

1. Read the text carefully! Look for the unknown words! Make a list!

The barn was very large. It was very old. It smelled of hay and it smelled of manure¹. It smelled of the perspiration of tired horses and the wonderful sweet breath of patient cows. It often had a sort of peaceful smell - as though nothing bad could happen ever again in the world. It smelled of grain and of harness dressing² and of axle grease³ and of rubber boots and of new rope. And whenever the cat was given a fish-head to eat, the barn would smell of fish. But mostly it smelled of hay, for there was always hay in the great loft⁴ up overhead. And there was always hay being pitched down to the cows and the horses and the sheep.

The barn was pleasantly warm in winter when the animals spent most of their time indoors, and it was pleasantly cool in summer when the big doors stood wide open to the breeze. The barn had stalls⁵ on the main floor for the work horses, tie-ups⁶ on the main floor for the cows, a sheepfold⁷ down below for the sheep, a pigpen⁸ down below for Wilbur, and it was full of all sorts of things that you find in barns: ladders, grindstones⁹, pitch forks, monkey wrenches¹⁰, scythes¹¹, lawn mowers, snow shovels, ax handles, milk pails, water buckets, empty grain sacks, and rusty rat traps. It was the kind of barn that swallows like to build their nests in. It was the kind of barn that children like to play in. And the whole thing was owned by Fern's uncle, Mr. Homer L. Zuckerman.

Wilbur's new home was in the lower part of the barn, directly underneath the cows. Mr. Zuckerman knew that a manure pile is a good place to keep a young pig. Pigs need warmth, and it was warm and comfortable down there in the barn cellar on the south side.

Fern came almost every day to visit him. She found an old milking stool that had been discarded, and she placed the stool in the sheepfold next to Wilbur's pen. Here she sat quietly during the long afternoons, thinking and listening and watching Wilbur. The sheep soon got to know her and trust her. So did the geese, who lived with the sheep. All the animals trusted her. She was so quiet and friendly. Mr. Zuckerman did not allow her to take Wilbur out, and he did not allow her to get into the pigpen. But he told Fern that she could sit on the stool and watch Wilbur as long as she wanted to. It made her happy just to be near the pig, and it made Wilbur happy to know that she was sitting there, right outside his pen. But he never had any fun, no walks, no rides, no swims.

One afternoon in June, when Wilbur was almost two months old, he wandered out into his small yard outside the barn. Fern had not arrived for her usual visit. Wilbur stood in the sun feeling lonely and bored.

¹ manure – îngrășământ, bălegar

² harness dressing – crema pentru hamuri

³ axle grease – vazelină

⁴ loft – pod

⁵ stall – grajd

⁶ tie-up – grajd cu granghii pentru legarea animalelor

⁷ sheepfold - stână

⁸ pigpen – cocină

⁹ grindstone – piatră de ascuțit

¹⁰ monkey wrench – cheie franceză

¹¹ scythe - coasă

"There's never anything to do around here," he thought. He walked slowly to his food trough¹² and sniffed to see if anything had been overlooked at lunch. He found a small strip of potato skin and ate it. His back itched, so he leaned against the fence and rubbed against the boards. When he tired of this, he walked indoors, climbed to the top of the manure pile, and sat down. He didn't feel like going to sleep, he didn't feel like digging, he was tired of standing still, tired of lying down. "I'm less than two months old and I'm tired of living," he said. He walked out to the yard again.

"When I'm out here," he said, "there's no place to go but in. When I'm indoors, there's no place to go but out in the yard."

"That's where you're wrong, my friend, my friend," said a voice.

Wilbur looked through the fence and saw the goose standing there.

"You don't have to stay in that dirty-little dirty-little dirty-little yard," said the goose, who talked rather fast. "One of the boards is loose. Push on it, push-push-push on it, and come on out!"

"What?" said Wilbur. "Say it slower!"

"At-at-at, at the risk of repeating myself," said the goose, "I suggest that you come on out. It's wonderful out here."

"Did you say a board was loose?"

"That I did, that I did," said the goose.

