THE REAL ZUCKERMAN FARM



0. THE REAL ZUCKERMAN FARM - Story Preface

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10. THE STORY OF CHARLOTTE'S WEB

Elwyn Brooks (E.B.) White once said: "No one can write decently who is distrustful of the reader's intelligence. Television has taken a big bite out of the written word. But words still count with me." This image depicts an out-building, on White's Maine farm in North Brooklin, in which he wrote some of his still-famous words. Image online via Maine Encyclopedia.

E.B. White (called "En" when he was young and "Andy" when he was grown), grew up in Mount Vernon, New York. As a boy, En spent time at Great Pond (one of Maine's Belgrade Lakes).

During those annual summer visits with his family, White fell in love with the state.

In 1933, Andy and his wife, Katharine, bought a Maine saltwater farm (so called because it was near a saltwater estuary). Initially, he commuted between the farm and New York City, where he worked as a magazine writer (first for *The New Yorker*, then for *Harper's*). But the call of the farm was strong, and the Whites eventually lived there full-time.

The Maine that E. B. White knew best - and loved most - was the picturesque Acadia region of the state. The Whites lived on the Blue Hill Peninsula in a tiny town called North Brooklin. (The town of Brooklin is located in the "Down East" part of Maine.) Whatever the season, the entire Blue Hill area is a beautiful place.

Andy White felt close to nature and to animals. One of his favorite writers was Henry David Thoreau. (It is said that White always had a copy of Thoreau's *Walden* with him, no matter where he went.)

In addition to his writing, which he did in a small boathouse on his property, Andy White worked his farm. His stepson, Roger Angell, describes the place as:

> *a saltwater farmer with a hundred and fifty pullets* [young female chickens], *a dozen geese, twenty or thirty sheep ... When the war came, he even took on a cow - the first time he leads her out to the pasture, he writes, he feels "the way I did the first time I ever took a girl to the theatre" - and his production goals for 1942 were four thousand dozen eggs, ten pigs, and nine thousand pounds of milk.* (*The New Yorker*, February 14 and 21, 2005)

This was the farm where Andy White lost his pig and saw a barn spider spinning her web. It is, in reality, the Zuckerman farm of *Charlotte's Web*.

It is now time to ask: Who, exactly, is Charlotte? And ... how is it possible for her to spin a web?

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-REAL-ZUCKERMAN-FARM-Charlotte-s-Web

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-REAL-ZUCKERMAN-FARM-Charlotte-s-Web

Questions 2 Ponder

How Much of Fiction Is Based on Real Life?

Have you ever wondered how much authors rely on real life to create fictional stories? Take “Charlotte’s Web,” for example. E.B. White’s story has many real-life parts:

- The Zuckerman Farm is based on White’s own farm;
- Charlotte is based on a real barn spider;
- Wilbur is based on a real pig;
- White personally felt close to nature and animals;
- White’s real farm included geese, sheep, cows and young egg-laying chickens.

How did E.B. White use his own real-life experiences to write his famous story about “Charlotte’s Web?”

Do you think it’s easier to write fictional stories which are actually based on real-life people, places and events —or—do you think it’s easier to create new fiction without using real-life influences? Explain your answer.

If you were asked to write a fictional story, based on real-life people, whom would you select? Why would you make those choices?

Media Stream



Signature of E.B. White
Image of E.B. White's signature, online courtesy American Society of Authors and Writers.
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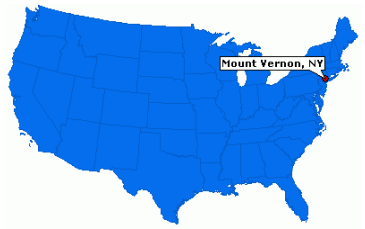


E.B. White as a Young Lad
Image online, courtesy University of Maine.
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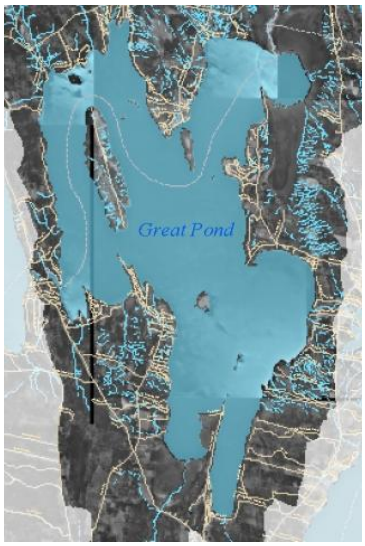
Grown-Up E.B. White

Image of E.B. White online, courtesy White Literary LLC, via Wikimedia Commons.
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Mount Vernon, New York - Map Locator

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Great Pond - Aerial View

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State of Maine - Map Locator

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Saltwater Farm

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E.B. "Andy" White at His Desk

Image online, courtesy E.B. White Estate.

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Bass Harbor Head Light - Acadia National Park

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Mount Desert Island - View from Cadillac Mountain

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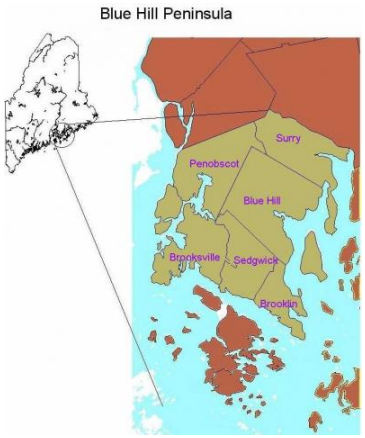


Location of "Down East" Maine

Image online, courtesy eTravel Maine.

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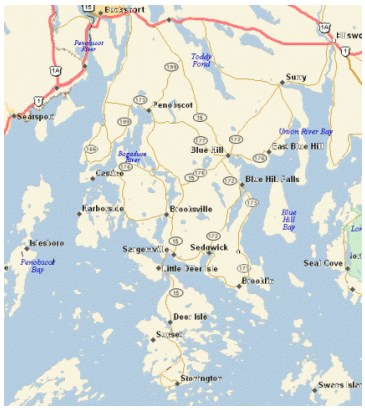


Blue Hill Peninsula in Maine

Map image, online courtesy Hancock County Planning Commission.

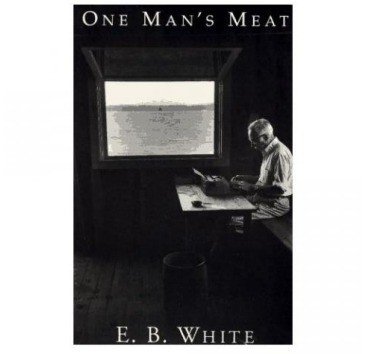
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Brooklin, Main - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy Blue Hill Inn.
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E.B. White - Writing in His Boathouse

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E.B. White's Boathouse

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E.B. White's Boathouse Property

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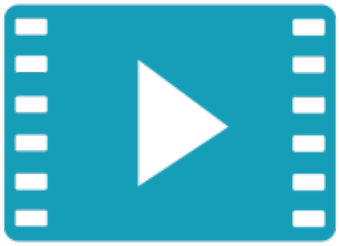
Henry David Thoreau

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Pullets - Raised on E.B. White's Saltwater Farm

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Henry David Thoreau - At Walden Pond

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