

# Acting Across Generations

**EVANSTON, ILLINOIS** When the Evanston Children's Theatre decided to put on a play of *Charlotte's Web*, they invited kids from eight to twelve years old to try out for parts. They asked seniors age 55 and older to try out, too. Usually, child actors wear gray wigs and paste on fake beards and moustaches to look old. This group uses real seniors.

A few years ago, the Evanston city council decided that the children's theater

would have its home in the Levy Center, Evanston's new senior center. So it just seemed natural to get both the kids and the seniors working together.

This experiment has worked well for several plays. Kids play most parts. It's a children's theater group, after all. But seniors have one or two roles in each play.

**The Evanston  
Children's Theatre**

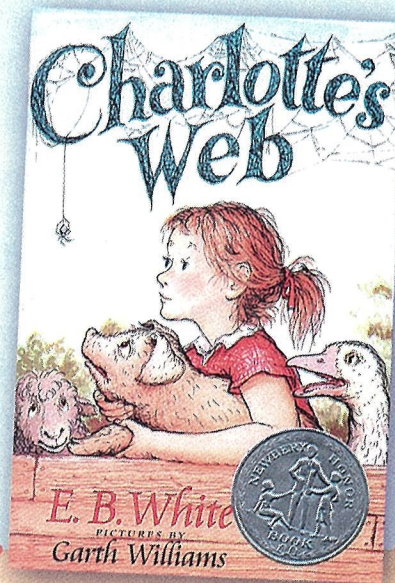




The Levy Center holds different senior classes. Seniors who take acting classes try out for the children's theater. Working with kids keeps seniors young. Working with seniors helps kids, too. The seniors share tips from their acting classes, and the kids show what they've learned.

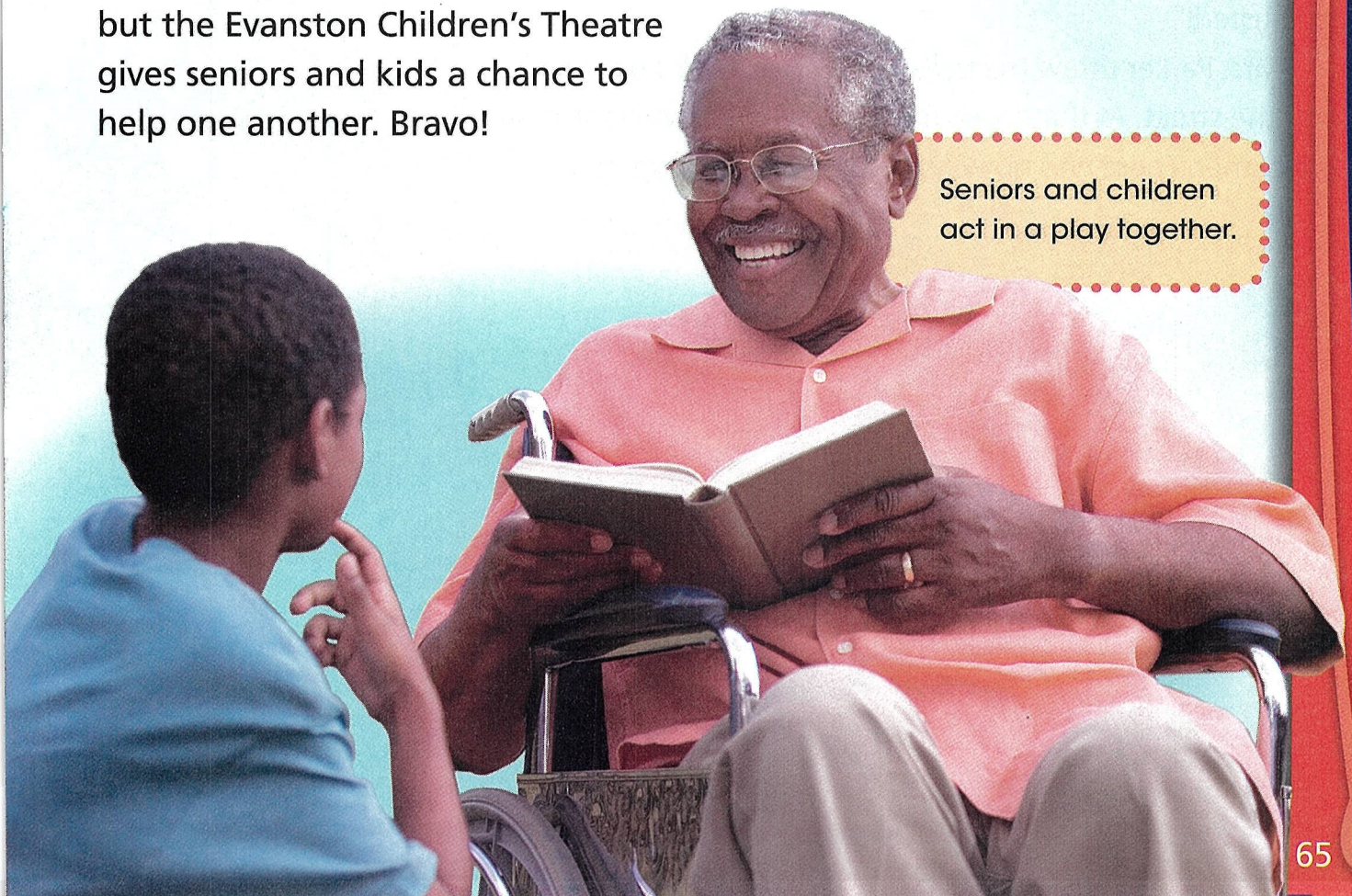
To put on a play, actors must help one another. If a senior forgets some lines, kids jump right in and move the scene along. Seniors do the same for the kids. Once a senior got sick after the first show. A kid took on the senior's part. The show must go on—and it did!

