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INTRODUCTION

Read through the Common Core Standards for “Reading: Literature,” and you will find that the work expected of students is expressed using such academic terminology as *describe*, *determine*, *develop*, *support*, and *cite*. Requirements such as these cannot be met via the comprehension-question worksheets and culminating quizzes that have long been the staples of literature guides designed for classroom use. The primary objective of those traditional activities was to make sure that students were keeping track of what was happening in the section of the novel that they had just read. Very little rigor and synthesis was asked of students—and usually none until the entire novel was read.

From a teacher’s standpoint, this style of classroom analysis misses multiple opportunities to delve deeply into the details that make a specific piece of literature a classic. From a student’s standpoint, this way to reflect on literature is monotonous and inflexible, and it fails to nurture the momentum experienced when one is invested in a compelling work of art. That is why the guides in the *Rigorous Reading* series aim to do much more: they aim to transform the reading of a great novel into a journey of discovery for students.

Instead of merely asking students what happened in any given section, this resource asks questions that require closer reading and deeper analysis—questions such as, “Why did the author choose to include this information?” and “How does this information further the plot or offer more insight into the themes, characters, settings, etc.?” And instead of waiting until the end of the novel to put the pieces of the puzzle in place, students will learn to add to and alter their understanding of the novel as *they are reading it*. The various activities in this resource systematically prompt students to consider and appreciate the many ingredients the author has combined to form the novel as a whole.

A CUSTOM RESOURCE

This in-depth guide has been written specifically for E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*. The lessons and activities have been structured and scaffolded to maximize the experience of reading and teaching this novel.

To prepare your students for their reading of *Charlotte's Web*, utilize the **novel information** and **pre-reading activity** included on pages 7–8 of this guide. Included in this section is information about the book and its author and illustrator, along with an activity designed to acclimate students to the themes present in the book they are about to read.

This resource provides activities that help foster comprehension and reinforce knowledge of literary elements as students read *Charlotte's Web*. These **section activities** allow students the opportunity to process short sections of the novel individually, laying a strong foundation for their ability to engage more deeply with the chapters to come. For each section of the novel, students will complete individual and collaborative activities that encourage close reading, referencing textual evidence, and drawing their own conclusions about the text.

Additionally, this resource provides students with another avenue through which they can reflect on recurring literary elements, while also connecting personally with the novel. Each student maintains his or her own **Interactive Novel Log**, using it as a way to consider and then reconsider various aspects of the novel.

Upon completion of the entire novel, students can synthesize their ideas about the novel by completing several individual and/or collaborative **post-reading activities** (pages 61–73). This section of the resource includes such larger assignments as group projects, essay assignments, and research projects.

On pages 74–75, **vocabulary** lists are provided for each section of the novel, along with suggestions for ways to teach vocabulary during reading and after completing the novel.

At the end of this guide, an **answer key** is provided for activities that require specific answers, and a list identifies how each activity correlates to **Common Core State Standards**.

Key Notes

For a description of Interactive Novel Logs and how to use them in your classroom, see page 5 of this guide.

An ideal way to use this resource would be to follow the complete lesson plan given on page 6 of this guide.

The use of multiple texts can help build and extend knowledge about a theme or topic. It can also illustrate the similarities and differences in how multiple authors approach similar content or how an individual author approaches multiple novels. See the bottom of page 7 for suggestions about using *Charlotte's Web* as part of a text set.

When teaching other novels in your classroom, consider using the specific ideas and also the general approach presented in this resource. Ask students to mine small sections of a novel for clues to theme and characterization. Examine the craft, structure, and purpose of select passages. Explore inferences and encourage connections.

This guide is designed for use in grades 3–5, and the standards correlations on pages 78–80 reflect this range. This leveling has been determined through the consideration of various educational metrics. However, teacher discretion should be used to determine if the novel and guide are appropriate for lower or higher grades, as well.

KEEPING NOVEL LOGS

Great works of literature are complex texts, and complex texts are multilayered. They enrich and reveal as they go along. Successful readers are those who “go along” with the novel, too. Interactive Novel Logs give students a place and a space to record their thoughts and observations as they journey through the book. After each section of the novel is read, students use their Interactive Novel Logs to track the introduction and development of such literary elements as plot, setting, theme, characterization, craft, and structure, while also choosing their own ways to connect the novel to their own life experiences.

