



TEACHER'S GUIDE

2017-2018 Class Acts season sponsored by



Charlotte's Web

Friday, February 16, 2018
10:00 AM & 12:30 PM

Dear Educator,

Welcome to Class Acts at the University of Illinois Springfield's Sangamon Auditorium! We hope this guide will help you expand on concepts from this particular performance and incorporate them into your classroom teaching, both before and after the performance. We want students to think of the arts as an integral part of their lives, not just a one-time event.

Before arriving at the Auditorium, you can prepare your students by helping them understand the story or by sharing basic information about the art form they are going to see. We also ask you to review the theater etiquette information with your students (found on pages 2-3 of this guide) to help prepare them for attending a live performance.

After the performance you can talk to your students about their experience. Did they enjoy the performance? What did they learn? How was the performance different than what they expected? We hope the information and activity ideas included in this guide will help your students gain a deeper understanding of the performance they see.

We look forward to seeing you! If you have any questions about these materials or about the performance, please feel free to contact me at (217) 206-6150 or azepp2@uis.edu.

Amy Zepp

Audience Development Coordinator



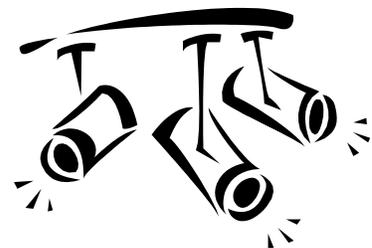
Youth programming in the Class Acts series and in conjunction with other Sangamon Auditorium events is supported in part by the Helen Hamilton Performing Arts Endowment for Youth Fund, gifts from Elizabeth and Robert Staley, and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.



Theater Etiquette

Going to a live theatrical performance is different than watching a movie or TV show – the members of the audience are very important, and the way they behave will affect the performance. Therefore, theaters have their own special rules about behavior.

- **Ask the ushers if you need help with anything** – The people who wear red coats are volunteer ushers, and they want to make sure everyone is able to enjoy the performance. They will guide you to your seat, and they can help you find a restroom. In any emergency situation, the ushers will help guide your class to safety. There may be as many as 1700 people coming to see the performance. Please follow the instructions of the ushers at all times.
- **Turn off and put away cell phones, beeping watches, or anything else that can light up or make noise** – These can be very distracting to the performers and your fellow audience members.
- **Do not eat, drink, or chew gum in the auditorium** – Even the quietest chewers and slurpers can be distracting to the performers and to the other people around you. Also, even if you are very careful, food and drinks can sometimes make a mess in the auditorium. We try to keep the auditorium as clean as possible so that it will be just as nice for the next audience.
- **Never throw anything in the auditorium** – This is distracting and dangerous for the performers and people in the audience.
- **Do not put your feet on the back of the seat in front of you**
- **Please do not wear a hat inside the auditorium** – It is difficult for the people behind you to see the stage if you're wearing a hat.
- **Use the restroom before the performance begins** – As soon as your class arrives and is seated in the auditorium, the teacher can arrange visits to the restroom before the performance begins. The ushers will help you find the closest restroom. Of course, if you *must* use the restroom during the performance, please be as quiet as possible about leaving your seat. Once you get to the aisle, an usher will help you find the way.
- **When the lights begin to dim, the performance is beginning** – This tells the audience to stop conversations, get settled in their seats, and focus their attention on the stage. A person will come out and make an announcement before the performance begins. Pay close attention to the announcement because it might include special instructions that you will need to remember.



- **Remember that the overture is part of the performance** – If the performance has music in it, there might be an opening piece of music called an overture before any actors appear on stage. Give this piece of music the same respect you give the performers by being quiet and attentive while the overture is played.

- **Do not take pictures or recordings during the performance** – The flashes can be distracting to performers, and it is against the law to take pictures or recordings of many performances.



