

Sing a Song for Worms

Topic: Worm Composting

Materials Needed: Song lyrics below

Purpose: To blend music with your study of worms

Directions:

- Have your students learn some new words to very familiar songs. For some added fun, make up your own verses.

Worm Bin Boogie (Hokey Pokey)

You put ***the worms** in and take some worm dirt out, you put ***the worms** in and COMPOST all about, you do the Worm Bin Boogie and you save the environment, that's what it's all about. (clap, clap)

You put some water in and keep the worms in the dark, you put some water in but give your worms some air, you do the Worm Bin Boogie and save the environment, that's what it's all about. (clap, clap)

*Substitute these phrases for **"the worms"** and repeat the rest of the song

- Some fruit scraps
- Some veggie scraps
- Some leafy greens

Kindergarten* Had Some Worms (Old McDonald's Farm)

* substitute your grade

Kindergarten had some worms,
In a compost bin.
And all these worms made healthy soil
In a compost bin.
With a squiggle, squiggle here and a squiggle, squiggle there,
Here a squiggle, there a squiggle everywhere a squiggle, squiggle.
Kindergarten loved their worms
In their compost bin.

The Worms in Our Bin (The Wheels on the Bus)

The worms in our bin they eat our trash,
eat our trash, eat our trash.
The worms in our bin they eat our trash
and help to save the Earth.

Little Worms (Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star)

Little worms in our bin so neat.
How I wonder what you eat.
Apples, egg shells, veggies too.
All these things are good for you.
Don't give 'em eggs, don't give 'em cheese.
No matter what, no meat please!
Little worms in our bin so neat.
Now I know just what you eat!

A Worm Came To Dinner?

Topic : Worm Composting

Materials Needed: “*The Worm Who Came to Dinner*” story below, vocabulary words

Purpose: To explore worm composting.

Directions:

- Review the following worm vocabulary.
- Read or have your students read “*The Worm Who Came to Dinner*” by Mary Frances Fenton and discuss the story.

Vocabulary

Biodegradable: Broken down by nature

Composting: Organic waste to dirt

Decompose: Break down smaller

Humus: Rich organic material

Organic: From living things

Nutrients: Things used for growth

Worm castings: Worm poop

Vermiposting: Worm composting

The Worm Who Came to Dinner

By Mary Frances Fenton

Sara was both happy and sad. Yesterday was the last day of school. Although she was happy to be on vacation, she would miss her friends. Also, it was hard for Sara to admit to herself that she would miss learning the new things she found out about in school. Sara did look forward to visiting her Grandmother's, because Grandmother always had something interesting going on in her home.

At Grandmother's, as Sara helped Grandmother fix supper, she asked, "Where do you want me to put these apple peels?"

Grandmother replied, "Put them right in this bowl for now. Later, you can help me feed them to the worms."

"Worms? What do you mean, feed them to the worms?" asked Sara in disbelief.

"Well my dear, I've got a new way to get rid of my garbage. I feed it to worms, and they turn it into potting soil for my garden," answered Grandmother. "And we have worms for fishing."

Well, Sara didn't know whether she liked the whole idea, or not. But it was all so new to her it intrigued her. So, she followed Grandmother when she went to feed the kitchen food scraps to the worms. She got to see for herself how one could keep a number of worms in captivity. After a few visits that summer, Sara was able to feed them and learn to respect them as good little workers.

Now, Sara found that Grandmother kept a box down in the basement—in a corner where it was kind of dark. There was, however, a light you could turn on so that you could see. The box was just a plain old wooden one that Grandfather had around. They drilled holes in the box so air could come in. Sara learned that worms had to have air to live. There was a plastic cover on top of the box of worms. It lay loosely like a blanket--it wasn't sealed tightly so worms could have air from the top, as well as in or near the bottom.

Grandmother peeled back the cover. Sara looked in expecting to see scads of worms squirming around on the top of the box, and . . . she didn't see anything! All she saw looked like black dirt. "Where are the worms?" Sara asked.

Grandmother chuckled, "Well, they're down in the bedding. They don't like light, so they quickly moved away and down into the bedding when I took the cover off. That's where they live and work, down in that damp bedding."

