

Charlotte's Web



CONTENT GUIDE • AGES 5 AND UP

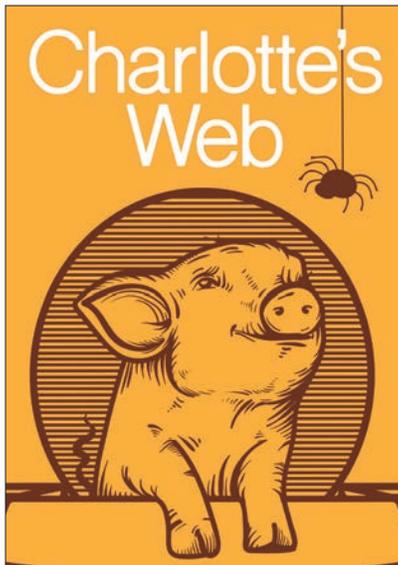
Content Guide Information by Derek T. Pickens

“IT IS NOT OFTEN THAT SOMEONE COMES ALONG WHO IS A TRUE FRIEND AND A GOOD WRITER. CHARLOTTE WAS BOTH.”

Charleston Stage, now celebrating its 45th Anniversary Season, is in residence at the Historic Dock Street Theatre. Charleston Stage is South Carolina’s largest resident professional theatre. More than a half million students have attended Charleston Stage’s fully professional productions at the Historic Dock Street Theatre over the past 45 years. Charleston Stage school shows feature dazzling scenery, stunning costumes, and casts of professional actors.

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Adapted by Joseph Robinette
Based on the Book by E.B. White

SYNOPSIS:

The enchanting and moving story of the special friendship between Wilbur the pig and Charlotte the spider brings E.B. White's immortal children's classic to the stage. To save Wilbur from going to market, Charlotte begins to spin words like "remarkable" and "some pig" into her web over Wilbur's pigpen bringing astonishment and wonder to a flabbergasted farmer and his daughter, Fern.

CHARACTERS:

- Fern Arable** - a young girl who understands what animals say to each other.
- Avery Arable** - her brother
- John Arable** - Fern and Avery's father
- Homer Zuckerman** - Fern's uncle
- Edith Zuckerman** - Fern's aunt
- Lurvy** - a hired hand
- Wilbur** - a pig and Fern's best friend
- Templeton** - a gluttonous rat who occasionally does the right thing
- Charlotte** - an extraordinary spider who helps to protect Wilbur
- Goose, Gander, Sheep and Lamb** - farm animals
- Ensemble** - reporters, photographers, spectators, judges, fairgoers, announcer, spiders

THEMES EXPLORED:

- Friendship
- Accepting Others
- Working Together
- Caring for Others
- Sacrifice
- Being Brave

AGES 5 AND UP

GLOSSARY

Adjourned - break off (a meeting, legal case, or game) with the intention of resuming it later.

Brutal - savagely violent.

Conspiracy - a secret plan by a group to do something unlawful or harmful.

Determined - having made a firm decision and being resolved not to change it.

Goslings - a young goose.

Miraculous - occurring through divine or supernatural intervention, or manifesting such power.

Spinnerets - any of a number of different organs through which the silk, gossamer, or thread of spiders, silkworms, and certain other insects is produced.

Unremitting - never relaxing or slackening.

BACKGROUND INFO

AUTHOR OF THE BOOK



Elywin Brooks (E.B.) White (1899-1985)

E.B. White the author of the beloved children's classics *Charlotte's Web*, *Stuart Little*, and *The Trumpet of the Swan*, was born in Mount Vernon, New York on July 11, 1899.

He graduated from Cornell University in 1921 and worked for United Press International and the American Legion News Service in 1921 and 1922. After briefly working as a reporter for the *Seattle Times*, White then worked at the Frank Seaman advertising agency as a production assistant and copywriter for two years.

