



Great  
Works

Instructional Guides  
for Literature

# Charlotte's Web

E.B. White



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# How to Use This Literature Guide

Today's standards demand rigor and relevance in the reading of complex texts. The units in this series guide teachers in a rich and deep exploration of worthwhile works of literature for classroom study. The most rigorous instruction can also be interesting and engaging!

Many current strategies for effective literacy instruction have been incorporated into these instructional guides for literature. Throughout the units, text-dependent questions are used to determine comprehension of the book as well as student interpretation of the vocabulary words. The books chosen for the series are complex and are exemplars of carefully crafted works of literature. Close reading is used throughout the units to guide students toward revisiting the text and using textual evidence to respond to prompts orally and in writing. Students must analyze the story elements in multiple assignments for each section of the book. All of these strategies work together to rigorously guide students through their study of literature.

The next few pages describe how to use this guide for a purposeful and meaningful literature study. Each section of this guide is set up in the same way to make it easier for you to implement the instruction in your classroom.

## Theme Thoughts

The great works of literature used throughout this series have important themes that have been relevant to people for many years. Many of the themes will be discussed during the various sections of this instructional guide. However, it would also benefit students to have independent time to think about the key themes of the book.

Before students begin reading, have them complete the *Pre-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 13). This graphic organizer will allow students to think about the themes outside the context of the story. They'll have the opportunity to evaluate statements based on important themes and defend their opinions. Be sure to keep students' papers for comparison to the *Post-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 59). This graphic organizer is similar to the pre-reading activity. However, this time, students will be answering the questions from the point of view of one of the characters in the book. They have to think about how the character would feel about each statement and defend their thoughts. To conclude the activity, have students compare what they thought about the themes before they read the book to what the characters discovered during the story.

## Vocabulary

Each teacher reference vocabulary overview page has definitions and sentences about how key vocabulary words are used in the section. These words should be introduced and discussed with students. Students will use these words in different activities throughout the book.

On some of the vocabulary student pages, students are asked to answer text-related

questions about vocabulary words from the sections. The following question stems will help you create your own vocabulary questions if you'd like to extend the discussion.

- How does this word describe \_\_\_\_'s character?
- How does this word connect to the problem in this story?
- How does this word help you understand the setting?
- Tell me how this word connects to the main idea of this story.
- What visual pictures does this word bring to your mind?
- Why do you think the author used this word?

At times, you may find that more work with the words will help students understand their meanings and importance. These quick vocabulary activities are a good way to further study the words.

- Students can play vocabulary concentration. Make one set of cards that has the words on them and another set with the definitions. Then, have students lay them out on the table and play concentration. The goal of the game is to match vocabulary words with their definitions. For early readers or English language learners, the two sets of cards could be the words and pictures of the words.
- Students can create word journal entries about the words. Students choose words they think are important and then describe why they think each word is important within the book. Early readers or English language learners could instead draw pictures about the words in a journal.
- Students can create puppets and use them to act out the vocabulary words from the stories. Students may also enjoy telling their own character-driven stories using vocabulary words from the original stories.

## **Analyzing the Literature**

After you have read each section with students, hold a small-group or whole-class discussion. Provided on the teacher reference page for each section are leveled questions. The questions are written at two levels of complexity to allow you to decide which questions best meet the needs of your students. The Level 1 questions are typically less abstract than the Level 2 questions. These questions are focused on the various story elements, such as character, setting, and plot. Be sure to add further questions as your students discuss what they've read. For each question, a few key points are provided for your reference as you discuss the book with students.

## **Reader Response**

In today's classrooms, there are often great readers who are below average writers. So much time and energy is spent in classrooms getting students to read on grade level that little time is left to focus on writing skills. To help teachers include more writing in their daily literacy instruction, each section of this guide has a literature-based reader response prompt. Each of the three genres of writing is used in the reader responses within this

guide: narrative, informative/explanatory, and opinion. Before students write, you may want to allow them time to draw pictures related to the topic.

## **Guided Close Reading**

Within each section of this guide, it is suggested that you closely reread a portion of the text with your students. Page numbers are given, but since some versions of the books may have different page numbers, the sections to be reread are described by location as well. After rereading the section, there are a few text-dependent questions to be answered by students.