Putting on plays is great fun, but the Evanston Children's Theatre gives seniors and kids a chance to help one another. Bravo!



The Evanston Children's Theatre has become very popular. In fact, more than 300 people came to a Sunday afternoon performance of *Charlotte's Web*.

Seniors and children act in a play together.





# SAVING BUSTER

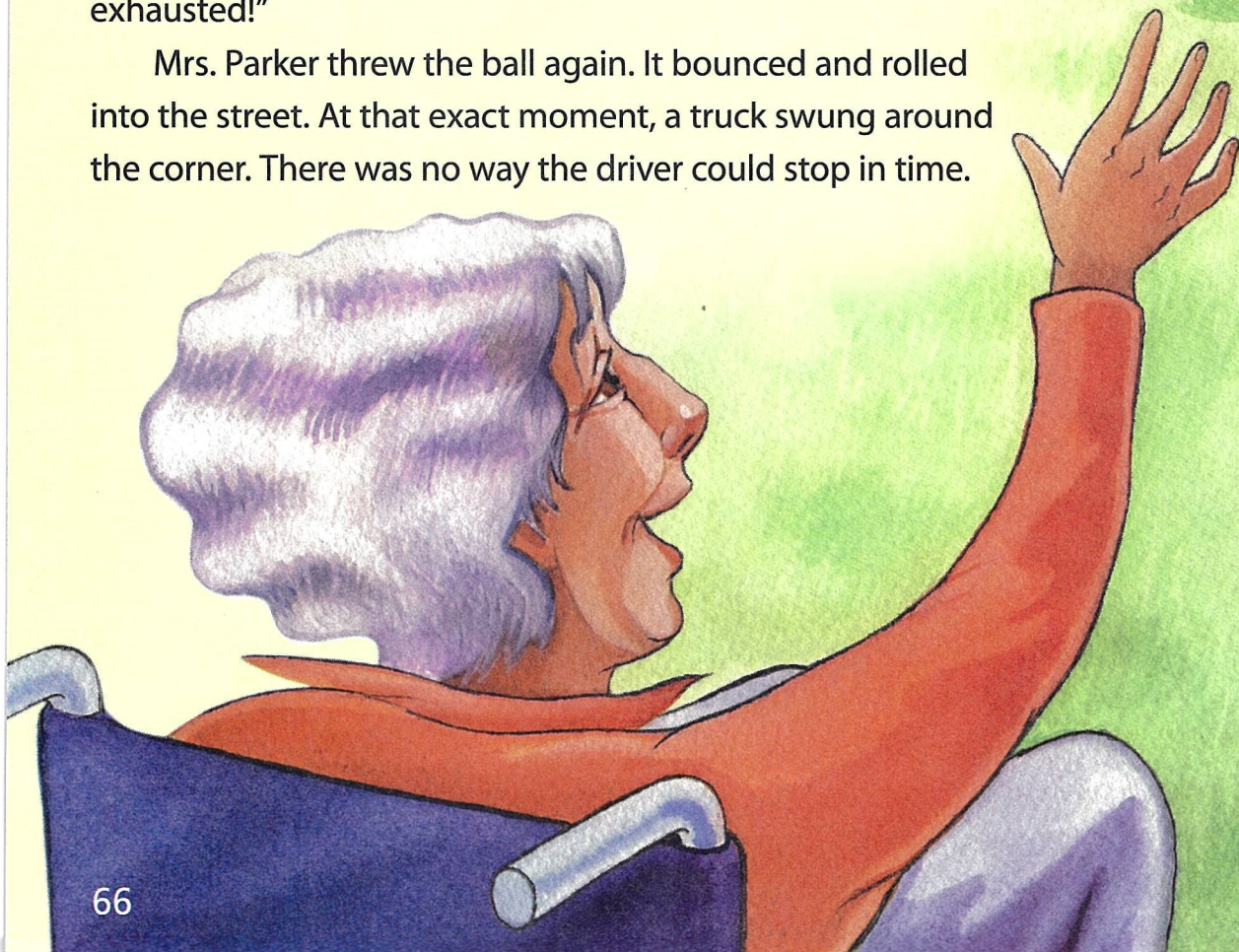
"Go get it, boy!" Mrs. Parker yelled as she tossed Buster's favorite ball across the yard. Donovan Lowe was pulling weeds in the Parkers' front yard. He watched Buster streak by and smiled. Donovan liked Mrs. Parker. A year ago she'd had a stroke. That's when she moved in with her daughter Liz, Donovan's neighbor.

The stroke left Mrs. Parker weak enough to need a wheelchair, but it didn't affect her funny bone. Everyone loved her jokes and stories. She was like the whole neighborhood's grandmother. Buster was her service dog, and he was like the whole neighborhood's pet.

He raced back with the ball.

"Okay!" Mrs. Parker laughed. "But this is the last time! I'm exhausted!"

Mrs. Parker threw the ball again. It bounced and rolled into the street. At that exact moment, a truck swung around the corner. There was no way the driver could stop in time.







*"Buuuussss-terrrrr!"* both Donovan and Mrs. Parker shouted. Donovan sped to the curb where Buster lay. The truck driver was kneeling beside the dog.

"Get a blanket and call the vet!" he yelled to Donovan. "Tell them it's an emergency, and we're on our way!"

That night Donovan and his mom brought her tortilla casserole over to the Parkers. Liz reported what the vet had told them. "Dr. Sims thinks that Buster will need to go to the animal hospital in the city for an operation. She'll call tomorrow when she knows more."

The next morning, Donovan waited nervously for news about Buster. Around ten o'clock, Liz called. Donovan stayed near until his mother hung up. "Buster has two broken legs," his mom said. "The doctors will operate today. You and I will help out with Mrs. Parker while Liz is at the animal hospital."



Donovan and Mrs. Parker looked at old photo albums while they waited for Liz. They shared funny stories about Buster. Donovan's mom did what she always did in times of stress. She cooked.

Liz returned late that evening. Buster would have casts on his legs for a while, but he'd be all right.

Mrs. Parker and Donovan played a game as his mother heated some food for Liz. Then Donovan went into the kitchen to get a glass of water. Mom and Liz were washing dishes and didn't hear him come in.

"We don't have two thousand dollars to pay for Buster's care!" Liz exclaimed. "I don't know how we'll ever pay it."

