

## Classic Novel Opening Studies 1 – Charlotte’s Web

**"Where's Papa going with that ax?"  
said Fern to her mother as they  
were setting the table for breakfast.  
"Out to the hog house," replied Mrs.  
Arable. "Some pigs were born last  
night."**

**"I don't see why he needs an ax,"  
continued Fern, who was only eight.  
"Well," said her mother, "one of the  
pigs is a runt. It's very small and  
weak, and it will never amount to  
anything. So your father has  
decided to do away with it."**

**"Do away with it?" shrieked Fern.  
"You mean kill it? Just because it's  
smaller than the others?"**

- 1) In this text, we have a third-person, all-knowing, all-seeing narrator. What do we mean by this?
- 2) Using this opening, how does the writer create the impression that the reader immediately senses they are in the presence of something bigger than expected?
- 3) Fern's mother responds to her evasively. What does this word mean?
- 4) What evidence suggests that Fern is of an inquisitive mind?
- 5) The idea of killing a new-born piglet with an axe is hard to take, especially for a young reader. How does this stark opening encourage the reader to want to read on?



### Writing Task

Rewrite this short passage as narrative rather than dialogue. Can you achieve the same effect?