Working space has been provided to help students prepare for the group discussion. They should record their thoughts and ideas on the activity page and refer to it during your discussion. Rather than just taking notes, you may want to require students to write complete responses to the questions before discussing them with you.

Encourage students to read one question at a time and then go back to the text and discover the answer. Work with students to ensure that they use the text to determine their answers rather than making unsupported inferences. Suggested answers are provided in the answer key.

The generic open-ended stems below can be used to write your own text-dependent questions if you would like to give students more practice.

- What words in the story support ... ?
- What text helps you understand ... ?
- Use the book to tell why \_\_\_\_\_ happens.
- Based on the events in the story, ... ?
- Show me the part in the text that supports ... .
- Use the text to tell why ... .

## **Making Connections**

The activities in this section help students make cross-curricular connections to mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, or other curricular areas. These activities require higher-order thinking skills from students but also allow for creative thinking.

## **Language Learning**

A special section has been set aside to connect the literature to language conventions. Through these activities, students will have opportunities to practice the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, and punctuation.

## **Story Elements**

It is important to spend time discussing what the common story elements are in literature. Understanding the characters, setting, plot, and theme can increase students'

comprehension and appreciation of the story. If teachers begin discussing these elements in early childhood, students will more likely internalize the concepts and look for the elements in their independent reading. Another very important reason for focusing on the story elements is that students will be better writers if they think about how the stories they read are constructed.

In the story elements activities, students are asked to create work related to the characters, setting, or plot. Consider having students complete only one of these activities. If you give students a choice on this assignment, each student can decide to complete the activity that most appeals to him or her. Different intelligences are used so that the activities are diverse and interesting to all students.

## **Culminating Activity**

At the end of this instructional guide is a creative culminating activity that allows students the opportunity to share what they've learned from reading the book. This activity is open ended so that students can push themselves to create their own great works within your language arts classroom.

## **Comprehension Assessment**

The questions in this section require students to think about the book they've read as well as the words that were used in the book. Some questions are tied to quotations from the book to engage students and require them to think about the text as they answer the questions.

## **Response to Literature**

Finally, students are asked to respond to the literature by drawing pictures and writing about the characters and stories. A suggested rubric is provided for teacher reference.

## Correlation to the Standards

Shell Education is committed to producing educational materials that are research and standards based. As part of this effort, we have correlated all of our products to the academic standards of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Dependents Schools, and all Canadian provinces.

## Purpose and Intent of Standards

Standards are designed to focus instruction and guide adoption of curricula. Standards are statements that describe the criteria necessary for students to meet specific academic goals. They define the knowledge, skills, and content students should acquire at each level. Standards are also used to develop standardized tests to evaluate students' academic progress. Teachers are required to demonstrate how their lessons meet standards. Standards are used in the development of all of our products, so educators can be assured they meet high academic standards.

## How to Find Standards Correlations

To print a customized correlation report of this product for your state, visit our website at <http://www.shelleducation.com> and follow the online directions. If you require assistance in printing correlation reports, please contact our Customer Service Department at 1-877-777-3450.

## Standards Correlation Chart

The lessons in this book were written to support today's college and career readiness standards. The following chart indicates which lessons address each standard.

College and Career Readiness Standard	Section
Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. (R.1)	Guided Close Reading Sections 1–5
Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (R.2)	Analyzing the Literature Sections 1–5; Story Elements Sections 1–5; Post-Reading Theme Thoughts
Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. (R.3)	Analyzing the Literature Sections 1–5; Story Elements



	Sections 1–5
Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. (R.4)	Vocabulary Sections 1–5
Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole. (R.5)	Guided Close Reading Sections 1–5; Comprehension Assessment
Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. (R.7)	Making Connections Section 4
Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently. (R.10)	Entire Unit
Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (W.1)	Reader Response Sections 3–4
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. (W.2)	Reader Response Sections 2, 5
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences. (W.3)	Reader Response Section 1; Culminating Activity
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (W.4)	Reader Response Sections 1–5; Response to Literature; Culminating Activity
Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others. (W.6)	Culminating Activity
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. (L.1)	Language Learning Sections 1–5; Reader Response Sections 1–5

