This is a performance guide developed by the Education Department of Marin Theatre Company. This guide is created to help young audience members enjoy: *Charlotte’s Web*

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This image marks an activity that correlates to the Content Standards adopted by the California State Board of Education.
About MTC

At MTC, we believe that theatre offers our community the chance to share in the act of imaginative storytelling – live, in person, in the moment. For audiences and performers alike, theatre is a creative act, and we believe that sharing in a creative act inspires personal growth and brings people together. MTC’s Expanded Programs open up opportunities for people of all ages and all communities to participate in the joyous, challenging, and inspiring process of theatre.

The Components

**Family Series:** This series provides family-oriented performances appropriate for children, families, and educators.

**The Drama Conservatory:** The Drama Conservatory provides the best classes, camps, workshops, and performance opportunities for Bay Area children and teens. The Conservatory's programming consists of a variety of sequential acting classes, year-round drama camps, and opportunities for students to perform in their own full-scale productions. The Drama Conservatory’s mission is to introduce students to a professional quality theatrical experience in a friendly, comfortable educational setting. We strive to help students tap into their inner confidence and creativity to inspire them to reach their fullest potential in the arts and beyond.

**Mainstage Series:** Marin Theatre Company produces world-class theater for the Marin County and Bay Area communities. We strive to set a national standard for intimate theater experiences of the highest quality, featuring provocative plays by passionate playwrights. We pursue a dialogue with our community that addresses our national and local concerns and interests and assists us in finding a new understanding of our lives.

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**2015-2016 Family Series Season**

**Charlotte’s Web**  
August 8—16, 2015

**Cinderella**  
Presented by Great Arizona Puppet Theatre  
October 10 & 11, 2015

**The Little Prince**  
December 12 – 20, 2015

**The Little Mermaid**  
February 27 – March 6, 2016

For more information, please  
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Staging a play is a big job! Not only does it include the people you see on stage but also a great number of people behind the scenes.

**The Playwright**
- Funnels the vision of his/her storytelling into a written script. Scripts can be either original or adapted from other sources, like published books.

**The Director**
- Determines the overall look of the stage production.
- Rehearses the actors in character development and stage movement.
- Collaborates with designers to plan the lights, scenery, costumes, and sound to enhance the look and feel of the show.

**The Designers**
- Imagine and plan the lights, scenery, costumes, props, and sound to help bring the play and director’s ideas to life.
- Oversee crews in applying their designs to the stage.

**The Stage Manager**
- Coordinates the actors, directors, stage crew, scenery, set, lights, props, and sound.
- Runs the performance by calling cues over a headset to the light and sound board operators and backstage crew.

**The Stage Crew**
- Builds and operates scenery, props, lights, spotlights, and sound before and during performances.

**The Cast**
- Performs the story using their bodies and voices.
- Interprets the playwright’s words and meaning.
- Fulfills the director and designers’ vision of the play’s meaning.

**The Audience**
- Watches and experiences the play’s story, themes, and imagery.
- Actively participates in sharing human emotion with the playwright, actors, director, designers, stage manager, and stage crew.
Seeing a live stage play is much different from watching TV, going to a sporting event or going to the movies!

When you watch television you can talk, eat, drink, talk on the phone, text, listen to your iPod, and leave the room at anytime.

At sporting events you can shout, cheer, talk, eat and drink or leave the event at any time.

When you go to the movies you can eat, drink, and leave the theatre at anytime

A **live stage play** is different. Here are some wonderful tips for being a good audience member:

**Listen closely**
A lot of action is packed into each play and if you’re not listening, you might miss something!

**Watch silently**
The actors on stage can hear and see you just as much as you can hear and see them!

**Sit still**
Wiggling in your seat can be distracting to your fellow audience members!

**Turn it off**
Cell phone rings and light from personal electronics devices put the spotlight where it doesn’t belong!

**Plan ahead**
Try to go to the restroom before the show or during intermission to avoid interrupting the performance!
Try this audience challenge to determine your audience skills.

Check off the boxes that are appropriate behavior at a live stage play.

☐ Remain in your seat during the performance.
☐ Talk loudly to others around you.
☐ Wave and yell at the actors.
☐ Stand and kneel on your seat.
☐ Reward the cast and crew with applause at the end of a scene, song or dance number.
☐ Chew gum or eat snacks during the show.
☐ Show your appreciation for the actor, director, and designers at the end of the show with applause.
After the Performance

The following are suggested post-show discussion topics to extend and broaden your theatre-going experience.

