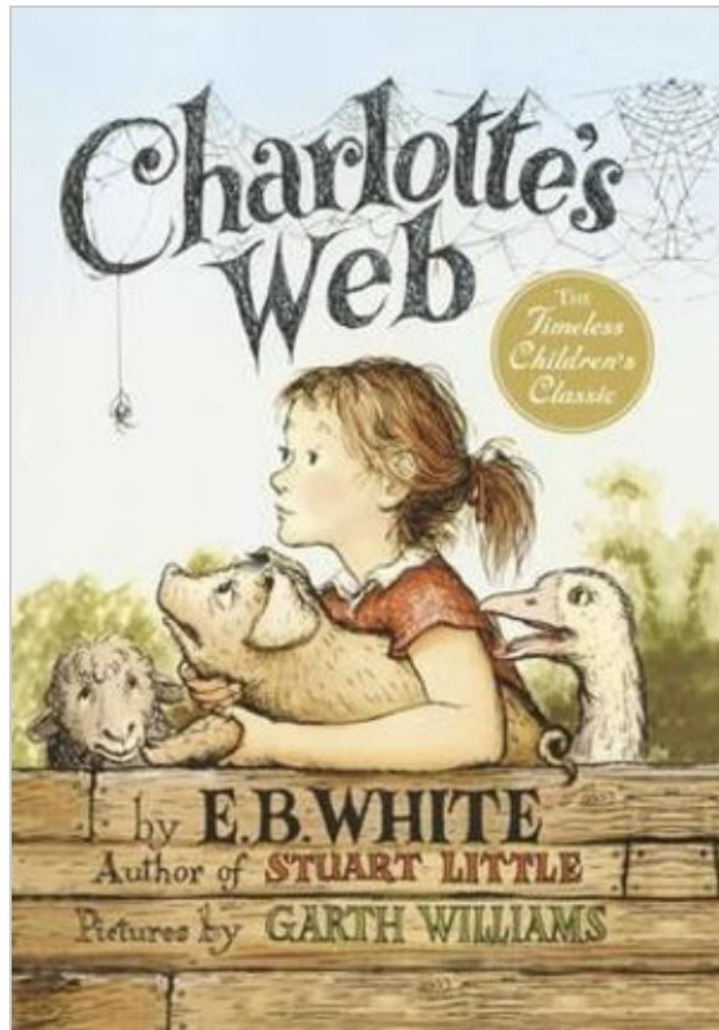


**The Five Characteristics of a *Conceptual Playworld* (Fleer, 2018)**



Pedagogical characteristics	Pedagogical practices that are planned
Selecting a story for the <i>Conceptual Playworld</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Working with understandings of the context of children’s development and their interests (<b>Spiders</b> – experience, farm animals)</li> <li>■ Selecting a story that is enjoyable to children and adults (<b>Charlotte’s Web by E.B. White</b>)</li> <li>■ Building empathy for the characters in the story (<b>Children experiencing the drama of Wilbur the pig being eaten or killed because he is the runt of the litter</b>)</li> <li>■ A plot that lends itself to introducing a problem situation to the children. The story creates a dynamic tension, builds</li> </ul>