- **Refrain from talking, whispering, and making noise during the performance** – Remember that live performers can see and hear you from the stage. It is very distracting to the performers and the other audience members if you talk during the performance. After all, the audience came to hear the professionals perform!
- **It's ok to react to the performance** – Spontaneous laughter, applause, and gasps of surprise are welcome as part of the special connection between the performers and the audience during a live show. However, shouts, loud comments, and other inappropriate noises are rude and distracting to the actors and your fellow audience members.
- **Clap at the appropriate times** – If you are enjoying the performance, you can let the performers know by clapping for them. During a play or musical, you can clap between scenes (during a blackout) or after songs. During a music concert or dance performance, you can clap after each piece is performed. In a jazz music concert it is ok to clap in the middle of a song when a musician has finished a solo. If a music ensemble plays a piece with several sections, called movements, the audience will usually only clap at the very end of all the movements.
- **The performers will bow when the performance ends** – This is called a curtain call. You should applaud to thank the performers for their hard work, but you should not begin to leave the auditorium until the curtain call is over and the lights become brighter. If you really enjoyed the performance, you are welcome to give a standing ovation while you applaud. This is reserved for performances you feel are *truly outstanding!*
- **Respect the hard work of the performers** – You may not enjoy every performance you see, but I hope you will recognize that each performance requires a tremendous amount of dedication on the part of the performers and those who work backstage. It is polite to keep any negative comments to yourself until you have left the building.



Class Acts and Common Core

Attendance at any Class Acts event can help teachers meet Common Core Standards. The clearest example can be found in the Standard for Speaking and Listening, #2:

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

The experience of attending a live performance is a unique format that can greatly enhance a student's understanding of an important topic or theme.

Additionally, in the Common Core Standards for Reading, the definition of the word "text" can be expanded to include non-printed works such as dance, music, theater, and visual arts. This makes the arts an important part of all standards in the Reading category, at every grade level.



Write to Us!

We would love to hear from you and your students! If your students write about the performance they saw or create artwork related to it, you are welcome to send it to us via email to azepp2@uis.edu or through the mail to:

Amy Zepp
Performing Arts Services
University of Illinois Springfield
One University Plaza, MS PAC 397
Springfield, IL 62703

We love sharing student work with our Class Acts sponsors, so they can see the impact of their donations.

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

Study Guide

THE STORY

Our play is based on E.B. White's classic book, CHARLOTTE'S WEB, which has been read by generations of children since it first appeared in 1952 and remains a favorite today.

The story opens on a farm with the birth of a litter of pigs. The farmer, Mr. Arable, is about to destroy the tiniest one, or the "runt," but is stopped by the pleading of his young daughter, Fern. She takes over the bottle-feeding and special care required for such a little pig -- whom she names "Wilbur" -- and the pig flourishes. Now that Wilbur is growing, Mr. Arable must sell him -- but, again at Fern's urging, the pig is sold to her Uncle Homer Zuckerman. Since the Zuckerman's farm is just down the road, Fern can still visit him often.

On the Zuckerman's farm, Wilbur meets many new animals -- Goose and Gander, Sheep, and Templeton the Rat -- but without Fern around as much, he admits to feeling lonely. One night, a voice answers his wishes, and promises to be his friend. The next morning, he finds out that the voice belongs to a beautiful grey spider named Charlotte. Although Wilbur is nervous about trusting this new acquaintance (she captures bugs in her web, so he thinks she's "brutal"), he soon learns that Charlotte is his loyal and true friend when she devises a plan to save him from his inevitable trip to the slaughterhouse. Through her talent at weaving words into her web, and her sacrificing of most of her energy to do so, she convinces "the people" that Wilbur is "some pig," and he is insured a long life in the barnyard.

BEFORE SEEING THE PLAY

1. Ask students if they have ever visited a farm. If so, what kinds of animals did they see there? Read about farms in class, or show a film or video about raising animals on a farm.
2. Review the following vocabulary words which will be heard in the play:

runt	slops (scraps fed to pigs)	terrific	radiant
gander (male goose)	lonesome or lonely	humble	
goslings (baby geese)	famous	loyal	

Tell students to listen -- and look -- for some of these words in the play.

3. Show the class a picture of a spider's web. Does it look like something that would be easy or difficult to make? Explain how the web is used to capture food for the spider. Finish the lesson with a discussion of the way a spider makes an "egg sac" for their hundreds of eggs, which then hatch into baby spiders.
4. In our play, there are fewer actors than characters. Ask children to observe closely to see if they can tell which actors play more than one part.
5. Since the main theme of the play is friendship, have a class discussion on this topic. What makes a good friend? What kinds of things do friends do for each other? Have students give examples from their own circle of friends.

