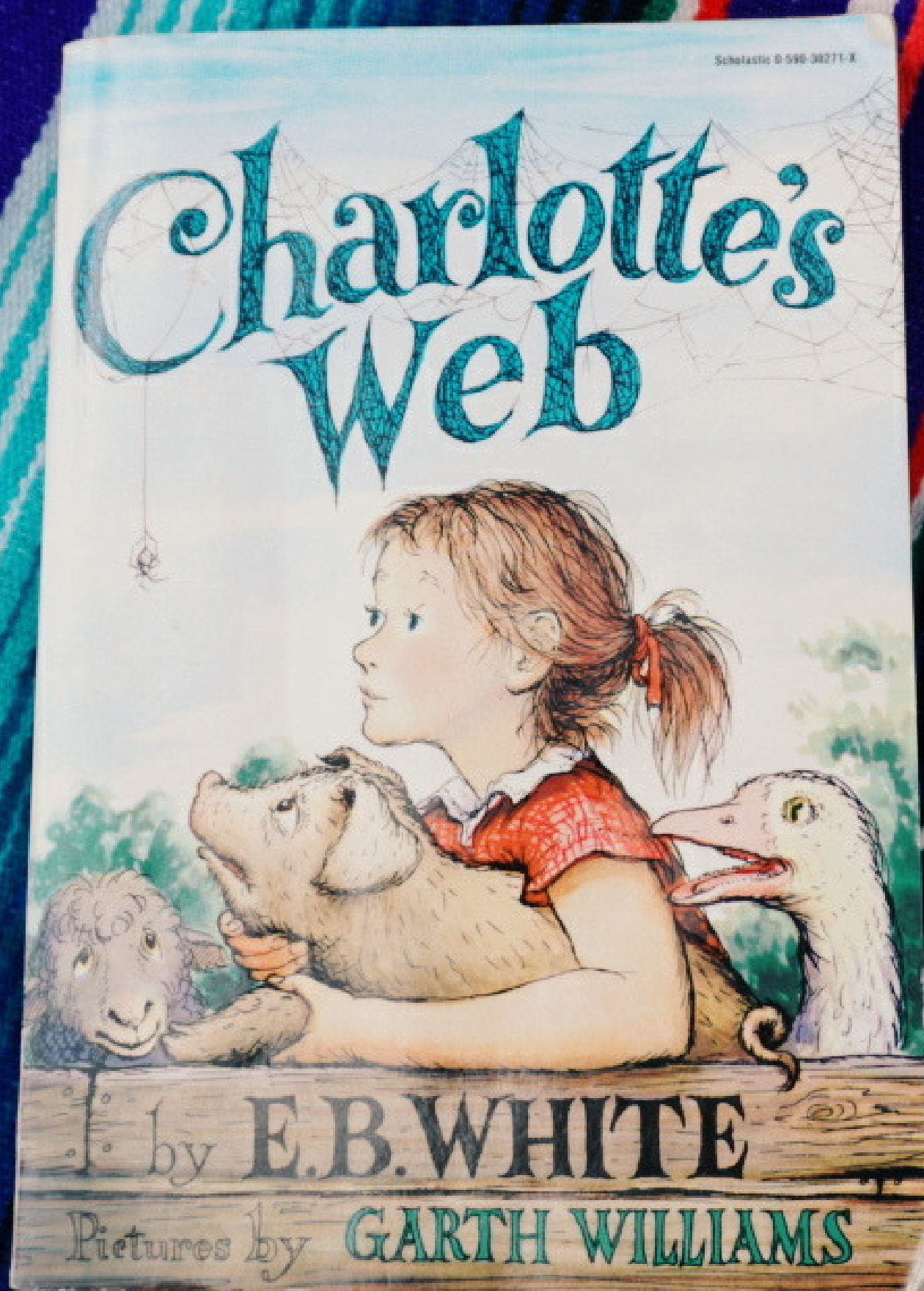


CHARLOTTE'S WEB { A FAMILY BOOK CLUB }

BY CHANTEL KLASSEN

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Lifelong learning is an important thing to me, it's one reason I set goals for myself at the beginning of each year and periodically throughout the year. This year one of my goals is to get better at reading aloud chapter books. I am extremely grateful for the ability to use audiobooks in our home but I also want to read some of our chapter books aloud, it may seem silly but it is a memory I want my children to be able to have.

I've decided to start building my reading aloud skills by beginning with books that have been proven to be easier read alouds, one of which is Charlotte's Web. While it did take awhile to read through the book we did manage to finish it, and my son was often asking for me to read it, something I take as a good sign.

Part of being able to read aloud to my kids has been finding a good time of day to do so. Early afternoon or in the evening are not ideal times for me as that is when I feel most tired and it makes reading even harder, so for now the mornings or just before making supper have been the best time. That's a different picture than the evening read aloud sessions I had in my mind but if it allows the reading to take place ultimately that is what matters.

Since this was the first chapter book that I read aloud that my son was engaged with I thought it would be fun to take it a step further, and after we finished the book we had a special family book club.

To be honest, I wasn't sure how it was going to go. I loved reading growing up but despised book reports and having to give a summary of the book I read. Since we read the book together there was no need to check in to see if my children had read the story, and since we often reviewed what happened in the previous chapter I wasn't going for reading comprehension.