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. (L.2)	Language Learning Sections 1–5; Vocabulary Activity Section 1; Reader Response Sections 1–5
Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate. (L.4)	Vocabulary Sections 1–5
Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. (L.5)	Vocabulary Sections 4–5
Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression. (L.6)	Vocabulary Sections 1–5

## TESOL and WIDA Standards

The lessons in this book promote English language development for English language learners. The following TESOL and WIDA English Language Development Standards are addressed through the activities in this book:

- **Standard 1:** English language learners communicate for social and instructional purposes within the school setting.
- **Standard 2:** English language learners communicate information, ideas and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of language arts.

## About the Author—E. B. White

Elwyn Brooks White was born in upstate New York in July 1899, the youngest of six children. He was never a fan of the name Elwyn; while a student at Cornell University he adopted the nickname “Andy,” which is how he was known for the rest of his life. While at Cornell, White served as editor of *The Cornell Daily Sun*. After graduating in 1921, he embarked upon a career in journalism. After several years he landed a job with the prestigious *The New Yorker* magazine, where he stayed for the rest of his career.

White wrote a column for *The New Yorker* for more than half a century. He married Katharine Angell, a writer and editor at the magazine, in 1929. Over the years, White also authored and co-authored many books. He published his first children’s book, *Stuart Little*, in 1945.

White spent much of his time at his family’s secluded farm home in North Brooklin, Maine. One day he noticed a spider spinning an egg sac in the barn. This moment served as an inspiration for *Charlotte’s Web*, which was first published in 1952. The book was received warmly and was named a Newbery Honor book. Over time, its popularity became massive. The book has been translated into 23 languages and inspired two movie adaptations (in 1973 and 2006).

In 1959, White edited and updated *The Elements of Style*, one of the most famous guides on English language grammar and style. In 2011, TIME listed *The Elements of Style* as one of the 100 best and most influential books written in English since 1923.

Despite the popularity of his books, White was fiercely private. He disliked publicity and avoided strangers, especially members of the press. While at the offices of *The New Yorker*, he would sometimes leave his office by going down the fire escape rather than talk to someone he didn’t know.

In 1963, White was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 1970, he was awarded the coveted Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal. This award is given to “an author or illustrator whose books, published in the United States, have, over a period of years, made a substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children.” That same year he published his third children’s classic, *The Trumpet of the Swan*. In 1971, White won the National Medal for Literature. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1973. In 1978, he won a special Pulitzer Prize for his body of work.

White, who suffered from Alzheimer’s disease, died in 1985 at the age of 86. His influence on children lives on, however. *Charlotte’s Web* consistently appears as number one on lists of the top books for children.

## Possible Texts for Text Comparisons

In addition to *Charlotte’s Web*, E. B. White also wrote the classic children’s novels *Stuart Little* and *The Trumpet of the Swan*. Either of these titles can be used in compelling studies of books by the same author.

## Book Summary of *Charlotte's Web*

Eight-year-old Fern Arable is distressed when she realizes her father is about to kill the runt of a newly born pig litter. She convinces her father to spare the pig's life, on the condition that she will care for the piglet herself. Fern spends the next several weeks doting on the tiny pig, whom she calls Wilbur.

In time, Wilbur is sold to the owner of a neighboring farm and moves down the road. Wilbur is intrigued by his new home in a bustling barn full of animals, but he becomes lonely. He misses Fern and longs for a new friend. Wilbur soon finds that friend in Charlotte, a barn spider. At first, the pig worries that he can't be friends with a spider. But he soon realizes that Charlotte is clever, loving, and loyal.

During the summer, one of the sheep in the barn warns Wilbur that he will be killed for ham and bacon come wintertime. Wilbur is terrified until Charlotte promises that she will find a way to save his life. Charlotte eventually comes up with a plan to weave webs that spell out words that describe Wilbur. Her first web reads, "Some Pig." The special webs do the trick—people come from miles around to see them. They believe the web writing is a miracle and that Wilbur is a very unusual, special pig.