(O V E R)

AFTER SEEING THE PLAY

1. How does Fern convince her father not to kill the smallest pig -- the "runt" -- of the litter? What does she do to help raise the little pig?
2. When Wilbur moves to the Zuckerman farm, he meets many animals but is still lonely until he meets Charlotte. What is different about Charlotte that makes her become Wilbur's friend?
3. When Wilbur first meets Charlotte, he wonders if he will ever learn to like someone who is so "brutal" and "bloodthirsty," yet Charlotte soon becomes his best friend. Have you ever changed your opinion about someone after you got to know them better? Are first impressions always reliable?
4. In the play, we see both Charlotte and Templeton the Rat do things for Wilbur which help to save his life. Do they both help him for the same reasons? How is Templeton convinced to help? Why does Charlotte make sacrifices for Wilbur? What does Wilbur do to return the favors?
5. Although our play is not a musical, there is music heard throughout. How is music used in setting the mood? What kind of music is played for the happy parts? The sad parts? Tell students to listen for music that sets the mood the next time they see a movie or television show.
6. Ask students if they were able to pick out the actors playing more than one character. What did the actors do to show that they were playing different parts (change costumes, voices, body movements)? How did the actors portray the animal characters? Have children take turns imitating different animals sounds. If these animals could talk, how would they sound?
7. Ask students if they can remember which words Charlotte wove into her web (SOME PIG, TERRIFIC, RADIANT, HUMBLE). How did the appearance of these words save Wilbur's life? What other words can they think of that Charlotte might have used?
8. Activity Sheet. Attached is a "fun sheet" with two activities based on *Charlotte's Web* for your class to do after they have seen the play.

FOR FURTHER READING

Students may also enjoy these animal stories by E.B. White:

Stuart Little

The Trumpet of the Swan

Here's a sampling of the many books available about farm animals and spiders which may be helpful to your students before or after seeing the performance:

Ancona, George, photographs, text by Joan Anderson. [Pets and Farm Animals, A Photo Essay](#). New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Publishers, 1989.

Isenbert, Hans-Heinrich, translated by Elizabeth D. Crawford, photographs by Ruth Rau. [Baby Animals on the Farm](#). New York: B.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981.

Miller, Jane. [Seasons on the Farm](#). New York: Prentice-Hall Books for Young Readers, 1986.

Schnieper, Claudia, photographs by Max Meier. [Amazing Spiders](#). Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, Inc., 1989.

Webster, David, pictures by Carol Hellman. [Spider Watching](#). New York: Julian Messner, 1984.

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CHARLOTTE'S WEB

FUN SHEET

1. There are 10 words from the play hidden in this puzzle. Circle the words you find -- don't forget to look in all directions (including backwards!)

