Charlotte's Web at AwesomeStories

E.B. (Andy) White is distracted by a gray spider spinning a web. On his way to feed a pig (who lives in White's North Brooklin barn), the author of *Charlotte's Web* is intrigued. That spider is so interesting. Working hard, it can produce strands of silk at least as strong as similarly-sized strands of steel. How could such a thing be?

Not long before observing the spider, White had lost one of his pigs (even though he had worked really hard to nurse it back to health). White's essay, “Death of a Pig,” tells us that the animal "had evidently become precious to me."

So ... what if it were possible for White to give the pig a different ending? And ... what if he includes a spider, whom he calls Charlotte, in his story? This is the background for the beloved book, *Charlotte's Web*.

In this AwesomeStory behind the book:

- Meet a real version of Charlotte;
- Listen to E.B. White read a passage from his famous story;
- Virtually visit White’s farm (in the “Down East” part of Maine);
- Watch a spider, like Charlotte, spinning a web;
- Learn how she catches (and eats) food;
- Find out how her wingless babies (called spiderlings) can “fly” (or “balloon”) from the place where they were hatched;
- See what life is like at the Zuckerman farm (modeled, in the book, on Andy White's own North Brooklin home); and
- Meet some interesting farm animals (including Wilbur and Templeton).

Charlotte’s Web, White's much-loved story for elementary students, comes alive at AwesomeStories. Depending on a teacher’s preference, students can:

- "See” the story unfolding before their eyes in class (then view it, with their parents, at home);
- “Hear” the story (via a provided dramatized narration);
- “Think about” the story (with essential questions, such as "Does creating a fictional story, about a real event, help us to process sadness?”); and

- “Study” the story (with lots of pictures and videos).

Using an integrated approach—combining visual arts, science and language arts—students experience *Charlotte’s Web* in personalized-learning fashion with words and concepts suitable for a range of achievement levels. Students can then create their own stories, using the AwesomeStories’ archive of primary sources, to produce their own related stories to share with their class, their family and (if accepted for publication) … the whole online world!

Credits:

Image of a barn spider online via InChemistry.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Charlotte-s-Web-at-AwesomeStories

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Charlotte-s-Web-at-AwesomeStories

Questions 2 Ponder

Does Creating a Fictional Story, about a Real Event, Help Us to Process Sadness?

Before developing his story about a barn spider, which he observed in his barn in Maine, E.B White—author of “Charlotte’s Web”—wrote an essay about one of his pigs who’d died of an apparent illness.

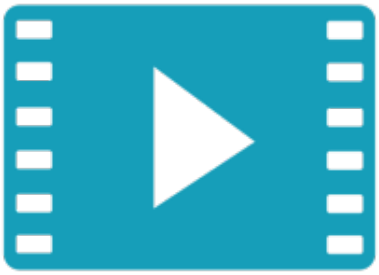
Even though the pig who died was always destined to become someone’s ham dinner, White was upset at its early death. “Evidently,” he wrote, that now-lost pig had “become precious to me.”

In “Charlotte’s Web,” White invented a pig named Wilbur who was befriended by a spider named Charlotte. This fictional pig avoided death in the smokehouse, thereby fulfilling a different purpose than just being part of the food chain.

Via his fictional story, in “Charlotte’s Web,” E.B. White gives his pig a different ending. Do you think a fictional story, about a non-fictional event, helps people to deal with sadness? How?

Have you ever experienced an event which caused you to be really sad? If so, do you think that writing a fictional story about that event—thereby allowing you to change the ending—would help you to feel less sad? Why, or why not?

Media Stream



Spider Spinning a Prey-Catching Web
Video clip online, courtesy YouTube.
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