

# SMART STAGE MATINEES



## *CHARLOTTE'S WEB* STUDY GUIDE

## **SMART STAGE MATINEES**

### **READING BASED PERFORMANCE**

Reading is the fundamental building block to all learning. Without the ability to read, successful academic achievement is not possible. Research shows a strong link between reading comprehension skills and the dramatic enactment of stories. Additional research confirms that learning in the arts is especially beneficial for young children, students from disadvantaged economic backgrounds, for those needing remedial instruction, and for those developing proficiency in English. This Smart Stage Reading Based performance was designed upon the foundation of these findings.

Broward County Public Schools reading curriculum specialists have selected this story from the district Basal Reading Curriculum. The Broward Center for the performing Arts has selected a professional theater company to perform this story. A team of district Reading Curriculum Specialists, Reading Trainers and classroom teachers developed study guides and lesson plans for use in the classroom.

The reading curriculum specialists have identified three key components of reading; plot development, story sequencing and inference as areas that would be directly advanced by a dramatic enactment of a story. As the curtain rises on this reading based program, the spotlight focuses on ensuring that all students achieve at their highest potential by energizing classroom learning through the arts.

The Broward Center's 40-year partnership with the School Board of Broward County has provided the foundation from which the Student Enrichment in the Arts (SEAS) program has thrived. SEAS is the country's only program of such magnitude to offer students free and equal access to professional performances in a quality theater setting. The Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network and National School Boards Association called the SEAS program a "national model for integration of the arts into the classroom curriculum." The Broward Center has proudly hosted some 1.5 million Broward public school students since the program's inception. The Smart Stage Matinees are presented as a replica of this award winning program.

### **ABOUT CHARLOTTE'S WEB**

As the curtain rises on this reading based Program, the spotlight focuses on ensuring that all students achieve at their highest potential by energizing classroom learning through the arts. The experience will connect the story read aloud and the live performance, enabling teachers and students to apply Florida Sunshine State Standards. The three targeted benchmark areas are chronological order, plot development, and inferential thinking. The following Playbook assists teachers as they address the benchmarks, read aloud the text, and attend the performance.

#### **Charlotte's Web**

E.B. White has written this classic fiction tale about true friendship, weaving together the lives of Fern, a small farm girl; Wilbur, the runt of the pig litter; and Charlotte, a diligent spider. When

Wilbur is born, Mr. Arable plans to dispose of the runt, but the pig is saved by Fern. However, Wilbur is sold to her Uncle Zuckerman. Wilbur's life on the farm is lonely until Charlotte, a spider, befriends him. His life is still in jeopardy. Charlotte weaves words into her web to convince everyone that Wilbur is special. This inevitably saves Wilbur's life.

### **Teaching the Standards**

#### **Chronological Order** Guided Discussion Questions

*LA.A 2.2.1 The student reads text and determines chronological order.*

- List the many ways that Wilbur was saved; then put them in order.
- How did Wilbur's opinion of each creature change after he got to know them?
- What are the steps Fern takes in order to get permission to raise Wilbur?

#### **Activities**

- Create a time line depicting the major events.

#### **Plot Development** Guided Discussion Questions

*LA.E 1.2.2 The student identifies plot development/problem resolution.*

- What problem did Wilbur face throughout the story?
- What do you think are the 3 most important events? Give details from the story to support your answer.
- Explain several ways that Wilbur's problem was solved.

#### **Activities**

- Write questions to the author, asking about specific events, characters, or decisions. Trade questions, imagine you are the author, and answer the questions.
- Develop a cause and effect T-chart.

Example:

cause	effect
Wilbur is a runt.	Mr. Arable plans to kill him.

#### **Inferences** Guided Discussion Questions

*LA.A.2.2.2 The student identifies author's purpose.*

*LA.A.2.2.7 The student explains how elements are alike or different within or across texts.*

*LA.E.1.2.3 The student identifies similarities and differences among characters, events, or settings.*

*LA.E.2.2.1 The student explains cause and effect relationships.*

- Why do you think Fern understands what the animals are saying?
- Who would Wilbur choose as his most important friend? Explain.
- How do you think Charlotte would feel about Wilbur's relationship with her children and grandchildren? How do you know?

#### **Activities**

- Highlight facts and details about spiders that could be true.
- Make a postcard. On one side draw a scene including at least one character and specific details. On the other side, write a message from the character.

### In a Book . . .

- The main events and details are described with words.
- The events may be organized into chapters.
- The author uses words to describe what the characters are thinking or feeling,  
OR
- The characters' words are written as dialogue using quotation marks,  
OR
- You learn about the characters through their interactions with each other.
- The author chooses specific words and details to show the mood and setting.
- YOU use the author's words to make a picture in your head.
- Word choice is used to create vivid pictures and enhance understanding.

### Before Reading the Book . . .

- Build background and activate prior knowledge.  
**Activities**
  - Brainstorm a list of farm animals. Circle the animals that are included in the book.
  - Share resources about spiders, such as picture books, magazines, or posters.
- Review chapter titles. Predict and record on a What We Think Will Happen chart.
- Develop vocabulary.