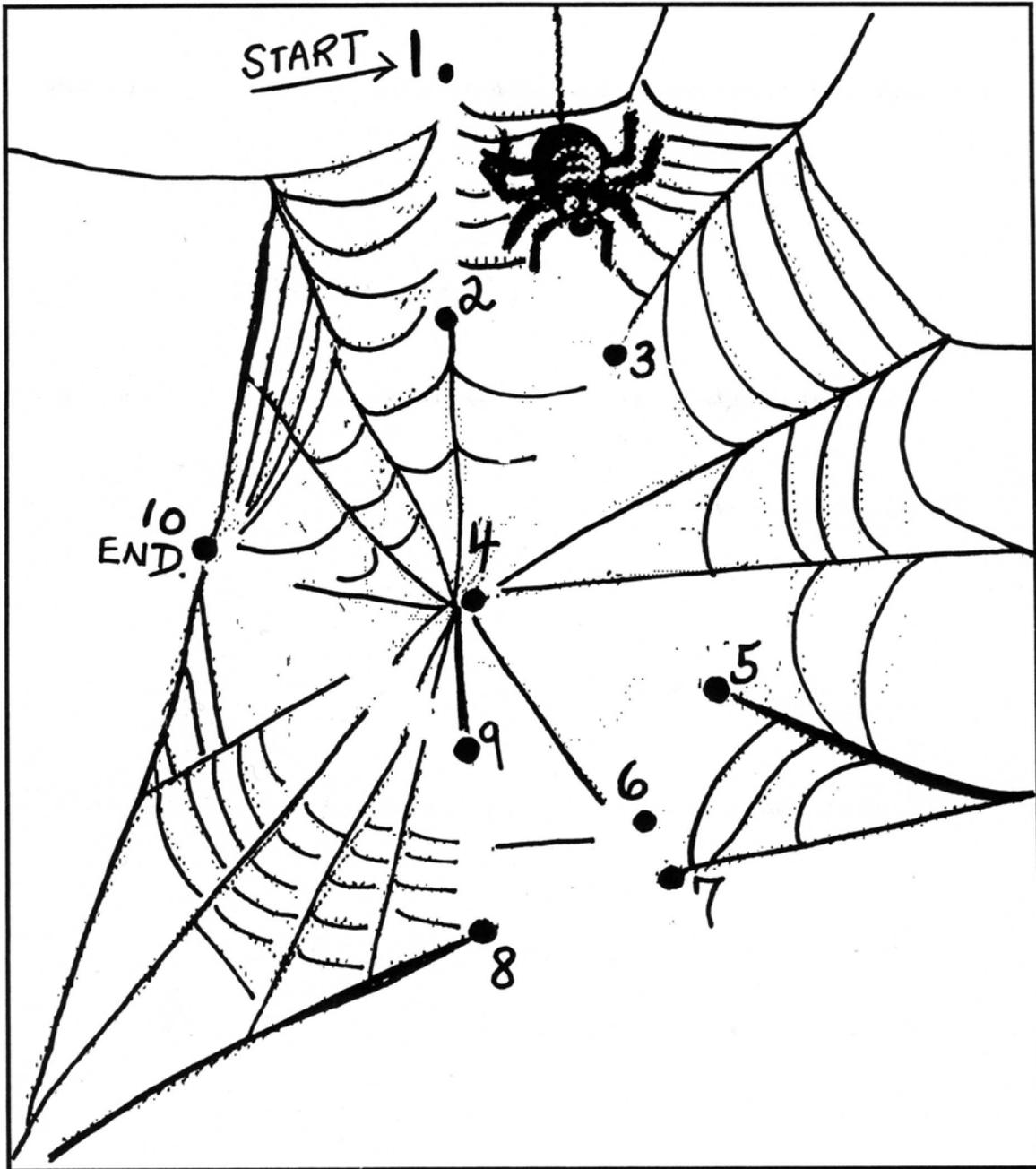
A	N	S	L	O	P	S	B
S	R	G	T	R	I	H	O
P	A	G	X	O	G	E	T
I	B	F	A	I	R	E	W
D	C	E	Z	N	W	P	W
E	R	J	M	U	D	T	T
R	U	N	T	Q	E	E	A
E	L	B	M	U	H	A	R

HINT: Words to look for are: spider, rat, pig, gander, runt, fair, humble, slops, sheep, barn.

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

FUN SHEET

2. Charlotte has a hole in her web! Help her to fix it by connecting the dots in order, #1-10.



About the Author: E. B. White

E. B. White, the author of such beloved children's classics as *Charlotte's Web*, *Stuart Little*, and *The Trumpet of the Swan*, was born in Mount Vernon, New York. He graduated from Cornell University in 1921 and, five or six years later, joined the staff of *The New Yorker* magazine. E.B. White authored over 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 writing poems and essays, and drawing sketches for *The New Yorker* magazine. Some of his other books include: *One Man's Meat*, *The Second Tree from the Corner*, *Letters of E. B. White*, *The Essays of E. B. White*, and *Poems and Sketches of E. B. White*.



Funnily enough for such a famous writer, he always said that he found writing difficult and bad for one's disposition but he kept at it!

Mr. White has 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.”

He died on October 1, 1985, and is survived by his son and three grandchildren.

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.”