Then, Grandmother plunged her hand down into the box, into the bedding, and down deep under the surface. She pulled up a handful of stuff and turned it over and—sure enough—there were the worms, all wiggling and glistening in the dim light of the basement.

Seeing the surprise on Sara's face Grandmother said, "I happen to know where I buried the last batch of table scraps. I want to make sure that I don't stick my hand down where the last pile of garbage was buried. I keep a chart. That way I know where I've buried what, so I don't have to put my hand in the last two night's garbage."

Sara thought, "That's a good idea. I wouldn't handle it when it's decomposing—it stinks!"

Grandmother said, "Now, here's a handful of compost without garbage in it. Smell my hands." Sara didn't really want to, but Grandmother said, "See, it doesn't smell bad."

"No—it doesn't smell bad," mumbled Sara. "It smells like dirt."

"Well, yes, it does smell like organic humus," Grandmother went on to say.

Sara didn't know what humus meant, but she didn't ask the question about what that was at this moment. She was more interested in the worms squiggling around in Grandmother's hand. Her grandmother put the worms back, saying, "We'll put them back so they can go back to work. They don't like to be out in the air, because their bodies have to be moist."

Sara said, "Oh, I guess that's why you see them crawling around in the rain then. You don't see worms on sunny days, you see them when it rains."

"That's right. Very good," Grandmother replied, "So when I check the box every couple of days or so, I make sure that there is enough moisture. I either put my hand in, or use a fork or something to make sure that the worms are kept happy. The worms will stay right here in the box if everything is here that they need." Sara said, "You mean they never crawl out?"

Grandmother replied, "No, for the reason you just gave, that they don't like dry places. They're not going to crawl where it's dry. It's only wet and moist in the box."

"Oh yes, that's right," thought Sara. Then she asked, "How much garbage can you bury in here, Grandmother?"

"Well," Grandmother said, "When it's just Grandfather and I here, and not you and your mother and father visiting, we can probably bury four pounds of garbage a week. But, when I have lots of company, then I have too much garbage for the worms."

At this Sara looked surprised. Her eyes got big, and she asked, "You mean you can feed them too much?"

Grandmother said, "Yes, you can."

"Oh, then what do you do with the extra garbage?" asked Sara. Grandmother replied, "Well, that can be a problem, but there are a number of ways we can solve that."

Sara was confident that Grandmother knew what she was doing, so she didn't ask any more questions about the extra garbage. She asked, "Can I hold one of the worms?"

“Of course, let’s try this corner,” Grandmother said as she peeled back some bedding that was made of shredded newspaper. “I’ll peel this back, because I know there’s no garbage buried in this corner. See if you can find a worm down there.”

Sara said, “Oh, there’s one! There’s a worm!” Sara picked it up and put it in her hand. She watched it twist and turn and sort of look like it was looking for a place to go, as if it didn’t know where it was in her hand. This was a new place for it; it didn’t want to be there exactly, so it was trying to move away.

She noted that one end of the worm was definitely the end that wanted to move in some direction. It was waving around, trying to figure out which direction to go. Sara said, “Grandmother, does the worm have a head and a tail? I know it has a tail, but I don’t see a head. The end looks like a tail.”

Grandmother said, “That’s true. We don’t have a microscope, or a magnifying glass, but if we did, you could see that there is a difference between one end and the other, even though they both look ‘pointy.’ Do you see that swollen band close to one end?”

Sara said, “Yes. What is it?”

“That’s called a clitellum,” Grandmother replied. “That is a part of their reproductive system. That helps them develop cocoons so that baby worms can hatch from them.”

Sara thought, “Baby worms? Cocoons? What was all that?”

Grandmother continued, “We’ll talk more about that later. Right now, look at the way it moves, I want you to touch it. Does it feel slimy to you?”

“No. It just kind of tickles my hand,” Sara said.

And Grandmother said, “A lot of people think worms are slimy, but they’re really not. They are a little bit moist, but they’re not slimy like snails.”

“Yeah, snails are particularly slimy,” Sara agreed. She put the worm back and covered it back up with bedding, knowing that it didn’t like being away from its moist home.

Sara was pleased that she learned something new. She thought it was great that her grandparents knew special things and shared them with her.

Sara joked with her grandmother, “The next time I come, do you think we could bake a treat for the worm who came to dinner?”

The End