

Charlotte's web critical review: focus on setting



**ASSIGN
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In a very real sense, *Charlotte's Web* is set in E. B. White's barn in Maine. In the story though it is not White's barn but the Zuckerman's farm. And yet, the farm is not the only setting in the book. In chapter 17 we were introduced to a new setting, the country fair. The first image we are given when the group arrives at the fair is of the Ferris wheel: " When they pulled into the Fair Grounds, they could hear music and see the Ferris wheel turning in the sky"(130). Surely this constantly moving wheel is symbolic of change. Soon after, Fern says " I'm going to win a doll by spinning a wheel and it will stop at the right number"(130).

If the fair is a place of change and transformation, Fern's wheel here suggests her own transformation: she will spin her own wheel, take her life into her own hands and we shall observe the outcome. The description of the fairground is magical: " The children grabbed each other by the hand and danced off in the direction of the merry-go-round, towards the wonderful music and the wonderful adventure and the wonderful excitement, into the wonderful midway where there would be no parents to guard them and guide them, and where they could be happy and free and do as they pleased"(131).

The repetition of " wonderful" goes far enough to suggest that this is a slightly teasing description by White. It is a hyperbolic description and full of energy as it is clearly written from the point of view of the children. The child reading *Charlotte's Web* will enjoy the scene at the fair. Including a country fair as part of the setting was a smart move on E. B. White's part. This is because every child has either been to a fair, or has some sort of knowledge of one.