

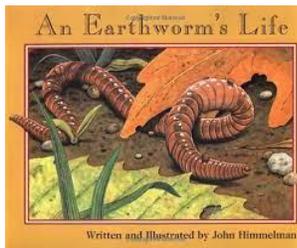
CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND RESOURCES REVIEW

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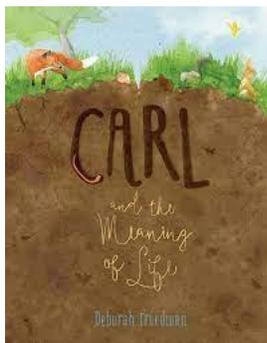
Worms, Glorious Worms!

As children dig in the earth and rain pounds down on our outdoor spaces, it is inevitable that worms are discovered by small hands. Live animals, even like the earthworm, delight children as we hear squeals of wonder and interest. Worms are one of nature's recyclers. Worms have no bones, lay eggs, and are hermaphrodites (both male and female). Worm castings (poop!) are often sold as a soil amendment product. Vermicomposting can be a great way to explore worms and recycle fruit and vegetable waste. How do worm experiences happen in your space? Here are a few books and resources that may be helpful:



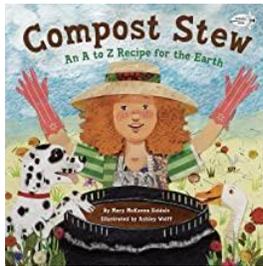
An Earthworm's Life by John Himmelman

Part of *The Nature Upclose Series*, this simple book beautifully illustrates the life cycle of the earthworm from one spring through two more springs. The earthworm is faced with dangerous predators such as a mole and robin, along with the reality of too much rain. The book shows how the worm eats, creates an egg case, and creates tunnels. With only one to two sentences per page, the information is basic enough to read with younger children, keeps their attention, and builds knowledge and vocabulary. The book includes words to know at the back, such as burrow, castings, egg case, mole, and soil.



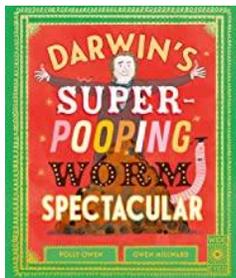
Carl and the Meaning of Life by Deborah Freedman

Carl, the worm, questions the meaning of digging tunnels after a mouse asks why. While Carl ponders the meaning of life, he stops digging. Slowly, the soil around him dries up and becomes hard. His other animal friends move on to new spaces as the land by Carl becomes more barren. Carl realizes how important his tunnels and starts digging again. The animal friends return as the soil becomes fluffy and light once more. Watercolor illustrations add to the experience.



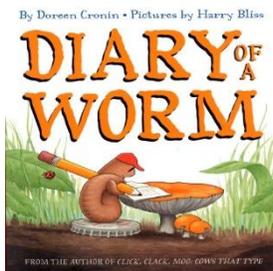
Compost Stew: An A to Z Recipe for the Earth by Mary McKenna Siddals

This rhyming ABC book explores all the interesting things that can go into our compost including wriggling worms! This is a simple book with just a handful of words per page, suitable for younger children. Kitchen scraps, oatmeal, paper shreds, tea bags, and more can go into the compost pot to rot. A chef's note at the end shows how flexible composting can be, along with what to avoid, such as meat or dairy. Diverse skin color representations.



Darwin's Super-Pooping Worm Spectacular by Polly Owen

This brand-new book highlights Charles Darwin's worm studies and explorations as he is on a quest to show others the importance of worms which were considered pests at the time. He figured out that worms are blind (and have no eyes!). We learn about Darwin's studies and worms at the same time in an engaging story. The last couple of pages share wormy facts and the future of worms, with a caution on the impact of pesticides and loss of habitat. This would work best for early elementary students.