Donovan slipped back into the living room. He had \$17 he had saved for a new computer game. He'd give it to Liz, but Liz needed two thousand dollars. What else could he do?







That night, Donovan told his mom what he had overheard. "I want to help, but I don't know how."

Mom said softly, "It's a big problem, honey. Sleep on it. Maybe in the morning, we'll have an idea."

No brilliant idea came to Donovan during the night. Nor did one come during school the next day. When he got home, his mom was testing a new recipe. "Taste this, please," she said as she held a spoonful of stew under his nose.

Donovan cleaned the spoon and declared, "Delicious! You should have a cooking show."

"Thank you! I made enough for Liz and Mrs. Parker too. Would you carry it over for me?" Mom asked.

Liz was on the phone as she answered the door. She pointed Donovan to the kitchen. "Just put it anywhere," she whispered as she turned back to her phone conversation.





Donovan stared at the counters. It seemed as if all their neighbors had sent food. Donovan squeezed his bowl in between two dishes. Then he stopped to see how Mrs. Parker was holding up.

"I'm fine, but it's hard on Liz. She has to do everything that Buster used to do for me."

And worry about how she's going to pay the vet bill, Donovan thought.

"What did your mom send over?" Mrs. Parker asked.

"Stew," said Donovan. "But I think you have a wide menu to choose from tonight. I haven't seen that many dishes since the school's potluck supper."

Mrs. Parker whispered, "I know. But your mom's the best cook around."

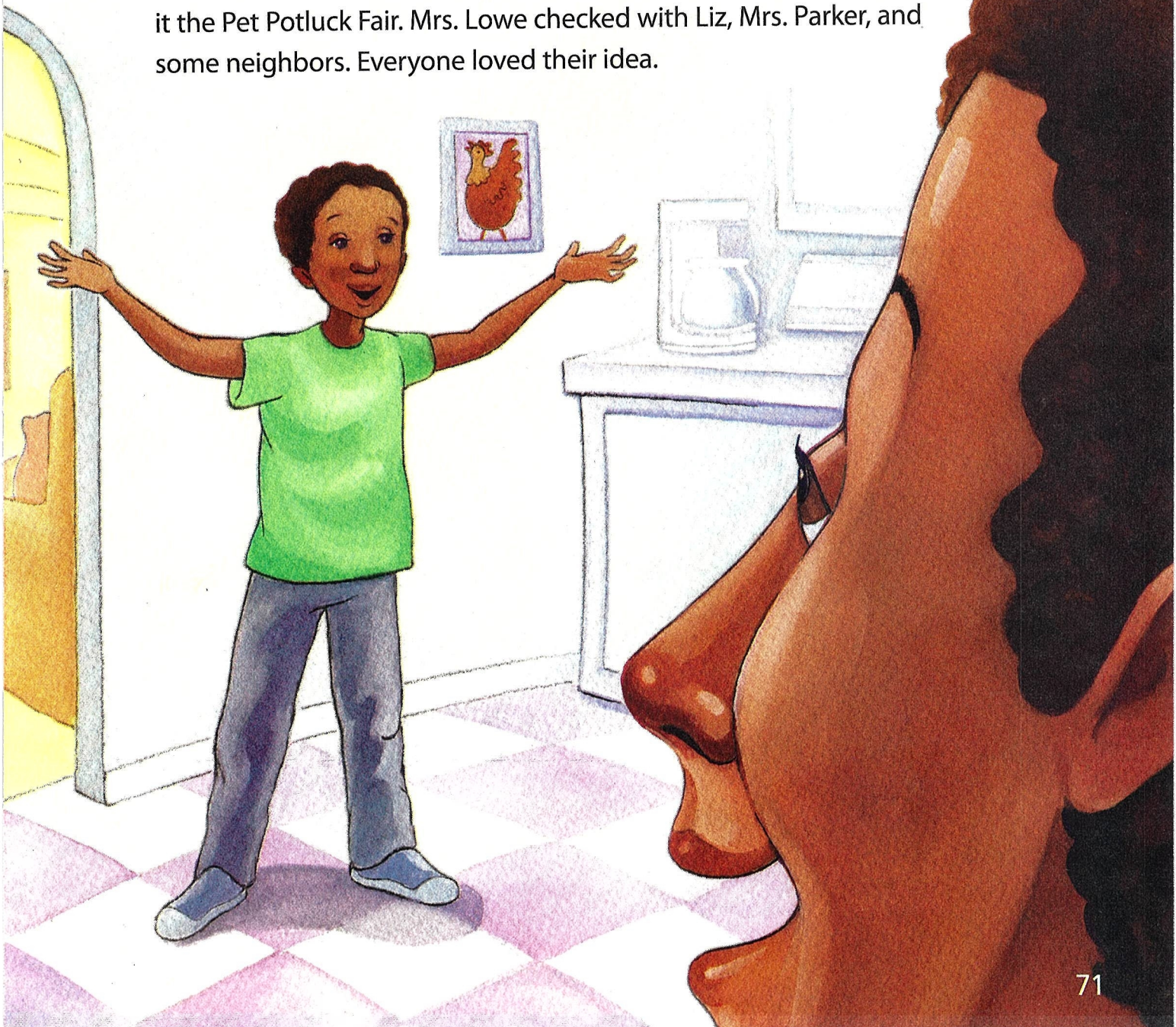
Donovan smiled. He thought so too. As he walked home, that brilliant idea he'd been waiting for started brewing in his head. As his thoughts sped up, so did his feet.