Materials needed for each student:

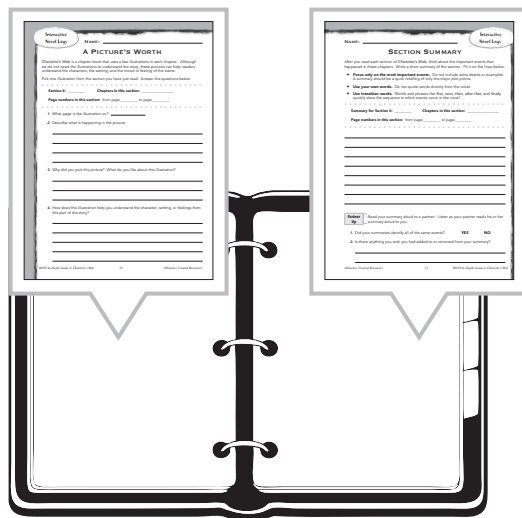
- ✦ a three-ring binder or presentation folder
- ✦ a blank sheet of plain paper with holes punched for the title page
- ✦ two or three sheets of blank lined paper for the Table of Contents
- ✦ several extra sheets of paper (both lined and plain) for student’s responses to the “Ideas for Your Interactive Log” prompts at the end of each section

Key Notes

One Interactive Novel Log can be kept for multiple novels, in which case a larger three-ring binder will be needed. If it will be used only for the activities included in this guide for *Charlotte’s Web*, a ½-inch binder or presentation folder will be adequate.

Assembling the Interactive Novel Log:

1. On the plain paper, allow students to design and decorate their own title page. Have them write “Interactive Novel Log” and “*Charlotte’s Web*” in the middle of the page. They should include their name and grade at the bottom.
2. Add blank lined paper for the Table of Contents. Have students write “Table of Contents” at the top. They will add to this list as they create new pages.



3. Before reading each section of the novel, photocopy and distribute new copies of the Interactive Novel Log worksheets (pages 9–12). Directions for completing these activities can be found in the “Teacher Instructions” that begin Section I.
4. For the final activity in each section, photocopy and distribute the “Section Log-In” page for the section. Follow the directions given. Students select one or more of the four topics in the “Ideas for Your Interactive Novel Log” section and create an Interactive Novel Log page that responds to that topic.

5. After the class has completed the entire novel and the post-reading activities, you may have students include the “My Book Rating” worksheet (page 73) as a final entry in their Interactive Novel Logs.

NAME: _____

A PICTURE'S WORTH

Charlotte's Web is a chapter book that uses a few illustrations in each chapter. Although we do not need the illustrations to understand the story, these pictures can help readers understand the characters, the setting, and the mood or feeling of the scene.

Pick one illustration from the section you have just read. Answer the questions below.



Section #: _____ **Chapters in this section:** _____

Page numbers in this section: from page _____ to page _____



1. What page is the illustration on? _____

2. Describe what is happening in the picture.

3. Why did you pick this picture? What do you like about this illustration?

4. How does this illustration help you understand the character, setting, or feelings from this part of the story?

NAME: _____

SECTION II LOG-IN

Now that you have finished this section of *Charlotte’s Web*, take some time to add to your Interactive Novel Log before you begin reading the next section.

✦ **First, make a prediction about what will happen next in the novel.**

Use your “I Predict” worksheet (page 12) to do this. Do not fill out the “Fact Check” section at the bottom of the page until you have read the next section.

✦ **Next, make a more personal connection to what you have read.**

Choose one of the suggestions below and use it to fill a page in your Interactive Novel Log. Take this opportunity to connect with the novel in a way that appeals to you.



Ideas for Your Interactive Novel Log

1
Planning My Day

In Chapter 4, Wilbur has his whole day planned out, hour-by-hour. Create your own plan for what you will do this Saturday or Sunday, listing what you plan to do throughout the day. Write down the times for each activity. Draw or find pictures to add to the chart to show some of the activities.

My Day

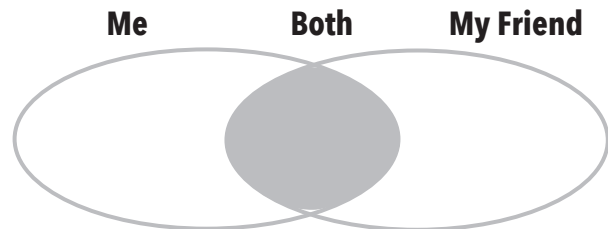
8:00 – *Wake up.*

8:30 – *Eat breakfast.*

9:00 – *Swim lesson begins.*

2
A Good Friend

In this section, Wilbur meets his new friend, Charlotte. At first, he is not sure if he will be able to like her because she is so different from him. Do you have a friend who is very different from you? Describe that friend and explain the differences between the two of you. Or make a chart of similarities and differences.



