

Reading Notes

plaster	a paste applied to walls which hardens as it dries
roller towel	a long, continuous towel sewed together and hung on a roller; it can be washed and reused
dagger	a short sword-like weapon
specimen	an example

Vocabulary

1. one of the pigs is a **runt**. _____ smallest of the litter
2. I know more about raising a **litter** of pigs than you do. _____ animal siblings born at the same time
3. This is the most terrible case of **injustice** I ever heard of. _____ unfairness
4. Saved from an **untimely** death. _____ occurring too soon
5. No, I only **distribute** pigs to early risers. _____ to deliver, give out

Comprehension Questions

1. Name each Arable family member, including the children's ages. _____
The Arable family includes Father, Mother, Fern (age 8), and Avery (age 10).

2. How does Fern convince her father not to kill the runt? What is her reasoning? _____
Fern tells her father that killing the runt is an unjust act. "The pig couldn't help being born small
..."

3. What is the first thing Fern teaches her pig? _____
Fern first teaches her pig to take milk from a bottle.

4. What does Fern name her pig? Why does she choose that name? _____
Fern names her pig Wilbur because it is "the most beautiful name she could think of."

5. Why does Fern say "Wilbur" instead of answering her teacher's questions about Pennsylvania's capital? _____
She is daydreaming about her pig and not paying attention.

Quotations

“But it’s unfair,” cried Fern. “The pig couldn’t help being born small, could it? If I had been very small at birth, would you have killed me?” Mr. Arable smiled. “Certainly not,” he said, looking down at his daughter with love. “But this is different. A little girl is one thing, a little runty pig is another.”

Fern couldn’t take her eyes off the tiny pig. “Oh,” she whispered. “Oh, look at him! He’s absolutely perfect.”

Discussion Questions

1. *What does the word “arable” mean? From what Latin word does “arable” come? Why is it a good name for a farm family?
2. Study the pictures on pages 5 and 6. How has the illustrator contrasted Avery and Fern?
3. Reread Fern’s objection to the runt’s death and Mr. Arable’s reply in the first quote above. In what way is a pig different than a little girl? Who do you agree with, and why?

* Discussion questions that have a * are NECESSARY to discuss with students, as they may appear on a test and are generally important in understanding the full flavor of the story.

Enrichment

Focus Passage: Copy the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs from page 5 (beginning with “Can I have a pig ...” and ending with “Let’s eat!”)

What is Mr. Arable subtly trying to communicate to Avery through his response? _____

He is telling Avery that he thinks he (Avery) sleeps too long and should be in the habit of getting up earlier.

Reading Notes

apple-blossom time	springtime
enchanted	fascinated
manure	animal excrement
cellar	a room beneath the barn

Vocabulary

1. He would stand and **gaze** up at her with adoring eyes. _____ to look at steadily
2. Fern **peered** through the door. _____ peeked
3. It **relieved** her mind to know that her baby would sleep covered up _____ comforted
4. he would stand and watch the bus until it **vanished** around a turn. _____ disappeared
5. When she **waded** into the brook, Wilbur waded in with her. _____ walked in or through shallow water

Comprehension Questions

1. How does Wilbur keep himself warm on cold nights? _____
Wilbur keeps himself warm by burrowing into the straw.

2. Describe some of the ways Fern pampers Wilbur. _____
Fern takes Wilbur for rides in her doll carriage and lets him wade in the mud while she swims.
She cuddles him while feeding him warm milk from a bottle. She allows him the freedom to
follow her all around the farm.

3. How does Fern feel about Wilbur? How does Wilbur feel about Fern? _____
Fern loves Wilbur more than anything, and Wilbur adores Fern.

4. Who buys Wilbur? For how much? _____
Uncle Homer Zuckerman buys Wilbur for six dollars.