1. What did you notice when you first entered the theatre? What was the first thing you noticed about the stage?

2. What did you notice about the set: color, shape, and texture? Did it move? Did you notice anything special about the set that you thought was unique? How did the scenery help establish the time, place, or atmosphere of the play?

3. What did you notice about the stage lights? How did the lights change when the show began? How did the stage lights help the story? Did you notice moving lights? Did you notice specific colors, shapes, textures or in the lighting?

4. What details did you notice about the costumes? Did something in the costumes help tie all the characters together? Did you notice if characters changed costumes during the play? What did the costumes teach you about the characters? Consider aspects such as age, time period, personality, and job, just to name a few!

5. Did the performance have music or sound in it? Did the characters sing or was music in the background? If there was music, do you think it was played by live musicians or do you think that it was recorded? How did the sound help to tell the story? Why?

6. How many actors were in the show? What did the actors do to make you believe they were their characters? How many days or weeks do you think they had to rehearse? How do you think the actors memorized their lines? How was their acting different from someone reading a story?

The following are suggested activities for the classroom.

1. Draw a picture of what the actors see from the stage during a performance. What do you think the audience looks like to the actors? What do you think the backstage area looks like?

2. How do you think an actor feels before, during, and after the performance? Write about those feelings.

3. Which job would you like to have in this production: performer, director or designer? What skills would you need in order to do this job?

4. Create a poster design for the performance. Use elements from what you saw to help inspire your design.
One early morning on the Arable farm, a litter of pigs was born. When eight-year-old Fern learns that her father, John Arable, intends to kill a baby piglet because it is the runt of the litter, Fern begs him to spare the piglet’s life. Mr. Arable finally relents and gives Fern the responsibility of raising the piglet herself. Fern nurses the piglet, which she names Wilbur, for several weeks, feeding him with a baby bottle and taking him for walks in her doll stroller. Once Wilbur is old enough, Mr. Arable informs Fern she must sell the piglet, which she doesn’t want to do. Mrs. Arable suggests calling Fern’s uncle, Homer Zuckerman, who has a farm up the road. Fern sells Wilbur for six dollars to her uncle, who allows Fern to come and visit Wilbur any time she chooses.

At Zuckerman’s farm, Wilbur becomes lonely for friendship but none of the farm animals will play with him. Eventually, a soothing voice comes to Wilbur, telling him that she will be his friend. The next morning, Wilbur meets Charlotte A. Cavatica, a large gray spider whose web stretches above the door to Wilbur’s pigpen. Wilbur is at first horrified by the bloodthirsty nature of the spider, but eventually the two become dear friends.

When Wilbur learns from the old sheep that Mr. Zuckerman intends to kill Wilbur to eat, Charlotte offers to help. Charlotte promises she will devise a plan to save Wilbur’s life, and after several days an idea comes to her. Charlotte begins spinning messages in her web which praise Wilbur, including “Some Pig!” and “TERRIFIC,” which have the desired effect of astonishing the Zuckermans and the townspeople.

Mr. Zuckerman becomes so preoccupied with the miracles of his famous pig he decides to enter Wilbur in a competition at the County Fair. With Charlotte’s assistance, Wilbur goes to the fair and wins a bronze medal for being the star attraction at the county fair, ensuring that Wilbur will not go to slaughter.

Charlotte, however, has reached the end of her natural lifespan, and after laying her eggs and weaving an egg sac while at the fair, Charlotte becomes too weak to go on. With help from Templeton the rat, Wilbur saves Charlotte’s eggs and transports them back to Zuckerman’s barn, where he awaits their hatching the following spring.

When Charlotte’s eggs eventually hatch, most of the baby spiders depart to build webs of their own elsewhere. Three of Charlotte’s daughters, however, stay behind at Zuckerman’s barn as friends to Wilbur.

Big Ideas in Charlotte’s Web

- Friendship
- Language
- Life/Death
- Loyalty
E.B. White is the author of such beloved children’s classics as *Charlotte's Web*, *Stuart Little*, and *The Trumpet of the Swan*. He was born in Mount Vernon, New York and graduated from Cornell University in 1921. Several years later, he joined the staff of The New Yorker magazine. E.B. White authored over seventeen books of prose and poetry and was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1973. In addition to writing children's books, E. B. White also wrote books for adults, as well as writing poems and essays, and drawing sketches for The New Yorker magazine.

