



Rotten Apple Party: Worm Exploration ***JK/SK Facilitator Notes***

Objective: To use the metaphor of *throwing a party* to introduce students to how composting works, how it benefits our soil and the idea that soil is a habitat for billions of organisms.



Recipe Category: Soil & Composting



Cooking Time: 25 mins



Level of Difficulty: JK/SK



Recipe Ingredients

Introduction

- Story book: “*Yucky Worms*” by Vivian French (or colour photo copies)
- Soil samples: dirt, compost, and coconut husk in small, clear containers with lids
- 3 small bowls

Worm Exploration

- Vermicomposting bin
- Wooden spoon and water spray



Curriculum Links:

Grade	Subject Area	Ontario Curriculum Links
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K	Science and Technology	<p><i>Exploration and Experimentation:</i></p> <p>Demonstrate an understanding of and care for the natural world (O)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C.8 Demonstrate an awareness of local natural habitats through exploration and observation (S)
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Introduction: (5 minutes)

Firstly, ask who likes going to parties... *What about a compost party!*

- Ask the class for their definitions of *composting*. If they have no idea, ask them about *recycling* first and then relate it back to composting. It's just like recycling our food scraps – returning our food to the soil!
- Compare how composting is kind of like a party for teeny tiny microorganisms (animals that are so small, we can't even see them!) in the soil – but really it's a *habitat*, where they all live together happily. One of the special compost party guests we are going to see today are worms!
- The end result of composting is beautiful "worm castings" or, worm poop! This stuff looks like dirt, but really it's a super-duper soil to make healthy plants. *What happens?*
- Worms wait for our food scraps to start breaking down after we've tossed them into the green bin or compost pile, before feeding on them. Just like us, worms poop. But worm poop is special stuff that helps our garden to grow big and strong. Kind of like what fruits and vegetables do for us. They are both full of nutrients that help make us healthy.

***Show, feel and smell soil samples (compost, dirt and coconut husk) and discuss the differences between them.*

- Textures
- Smell
- Colour
- Where it comes from

- Benefits/Uses

Story Time: (5mins)

Worms are a really important part of composting.

Read a small section (or a few key pages) of "*Yucky Worms*" and discuss

Worm Exploration: (10mins)

Start by sitting in a circle...

Now let's look at some real worms!

Before introducing them, make sure students understand the following things about worms:

- Worms don't have lungs like us, they breathe through their skin, which needs to be nice and moist. You can give the students' hands a light spray with water before holding a worm.
- Worms not only breathe through their skin, but also feel vibrations too. So, if we make loud noises, it's very painful for them (like being shaken really hard). So let's keep our *indoor* voices!
- Worms don't have any teeth, so they can't bite us.
- They like to be in the shade so they don't dry out. Try and keep a "lid" over the worm your holding by cupping it under your other hand.
- They are very delicate and can break easily (a broken worm DOES NOT make two worms!), so be careful.
- They're a lot more scared of us than we are of them.
- Have students wash their hands in dirt first – ask who used sun screen, bug spray, soap today? We don't want those chemicals touching the worms' skin, so before we hold a

worm, we are all going to wash our hands with dirt! Have students rub their hands in the grass or dirt to get rid of their sunscreen or other chemicals on their skin.

So, considering these things...

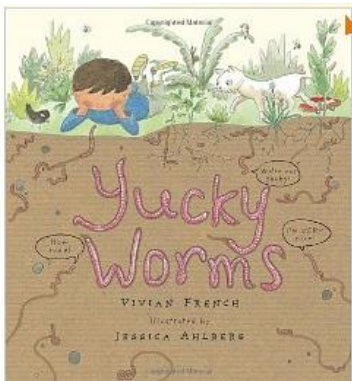
1. Explain first that the person next to them may not want to hold a worm. It's important to ask before passing them a worm, *"Do you want to hold a worm?"* If not, pass it to the next person.
2. Pass 2 worms around the circle, starting on either side of you so the worms are being passed around opposite directions of the circle
3. Ensure an adult hand is under the student's hand whilst holding and passing the worms incase the worm gets dropped.

If Time:

- Let them dig very carefully in the bin with the wooden spoon, what other creatures can they see?
- If the vermicompost bin gets dry, let them give it a quick spray with water.
- Recap on key points: compost, habitat, worm castings, and worm anatomy...



Serving Suggestions:



Yucky Worms by Vivian French and illustrated by Jessica Ahlberg