

## Charlotte's Web – E.B. White

### CHARACTER TRAITS AND THEMES

GRADES: 3 AND 4

Primary Character Trait:

**Kindness** - Thinking and acting in ways that show you care

Secondary Character Trait:

**Optimism** - Expecting good things today and in the future

**Work Ethic** - Working hard and sustaining effort leading to feeling good about a job well done

### OBJECTIVES

*The learner will:*

- Develop a further understanding of the Character Traits: Kindness, Work Ethic and Optimism
- Understand *The Charlotte's Web* on the literal and thematic level
- Make connections: Understand how the characters and events in the novel demonstrate the importance of being kind and optimistic
- Make connections between events and characters in *Charlotte's Web* to their own lives, and articulate those connections through speaking and writing
- Use effective communication and social skills in a class meeting format
- Develop letter writing skills
- Identify the meanings of unknown words through context clues and reference materials

### GRADE LEVEL CONTENT EXPECTATIONS

#### Third Grade

**R.NT.03.03** Identify and describe characters' thoughts and motivations, story level themes (good vs. evil), main idea, and lesson/moral (fable).

**R.CM.03.01** Connect personal knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the world to themes and perspectives in text through oral and written responses.

**R.CM.03.02** Retell in sequence the story elements of grade-level narrative text and major idea(s) and relevant details of grade-level informational text.

**R.CM.03.03** Compare and contrast relationships among characters, events, and key ideas within and across texts to create a deeper understanding; including a narrative to an informational text, a literature selection to a subject area text, and an historical event to a current event.

**R.WS.03.06** Acquire and apply strategies to identify unknown words or word parts; self-monitor and construct meaning by predicting and self-correcting, applying knowledge of language, sound/symbol/structural relationships, and context.

**W.GN.03.02** Write poetry based on reading a wide variety of grade-appropriate poetry.

#### Fourth Grade

**R.CM.04.02** Retell through concise summarization grade-level narrative and informational text.

**R.MT.04.01** Self-monitor comprehension when reading or listening to text by automatically applying and discussing the strategies used by mature readers to increase comprehension including:

predicting, constructing mental images, visually representing ideas in text, questioning, rereading or listening again if uncertain about meaning, inferring, summarizing, and engaging in interpretive discussions.

**R.MT.04.02** Plan, monitor, regulate, and evaluate skills, strategies, and processes to construct and convey meaning (e.g., decoding unknown words) and use graphic organizers to deepen their understanding of compare/contrast, and sequential organizational patterns.

**W.GN.04.04** Use the writing process to produce and present a research project using a teacher-approved topic; find and narrow research questions; use a variety of resources; take notes; and organize relevant information to draw conclusions.

**W.GN.04.02** Write poetry based on reading a wide variety of grade-appropriate poetry.

### ESTIMATED TIME PARAMETERS

One day

More than one day

Mini-unit

### RESOURCES

Novel: *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White

### PREREQUISITES

- Students have a working understanding of the Smart Six character traits: kindness, optimism and work ethic, specifically.
- Each student will need a reading log to write in during each session.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Lesson 1: Introduction to Spiders

A great way to get students interested in *Charlotte's Web* is to begin the unit with a spider activity. You will need to have a large amount of nonfiction books about spiders set out for the students to look at. Charlotte is a type of orb spider. If there is time, students may look up pictures of orb spiders on the internet.

- Tell the class that the new chapter book they will be starting in a few days has a spider as a main character. Although the book is fiction, let the students know that you think it is important that they develop some background information about spiders.
- Depending on the class size, students may work independently or in pairs for this activity. Instruct the students to choose a spider book from the pile you have set out.
- Ask students to take out their reading logs for the upcoming book.
- Give the students sufficient time to look through and read the book they chose for the activity.
- Ask students to write down three facts they learned about spiders in their reading logs.
- Have students write down any questions they have as well; they may be answered by other students' facts. Finding the answers later can be an activity for students who finish other tasks early.
- When you feel all of the students have had sufficient time to complete the assignment, ask students to return the spider books to the original pile and return to their seats.

# SmartCharacterChoices

- As a whole group, ask each student to share a fact that he or she wrote down during the activity.

## Lesson 2: Fictional Book Walk

Introduce the novel, *Charlotte's Web*, to the class. Explain to the students that the following day, they will be reading a book in which the main characters have to work together to solve a very serious problem.

- Distribute a copy of the book to each student.
- Ask students to look at the front cover and read the summary on the back cover.
- Invite students to skim through the book, looking at the chapter titles and the pictures.
- Have students write down what they think the book will be about in their reading logs. Ask students what they think the problem will be in the story.
- As a class, briefly discuss what the students wrote down.

## INSTRUCTION

### Lesson 3

Read aloud chapter one to the class. Have students follow along in their copies of the book.

- When you have finished reading, discuss what it would be like to have a pig as a pet.
- Ask the students if any of them has ever had an unusual pet.
- After students have shared their answers, ask them to take out their reading logs.
- In their reading logs, have students write down an unusual pet that they would like to have.
- Tell the students that they must also write down everything they think they will need to feed and take care of their unusual pet.

### Lesson 4 – A Friendly Letter

At the beginning of this lesson, review what a friendly letter looks like with your students. I suggest having an example posted somewhere in the room for the students to see.