At the county fair in September, Wilbur wins a special prize that guarantees he can live his life free from worry of the ax. However, Charlotte, who accompanies him to the fair, dies. Heartbroken, Wilbur brings her egg sac home and watches over it lovingly all winter. When the baby spiders hatch, he is delighted, but when they form balloons and leave, he is overwhelmed by grief again. Three of Charlotte's daughters promise to stay with him and be his friends. Thus, Wilbur's life continues in a bittersweet cycle as each year a new set of Charlotte's progeny hatches and a few of the spiders stay with him, but none of them ever truly take Charlotte's place in his heart.

## Cross-Curricular Connection

This book can be used in a unit about family, friendship, or domesticated animals; a unit about spiders and their life cycles; or when teaching about farm life in the mid-1900s.



## Possible Texts for Text Sets

- Atwater, Richard and Florence. *Mr. Popper's Penguins*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 1992.
- Cleary, Beverly. *Socks*. HarperCollins, 2008.
- Grahame, Kenneth. *The Wind in the Willows*. Dover Children's Evergreen Classics, 1999.
- King-Smith, Dick. *Babe: The Gallant Pig*. Random House Children's Books, 1995.
- Rawls, Wilson. *Summer of the Monkeys*. Yearling, 2010.
- Steig, William. *Abel's Island*. Square Fish, 2007.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Pre-Reading Theme Thoughts

**Directions:** Read each statement below. Draw a picture of a happy face or a sad face in the column next to it. The face should show how you feel about the statement. Then, use words to say what you think about each statement.

Statement	How Do You Feel?  	Explain Your Answer
Spending time with animals can be enjoyable.		
A loyal friend can be hard to find.		
Sometimes we have to say good-bye to a friend.		
There is great joy simply in being alive.		

## Vocabulary Overview

Key words and phrases from this section are provided below with definitions and sentences about how the words are used in the story. Introduce and discuss these important vocabulary words with students. If you think these words or other words in the story warrant more time devoted to them, there are suggestions in the introduction for other vocabulary activities (page 5).

Word	Definition	Sentence about Text
<b>sopping</b> (ch. 1)	wet all the way through	Fern’s sneakers are <b>sopping</b> after she walks through the wet grass.
<b>injustice</b> (ch. 1)	unfairness; wrong treatment	Fern insists it is an <b>injustice</b> to kill the piglet just because he is small.
<b>specimen</b> (ch. 1)	a notable example of something	Avery thinks that the runt is a miserable <b>specimen</b> of a pig.
<b>manure</b> (ch. 2)	farm animals’ solid waste	Wilbur sleeps in a pile of <b>manure</b> in Zuckerman’s barn.
<b>perspiration</b> (ch. 3)	sweat	The barn smells of hay, manure, and horse <b>perspiration</b> .
<b>rooting</b> (ch. 3)	digging in the earth with one’s snout	Wilbur stops under an apple tree and begins digging and <b>rooting</b> for food.
<b>appetizing</b> (ch. 3)	appealing to one’s sense of smell and taste	Mr. Zuckerman knows the smell of the slops will be <b>appetizing</b> to Wilbur.
<b>fold</b> (ch. 4)	a pen or a shelter for sheep	The sheep spend time in their <b>fold</b> when the weather is bad.
<b>middlings</b> (ch. 4)	a grain milling byproduct used in animal feed	Wheat <b>middlings</b> are usually a part of Wilbur’s daily slops.
<b>gnawing</b> (ch. 4)	chewing	Templeton likes <b>gnawing</b> on things and making holes in them.
<b>glutton</b> (ch. 4)	one who frequently overeats	Templeton the rat admits that he is a <b>glutton</b> and will eat whatever he can find.
<b>dejected</b> (ch. 4)	feeling down; depressed	Wilbur stops eating because he feels lonely, friendless, and

dejected.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Vocabulary Activity

**Directions:** Write five sentences about the story. Use one vocabulary word from the box below in each sentence.

### Words from the Story

sopping	injustice	manure	perspiration	rooting
appetizing	fold	gnawing	glutton	dejected

**Directions:** Answer this question.

1. Why does Avery think that Wilbur is a miserable **specimen** of a pig?

## Analyzing the Literature

Provided below are discussion questions you can use in small groups, with the whole class, or for written assignments. Each question is written at two levels so that you can choose the right question for each group of students. For each question, a few key points are provided for your reference as you discuss the book with students.



