



Novel Guide for Gifted and Advanced Readers



This guide is appropriate for use with gifted and advanced readers. It addresses their affective and cognitive needs through questions that can be used for discussion. Depending on the length of the book, students should read the entire book before conducting the bibliotherapy lesson, the **Group Discussion** using the higher order questions and the **After Discussion** activities. Students should be given the **Before Discussion** activities to complete during their time while reading the book. If the book is exceptionally long, you may need to modify this lesson plan. See **Novel Guide: Notes for Implementing** for additional procedures and recommendations.

Book Title: *Charlotte's Web*

Author: E. B. White

Interest Level: ages 6-12

Lexile: 680L

Length: 184 pages

Guide developed by: Ryan Lancaster

Summary

Fern Arable is an eight year old animal lover. One day, Fern rescues a piglet runt that she names Wilbur. Fern and Wilbur are inseparable until one day he becomes too big to stay at her house, and her father sends him to live at her uncle's farm. Once at the farm Wilburn soon learns of his horrible fate. Fern's uncle plans to fatten him up and kill him. All of the animals at the farm try to help save Wilbur's life, but no one is successful until a spider named Charlotte comes up with a plan. While at the county fair, Charlotte begins spinning message in a web above his pen that gain the county's attention, and eventually saves Wilbur's life.

Conceptual Connections

Conceptual Lens: friendship

Other Key Concepts: loyalty, life and death,

Essential Understandings:

Friendship is about helping each other.

Being a good friend means being loyal.

Life and death are part of nature.

Essential Questions:

What does it take to be a friend?

What does being loyal include?

How does death bring about change?

Affective Focus (Bibliotherapy)

Introductory Activity/Hook

Friendships are an important part of our life. Friends can help us when we have a problem. Write in your journal about a time that you helped a friend, or a time that you were helped by a friend.

Menu of Bibliotherapy Questions

Identification:

- What happens when Fern stops her father from killing Wilbur?
- What happens when Wilbur goes to live at the farm?
- What does Wilbur learn that the farmer is planning to do to him?
- How do Charlotte and the other animals try to help Wilbur?

Catharsis:

- How did Fern feel when she found out her father was going to kill Wilbur?
- How did Fern feel when she had to send Wilbur to her Uncle's farm? How did Wilbur feel?
- How did Wilbur feel when he found out that the farmer was going to kill him?
- How do you think he felt when the other animals tried to help him?
- How did Wilbur feel when Charlotte told him she was going to die?
- How did he feel at the end of the story?

Insight:

- How do you feel when a friend helps you out?
- What can you do to be a good friend?

Universalization/Follow up Activity

Make up a short story about someone who is in trouble. Draw a comic strip to illustrate this. Have a friend finish the comic strip by writing and drawing what they could do to help.

Reading Comprehension: Independent Work and Group Discussion

To foster strong reading comprehension, literacy skills, and love of literature, students need to read critically, respond to what they read with text-based evidence, develop a robust vocabulary, and engage in high level discussion with peers. The following activities address these components.

Before Group Discussion (Activities for students to complete independently)

A. Knowledge and Comprehension Questions related to the novel. Students use sticky notes to locate answers in the text as they read. Teacher may use student's answers for a grade.

Knowledge Questions

- Who were the main characters?
- Who was going to 'do away' with Wilbur and why?
- When Wilbur escapes from the pen, why does he let himself be captured?
- Who tells Wilbur about the farmer's plan to kill him?
- What are some of the words Charlotte writes in the web?

Comprehension Questions

- How was Fern a friend to Wilbur before she even met him?
- What kinds of problems did Wilbur have when trying to make friends at the farm?
- What are Charlotte's qualities that make her a good friend?
- Why do you think Charlotte doesn't want Wilbur to help with her plan?
- How do you think Wilbur feels when he sees the pig in the stall next to him at the fair?
- What changes on the farm after Charlotte dies? What stays the same?