3
Nature Walk

Spend some time outside to notice what animals and insects are around you. What bugs or insects do you see? Spiders? Bees? Flies? Ants? What animals do you see? Birds? Squirrels? Make a chart that identifies all of the animals and insects you saw and what they were doing.

4
Birth Announcement!

In Chapter 6, the goose hatches her goslings. If you have younger brothers, sisters, or cousins, you may have seen a birth announcement before. Create a birth announcement for the new goslings. Make it colorful and creative. You can also make up names for the goslings, as well as weight, length, or other details.

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

In this section, Charlotte comes up with her plan to save Wilbur. Her words in the web have the desired effect, and the people believe that Wilbur is something special. We also see the barn animals working together to help Charlotte with her plan.

After your students have read Chapters 10–12, have them begin their analysis of this section of the novel by completing the following activities for their Interactive Novel Logs. Each of these activities is to be done individually.

- ✦ **"Challenge Words"** (See instructions on pages 9 and 13.)
- ✦ **"A Picture's Worth"** (See instructions on pages 10 and 13.)
- ✦ **"Section Summary"** (See instructions on pages 11 and 13.)

*For this section,
distribute new copies of
the Interactive Novel Log
worksheets on pages 9–11.*



Students will then further examine this section through the following worksheets:

Activity: "Building Suspense"

Focus: Craft and Structure

Description: Examine how the author creates suspense by using clues that build curiosity.

Page #: 31

Learning Type: Individual

Activity: "The Structure of a Scene"

Focus: Plot, Craft and Structure

Description: Consider the structure of a specific scene in the novel and determine how the events in the story relate to elements of traditional plot structure.

Page #: 32

Learning Type: Individual

Activity: "Web of Effects"

Focus: Plot

Description: Examine how the events in this section build on earlier events.

Page #: 33

Learning Type: Collaborative

Activity: "Not So Lonely Anymore"

Focus: Theme, Characterization

Description: Determine changes in the protagonist and begin to consider theme.

Page #: 34

Learning Type: Collaborative

Activity: "Friendship"

Focus: Theme

Description: Build on the last activity in order to analyze the theme of friendship.

Page #: 35

Learning Type: Individual

Activity: "Section IV Log-In"

Focus: Plot, etc.

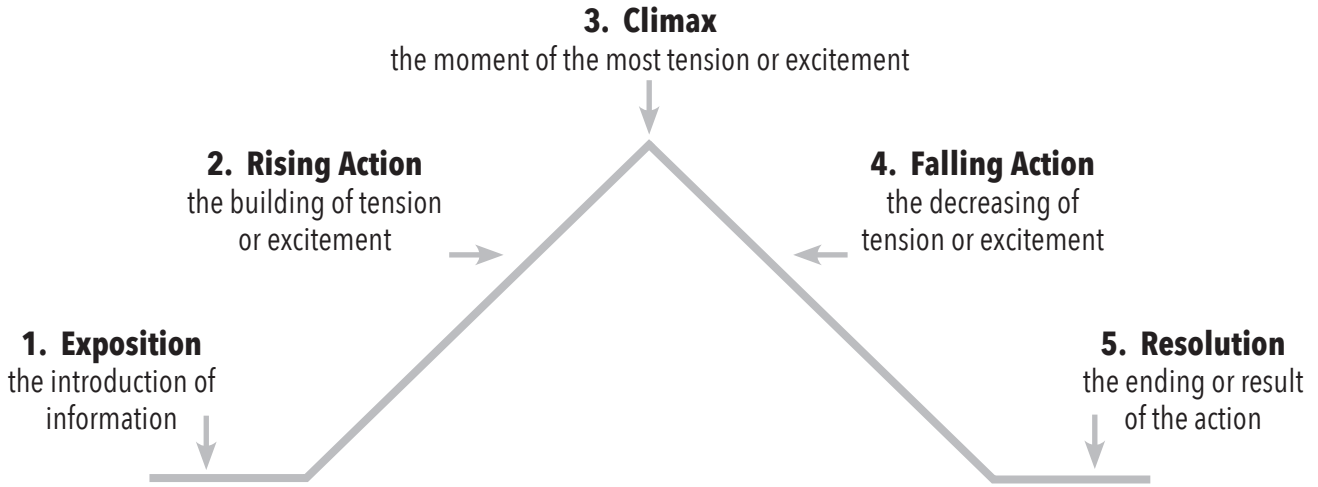
Description: Complete questions 1–3 on the "I Predict" worksheets in order to anticipate future events in the novel. (TIP: Have students revisit the "Fact Check" section of this worksheet after reading the following section of the novel.) Then choose from several options to connect with the novel on a more personal level.