Wilbur walked up to the fence and saw the goose was right – one board was loose. He put his head down, shut his eyes, and pushed. The board gave way. In a minute he had squeezed through the fence and was standing in the long grass outside his yard. The goose chuckled.

"How does it feel to be free?" she asked.

"I like it," said Wilbur. "That is, I guess I like it."

Actually Wilbur felt queer to be outside his fence, with nothing between him and the big world.

"Where do you think I'd better go?"

"Anywhere you like, anywhere you like," said the goose. "Go down through the orchard, root up the sod! Go down through the garden, dig up the radishes! Root up everything! Eat grass! Look for corn! Look for oats! Run all over! Skip and dance, jump and prance! Go down through the orchard and stroll in the woods! The world is a wonderful place when you're young."

"I can see that," replied Wilbur. He gave up a jump in the air, twirled, ran a few steps, stopped, looked around, sniffed the smells of afternoon, and then set off walking down through the orchard. Pausing in the shade of an apple tree, he put his strong snout into the ground and began pushing, digging, and rooting.

He felt very happy.

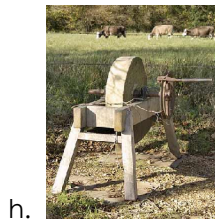
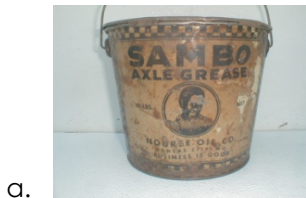
¹² trough – covată

(E.B. White – Charlotte's Web, Chapter 3 – Escape)

2. Answer the following questions:

- a. Who is Wilbur?
- b. Where does Wilbur live?
- c. Write down 10 things you can find around a barn.
- d. What animals live in a barn?
- e. Enumerate the parts of a barn (places different animals live in).
- f. Who do you think Fern is?

3. Find in the text above the names of the things in the images:





4. What do you think will happen? Write a text of 10-15 sentences about the outcome of the story.
5. Work in pairs. Do you think it was important for Wilbur to be free? Why was he happy? Do you think animals should live free? Is it important to grow animals in farms? Write down your opinion.

Teacher's Guide

1. Pupils should make a list of the words from the footnotes and other unknown words. If there are words not mentioned in the footnotes, the teacher should tell them the meaning of these, translate them.

It is very important for the children at this level to try to describe unknown words with their own words, after they understand them in their own language.

2.

- a. Ex. Wilbur is a pig/piglet.
- b. Ex. Wilbur lives on Mr. Homer L. Zuckerman's farm.
- c. Ex. Bucket, animals (pig, sheep, horse, cow, swallow, goose, etc.), ladder, fork, milk pail, rubber boots, rope, rat trap, snow shovel, hay, food trough, manure pile, stall, barn, etc.
- d. Ex. Pigs, sheep, cows, horses, hens, chicken, geese, ducks, dogs, cats, rats, mice, etc.
- e. Ex. Loft, stall, tie-up, sheepfold, pigpen, manure pile, etc.
- f. Ex. Mr. Homer L. Zuckerman's niece. But there can be more creative answers which include guessing what happened up to this time in the novel.

3.

- a. axle grease
- b. ax handle
- c. bucket
- d. lawn mower
- e. harness dressing
- f. ladder
- g. loft
- h. grindstone
- i. milk pail
- j. monkey wrench
- k. pigpen
- l. food trough
- m. pinch fork
- n. rat trap
- o. rope
- p. grain sack
- q. rubber boots
- r. scythe
- s. sheepfold
- t. snow shovel
- u. stall
- v. tie-up

4. The pupils should be asked to use their imagination and come up with an ending to the short fragment read. Eventually after listening to their versions the teacher can read them the original version, so that they can compare their own versions with this one.
5. This is once again a creativity exercise. Pupils should work in pairs and should talk about life on a farm, life of animals on a farm and freedom. They should be big enough to form

such an opinion and to decide whether they think animals should live in freedom or not, and why they should do so.

A short debate, after hearing different opinions is good for children to increase their self-confidence in speech and own opinions.

I would recommend this lesson for 5th grade children. The text is easy to read, except the specific terminology of the farm, which they will be able to understand with the footnotes and the pictures in the exercises.