

Characters Alive: Text Task, part 1

Your task is to organise a group of four classmates. Together, you will learn your lines and practise your parts. Present your play to the rest of the class in week 5. Your performance will demonstrate your understanding of the elements of drama.

Character List: Fern, Mr Arable, Mrs Arable, Avery

Scene setting: *Mr and Mrs Avery are having breakfast in the farmhouse kitchen. Fern comes in from the garden with a bunch of picked flowers.*

Fern: Look at these beautiful flowers. Oh, I wish I didn't have to go to school today. I'd like to stay in the garden all day, climb trees and help you with the animals.

Mr Arable: Much as I'd like you to help me with the farm, Fern, you have to go to school.

Mrs Avery: Avery! Avery! (*calling upwards*) Come downstairs at once and eat your breakfast. You'll be late for school. That boy is impossible!

Avery comes into the kitchen yawning and falls heavily into a kitchen chair.

Avery: Morning, everyone. Has anyone seen my frog? I think it escaped from my bedroom last night.

Mrs Arable: A bedroom is not the place to keep a frog, Avery. How many times do I have to tell you? Now, come on you two. Hurry up and get ready for school. I've all the animals to feed as well as you lot.

Mr Arable gets up from the breakfast table and goes to the corner of the kitchen where he picks up his axe.

Fern: Where is father going with that axe, mother?

Mrs Arable: Out to the pig house. Some piglets were born last night.

Fern: Well, I don't understand why he needs an axe.

Mrs Arable (*speaking softly and kindly*) Well, my dear, one of the piglets is very small and weak, so your father has decided to do away with it.

Fern: Do away with it! Do you mean kill it – just because it is smaller than the others?

Mrs Arable: Don't yell, Fern. Your father knows best. The piglet would probably die, anyway.

Mr Arable comes back into the kitchen with his axe. Fern rushes over to him.

Fern: Please! Don't kill the piglet!

Mr Arable: Fern, you must understand about life on a farm. A weak pig causes trouble. We haven't the money to look after weak pigs.

Fern: But, it's not fair! The pig couldn't help being born small. If I had been born small at birth, would you have killed me too?

Arable: Of course not, but a baby girl is one thing and a piglet is quite another.

Meanwhile, Avery grabs the school bags and hands one to Fern.

Avery: The school bus will be here any minute. Let's go.

Fern: (*turns desperate, pleading eyes onto her dad*) Dad, please!