Page #: 36

Learning Type: Individual

THE STRUCTURE OF A SCENE

Many novels—or scenes within novels—follow a classic plot structure. This structure is made up of five basic parts, as the diagram below shows.



Show how Chapter 10 fits this classic plot structure. On a separate piece of paper, write your answers to the following questions:

Exposition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who is visiting the Zuckerman farm that day? 2. What types of things are the visitors doing? 	<p style="text-align: center;">My Answers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.
Rising Action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Fern decides to visit Wilbur. How does this decision lead to a problem? 4. What does Avery want to do? 	
Climax	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. What is the most exciting moment in this scene? 6. Describe what Avery is doing. 7. Describe Fern’s reaction and what happens to Avery at that time. 	
Falling Action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Why do the children leave the barn? 	
Resolution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. How do the goose and Templeton feel about what happened? 10. What does Lurvy do when he gets to the barn? How does this help? 	

NAME(S): _____

TALKING ABOUT CHANGES

“Growing Up” is one theme in *Charlotte’s Web*. We see Wilbur grow up in the novel, but we also see other characters grow and change. In the last activity, you found several examples that showed how Fern’s story fits this theme.

With a partner, share your examples from “Changes.” Are your examples the same or different for each chapter? Check the box beside your answer for each chapter. If your answers are different, explain how they are different.

Chapter	Same or Different?	Explain
18	<input type="checkbox"/> Same <input type="checkbox"/> Different	
19	<input type="checkbox"/> Same <input type="checkbox"/> Different	
20	<input type="checkbox"/> Same <input type="checkbox"/> Different	



Practice Speaking and Listening

With your partner, have a discussion about the events that take place at the fair. Begin by deciding who will be Speaker 1 and who will be Speaker 2.

Speaker 1: _____
(name)

Speaker 2: _____
(name)

Answer this question aloud: *Do you think it was wrong of Fern to leave Wilbur and go enjoy the fair? Give a reason for your answer.*



Listen carefully to Speaker 1’s response. In your own words, explain what he or she said. Discuss! Do you agree or disagree with Speaker 1’s opinion? Explain why.

then

Listen carefully to Speaker 2’s response. In your own words, explain what he or she said. Discuss! Do you agree with Speaker 2? Explain why or why not.



Answer this question aloud: *Who do you think has changed the most so far, Wilbur or Fern? Give a reason for your answer.*

NAME: _____

TALK TO THE ANIMALS

Do you have pets, or have you spent time with someone else's pets? If these pets could talk, what do you think they would say? How would each pet's way of speaking fit its personality, as is the case with the characters in *Charlotte's Web*? If you don't have a pet, what do you imagine the wild animals that live near you—like squirrels, rabbits, birds, skunks, or coyotes—would talk about?

Make up a story with talking animals. Think of a problem the animals want to solve. Are they trying to escape? Do they not like a new member of the household? Do they want something that is out of reach? Be creative! Then decide what the animals will say and do to solve their problem. You can put yourself into the story or just write about the animals.

Use this worksheet to plan your story. Then write your story on a separate sheet of paper. Your story should do the following:

- ✦ Describe the characters.
- ✦ Introduce the situation or problem.
- ✦ Use dialogue. Put quotation marks around the words your characters say.
- ✦ Describe what happens.
- ✦ Use **signal words** to help connect ideas.
- ✦ Bring the story to a conclusion.

Examples of Signal Words

first, then, next, finally, however, for example, even though, after, before, because, since, when, also, another, later

First _____ Decide who the characters will be.

Type of Animal	Name	Personality Traits

Next _____ Decide what the problem is that they are trying to solve. _____

First _____ Decide how they will solve it. _____