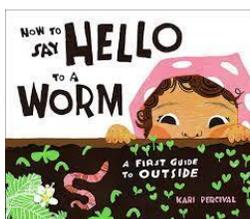
Diary of a Worm by Doreen Cronin

This is a funny journal of an earthworm. While it can be informative, understanding certain aspects about worms make it easier to understand the humor, such as when the worm eats its homework and needs to write sentences which he then promptly eats. The worm also doesn't need to go to the dentist—no teeth! There is a slight hint at the importance of earthworms as well.



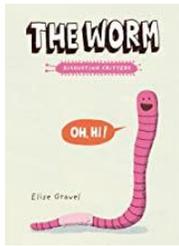
Hello, Garden Bugs: A High Contrast Book by duopress labs

This black and white book with high contrast is meant for infants. While an earthworm is briefly mentioned, the infants also find other garden friends, such as a spider, dragonfly, bee, snail, and caterpillar. The animals are more cartoony in style than other books listed but do provide a brief introduction to these garden critters.



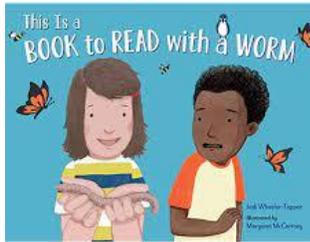
How to Say Hello to a Worm: A First Guide to Outside by Kari Percival

In this simple book, a few children plant lettuce, peas, and other garden plants. As they water and interact with the soil, worms come up to the surface. With an emphasis on the benefits of worms and being gentle, this is a basic introduction to worms and gardening. The children make mud, a trellis for the peas, explore bees, pick strawberries, and harvest vegetables. Backmatter focuses on tips and gardening with toddlers. Diverse skin color representations.



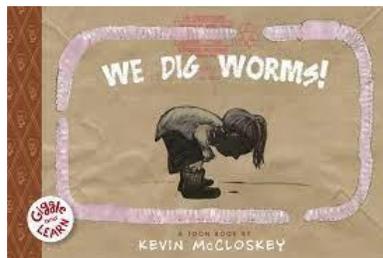
The Worm: The Disgusting Critters Series by Elise Gravel

The cartoon drawn illustrations support a humorous thread through this informational book. Learn about different types of worms and how they live while being entertained by cartoon worms and speech bubbles. Recommended for early elementary classrooms, though some younger children may enjoy it as well.



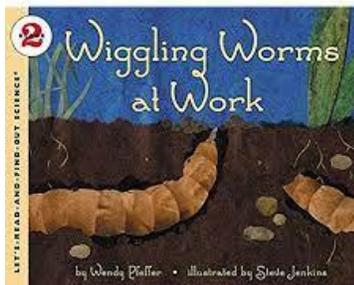
This is a Book to Read with a Worm by Jodi Wheeler-Toppen

While preschoolers could benefit from this book (and/or us as educators), this book is better suited for K-3 students. The book follows two children as they find worms, get to know the worm and its body parts, and gently explore the worm through simple exercises, such as finding the worm's face, investigating its reaction to light and rubbing alcohol, and visualizing the digestive system. With a labeled diagram of the body parts and invitation to get to know the worm, I found this book helpful for me as I was guiding worm experiences with younger children as well. The book encourages responsible investigations, including putting the worm back where it was found. Back matter includes questions and answers about worms, along with further resources. Diverse skin color representations.



We Dig Worms by Kevin McClosky

This book starts by recognizing the many different types of worms. I enjoyed the illustrations, such as the page that mentioned that worms had no eyes or nose, the worm became the mouth on a face. Whimsical touches make this a fun book. Simple illustrations, such as a map of the worm, help teach about worm characteristics. The friendly and silly question and answer format with the worm and nearby humans and animals makes the book engaging and informational, as the worm moves quickly away from the bluebird who wants to eat it for lunch. The worm illustrations are painted on recycled grocery bags to keep things eco-friendly.