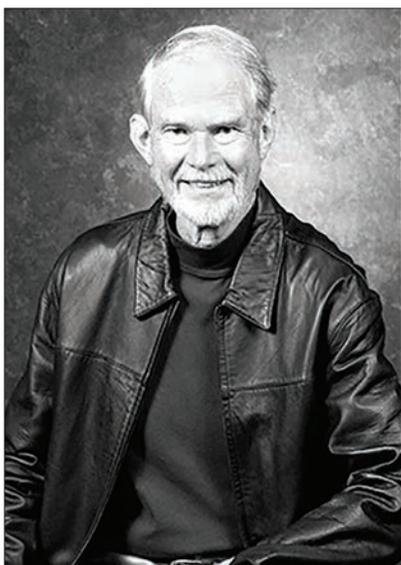
In 1925, E.B. White became a contributing editor of *The New Yorker* magazine in 1927, an association which continued until his passing in 1985.

E.B. White authored more than seventeen books of prose and poetry and was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1973. In addition to writing children's books, E. B. White also wrote books for adults, as well as poems and essays, and he drew sketches for *The New Yorker* magazine. Some of his other books include *One Man's Meat*, *The Second Tree from the Corner*, and *Here is New York*. He revised and edited William S. Strunk's *The Elements of Style*, which is widely used in college English courses.

BACKGROUND INFO

Mr. White won countless awards, including the 1971 National Medal for Literature and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal, which commended him for making “a substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children.” Mr. White passed away on October 1, 1985, leaving behind a legacy that live on today through a stream of books, plays, musicals, and films, all produced in various languages.

PLAY DRAMATIZED BY



Joseph Robinette

Joseph Robinette is a Tony Award nominee for the libretto of the acclaimed *A Christmas Story, The Musical*. He is the author or co-author of 55 published plays and musicals. His works have been produced at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York, Pittsburgh Playhouse, The 5th Avenue Theatre in Seattle, the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, the BBC and in all 50 states and in 17 foreign countries. Twelve of his works have been translated into foreign languages, and another five have been anthologized. Robinette collaborated with E.B. White on the authorized stage version of *Charlotte’s Web*, and he wrote the musical version with Charles Strouse (*Annie* and *Bye, Bye, Birdie*). Other dramatizations include *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Anne of Green Gables* and *Stuart Little*.

He is the recipient of the American Alliance for Theatre & Education’s Charlotte B. Chorpensing Cup, the 2004 Distinguished Play Award for *Sarah, Plain and Tall* and the Children’s Theatre Foundation of America medallion for his “body of dramatic works for family audiences in the United States and beyond.”

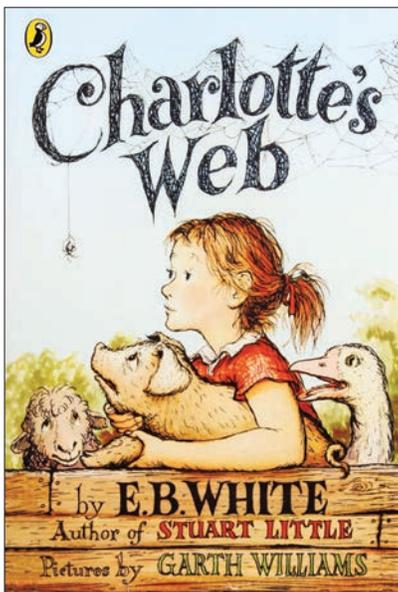
A regular contributor to several children’s theatre publications, Mr. Robinette is also a founding member of the national organization Opera for Youth, and a member of ASCAP and the American Alliance for Theatre and Education. He has guest-lectured at several universities and has taught playwriting at the Cape Cod Writers’ Conference, the Ohio State Writers’ Series and the Philadelphia Writers’ Workshop.

Mr. Robinette is now a Professor of Theatre at Rowan University in New Jersey. He holds a B.A. from Carson-Newman College and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University.

THE STORIES BEHIND THE BOOKS

During his lifetime, many young readers asked Mr. White if his stories were true. In a letter written to be sent to his fans, he answered, “No, they are imaginary tales... But real life is only one kind of life — there is also the life of the imagination.”

