

Critical response paper:charlotte's web



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

CHARLOTTE'S WEB Prof. One of the great things about these three stories is that they show there are universal themes found in all cultures. Stories and poems bring us together and lead us to embrace our common humanity. I think that this is a good and useful point, but I wonder if there are some things about different cultures that literature can't communicate. In some cultures there are words for things that there aren't in our language. Some cultures have many different words for the same sort of thing with many different aspects. It seems to be that literature can show us very broad universal themes, but it might have trouble showing what we have in common in a nitty-gritty kind of way. One of the solutions to this are different types of characters. Throughout all cultures, characters exist. There are many ways we come to know characters. Sometimes from how they describe themselves, how they appear, sometimes from how others describe them or treat them. In Charlotte's Web two characters that contrast well and bring out a great deal of each other's qualities are Wilbur, the pig, and Templeton, the rat.

Every story needs a fully-formed hero with which readers can both relate to and sympathize with. They need a character that people will cheer for and hope for. A good example of this is Wilbur, the kind-hearted and life-loving pig. Wilbur is a character who almost everyone loves. He does not have a malicious bone in his body and is loyal and kind to his friends. He is well-developed character with many traits that are relatable. The reader senses Wilbur's fear at being killed by the farmer. It is an emotional expression that brings us closer to the character. This universal emotion is used to universalize Wilbur's experience and make the reader understand who is as a character. His relationship with Charlotte is also useful in this respect. We

see how much Charlotte cares for Wilbur and we see the qualities she likes in him. This allows us to feel more for him. Characters are sometimes defined by their friendships and relationships within a story. Wilbur is a good example of this.

Just like every story needs a hero, each story needs a villain. A good villain helps to draw out the good qualities in a hero. They also help the reader decide which side they're really on. In *Charlotte's Web*, Templeton is a good example of a villainous character. He is also a static character: he does not grow throughout the course of the book and his personality and way of looking at the world does not develop. Static characters are rarely heroes, because the point of a story is to see how the good characters change and learn throughout the plot. As the textbook says, "Character on the fringe rarely change" (87). Templeton starts as a greedy and selfish character and does not much develop beyond this. He is viewed by the other characters as a bit of a tool because his behaviour is so consistent. He is easily manipulated because he only thinks in one-dimension: himself. He is not sympathetic and no one likes him.

Charlotte's Web has many useful examples of different characters with different qualities. They are individuals who change or remain the same throughout the book. Even though they are animals they teach us something about what it is to be a good human.