B. Vocabulary Study: Students will complete the following activities with vocabulary from the novel. The activities may be used for a grade, but should also be included in the discussion.

- Students look up the word in the dictionary or online, noting the definition that best fits how the word is used in the passage. Also, determine possible synonyms and evaluate the author's use of the word in the passage.
- Students will complete a graphic organizer provided by the teacher.

Vocabulary Words

- runt
- injustice
- scythes
- frolic
- salutations
- blundered
- inheritance
- hysterics
- gullible
- radiant
- solemn
- sentiments

Group Discussion: Teacher-facilitated small group discussion. Teacher may choose to provide students with a set of the questions prior to the discussion. Students should also be encouraged to create their own questions.

Higher-Level Questions (using Bloom's categories):

1. **Application**

- Wilbur feels sad and alone when he first moves to the farm. When have you been in a new situation that made you feel alone?
- When Wilbur first sees Charlotte eating an insect, he thinks she is cruel, but later he finds out she is very nice. Has there ever been a time when you thought one way about a person, but found out it was not true?
- Why is it important to be a loyal friend?
- If you were Charlotte, what would you have written in your web about Wilbur?

2. **Analysis**

- How are Charlotte and Templeton alike? How are they different?
- Why do you think Wilbur said, "Friendship is a gamble" when he met Charlotte?
- Do you think Templeton is a hero, or a villain? Why?

3. **Evaluation**

- What does this story tell us about making sacrifices for friends?
- Why do you think Charlotte chose the words she did to write in the web?
- When it is time to go to the fair, Charlotte chooses to go with Wilbur even though it is egg laying time. What does this tell you about her personality?

4. **Synthesis**

- How might things have been different for Wilbur if Charlotte had not gone to the fair? How might things have been different for Charlotte?
- If you were to design a web for Wilbur at the end of the story, what would it say?
- How do you think Charlotte's friendship will impact the kind of friend Wilbur wants to be?

After Group Discussion: Activities for students to complete with a partner, in a small group, or individually. Activities may be used for a grade.

A. Connections to the Curriculum: Students will make connections to a curriculum area

Math- Have students create 'What's the Secret Number ' riddles for classmates to figure out. (Example: The hundreds digit is the number of legs on a spider. The ones digit is the number of message Charlotte wrote in her web. The tens digit is the number of ears on a pig. The thousands digit is the number of letters in Fern's name. What is the secret number? (Be sure and put the coma in the right place!)

Science/Art- Charlotte saves Wilbur's life by writing messages about him in her web. Students will research how a spider makes a web. They will then sketch out their own web design with a message inside and create it. Students will glue a black piece of construction paper to a foam board, they will put push pins in the foam board at each point they want their web to change direction, and write string around the pushpins to create their web.

Social Studies- Have students visit several different state fair websites and make a list of attractions that many of them have in common. Have students create a tri-fold brochure for the state fair that the Zuchermans went to.

Language Arts- Review how to write a persuasive paper. Students will pretend that they are Fern. They will write a persuasive essay asking her father not to kill Wilbur.

-Have students write an obituary for Charlotte.

-Pick a favorite character and write an acrostic with the letters in their name.

Careers- Fern is an animal lover. Students will research to find out what kind of careers she could have working with animals.

B. Creative Reading: Using the following list of creative products, students will complete a project reflecting their personal connection with the novel (students may determine their own creative product with the approval of the teacher):

1. Create a puppet play based on a favorite scene in the story
2. Create a poem based on the novel, a character, or favorite scene
3. Illustrate a favorite scene(s) from the story
4. Create a story board of the plot of the story
5. Write a screen play based on the story
6. Create a new ending for the story
7. Create a map of the location(s) of the story
8. Create a mural representative of the story and characters
9. Extend the story into a sequel
10. Rewrite a portion of the story from another character's perspective
11. Rewrite the story in another time or culture
12. Create an online product: infographic, video, character blog, etc.
13. Write a song that one or more of the characters might sing
14. Create an interpretative dance for the story
15. Student idea for a creative product related to the story