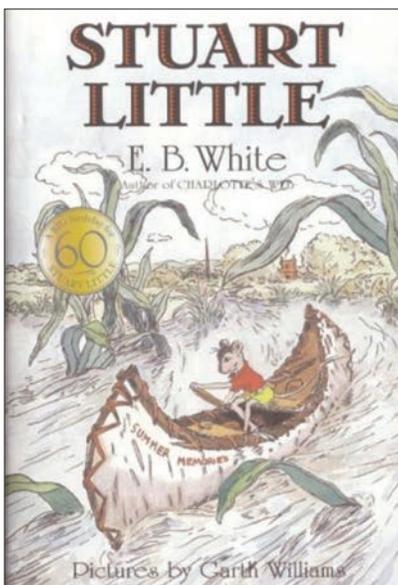
Mr. White lived on a farm in Maine where he kept animals, and some of these creatures made their way into his stories and books, like Stuart in *Stuart Little*, or Charlotte in *Charlotte’s Web*. After all, as E.B. White said, “I like animals, and my barn is a very pleasant place to be, at all hours!”



Charlotte’s Web

How did E. B. White think up the story for *Charlotte’s Web*? “I had been watching a big grey spider at her work and was impressed by how clever she was at weaving.

Gradually I worked the spider into the story that you know, a story of friendship and salvation on a farm.”



Stuart Little

“Many years ago,” E.B. White would say, “I went to bed one night in a railway sleeping car, and during the night I dreamed about a tiny boy who acted rather like a mouse. That’s how the story of *Stuart Little* got started.”

RESOURCES

Film adaptations

Charlotte's Web (1973 film)

The book was adapted into an animated feature by Hanna-Barbera Productions and Sagittarius Productions in 1973 with a song score by the Sherman Brothers.

2003 sequel

Charlotte's Web 2: Wilbur's Great Adventure

This is the sequel to the 1973 film, released direct-to-video by Paramount Pictures.

2006 version

Charlotte's Web (2006 film)

Paramount Pictures, with Walden Media, Kerner Entertainment Company, and Nickelodeon Movies, produced a live-action/animated film starring Dakota Fanning as Fern and the voice of Julia Roberts as Charlotte, released on December 15, 2006.

Video game

Charlotte's Web (video game)

A video game of the 2006 film was developed by Backbone Entertainment and published by THQ and Sega, and released on December 12, 2006 for the Game Boy Advance, Nintendo DS, PlayStation 2 and PC.

<https://www.dramaticpublishing.com/authors/profile/view/url/e-b-white>

https://prabook.com/web/joseph_allen.robinette/359057

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/contributor/e-b-white>

<https://www.dramaticpublishing.com/charlotte-s-web>

CONTENT WARNINGS

Charlotte's Web is a classic tale for all ages, however it does depict rough housing and makes mention of killing Wilbur. There is also a scene that shows the death of Charlotte.

HAVE KIDS WHO'D LIKE TO TAKE THEATRE CLASSES?



Acting Classes

200+ Students Attend Acting Classes After School

Charleston Stage's TheatreSchool offers classes year round for students from kindergarten through high school at Charleston Stage's West Ashley Theatre Center. Acting classes for students of all ages and abilities are taught by members of Charleston Stage's Professional Resident Acting Company. Classes range from beginning classes to performance workshops and performance troupes. Classes culminate in mini-performances held at the West Ashley Theatre Center. Tuition scholarships are available for need-based students.

Register online today at CharlestonStage.com/Education!



ArtReach In-School Workshops

Bringing Professional Actors Into the Classroom

Charleston Stage's Resident Professional Actors provide dynamic workshops in area schools through a partnership with Engaging Creative Minds. Workshops use theatrical skills to teach academic subjects and can be combined with a school matinee performance experience. For information on booking ArtReach workshops, contact Rylee Coppel, Director of Education and Engagement, at (843) 225-3900 or rcoppel@charlestonstage.com.