Story Element	Level 1	Level 2	Key Discussion Points
<b>Character</b>	What emotions does Fern's father feel when Fern grabs hold of his ax?	How does Mr. Arable respond when Fern calls killing the pig an "injustice"?	At first Mr. Arable dismisses Fern's concerns. He is determined to kill the runt pig, claiming it will "make trouble." But when he sees how determined Fern is to save its life, and how strongly she feels, he is moved. He sees the situation through her eyes and almost cries himself. He decides to spare the pig.
<b>Character</b>	What does Avery say that shows his opinion of Fern's pig?	How is Avery's reaction to the runt pig different from Fern's reaction?	Avery calls the pig a "miserable thing" and sarcastically says that it's a fine specimen of a pig. He compares it to a white rat. While Fern is moved to protect and care for the pig, Avery doesn't have the same compassionate reaction. He just sees the pig as a funny, strange little thing.
<b>Plot</b>	Why does Mr. Arable tell Fern that she has to sell Wilbur?	What solution does Fern's mother suggest to help her feel better about losing Wilbur?	Fern raises Wilbur for five weeks. By that age, Wilbur has gotten bigger and needs more food. Mr. Arable is not willing to pay to feed him anymore. Fern cries about losing Wilbur. Mrs. Arable suggests that Fern sell the pig to her uncle, whose farm is just down the road. Fern can go visit Wilbur whenever she wants.
<b>Setting</b>	Where does Wilbur move at the beginning of chapter 3?	Where is Wilbur's new home located in Zuckerman's barn? Is it a nice spot?	Wilbur moves down the road to Mr. Zuckerman's farm. Zuckerman has a large, pleasant barn. Wilbur's pen is a manure pile in the lower part of the barn, underneath the cows. His new home is warm and comfortable.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Reader Response

### **Think**

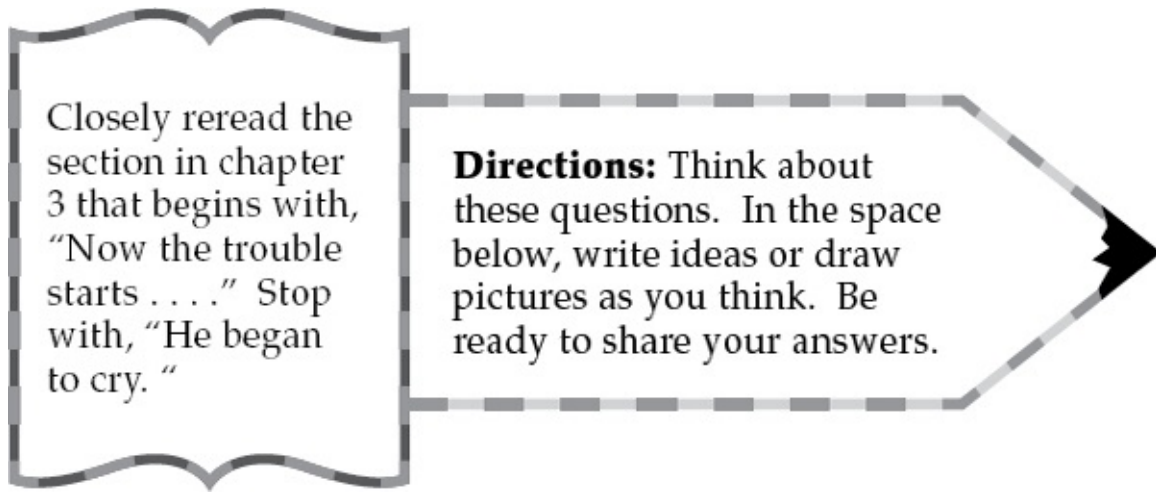
On a rainy day,  
Wilbur gets so  
lonely that he lies  
down and sobs.  
Think of a time  
when you felt  
lonely.