Donovan burst into the kitchen and announced, "I know how to pay for Buster's operation! We'll have a potluck cooking contest! People can pay to enter. They'll make a sample of food for the judges to taste and a large pot for people to eat. Then people can pay to eat the food!"

The more his mother and Donovan talked, the more excited they became. People could buy tickets for \$2 each. Each ticket would pay for a helping from a pot they wanted to taste.

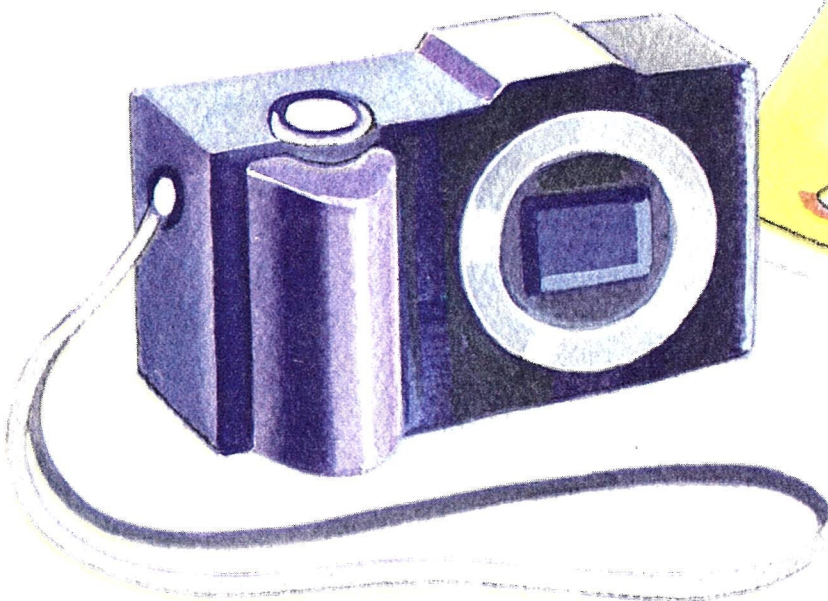
Ideas flowed quickly after that. They'd have cooking contests for adults and for kids. Someone could sell pictures of people and their pets. Others could demonstrate what service dogs do. They could even have a Funniest-Looking Pet contest. They would call it the Pet Potluck Fair. Mrs. Lowe checked with Liz, Mrs. Parker, and some neighbors. Everyone loved their idea.