Funnily enough for such a famous writer, he always said that he found writing difficult and bad for one's disposition but he kept at it!

Mr. White has won countless awards, including the 1971 National Medal for Literature and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal, which commended him for making “a substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children.”

Joseph Robinette is a Tony Award nominee for the libretto of the acclaimed *A Christmas Story. The Musical*. He is the author or co-author of 55 published plays and musicals. His works have been produced at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York, Pittsburgh Playhouse, The 5th Avenue Theatre in Seattle, the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, the BBC and in all 50 states and in 17 foreign countries. Twelve of his works have been translated into foreign languages, and another five have been anthologized. Robinette collaborated with E.B. White on the authorized stage version of *Charlotte's Web*, and he wrote the musical version with Charles Strouse (*Annie* and *Bye, Bye, Birdie*). Other dramatizations include *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Anne of Green Gables* and *Stuart Little*. He is the recipient of the American Alliance for Theatre & Education's Charlotte B. Chorpenning Cup, the 2004 Distinguished Play Award for *Sarah, Plain and Tall* and the Children's Theatre Foundation of America medallion for his "body of dramatic works for family audiences in the United States and beyond."
Dear Reader:

I receive many letters from children and can't answer them all - there wouldn't be time enough in a day. That is why I am sending you this printed reply to your letter. I'll try to answer some of the questions that are commonly asked.

Where did I get the idea for *Stuart Little* and for *Charlotte's Web*? Well, many years ago I went to bed one night in a railway sleeping car, and during the night I dreamed about a tiny boy who acted rather like a mouse. That's how the story of *Stuart Little* got started.

As for *Charlotte's Web*, I like animals and my barn is a very pleasant place to be, at all hours. One day when I was on my way to feed the pig, I began feeling sorry for the pig because, like most pigs, he was doomed to die. This made me sad. So I started thinking of ways to save a pig's life. I had been watching a big grey spider at her work and was impressed by how clever she was at weaving. Gradually I worked the spider into the story that you know, a story of friendship and salvation on a farm. Three years after I started writing it, it was published. (I am not a fast worker, as you can see.)

Sometimes I'm asked how old I was when I started to write, and what made me want to write. I started early -- as soon as I could spell. In fact, I can't remember any time in my life when I wasn't busy writing. I don't know what caused me to do it, or why I enjoyed it, but I think children often find pleasure and satisfaction is trying to set their thoughts down on paper, either in words or in pictures. I was no good at drawing, so I used words instead. As I grew older, I found that writing can be a way of earning a living.

Some of my readers want me to visit their school. Some want me to send a picture, or an autograph, or a book. And some ask questions about my family and my animals and my pets. Much as I'd like to, I can't go visiting. I can't send books, either -- you can find them in a bookstore or a library. Many children assume that a writer owns (or even makes) his own books. This is not true -- books are made by the publisher. If a writer wants a copy, he must buy it. That's why I can't send books. And I do not send autographs -- I leave that to the movie stars. I live most of the year in the country, in New England. From our windows we can look out at the sea and the mountains. I live near my married son and three grandchildren.

Are my stories true, you ask? No, they are imaginary tales, containing fantastic characters and events. In real life, a family doesn't have a child who looks like a mouse; in real life, a spider doesn't spin words in her web. In real life, a swan doesn't blow a trumpet. But real life is only one kind of life -- there is also the life of the imagination. And although my stories are imaginary, I like to think that there is some truth in them, too -- truth about the way people and animals feel and think and act.

Yours sincerely,

E.B. White
Fern feels very strongly about saving Wilbur’s life and she is able to convince her father to spare his life. How would you have convinced Mr. Arable to save Wilbur?

1. **Directions:** Students write a letter to Mr. Arable about what he should do with Wilbur. Students start by writing a statement that reflects their point of view. (Example: "Wilbur's life should be spared.") Students then brainstorm some facts, reasons, and examples to back up their argument. (You can use the chart below!) Next, have students write a rough draft of their persuasive letter, which includes their argument and supporting details. Remind the students to start their letter with a captivating first paragraph, and end with a summary of their argument and reasons. After the editing process, students will complete a final draft.

### Persuasion Chart

I want to persuade _________ to _________________.