### **Narrative Writing Prompt**

Write a note to yourself  
telling what you can do to  
cheer yourself up when you  
feel lonely.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Guided Close Reading



- ① What sentences in the text show that the other farm animals are delighted that Wilbur is out of his pen?
- ② Use details from the book to explain how Wilbur feels about being loose.
- ③ How do you know that the people on the farm want Wilbur to return to his pen?

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Making Connections—Meal Time!

- **Carnivores** are animals that eat other animals. They have sharp teeth to help them bite through meat.
- **Omnivores** are animals that eat both plants and meat. Omnivores have both sharp and flat teeth.
- **Herbivores** are animals that eat just plants. These animals have flat teeth to help grind down the plants.

**Directions:** Write three specific things that each farm animal would eat. If the animal can eat both meat and plants, write at least one of each.

### Barn Cat—carnivore

- 
- 
- 

### Templeton—omnivore

- 
- 
- 

### Sheep—herbivore

- 
- 
-

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Language Learning—Nouns and Proper Nouns

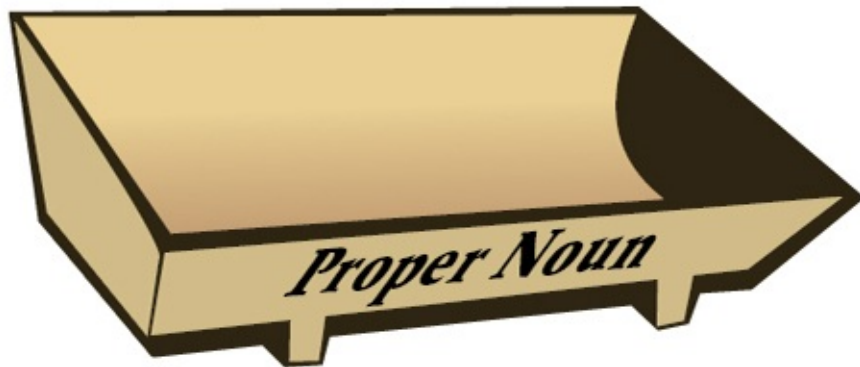
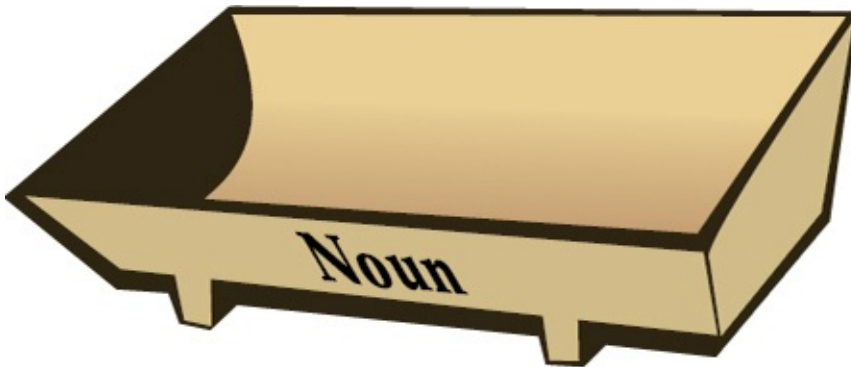
**Directions:** Decide which nouns below are proper nouns. Write each noun on the correct trough below. Be sure to capitalize the proper nouns.

- Nouns name people, places, and things.

### Language Hints!

- Proper nouns are capitalized because they name specific people, places, and things.

lurvy	farmer	wilbur	sheep	templeton	avery
barn	pigpen	mrs. arable	rat	mr. zuckerman	goose



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Story Elements—Plot

**Directions:** Based on the events in the story, fill in the columns of this graphic organizer.

<b>Somebody wants</b>	<b>But</b>	<b>So</b>
Mr. Arable wants to kill the runt pig.		
	Mr. Arable sells Wilbur to Mr. Zuckerman.	
		A voice promises to be Wilbur's friend.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Story Elements—Setting

**Directions:** Draw a map showing the Arable and Zuckerman farms and the path that Fern takes to walk from one to the other.



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