Pedagogical characteristics	Pedagogical practices that are planned
	<p>empathy and introducing a problem situation to the children: <b>How to save Wilber the pig</b>. The problem situation emerges in each chapter, but in different ways, with new characters and contexts – thus deepening the possibilities for the children’s play.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being clear about the concept and its relation to the story and play plot to be developed (<b>social and emotional development; science - ecosystem</b>)</li> </ul>
<p>Designing a <i>Conceptual Playworld</i> space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designing an imaginary space for all the children and teachers to enter and exist – <b>Zuckerman’s farm, the pig style, the spider webs</b>. In the story of <i>Charlotte’s Web</i> it is possible to use the outdoor area as Mr and Mrs Zuckerman’s farm. The tressel becomes a pig sty, the fort acts as a barn, where Charlotte the spider spins her web, and tunnels become pathways for Templeton the rat to scurry down to find food in different locations (or potentially different playworlds for the children to go down and imagine being in, such as the Fairground).</li> <li>Creating different spaces that give opportunities for exploring both concepts (<b>Ecosystem – looking for spider webs, trying to find Charlotte</b>) and social and emotional development (<b>empathy for Wilbur demonstrated through Fern</b>)</li> <li>Designing different opportunities for child initiated play in ways that develop the play plot further or explore concepts and make them more personally meaningful (<b>Mapping the farm and documenting where spiders can or could be found</b>)</li> <li>Planning different opportunities for representing children’s ideas and expressing their understandings (<b>Mind map of features of the Farm</b>)</li> </ul>
<p>Entering and exiting the <i>Conceptual Playworld</i> space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole group enters the <i>Conceptual Playworld</i> (<b>Visiting Zuckerman’s farm</b>). In the story of <i>Charlotte’s Web</i> <b>putting a sign on the gate such as “Mr and Mrs Zuckerman’s Farm”</b> signals to the children that they are about to enter to collective imaginary situation.</li> <li>All the children are in the same imaginary situation (<b>Being on the farm together</b>)</li> </ul>

Pedagogical characteristics	Pedagogical practices that are planned
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Children choose characters as they enter into the imaginary situation (<b>be Fern, Farmers, pigs - Wilbur; Charlotte - spiders</b>)</li> <li>■ Teacher is always a character in the story or acting as a human prop (e.g., such as <b>being Charlotte or being part of the farm animals or building structure</b>)</li> <li>■ <b>Transition in and out of play</b> - Walking in the Zuckerman’s farm following the map (like an obstacle course) ... across the yard ... around the farm house ... over to the pig style ... finding the rat run of Templeton ... etc.</li> </ul>
Planning the play inquiry or problem scenario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Children have enough knowledge to be able to solve the problem – introduced inside or out of the imaginary situation (<b>such as learning about the anatomy of spiders when exploring how spiders spin their web, or the role a spider has in an ecosystem.</b>)</li> <li>■ The problem scenario is dramatic and engaging (Farmer Zuckerman raises a problem <b>“There are so many flies on the farm. They are really annoying”</b>. These scenarios lend themselves to the problem situation or play inquiry of how to be rid of flies. This play inquiry gives the possibility for learning about the <b>ecosystem</b>)</li> <li>■ Problem scenario is not scripted, but a general idea of the problem is planned.</li> <li>■ Being clear about the concepts that will be learned from solving the problem situation (Acting out the important role of spiders in the ecosystem [Charlotte can help], learning about the spider’s anatomy to better understand how Charlotte actually spin her web [anatomy], and acting out spinning webs [embodying concepts]).</li> </ul>

Pedagogical characteristics	Pedagogical practices that are planned
Planning teacher interactions to build conceptual learning in role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Teachers working in interactional pairs: Teachers are not always the same character. Roles are not scripted one teacher is present with the children (equal), acting out being a character in the story, watching all the flies buzzing around being annoying. The other teacher who is in role as Mrs Zuckerman can tell the children about her problem and ask for help (below). The teacher who is present with the children can say “Yes we can help” or</li> </ul>

Pedagogical characteristics	Pedagogical practices that are planned
	<p>“I am ready to help” so as to inspire and collectively problem solve with the children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ There are different roles teachers can take: Teachers plan their role for the playworld to be equally present with the children, or to model practices in role, or to be needing help from the children. Their role can also be as together with the child leading (primordial we), where they literally cradle the child or hold their hand and together act out the role or solution</li> <li>■ Conceptual intentions are planned: Planning of who will have more knowledge and who will be present with the children to model solving the problem.</li> </ul>

Fleer, M. (2018). Conceptual Playworlds: The role of imagination in play and imagination in learning, *Early Years*, [doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2018.1549024](https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2018.1549024)

Conceptual playworld: <https://www.monash.edu/conceptual-playworld>