(audience) (purpose)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brainstorm reasons here:</th>
<th>Organize your reasons here:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(LEAST IMPORTANT)</td>
<td>___________________________</td>
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<td>___________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MOST IMPORTANT)</td>
<td>___________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity Extension:** Have your student(s) brainstorm a cause they feel very strongly about (ex. Recycling) and have them compose another persuasive letter that they can share!
When Charlotte decides to save Wilbur, she does so by writing words in the web that describe him. We call those words adjectives! She recruits the help of the entire barn to save Wilbur’s life, especially Templeton, in order to find the perfect words to describe Wilbur. What ADJECTIVES would YOU use to describe Wilbur? How about Charlotte?

Directions: Have your student(s) fill in this template to describe the various characters in *Charlottes Web*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>_______________ _______________ _______________ ________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbur</td>
<td>_______________ _______________ _______________ ________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Templeton</td>
<td>_______________ _______________ _______________ ________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fern</td>
<td>_______________ _______________ _______________ ________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avery</td>
<td>_______________ _______________ _______________ ________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle (big pig at the fair)</td>
<td>_______________ _______________ ________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Building a Soundscape

“Ssh! Listen to the sounds of the morning!” — Narrator

During the show, many times the actors use musical instruments or items they have turned into instruments to create the music and sounds of the story. How do these sounds add to the story? What new information does it give us?

Directions: Pick 3 different locations to take your student(s). Upon arriving have them sit still with their eyes closed for 30 seconds. Afterward, ask them to describe what they heard; what did this information tell them about where they were?

Activity Extension: *Have your students go to this website: [http://www.wildmusic.org/en/soundscapes/buildsoundscape](http://www.wildmusic.org/en/soundscapes/buildsoundscape) and build their own soundscape. When they are done, have them tell you the story of who lives there and what it is they do!*
Charlotte and Wilbur’s friendship began with a simple hello! Making friends can be easy and there are many ways to say hello in many different languages! Try some of the ones below:

Like English, many languages have more than one way to say hello - can you find 2 different ways for each language?

Spanish: __________ __________  Afrikaans: __________ __________
French: __________ __________  German: __________ __________
Hindi: __________ __________  Japanese: __________ __________
Books by E. B. White

*Stuart Little*, 1945  
*Trumpet of the Swan*, 1970

Plays by Joseph Robinette

*Sara, Plain and Tall*  
*Stuart Little*  
*The Adventures of Beatrix Potter and Her Friends*  
*Anne of Green Gables*  
*Chanticleer and the Fox*  
*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*  
*The Trial of Goldilocks*  
*The Trumpet of the Swan*

His plays can be purchased here:  
https://www.dramaticpublishing.com/AuthorBio.php?titlelink=9793

Websites and Activity Resources

NPR Story on White’s writing process for *Charlotte’s Web*:  
http://www.npr.org/2011/07/05/137452030/how-e-b-white-spun-charlottes-web

Harper Collins’ *Charlotte’s Web* site:  
Standards

Content Standards adopted by the California State Board of Education satisfied by using this guide and attending MTC’s production of:

*Charlotte’s Web*

**Theatre Standards K-5**

1.0 **Artistic Perception**: Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Theatre
   1.1 Use the vocabulary of theatre, such as actor, character, cooperation, setting, the five senses, and audience, to describe theatrical experiences.
   1.2 Observe and describe the traits of a character.

4.0 **Aesthetic Valuing**: Responding to, Analyzing, and Critiquing Theatrical Experiences
   4.1 Respond appropriately to a theatrical experience as an audience member.
   4.2 Identify and discuss emotional reactions to a theatrical experience.

5.0 **Connections, Relationships, Applications**: Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in Theatre, Film/Video, and Electronic Media to Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers

**World Language K-5**

Stage I

1.0 Students acquire information, recognize distinctive viewpoints, and further their knowledge of other disciplines.
   1.1 Students address discrete elements of daily life, including: a. Greetings and introductions

**Language Standards K-5**

Conventions of Standard English

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

**Music K-5**

2.0 **Creative Expression**: Creating, Performing, and Participating in Music

4.0 **Aesthetic Valuing**: Responding to, Analyzing, and Making Judgments About Works of Music

5.0 **Connections, Relationships, Applications**: Students apply what they learn in music across subject areas.

**History-Social Science K-1**

K.1 Students understand that being a good citizen involves acting in certain ways.
   1.1 Students describe the rights and individual responsibilities of citizenship.
   2. Understand the elements of fair play and good sportsmanship, respect for the rights and opinions of others, and respect for rules by which we live, including the meaning of the “Golden Rule.”