

Growing Up Charlotte: A Charlotte's Web Look at Life Cycles

Grade Level: Second

Presented by: Kristin Eckert, Tina Simms, and Karin Abbott, Wicomico Day School, Salisbury, MD

Length of Lessons: Six lessons

I. ABSTRACT

The novel *Charlotte's Web* is a literary work which illustrates the cycles in nature. This unit focuses on helping students understand the life cycles of various species by relating to different characters from the story. An emphasis will also be placed on the relationships that develop throughout the life cycle and how life may be affected by these relationships. The unit also demonstrates the seasonal cycles. Many of the themes of this unit will be demonstrated through expository, descriptive, and narrative writing assignments and through role playing activities. The unit is designed to begin at the conclusion of reading *Charlotte's Web*.

II. OVERVIEW

A. Concept Objectives

1. Students will develop an awareness of the stages of the life cycle.
2. Students will gain an understanding of various relationships and how they may affect one's life.
3. Students will recognize the idea that literature often reflects real life.
4. Students will develop an awareness of the seasonal cycles.

B. Core Knowledge Sequence Content

Content explored in the unit from the Core Knowledge Sequence includes:

1. *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White
2. The Life Cycle: birth, growth, reproduction, death
3. The Seasonal Cycle: winter, spring, summer, fall

C. Skill Objectives:

1. Students will identify the four stages of the life cycle.
2. Students will demonstrate the use of the advanced vocabulary introduced through the text.
3. Students will develop listening skills and recall skills from materials presented over multiple days.
4. Students will expand writing skills.
5. Students will develop roleplaying skills.
6. Students will be able to distinguish between factual elements of a story and fictional elements of a story.
7. Students will read and interpret information from a graph.
8. Students will identify the four seasons.
9. Students will create and use a time line.

III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

A. For Teachers:

1. Hirsch, Jr. E.D. *What Your Second Grader Needs to Know*. New York: Dell, 1991.
2. White, E.B. *Charlotte's Web*. New York: Harper & Row, 1952.
3. Shurley, Brenda and Wersell, Ruth. *The Shurley Method: English Made Easy, Level 2*. Arkansas: Shurley Instructional Materials, 1989.
4. Carroll, Joyce Armstrong & Wilson, Edward E. *ACTS of Teaching: How to Teaching Writing*. Colorado: Teacher Ideas Press, 1993.

B. For Students:

1. Kindergarten

- a. Plants and Plant Growth
- b. The Four Seasons
- c. Fact and Fiction
- 2. First Grade
 - a. Narrative Writing
 - b. Descriptive Writing
- 3. Second Grade
 - a. *Charlotte's Web*
 - b. Life Cycles
 - c. Seasonal Cycles
 - d. Graphing
 - e. Expository Paragraph
 - f. Narrative Writing

IV. RESOURCES

- A. Carroll, Joyce Armstrong & Wilson, Edward E. *ACTS of Teaching: How to Teaching Writing*. Colorado: Teacher Ideas Press, 1993.
- B. Hirsch, Jr. E.D. *What Your Second Grader Needs to Know*. New York: Dell,, 1991.
- C. Shurley, Brenda and Wersell, Ruth. *The Shurley Method: English Made Easy, Level 2*. Arkansas: Shurley Instructional Materials, 1989.
- D. White, E.B. *Charlotte's Web*. New York: Harper & Row, 1952.

V. LESSONS

Lesson One: Fact or Fiction

A. Daily Objectives:

- 1. Concept Objectives:
 - a. Students will gain an understanding of various relationships and how they affect one's life.
 - b. Students will recognize the idea that literature often reflects real life.
- 2. Lesson Content:
 - a. *Charlotte's Web* by E.B.White
- 3. Skill Objectives:
 - a. Students will be able to distinguish between factual elements of a story and fictional elements of a story.
 - b. Students will develop listening skills and recall skills from materials presented over multiple days.
 - c. Students will expand writing skills.
 - d. Students will demonstrate the use of the advanced vocabulary introduced through the text.