- Ask students to take out their chapter books and reading logs.
- As a whole group, read chapter two.
- When finished, ask the students if they think having a pig would be a lot of work.
- Ask students to open their reading logs and review the information that they wrote down the previous day. All of your students should have an entry about an unusual pet they would like to have.
- Tell the students that in their reading logs they are going to write a friendly letter to their parents. The purpose of the letters is to ask and persuade their parents to let them have an unusual pet.
- Prior to students starting their letters, brainstorm as a group all of the important information they should have in their letters. Examples should be the name of the pet, how they will care for the pet, what they will feed the pet, how they will pay for the pet, where the pet would live, etc. Post this list somewhere in the room for this activity.

- Have the students write their letters in their reading logs.
- Throughout the week, have students share their letters with the class on a volunteer basis.

### Lesson 5: Kindness

At the beginning of lesson five, quickly review the first two chapters of the book. Discuss with the students that kindness is a theme they will notice throughout the book. Ask students to turn to page 10 in their books and follow along as you review an excerpt from the middle of the first paragraph:

“Sometimes, on these journeys, Wilbur would get tired, and Fern would pick him up and put him in the carriage alongside the doll. He liked this.”

Ask the students if they can think of any other acts of kindness they have seen in the book so far.

- Continue this lesson with the following class meeting on kindness.

#### Class Meeting: Kindness

*Define:*

- What does it mean to be kind to someone?
- What other character traits does someone who is kind also need to possess?

*Personalize:*

- Name someone you know who is kind. How do they treat others?
- Tell about a time when you were kind to someone else. How did that person respond to you?

*Challenge:*

- Do you think it is possible for someone to be kind to everyone all the time?
- If someone is unkind to others, how do you think people will treat them? Why?

Explain that while they read the rest of the novel, you are going to have the students keep a double entry journal, listing times in the book when you notice someone: 1) demonstrating kindness, 2) having a strong work ethic, or 3) being optimistic. Pass out the attached double entry page and review the examples with the class.

Ask students to read chapter three independently, and then respond to the following questions in their reading logs:

- Is Wilbur as happy at Mr. Zuckerman’s farm as he was at Fern’s house? Explain.
- Are the animals that Wilbur has met on Mr. Zuckerman’s farm kind to him? Give an example from the story.

### Lesson 6 – Journal Entries

Review chapter three as a group. Ask students to share some of their reading log responses with the group.

- Next, read aloud chapter four to the class. Have students follow along in their copies of the book.
- When finished, return to the bottom of page 27. Review the beginning of the last paragraph with the students, “Wilbur didn’t want food, he wanted love.” Ask the students how that sentence makes them feel.
- Ask the students to take out their reading logs and respond to the following journal entries:

# SmartCharacterChoices

- 1) Wilbur felt very lonely in this chapter. Has there ever been a time when you felt like Wilbur does here? Explain.
- 2) The other animals are mean to Wilbur in chapter three, but at the end of the chapter, Wilbur gets hope that he will have a new friend. Who do you think the new friend will be? Do you think they will get along?

## Lesson 7 – New Word Wall

From this point on in the book, there are many new words introduced that the students may or may not know. Have a bulletin board prepared for this activity with the title “New Word Wall” on top. Have strips of paper set aside for the students to use to post new words they find.

- Show the students the new bulletin board you have prepared. Tell the students that they will be reading many new words in the upcoming chapters. Tell the students that you will be assigning two different students to be the word finders in each of the remaining chapters. Those students will write unfamiliar words they find on the strips of paper provided and staple them to the board. At the end of that lesson, the students will share and discuss the new words with the class. The students must look up and share the meaning of the new words they find.
- Assign two students to be the word finders for chapter five.
- Have students read chapter five in pairs.
- When the students have finished chapter five, instruct them to find passages to add to their Double Journal Entry sheet.
- Allow two minutes at the very end of the lesson for the word finders to share the new words they added to the bulletin board.

## Lesson 8 – End of reading

Lesson Format: From here to the end of the reading, start each class with a reading log entry, and then vary other activities to suit the students’ and your needs.

Here is a sample format:

1. Journal entry
2. Reading Quiz (optional)
3. Inquiring Minds Quad Reading Strategy (Classroom of Choice, pp. 86 – 88). Modify the strategy by having the questioner ask, in addition to other possible questions, “Do you see an example of work ethic, responsibility, or kindness in this section?” Students complete their double entry journals in groups of 4.

OR

Pair Reading, taking turns as reader, completing the double entry journals in pairs.

OR

Read to the class

OR

Individual reading (in or outside of class)

4. Class Meetings – focusing on helping them develop an understanding of the literal level of the novel and discussing the character traits of kindness, optimism and work ethic.
5. Presentation of the “New Word Wall” words.

## ***EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT***

1. Students’ reading logs can serve as a comprehension assessment.
2. Students’ Double Journal Entry sheets can serve as an understanding of the character traits studied in the book.
3. The students’ letters to their parents can serve as a friendly letter writing assessment.
4. Have students compare Wilbur from the beginning of the book to the end. How did he change? What characters or events influenced his change? How?
5. If you are reading this book while you are studying poetry, students could create different types of poems about each of the characters in the story.
6. Students could write a letter from Charlotte to her unborn children describing the people, animals, and life on the farm.
7. Assign each student a farm animal to research. Have students create a nonfiction book about their animals to share with lower elementary students.

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

## Character Trait Double Journal Entry

<b>Character Trait</b> (Kindness, Optimism, Work Ethic)	<b>Character, Actions and/or Quotations that demonstrate the trait.</b> (with page numbers)
Example: Work Ethic	Every afternoon, when the school bus stopped in front of her house, she jumped out and ran to the kitchen to fix another bottle for him. (9)