The day of the potluck contest came. Friends and neighbors filled the park. Buster was the guest of honor. He sat in a special wagon next to Mrs. Parker. Donovan helped sell food tickets. Liz took pictures of people with their pets. Mrs. Parker and Buster judged the pet contest. A bulldog was chosen the funniest-looking pet. It wasn't a surprise when Donovan's mom won the cooking contest. But the best moment came at the end of the day.

Carl Baca was a banker who lived on Donovan's street. He made a special announcement. "Buster has shown us how important a service dog can be. Because we care, we've raised more than one thousand dollars toward Buster's vet bill!" The crowd hollered and clapped.





Donovan hollered and clapped too, but he knew that it wasn't enough. Liz was about to thank the crowd when Mr. Baca held up a hand. "When Donovan Lowe talked to me about raising money for Buster, I made a vow. I told myself that my bank would do all it could to help raise this money. I talked to other businesses in our neighborhood too. And we will make up the difference. We will donate the rest of the money needed to pay Buster's vet bill."

The crowd hollered and clapped even more. Liz laughed and cried at the same time. So did Mrs. Lowe and Mrs. Parker. Buster looked up at Donovan. Donovan could have sworn Buster was smiling. And that was all the thanks Donovan needed.





# Company's Coming!

David L. Harrison

What a mess!  
A total wreck!  
They're nearly here!  
All hands on deck!

Clear the table!  
Grab the shoes!  
Make the beds!  
No time to lose!

Cram the closets!  
Slam the doors!  
Hang the jackets!  
Mop the floors!





Shove those socks  
And underwear  
And magazines  
Beneath a chair!

Faster! Faster!  
Not enough!  
Move it! Shake it!  
Hide this stuff!

Get some crackers  
On a plate!  
Pray that they  
Are running late!

Slice the cheese!  
Put out the cat!  
Someone check  
That thermostat!

Change the soap  
And wipe the tile!  
We're all sweaty!

Ding Dong!

Smile!

### Discuss Poetry

What patterns of rhymes and beats can you find in this poem? How are lines divided? How do the exclamation points make the poem sound and feel?







# Make a **Poster**

You read the story.  
Now come see the play!

# Charlotte's Web

Charlotte and Wilbur  
and all their friends  
on stage!

For three days only  
Friday, Saturday, and Sunday  
October 12-14  
7:00 p.m.

Story Theater  
2525 West Main Street

Tickets on sale at the theater now!

This poster does two things: it grabs your attention and gives information.

Make a poster of your own. Think of an event you would want people to come to. It could be a play, a race, a bake sale, or a fun fair. Plan what you will put on your poster and how you will grab people's attention. Then start writing and drawing.



# One Plus One ...Equals One!

It's not math, but when it comes to making words, one plus one can equal one. A **compound word** is one word made up of two smaller words.

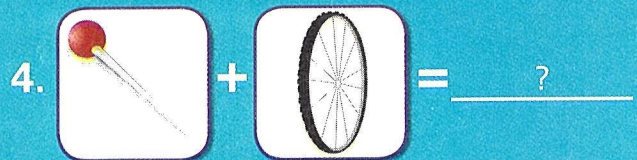
**Example:**

grand + mother = grandmother

On a sheet of paper, use the picture clues to make a compound word from two small words. The words in the box below are in the compound words you will write. Some words are used twice.

## Words Used

boat  
drum  
pin  
chair  
ear  
stick  
dog  
house  
wheel





A light blue banner with a white border and a slight curve. The words "The Fair Needs" are written in a large, bold, yellow font with a blue outline. The banner is decorated with colorful balloons (green, purple, orange) and yellow swirls in the background.

# The Fair Needs

Often a big problem like Buster's accident takes many people to help solve it. A fair is a fun way to solve a problem. Think of a problem that you would like to help solve by holding a fair. Maybe your school playground needs more equipment. Maybe a local pet shelter needs a bigger building. Write a letter to a newspaper to persuade other people to help you put on a fair. Give reasons that are right for your audience, and use persuasive words. Write with a confident tone.

- Explain the problem.
- Give reasons why people should help.
- Describe the kind of fair you want to hold.
- Tell exactly what your readers can do to help.



# YOU!!