B. Materials

- 1. *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White
- 2. *What Your Second Grader Needs to Know*, Revised Edition by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. page 297 – 303.
- 3. Various lines or phrases from the story written on index cards
- 4. Chart divided in 2 columns labeled fact and fiction
- 5. Interview sheet

C. Key Vocabulary

- 1. fact- information that is true and real
- 2. fiction- characters and events that are not real or that are make believe
- 3. interview- a meeting to ask questions and gather information
- 4. narrative paragraph- an account of something that has happened

- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Give each student an index card with a part from the story.
 2. Have the students place the story part in the appropriate column of the chart.
 3. Discuss what makes each part fact or fiction.
 4. Discuss how each part is like real life.
 5. Make sure to include a reference to Charlotte and Wilbur being friends and Charlotte's death. Discuss how the death of someone close to you can affect your life long after that person is gone.
 6. Each student needs a sheet of notebook paper. Tell the students they are going to interview someone at home about losing someone whom was close to them.
 7. Discuss how to interview. Make a list of appropriate interview questions on the board as the students list them on their paper.
 8. Ask the students to use the information they have obtained to write a short descriptive paragraph. Students should be able to rephrase the question in the answer to make a complete sentence and then put the sentences in a logical order to create a narrative paragraph. Example: *Who is the person you interviewed about the death of someone close to them? The person I interviewed about the death of someone close to them is my mom.* This becomes the first sentence of the paragraph. The interview and paragraph should be about 4 to 5 sentences.
 9. Give the students 2 to 3 days to complete the assignment. Allow students time to share their paragraphs in class.
- E. *Evaluation and Assessment*
1. Written assessment is based on completion of interview and paragraph.
 2. Oral assessment is based on class discussion and participation.

Lesson Two: Seasonal Cycles

- A. *Daily Objectives:*
1. Concept Objectives:
 - a. Students will develop an awareness of the seasonal cycles.
 - b. Students will recognize the idea that literature often reflects real life.
 3. Lesson Content:
 - a. *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White
 - b. Seasonal cycles
 3. Skill Objectives:
 - a. Students will identify the four seasons.
 - b. Students will develop listening skills and recall skills from materials presented over multiple days.
 - c. Students will expand writing skills.
 - d. Students will demonstrate the use of the advanced vocabulary introduced through the text.
- B. *Materials*
1. *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White
 2. *What Your Second Grader Needs to Know*, Revised Edition by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. page 297 – 303.
 4. Animated movie, *Charlotte's Web*
 5. Drawing paper
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. seasons—one of four natural parts of the year; the four seasons are winter, spring, summer, and fall
 2. winter—the season between fall and spring, when the weather is the coldest

3. spring- the season between winter and summer, when the weather becomes warmer and plants and flowers begin to grow
 4. summer- the season between spring and fall, when the weather is the warmest
 5. fall- the season between summer and winter, when the weather starts to cool down
 6. expository writing- the discussion or telling of ideas by giving facts, directions, explanations, definitions, and examples
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Watch the video of *Charlotte's Web*
 2. Discuss the various seasons the story encompasses and the characteristics of each season from the story.
 3. Have the students divide the drawing paper into fourths labeling each section with a different season.
 4. Have the students draw a scene from the story in each section using the appropriate characteristics for the season.
 5. Have the students write an expository paragraph with the topic "My Favorite Season".
- E. *Evaluation and Assessment*
1. Written assessment is based on the students' use of appropriate characteristics for each season in their drawing.
 2. Oral assessment is based on information demonstrated in class discussion and participation.

Lesson Three: The Life Cycle, Plants

- A. *Daily Objectives:*
1. Concept Objectives:
 - a. Students will develop an awareness of the stages of the life cycle.
 - b. Students will recognize the idea that literature often reflects real life.
 2. Lesson Content:
 - a. *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White
 - b. Life cycles
 3. Skill Objectives:
 - a. Students will identify the stages of the life cycle.
 - b. Students will develop listening skills and recall skills from materials presented over multiple days.
 - c. Students will expand writing skills.
 - d. Students will demonstrate the use of the advanced vocabulary introduced through the text.
- B. *Materials*
1. *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White
 2. *What Your Second Grader Needs to Know*, Revised Edition by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. page 297 – 303.
 3. Drawing paper
 4. Writing paper
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. seed- the part of a flowering plant from which a new plant can grow
 2. plant- a living organism consisting of a stem, roots, and leaves
 3. pollinate- to carry pollen from the stamen to the pistil of a flower
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Throughout the story there are several references made to Lurvy and Zukerman tending various plants on the farm, to the smell of various plants around the farm

and to the use of various plants to make delicious recipes. Have the students recall some of the plants mentioned in the story.