The whole purpose of our family book club was to continue the discussion of the story and dig a little deeper. My intentions were to keep it fun and if my kids were pushing back or not interested I wasn't going to force them. I wrote a list of questions of which I had hoped we could get to all of them but if we only got through a few that would be okay too.



To make things even more fun, when I announced we were having family book club I told each of my kids to grab some candy. We don't normally have a bunch of candy in our house but we had recently just been to a parade and each kid had a bowl full so they each grabbed a favorite to suck on while we chatted. In the future we may bake cookies or cupcakes or something equally as fun.

With our book, candy and a blanket in hand we set out to find a nice spot for our book club.

I was pleasantly surprised at how much my kids enjoyed our little family book club! They (usually) put some great thought into their answers. My favorite was when my daughter said she was most like Templeton the rat because she also enjoyed collecting things and had a hard time getting rid of stuff (true story). I loved that her answer was something completely unexpected, she enjoys talking so I suspected she would say she was most like the geese, and yet her reasoning for why she is like Templeton was spot on.

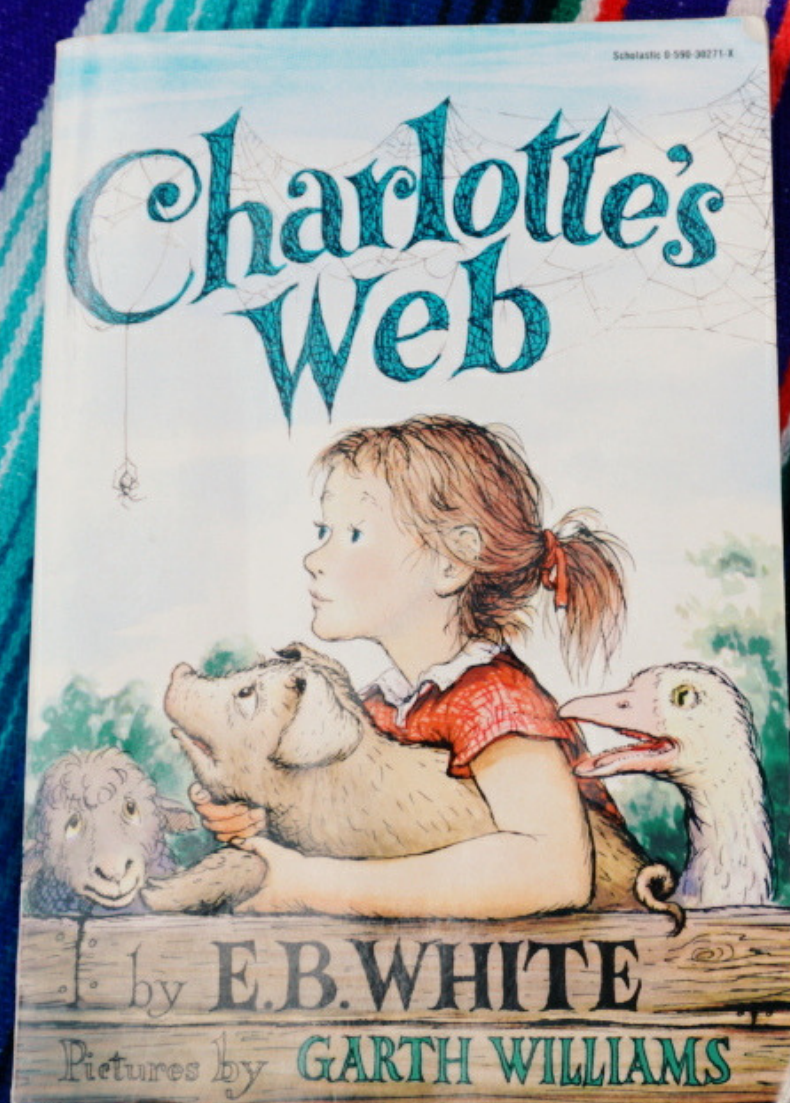
We already have plans for a future family book club and I hope this will become a semi-regular event in our house.

If you are interested in having your own Charlotte's Web family book club, I have some questions to kick start your discussion. Feel free to ask all of them if your children are enjoying themselves or just ask a few and wrap things up when they are getting distracted or bored. Make it an enjoyable experience and it will be something they want to do again!



CHARLOTTE'S WEB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which character would you say was the most like you?
2. Out of all the words Charlotte wrote in her web (some pig, terrific, radiant, humble), which one do you think best suited Wilbur?
3. If you were Charlotte is there a different word you would have written to describe Wilbur?
4. Would you say Charlotte was a good friend to Wilbur? Why or Why not? Was Wilbur a good friend to her? Why or why not?
5. What makes someone a good friend? What makes you a good friend?
6. Do you think Charlotte knew she was going to die at the end of the summer? Why do you think she spent her entire summer helping someone?
7. What words would you use to describe Charlotte?
8. Do you think you would be as selfless as Charlotte?
9. If you were the author of this story would you give it a different ending? How would you change things or why would you keep them the same?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chantel is a middle school teacher turned relaxed homeschooler, or what she calls "homeschooling as a lifestyle". She lives on the Canadian prairies with her husband and two children where they enjoy exploring the outdoors in the summer and curling up with good books and hot chocolate in the freezing winters while dreaming of traveling the world.

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