#### **Activities**

- Make a spider web of words. Have students paraphrase a brief definition, include synonyms or antonyms, and examples.

Example:



*You would be humble if you quietly sat in your chair when people applauded your accomplishments.*

### **Vocabulary Words**

humble	idiosyncrasy	loyal	"Some Pig"
radiant	runt	slops	

### During Reading of the Book . . .

- Use strategies to help you comprehend. Visualize, make connections, clarify, summarize, and question as you read.
- Stop when you are confused. Question, reread, and paraphrase to clarify.
- Enjoy. Notice the words or sections that make you say, "WOW." These are the parts that make you laugh, cry, worry, and wonder.
- Notice the language and how the author sends a message.

#### **Activities**

- Establish small groups to act out events and scenes. Encourage the "audience" of class members to identify the event or scene.
- Plot the story elements, keeping a time line of events.
- As you read a vivid passage, ask students to picture details in their minds and make a quick sketch recording their minds' picture on paper.

### In a Play . . .

- Only the most important events are shown.
- The events may be organized into acts or scenes.
- A narrator sometimes tells you what a character is thinking,  
OR
- A character sometimes thinks out loud to tell you how he/she feels,  
OR
- You might learn about a character through his/her expressions and actions.
- The setting is shown using sets and props.
- Sometimes you must use your imagination to complete the scene.
- Actors may need to play more than one character.
- Actors may change costumes, props, or voices to become different characters.
- Puppets, offstage voices, or props, instead of actors, might be used for some characters.
- Music and sound effects may be used to tell the story, set the mood, or enhance the setting.

### Before the Play . . .

- Discuss theater etiquette.
- Discuss the story summary.

#### **Activities**

- Brainstorm/predict/share different ways that each character might be portrayed. Record predictions on chart paper.
- Brainstorm and share what sets or props might be used.
- Act out feelings and mood such as excitement, worry, fear.
- Discuss the theme of friendship.

#### **Activities**

- Create a list of other books or movies that deal with friendship. When the title is shared, ask students to explain their connection.
- Introduce vocabulary related to theater.

#### **Activities**

- Write each word on a separate index card. Pass out the cards. Students act out each word while other class members guess the vocabulary word.

### **Vocabulary in the Play**

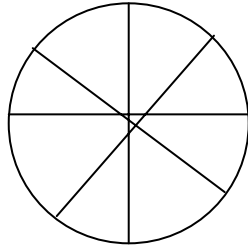
actors	scenes	audience	composer
costumes	director	lighting	playwright
props	set	stage hands	

### During the Play . . .

- Notice the setting.
- Recall your predictions about the characters, setting, and props then watch to see which ones were correct.
- Notice how the main characters introduce problems and then solve the conflicts.
- Observe the main events.
- Make a **brain bookmark** of things that make you say, "Cool!"
- Ask yourself, "Why did the playwright do that?"

### Making Connections

- After reviewing the play, conduct an open discussion on the “brain bookmarks.”
- Through a T-chart graphic organizer, compare and contrast the book and the play.
- Have small groups plan and share a tableau. (A tableau is a scene that is frozen in time. There is no movement. It is a “snapshot” to capture a single event.)
- Retell the story through a circle map using sequential illustrations.



### Writing Connections

- Have students develop a sequel to the play/book...(narrative essay).  
Suggested Titles: *Templeton’s Next Adventure*, *Fern’s Next Pet*, or *Wilber’s Next Friend*.
- Write a book/play review (expository writing).

### Technology Connections

- Research spiders, farm animals, or the author, E.B. White.
- Suggested websites: [www.bookmates.com](http://www.bookmates.com)  
[www.teachnet.com](http://www.teachnet.com)  
[www.abcteach.com](http://www.abcteach.com)  
[www.eduplace.com](http://www.eduplace.com)

### For Further Reading

- Students may also enjoy these books by E.B. White:  
*Stuart Little*  
*The Trumpet of the Swan*
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## Theater Etiquette

**Note-able behavior is a vital part of theater for youth. Going to the theater is not a casual event. It is a special occasion. If students are prepared properly, it will be a memorable, educational experience for all.**

### **AT SCHOOL:**

1. Teachers should review Theater Etiquette rules and study guide information with students in preparation for the upcoming performance.
2. Teachers should remind students to wear their best outfit on the day of the performance.
3. Before departure from school, send students to the restroom. Remind them that it will be quite a while before they can use it again.

### **AT THE THEATER:**

1. Upon arrival, teachers should keep all students from one class together and follow the directions of the ushers.
2. While seated, teachers should space themselves so they are visible, every 10 students. (This is school board policy.)
3. During the performance: Teachers should model appropriate behavior and stop any distracting student behavior immediately.
4. Teachers should instruct students that during the performance they should

1. Listen Attentively
2. Remain Quiet
3. Stay Seated
4. Keep in their own space