2. Bring in the seeds of plants that can be eaten along with the edible part of the plant (i.e. lettuce seed and lettuce). Have the students compare the seed to the full-grown plant
3. Allow the students to taste the plants. Talk about the fact that farmers have such an important job. Discuss with the students some of their favorite plants to eat and what would happen if there were no farms.
4. Discuss how the seed becomes a plant and the changes that occur.
5. Divide drawing paper into fourths. Have the students tape a few of the different seeds to the corner of the four spaces using clear tape.
6. Then the students should draw a picture of the full-grown plant and label the drawing.
7. Have the students write a 2-point expository paragraph with the topic “ My Favorite Fruits and Vegetables”.

E. *Evaluation and Assessment*

1. Written assessment is based on illustrating an understanding that plants start as seeds and under goes many changes during its life cycle.
2. Oral assessment based on information presented in class discussion and participation.

Lesson Four: Life Cycle Graph

A. *Daily Objectives:*

1. Concept Objectives:
 - a. Students will develop an awareness of the stages of the life cycle.
 - b. Students will recognize the idea that literature often reflects real life.
2. Lesson Content:
 - a. *Charlotte’s Web* by E.B. White
 - b. Life cycle
3. Skill Objectives:
 - a. Students will read and interpret information from a graph.
 - b. Students will expand writing skills.

B. *Materials*

1. *Charlotte’s Web* by E.B. White
2. *What Your Second Grader Needs to Know*, Revised Edition by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. page 297 – 303.
3. Life Cycle Graph (Appendix A)

C. *Key Vocabulary*

1. life cycles- a series of changes that each living thing goes through beginning with birth, moving on to growth, reproduction, and then ending with death
2. birth- the beginning of life
3. growth- the process of changing and growing
4. reproduction- the process of producing offspring
5. death- the end of life
6. stages- a level or part of a process or cycle
7. bar graph- cahrts that show the comparison of information by lengths of rectangular bars

D. *Procedures/Activities*

1. Discuss the various stages of the life cycle and which characters in the story best displayed these stages.

2. Have the students work in groups to create life cycle posters for the various characters in the story. Model the posters after the drawing on page 298 of *What Your Second Grader Needs to Know*, Revised Edition by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. Have them color in the stages of the life cycle that are represented in the story in red.
 3. Have students work independently to create a graph (Appendix A) of the various characters in the stages of the life cycle.
 4. Have the students interpret the graph. Ask: Which character went through the most stages? The least stages? What can you conclude about various animals and the stages of the life cycle? (It takes different animals a different amount of time to complete the stages of the life cycle.)
 5. Have the students write an expository paragraph with the topic “ My Favorite Characters in *Charlotte’s Web*”. Have students include the life cycles seen in their character throughout the book. Reinforce that the titles of books are capitalized and underlined.
- E. *Evaluation and Assessment*
1. Written assessment is based on accurate completion of the graph and on demonstrating content knowledge in the paragraph.
 2. Oral assessment is base on interpreting information from the graph during class discussion and participation.

Lesson Five: The Life Cycle, Animals

A. *Daily Objectives:*

1. Concept Objectives:
 - a. Students will develop an awareness of the life cycle.
 - b. Students will recognize the idea that literature often reflects real life.
2. Lesson Content:
 - a. *Charlotte’s Web* by E.B.White
 - b. Life cycles
3. Skill Objectives:
 - a. Students will identify the stages of the life cycle.
 - b. Students will develop listening skills and recall skills from materials presented over multiple days.
 - c. Students will expand writing skills.
 - d. Students will demonstrate the use of the advanced vocabulary introduced through the text.