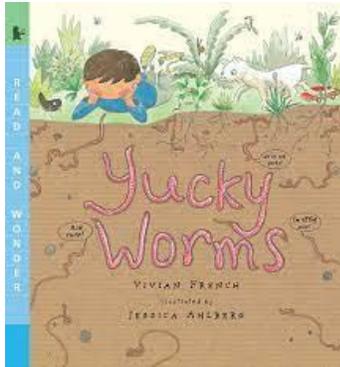
Wiggling Worms at Work by Wendy Pfeffer

The cut paper illustrations show the segments of worms, tunnels, and parts of the life cycle. With an emphasis on the usefulness and characteristics of worms, this book gives good, detailed information. Educators might read through the book and then tell longer pages in their own words if using with younger children. Backmatter includes activities to investigate a worm on your own through examining a worm and experimenting with worm castings.



Worm Weather by Jean Taft

This book for younger children features great rhyming sounds words as worms come up in the rain. The children put on rain gear to explore the rain, grab pizza as it starts lightening, and return to the outside to play some more as the rain lets up. Worms appear throughout during “worm weather” when we often find worms and have a chance to play in the rain.



Yucky Worms by Vivian French

This book follows a conversation between a child and grandmother in the garden as they encounter a worm. The boy learns from his grandmother and interacting with worms more about this marvelous animal. The main text includes 2-5 sentences per page, with additional details and speech bubbles about the worms. Interesting text features, like fun facts along the worm’s tunnel, give many ways to explore the book. Backmatter gives details on becoming a wormologist and an index. Cautions to be respectful toward the worm and wash hands are included.

Additional Resources

The Worm Project by Illinois Early Learning Project

Follow how preschoolers found worms on the playground and launched a worm investigation, with children’s questions, related graphing, creating composting and observation bins, conducting research and sensory play. Personal stories of two children add to the discovery.

<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/pa/projects/worm-project/>

The Worms are Dancing by Alissa Lange, Lynn Lodien, and Anna Lowe in *Science & Children*

Worm investigations in a preschool classroom including drawing, literacy, math, science, and technology connections.

<https://www.ecstemlab.com/uploads/4/0/3/5/40359017/langelodienlowe.pdf>

Growing Up Wild—Wriggling Worms by Project Wild

This 2-page spread of worm related curriculum shares related standards, books, websites, activities, math connections, ways to help, art projects, extensions, and a song and poem.

<https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild/growing-wild/resources/wiggling-worms>

Earthworm Digging Activity for Kids by Tinkergarten

This quick how to shares one approach to looking for worms with children, using a string circle, water, the ground, and tools for digging. Empathy, discovery, and safely returning worms to their home are emphasized.

<https://tinkergarten.com/activities/friends-in-low-places>

The Adventures of Herman by University of Illinois Extension

This website, in both English and Spanish, shares interactive elements for elementary students (and teachers) around earthworms. It includes fun facts, jokes, and directions for creating a worm bin for vermicomposting. The site has a printable certificate for studying worms, along with questions and answers for educators.

<https://web.extension.illinois.edu/worms/>

Worms, Glorious Worms podcast episode by Loose Parts Nature Play

This podcast episode shares practical approaches to investigating worms with young children in an indoor or outdoor space, along with related resources.

<https://loosepartsnatureplay.libsyn.com/worms-glorious-worms>

Invasive Worms—While worms in the US are typically from early European settlers, the Asian Jumping Worm is one worm to watch out for as it processes the dead organic matter more quickly than typical earthworms, making it hard for plants to set roots firmly in the soil. These worms are moving into more natural areas of the Northeast and Midwest. Avoid spreading these worms and report any activity you encounter. Find more details at: <https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/terrestrial/invertebrates/asian-jumping-worm>

A special thanks to the *Nature Preschool Community* and the *Nature-Inspired Children's Books & Storytelling* Facebook groups for additional books to consider. If you have ideas or would like to contribute book or resource reviews, please contact Dr. Gull at insideoutsidemichiana@gmail.com. If you have ideas or would like to contribute book or resource reviews, please contact Dr. Gull at insideoutsidemichiana@gmail.com.