Unit 2/Week 4

Title: Charlotte’s Web

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.4.4; W.4.1, W.4.4, W.4.9; SL.4.1; L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.4

Teacher Instructions

*Refer to the Introduction for further details*

**Before Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers, about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

Love and friendship can be powerful and sometimes our friends are very different from ourselves.

Words can change minds and even help save lives.

You are never too small to do great things.

Synopsis

E. B. White’s Charlotte’s Web, first published in 1952 tells the story of friendship and loyalty between Wilbur and a grey spider named Charlotte. Wilbur is a spring pig and learns that he is being fattened for slaughter in the fall. Although Charlotte is the smallest living thing in the barn, she ends up being the most powerful. Wilbur is at first disgusted by the fact that Charlotte eats flies, but comes to both appreciate and love her.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire main selection text independently.
2. Teacher reads the main selection text aloud with students following along. (Depending on how complex the text is and the amount of support needed by students, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2. )
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions and returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e.: whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| What is the setting of the play Charlotte’s Web? | Charlotte’s Web takes place in the Zuckerman’s Barn |
| Why did the author and illustrator introduce all the characters before the story begins? | Charlotte’s Web is a play. |
| How does Charlotte change how she sews her web once she meets Wilbur and becomes determined to save her? | At the beginning Charlotte’s web protects her, gives her a place to live, and helps her trap food. At the end, Charlotte is using her web to send messages to people so that Wilbur won’t be killed. |
| Why does Wilbur say early summer days on a farm are the happiest and fairest of the year? | Lilacs and apple blossoms bloom; the days grow warm and soft; he can visit the barn every day |
| Conspiracy means a secret plan by a group to do something harmful. The sheep says, “It is a regular conspiracy” To what is he referring? | They are fattening Wilbur up. They are going to kill him and turn him into smoked ham or bacon |
| Wilbur just found out about the Zuckerman’s plan. What detail from the text supports why Wilbur is smiling in the illustration? | Charlotte promised Wilbur that she would save him. |
| Homer says, “A miracle has happened on the farm”. What miracle has Charlotte performed? | Charlotte threads “Some Pig” in her web to describe Wilbur.  Illustration |
| How will saving Wilbur affect Templeton’s life? | He will get his pail of slops next winter. |
| How did Charlotte’s idea solve Wilbur’s problem? | Charlotte’s messages in her web cause the Zuckermans to believe that Wilbur is a special pig, not to be killed and turned into ham and bacon. |
| What does Charlotte mean in her poem by “The job that I’ve done is all for my friend?” | Charlotte realizes that she must do something to save Wilbur, and that if she can fool a “bug” (a fly) then she can fool a person. She decides to do it with words.?” |
| ”What does the word “Some” mean in Charlotte’s web words “Some Pig”? | “Some” means special, miracle. Mr. Zuckerman says “I’ve got to call the minister right away and tell about this miracle.” |
| Charlotte’s first writing in her web says “Some Pig.” The next time she decides to use the word “Terrific.” Why does Charlotte use these words to describe Wilbur? | Charlotte wants people to believe what she believes, which is that Wilbur is special and remarkable, and should not be killed and turned into bacon and ham. |

Vocabulary

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|  | **KEY WORDS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING** | **WORDS WORTH KNOWING**  General teaching suggestions are provided in the Introduction |
| **TEACHER PROVIDES DEFINITION**  not enough contextual clues provided in the text | brutal, doubts, fears, loyal  dismayed, conspiracy  miracle  provider | hired hand, gander  restores  uncertainty, fairest  unremitting, rigid  advances, emerging  elaborate, deliberately, indistinguishable  retreats, sustenance  eluding  bravo, cowers |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | rotten  some | salutations, fragile  capture, tremendous, debloeved  delayed, determined  exhausting, hurriedly  supreme, acrobat |

Culminating Task

Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write

*Write an essay explaining what makes Charlotte ‘no ordinary spider’. How do these special qualities help Wilbur? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.*

Answer: Although Charlotte is the smallest character in the story her actions were extraordinary. Upon finding out about Wilbur’s fate Charlotte devised a plan to save Wilbur. She communicates by spinning words in her web and talks to the other animals. Charlotte cleverly through her friendship with the other animals was able to save Wilbur’s life.

Additional Tasks

1. Students could actually perform the play, either as readers’ theater or staged. It is so short and has so many characters (11) that small groups could prepare and perform it for the entire class, even if they heard it multiple times. Good fluency and vocabulary practice.
2. Students can compare the play with the original text from the book. What changes did the author of the play make, and what effects (if any) do these changes have on the story?
3. Students read the entire original story of Charlotte’s Web. Then they might pick a different section that would make a good play, either writing a single scene or describing how they would stage it.
4. Student may watch the movie version of Charlotte’s Web (there are multiple versions on You Tube of the scene where Wilbur meets Charlotte) and compare them to the play and/or the original text.
5. Students read other books by E.B. White (Trumpet of the Swan, Stuart Little) and notice similar themes of loyalty, friendship, the power of words or discover new themes/lessons.

Note to Teacher

* Discuss with students why the author has included stage directions