits** and **personality traits**. Think about the character of Wilbur from the play Charlotte’s Web. Use this graphic organizer to record both physical (outside) and personality (inside) traits for the character. List at least five physical traits outside Wilbur, and at least five personality traits inside Wilbur.

CHARACTER TRAITS

Agonized, alluring, amicable, anxious, apologetic, arrogant, avid, awestruck, bashful, benevolent, blissful, bold, bored, brave, candid, calm, carefree, cautious, confident, concerned, considerate, courageous, cruel, cunning, curious, curt, defeated, demure, depressed, determined, devious, disappointed, disapproving, disbelieving, disdainful, disgusted, distracted, eager, ecstatic, enraged, envious, exhausted, flustered, focused, frank

Frightened, frustrated, gallant, gentle, gleeful, glum, grieving, guilty, happy, harmless, haughty, hilarious, honest, honorable, humble, hurt, hysterical, idiotic, impish, indifferent, innocent, inquisitive, interested, jaded, jealous, joyful, jubilant, kind, livid, lonely, meditative, melancholy, mischievous, miserable, miserly, modest, negative, nervous, nosey, obnoxious, obstinate, odd, opinionated, optimistic

Pained, paranoid, perplexed, pessimistic, petty, playful, prudish, puzzled, radical, regretful, relieved, sad, satisfied, selfish, selfless, serious, sheepish, shocked, shy, skeptical, sly, smug, spiteful, surly, surprised, suspicious, sympathetic, terrified, thoughtful, timid, trustworthy, undecided, unpleasant, unwilling, wary, willing, withdrawn, wretched, zealous

Think About It: A person’s behavior and interests might say a lot about them – what ways did Templeton behave that tell about Templeton’s character?

Essay Question: What does your behavior and interests say about you? If someone asked you about the things you collect or love to do, what would you say? What would they think about you based on your behavior or hobbies?

Sequence a story

1. Sequence the events from the story by numbering them.
2. Fold a piece of white paper like an accordion, so that it has six sections.
3. Number each section as a "page" in your book (1 - 6).
4. Illustrate the events that you put in sequence in your book.
5. Create a cover for your book.

COMPARING THE BOOK AND THE PLAY.

Read Charlotte's Web. Compare the book and the play. In what way are the characters, setting and plot alike? In what way are they different?

___ *Charlotte's egg sack hatches.*

___ *Uncle Pig wins the Blue Ribbon.*

___ *Charlotte writes "Some Pig" in her web.*

___ *Wilbur is born.*

___ *Charlotte meets Wilbur.*

___ *Wilbur tries to escape.*



“WHAT IF” EXERCISE

These are some “WHAT IF” questions based on *Charlotte’s Web*.

Read each one. Beside each write your answer.

Discuss as a group.

WHAT IF YOU HAD TO SAVE YOUR BEST FRIEND BY WRITING WORDS IN A WEB? WHAT GREAT THINGS WOULD YOU SAY ABOUT THEM IN YOUR WEB?

WHAT IF YOU WERE WRITING IN THE NEWSPAPER ABOUT THE WORDS ON THE WEB. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ABOUT THOSE MAGICAL WORDS?

WHAT IF YOU WERE A RAT AT A COUNTY FAIR? WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO NOT GET STEPPED ON BY PEOPLE?

WHAT IF YOU HAD A PET PIG? WHAT WOULD YOU NAME THEM?



LANGUAGE ARTS & STANDARDS

Most Youthatre Stories are Literature Based and on the recommended reading list of Library of Congress

Language Arts Standard: Perceive, identify, describe and analyze the distinguishing characteristics of form, structure and style of story.

- Retell story identifying plot, theme, characters, and setting.
- Recall story plot utilizing chronological order.

Language Arts Standard: Evaluate Theatre/Literary work based on critical perception and analysis.

- Share perception of theatre experience in the area of voice, movement, mood and motivation.
- Make suggestions for alternative endings.
- Analyze and critique story and performance through creative writing.
- Create a similar story through creative writing.

Language Arts Standard: Use Theatre /Literary work to develop affective areas of self-concept, problem solving and interpersonal skills.

- React to feelings of self and others within a production.
- Identify conflict within story as it relates to self and others.
- Compare and contrast problems and resolutions found in different stories and real life situations.
- Express personal attitudes, values, and belief systems as it relates to theatre piece.
- Interact freely in conversations, class discussions and dramatic activities.
- Contribute to the solving of problems through dramatization/improvisation.

Language Arts Standard: Examine Theatre /Literary work in a historical and multicultural context.

- Identify similarities and differences between characters from diverse cultures depicted.
- Identify historical differences/figures in different time frames depicted in story.
- Identify significance of historical aspects in story.

Exploring Aesthetics: A Philosophical Basis for Life!

Attending live theatre helps children value its importance to the community and helps develop a lifelong commitment and love of Theatre and Literature. Students experience aesthetic growth through appreciation of Theatre. Students discover through experience that making art is an essential human activity. It requires collaboration, and enhances creative thinking.