TheatreWings High School Apprenticeships

A Tuition-Free Apprentice Program For Teens

The TheatreWings High School Apprentice Program is designed to allow talented young people the opportunity to work directly with theatre professionals and gain first-hand experience in professional theatrical production. Students explore stage management, lighting and sound, as well as set and costume design and construction. Designed for highly dedicated students, TheatreWings requires more than 100+ hours of apprenticeship each season. For more information, email TheatreWings Co-Coordinator Ravyn Meador or Caleb Garner at wings@charlestonstage.com.

For more information on our programs, call the Education Office at (843) 225-3900 or visit CharlestonStage.com/Education.

DOCK STREET THEATRE



For almost 300 years audiences have delighted in performances at the Historic Dock Street Theatre which stands on the site of the very first theatre building in America which opened its doors in 1736. The current building, originally The Planter's Hotel was built in 1803 and in 1937 was converted into the Dock Street Theatre know today. Charleston Stage presents over 150 performances at the Historic Dock Street Theatre playing to theatre goers from every state in the union and many foreign countries. The Dock Street Theatre, newly renovated in 2010, is currently owned and managed by the City of Charleston. Other

performing arts groups including Spoleto Festival USA perform here annually.

On February 12, 1736 the Dock Street Theatre opened with a performance of *The Recruiting Officer*. Built on the corner of Church Street and Dock Street (now known as Queen Street), the Historic Dock Street Theatre was the first building in America built exclusively to be used for theatrical performances. Flora, the first opera performance in America, took place at the Historic Dock Street Theatre.

The original Dock Street Theatre was probably destroyed by the Great Fire of 1740 which destroyed many of the buildings in Charleston's French Quarter. In 1809, the Planter's Hotel was built on this site and in 1835 the wrought iron balcony and sandstone columns of the Church Street facade were added. A number of notable persons worked and patronized the Planter's Hotel including the noted 19th Century actor Junius Brutus Booth (father of Edwin and John Wilkes Booth). Robert Smalls, an African-American Civil War hero, who stole a steamboat in the harbor and sailed it out past the Confederate-held Ft. Sumter and turned it over to the blockading Union Fleet, served as a waiter in the hotel's dining room prior to the war. Charleston's famed Planter's Punch was first introduced here.

After the Civil War, the Planter's Hotel fell into disrepair and was slated for demolition. But in 1935, after Milton Pearlstine made the property available to the City of Charleston and at the urging of Mayor Burnet Maybank and other notable citizens, the original building became a Depression Era WPA (Works Progress Administration) project. At that time, the present theatre was constructed within the shell of the

DOCK STREET THEATRE



Planter's Hotel. The hotel's grand foyer became the grand foyer of the theatre and the hotel's dining room now serves as the box office lobby. The beautiful woodwork and mantels of the second floor drawing room were salvaged from the Radcliffe-King Mansion (circa 1799) which stood at the corner of George and Meeting Streets and was razed to build the College of Charleston gymnasium, another WPA project. Modeled on eighteenth century London playhouses by Charleston architect Albert Simons, the present Dock Street Theatre's new stage house and auditorium were built in the hotel's courtyard. The local carpenters who were put to work as a part of this Depression era relief effort utilized locally grown and milled native black cypress for the beautiful warm wooden interior. Following this \$350,000 renovation, The Historic Dock Street Theatre's second grand opening took place on November 26, 1937. Notables in the audience included author DuBose Heyward (*Porgy*) who was named writer-in-residence.

The Historic Dock Street Theatre reopened for the third time on March 18, 2010 after a three year, \$19 million dollar renovation by the City of Charleston. This extensive full-scale renovation brought the historic theatre into the 21st century with state-of-the-art lighting and sound, modern heating and air conditioning, and new restrooms and seating. In addition, the theatre was made seismically secure and fully handicapped accessible. Extensive sound-proofing was added to ensure that outside noises no longer intruded on performances inside.