

ACTIVITY

10

Worm Composting Grades 3-6

Objective

Participants will:

- learn about worms and their role in nature through observation and discussion, and
- overcome any fear of worms

Time

20-40 minutes

* Look in the back of this booklet for how this activity applies to the Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities.

Warming Up to Worms

Materials Needed

- Magnifying boxes or glasses (younger students)
- Worms
- Warming Up to Worms worksheets (p. 29)
- Paper towels (older students only)
- Toothpicks (older students only)

Background Information

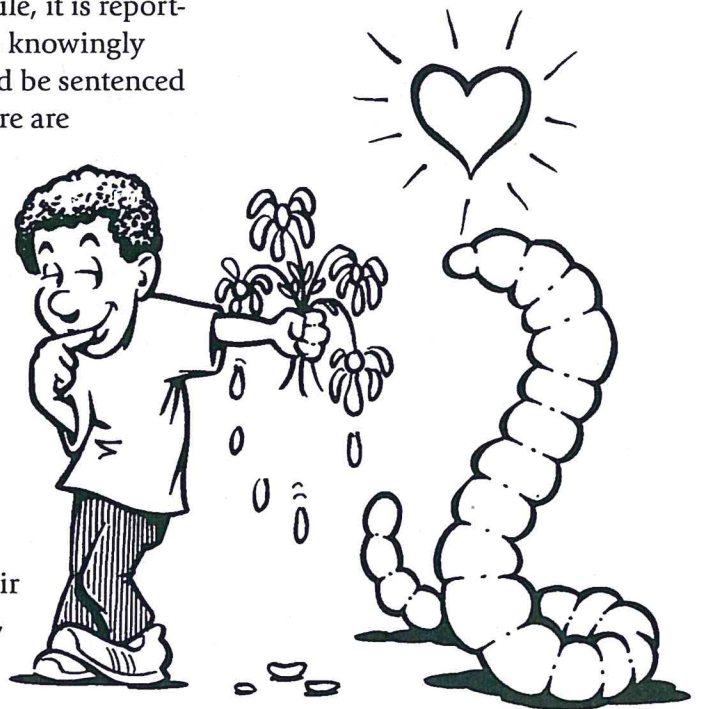
Worms are incredible decomposers. The worms we use for composting in boxes are surface feeders called *Eisena foetida*. They are also called manure worms, red wigglers, or redworms. Over 7,000 species of worms inhabit the world, and they are important to ecosystems. In ancient Egypt under Cleopatra's rule, it is reported that anyone who knowingly killed a worm would be sentenced to death. Today, there are engineers in India who are learning how to clean sewage water using worm systems.

There are lots of fun facts to know about redworms. They have five pairs of hearts, no eyes, and no teeth. They breathe through their skin, and need dark,

moist surroundings. Eight adult redworms can produce 1,500 offspring within six months, if conditions are favorable. Each worm is both male and female and can eat over half of its weight in food every day.

Management Skills

Worms are very sensitive to light, so handle them with care. Make sure there is a moist piece of paper towel in each participant's magnifying box. You should also put a little bit of bedding or worm castings in the magnifying box with them. For older students, use moist paper towels and toothpicks. Younger children may not be able to use the worksheet.



Warming Up to Worms

1. What color is the worm?
2. What shape is the worm? Describe it.
3. How does the worm's skin feel?
4. Is there a difference between the top side and the bottom side of a worm?
Describe what both sides are like.
5. Can you tell which is the front end of a worm and which is its tail?
How do you know?
6. Does an earthworm have...

EYES?

EARS?

LEGS?

A NOSE?

A MOUTH?
7. How does your worm move? Describe it.
8. What's the name of your worm?
9. Why are worms important to life on earth?



Name: _____ Date: _____