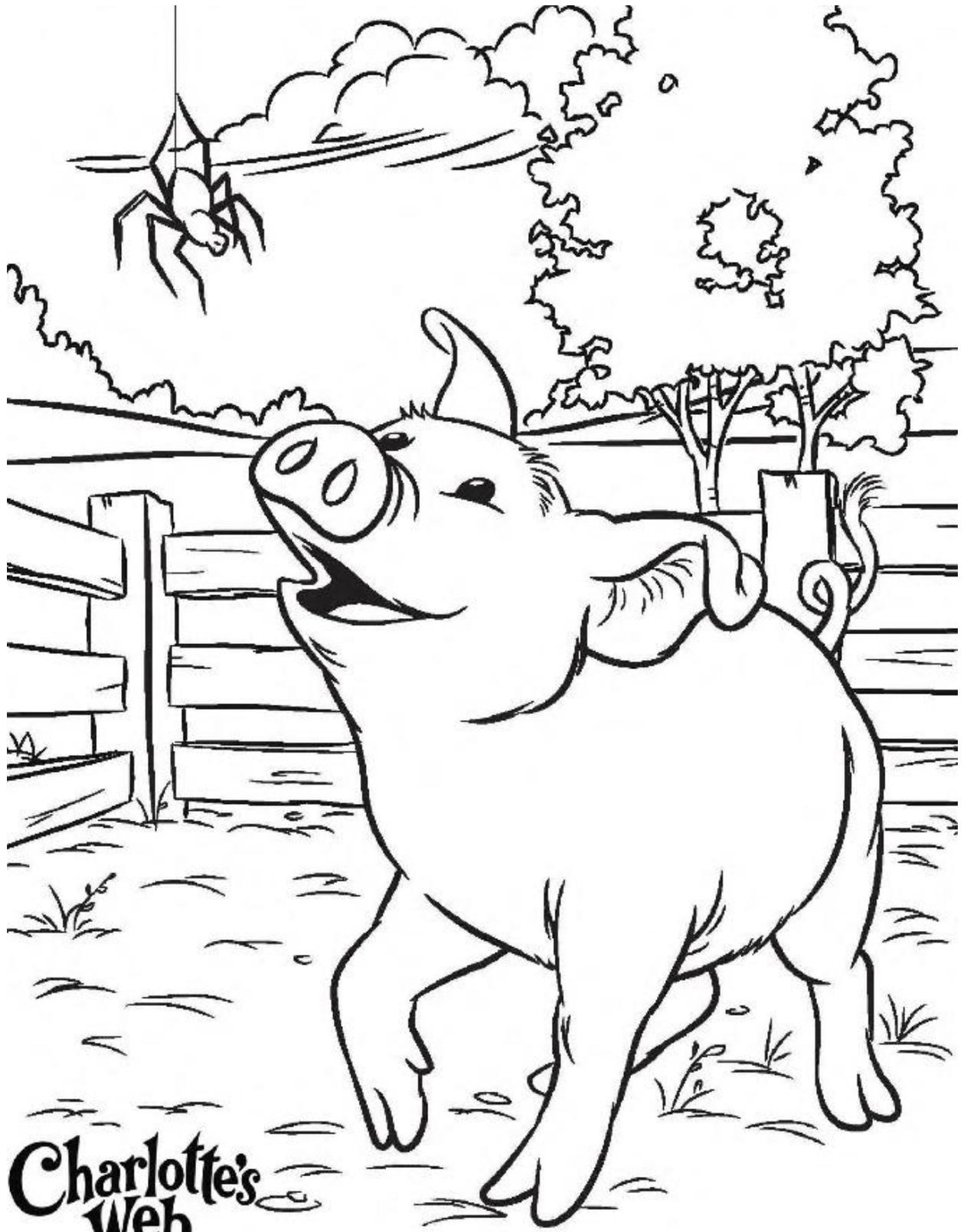
Mr. White lived on a farm in Maine where he kept animals, and some of these creatures made their way into his stories and books, like Stuart in *Stuart Little*, or Charlotte in *Charlotte's Web*. After all, as E.B. White said, “I like animals, and my barn is a very pleasant place to be, at all hours!”

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.”

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.”



Charlotte's
Web