

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

- 1 “Where’s Papa going with the axe?” said Fern to her mother as they were
2 setting the table for breakfast.
- 3 “Out to the hog-house,” replied Mrs. Arable. “Some pigs were born last night.”
- 4 “I don’t see why he needs an axe,” continued Fern, who was only eight.
- 5 “Well,” said her mother, “one of the pigs is a runt. It’s very small and weak,
6 and it will never amount to anything. So your father has decided to do away
7 with it.”
- 8 “Do away with it?” shrieked Fern. “You mean kill it? Just because it’s smaller
9 than the others?” Mrs. Arable put a pitcher of cream on the table.
- 10 “Don’t yell, Fern!” she said. “Your father is right. The pig would probably die
11 anyway.” Fern pushed a chair out of the way and ran outdoors. The grass was
12 wet, and the earth smelled of springtime. Fern’s sneakers were sopping by the
13 time she caught up with her father.
- 14 “Please don’t kill it!” she sobbed. “It’s unfair.” Mr. Arable stopped walking.
- 15 “Fern,” he said gently, “you will have to learn to control yourself.”
- 16 “Control myself?” yelled Fern. “This is a matter of life and death, and you talk
17 about controlling myself.” Tears ran down her cheeks and she took hold of the
18 axe and tried to pull it out of her father’s hand.
- 19 “Fern,” said Mr. Arable, “I know more about raising a litter of pigs than you do.
20 A weakling makes trouble. Now run along!”
- 21 “But it’s unfair,” cried Fern. “The pig couldn’t help being born small, could it?
22 If I had been very small at birth, would you have killed me?” Mr. Arable smiled.
- 23 “Certainly not,” he said, looking down at his daughter with love. “But this is
24 different. A little girl is one thing, a little runty pig is another.”
- 25 “I see no difference,” replied Fern, still hanging on to the axe. “This is the
26 most terrible case of injustice I ever heard of.” A queer look came over John
27 Arable’s face. He seemed almost ready to cry himself.

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28 “All right,” he said.” You go back to the house and I will bring the runt when I
29 come in. I’ll let you start it on a bottle, like a baby. Then you’ll see what
30 trouble a pig can be.” When Mr. Arable returned to the house half an hour
31 later, he carried a carton under his arm. Fern was upstairs changing her
32 sneakers. The kitchen table was set for breakfast, and the room smelled of
33 coffee, bacon, damp plaster, and wood smoke from the stove.

34 “Put it on her chair!” said Mrs. Arable. Mr. Arable set the carton down at Fern’s
35 place. Then he walked to the sink and washed his hands and dried them on
36 the roller towel.

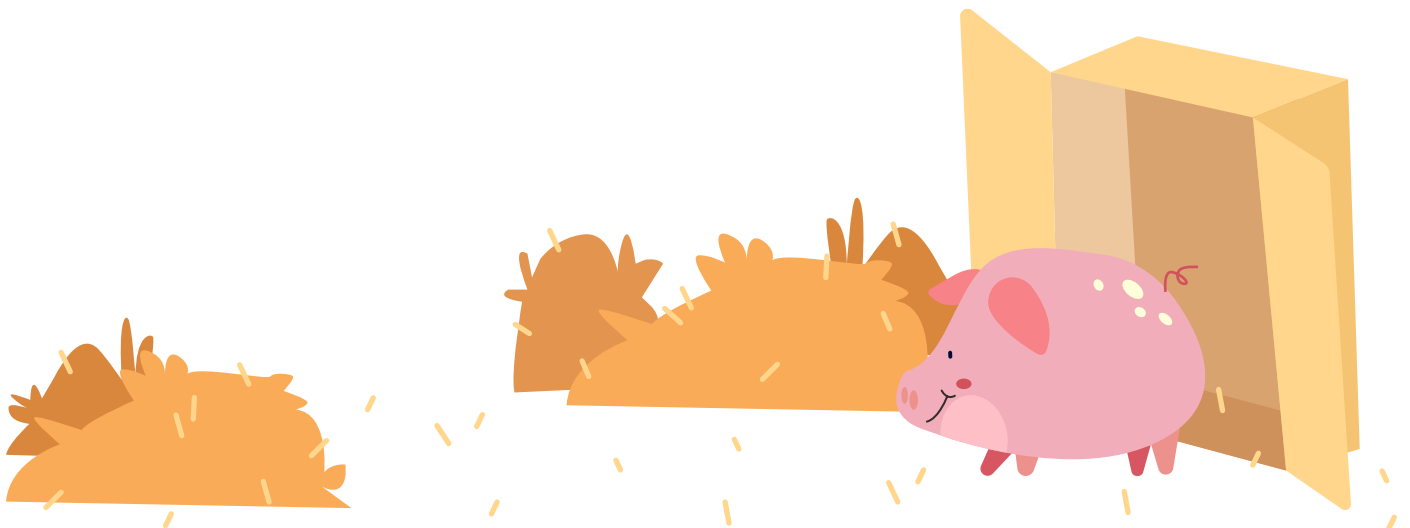
37 Fern came slowly down the stairs. Her eyes were red from crying.

38 As she approached her chair, the carton wobbled, and there was a scratching
39 noise.. Fern looked at her father. Then she lifted the lid of the carton. There,
40 inside, looking up at her, was the new-born pig. It was a white one. The
41 morning light shone through its ears, turning them pink.

42 “He’s yours,” said Mr. Arable. “Saved from an untimely death.

43 And may the good Lord forgive me for this foolishness.” Fern couldn’t take her
44 eyes off the tiny pig.

45 “Oh,” she whispered. “Oh, look at him! He’s absolutely perfect.” She closed
46 the carton carefully. First she kissed her father; then she kissed her
47 mother. Then she opened the lid again, lifted the pig out, and held it against
48 her cheek.



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 1** At what time of day is this chapter set?
- A** Morning
 - B** Noon
 - C** Afternoon
 - D** Evening
-
- 2** What season does this story occur in?
- A** Winter
 - B** Spring
 - C** Summer
 - D** Autumn
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- 3** Which is the most likely reason Fern's mother chooses to say 'do away with it' instead of 'kill it'?
- A** She doesn't want Fern to be more upset
 - B** They mean the same thing
 - C** Saying 'kill it' makes what Fern's father is doing sound worse
 - D** Because Fern's father is taking it away to the hog-house
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- 4** Why does Fern change her sneakers?
- A** They were wet from the rain
 - B** They were wet from the grass
 - C** They were wet from her crying
 - D** Because she went indoors
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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 5** Why does John Arable look almost ready to cry?
- A** He is sad that Fern cried
 - B** He wishes she would let go of the axe and let him do away with the pig
 - C** He realises that killing the pig is unjust
 - D** He is sad Fern thinks humans and pigs are the same
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- 6** What animal is bacon made from?
- A** Cow
 - B** Pig
 - C** Sheep
 - D** Chicken
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- 7** Was Fern certain her father would bring the pig back?
- A** Yes
 - B** No
 - C** It is not mentioned in the text
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- 8** What does Fern's father think of his decision to let her have the pig?
- A** Unforgivable
 - B** Kind
 - C** Unwise
 - D** Munificent
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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

9 What is meant by the word 'injustice' (line 26)?

- A** Unfairness
 - B** Justice
 - C** Murder
 - D** Pig-killing
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10 What is meant by the word 'untimely' (line 42)?

- A** Quick
 - B** Late
 - C** An unsuitable time
 - D** A planned time
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