B. *Materials*

1. *Charlotte’s Web* by E.B. White
2. *What Your Second Grader Needs to Know*, Revised Edition by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. page 297 – 303.
3. Drawing paper
4. Writing paper
5. Life Cycles Web (Appendix B)

C. *Key Vocabulary*

1. narrative writing- gives a detailed picture of a person, place, or thing

D. *Procedures/Activities*

1. Discuss with the students the characteristics of the stages of the life cycle and how the various characters in the story displayed these characteristics. Focus on the changes that occur from one stage to the next and the changes that occurred in the characters as they passed from one stage to the next:
 - Charlotte moves from growth to reproduction to death, becomes tired

- Fern moves from early in the growth stage to later in the growth stage, becomes more mature acting and begins to like boys
 - Wilbur moves from birth to growth, begins with someone constantly taking care of him to taking more care of himself.
 - The goose has eggs, they hatch, they grow, she has eggs again, they hatch.
2. Have the students complete the Life Cycles Web (Appendix B) filling in each section of the web with characters and characteristics from the story of each of the stages.
 3. Assign the students a narrative writing in which they take one character and create a short mishap or adventure that occurs as the character passes from one stage to the next. The story may be made up but should keep in line with the characters attribute in the story *Charlotte's Web*.
 4. Have the students draw a picture to go along with their story.
- E. Evaluation and Assessment**
1. Written is based on the students demonstrating knowledge of the characteristics of the various stages of the life cycle through completion of the web and the narrative writing.
 2. Oral assessment is based on information extracted from class discussion and participation.

Lesson Six: Student Time Line

- A. Daily Objectives:**
1. Concept Objectives:
 - a. Students will develop an awareness of the life cycle.
 - b. Students will recognize the idea that literature often reflects real life.
 2. Lesson Content:
 - a. *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White
 - b. Life cycle
 3. Skill Objectives:
 - a. Students will create and use a time line.
 - b. Students will expand writing skills.
- B. Materials**
1. *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White
 2. *What Your Second Grader Needs to Know*, Revised Edition by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. Page 297-303
 3. Poster paper
 4. Writing paper
 5. Pictures and memorabilia from the span of the students life brought from home
- C. Key Vocabulary**
1. time line- a chronology or order of events
 2. descriptive writing- gives a detailed picture of a person, place, thing, or idea
- D. Procedures/Activities**
1. On poster board have the students draw a time line starting at the year they were born to present day.
 2. Have the students fill in the time line with pictures and memorabilia brought in from home.
 3. Ahead of time, create a time line of your life.
 4. Discuss and compare the time lines and the changes that have occurred. Point out the various stages of the life cycle. Discuss why your time line is longer and has more changes.
 5. Have the students write descriptive writing about themselves.

F. *Evaluation and Assessment*

1. Written is based on the students displaying the various stages of the life cycle through the timeline and completion of the descriptive writing.
2. Oral assessment is based on class discussion and participation.

VI. **CULMINATING ACTIVITY**

Put students into groups of four. Give each group a character from the story. Assign each person in a group a stage of the seasonal cycle. Have the students work in a group to discuss and list the characteristics of that character in each season. The next day, break the students into groups based in the season they were assigned. Students work with this group to create a short narrative role playing skit of their season. For example, group 1 would have a spring Fern, summer Fern, fall Fern and winter Fern. Group 2 would have a spring Wilbur, summer Wilbur, fall Wilbur and winter Wilbur. The next day the fall Fern and fall Wilbur would work together to create a skit with Fern and Wilbur as the characters and fall as the topic of the skit. The process increases for the number of characters you choose. Have the groups perform their skits for the rest of the class.

VII. **HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS**

Appendix A: Life Cycles Graph
Appendix B: Life Cycles Web

VIII. **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Carroll, Joyce Armstrong & Wilson, Edward E. *ACTS of Teaching: How to Teach Writing*. Colorado: Teacher Ideas Press, 1993, ISBN 1-56308-039-7.

Hirsch, Jr. E.D. *What Your Second Grader Needs to Know*. New York: Dell, 1991, ISBN 0-385-31843-X.

Shurley, Brenda and Wersell, Ruth. *The Shurley Method: English Made Easy, Level 2*. Arkansas: Shurley Instructional Materials, 1989, ISBN 1-8819-63-2.

White, E.B. *Charlotte's Web*. New York: Harper & Row, 1952, ISBN 0-590-30271-X.

Appendix A

Color a block for each stage of the Life Cycle the character displays in the story *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White.

	Fern	Wilbur	Charlotte	Goose	Mrs. Arable
Death					
Reproduction					
Growth					
Birth					



Life Cycle Web

