

DIARY OF A WORM

Classroom Activity Sheet



By Doreen Cronin
Illustrated by Harry Bliss
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Ages 4-8, Grades PreS-3

Diary of a Worm is the diary ... of a worm. Surprisingly, a worm not that different from you or me—except that he eats his homework! *Diary of a Worm* is written in a journalistic style and contains themes of ecology and the environment. Doreen Cronin’s humorous writing, coupled with Harry Bliss’s playful artwork, makes this book fun to read aloud and an excellent choice to incorporate into a classroom curriculum.

The story chronicles the activities of the worm, and it can serve as a reference for different creative-writing activities. Furthermore, the ecological themes of the book can be drawn on to celebrate Earth Day in the springtime, or any day of the year! This classroom activity sheet is designed to provide a spectrum of classroom extension activities to enhance the enjoyment of *Diary of a Worm*.

About the Author

DOREEN CRONIN’S first picture book, the blockbuster *New York Times* best-seller *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*, was a Caldecott Honor Book in 2001. Her second book *Giggle, Giggle Quack* was also a *New York Times* best-seller and the Main Selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club. She lives in New York.

About the Artist

HARRY BLISS is an award-winning cartoonist and cover artist for *The New Yorker*. He has illustrated Sharon Creech’s *New York Times* best-selling *A Fine, Fine School* and William Steig’s *Which Would You Rather Be?* Harry Bliss lives in Vermont.

“Worm Fun Facts”

Worms are more than long, thin, slimy animals that live in the soil. For example, worms have five hearts, and all of these hearts pump blood through blood vessels just like a human heart! Using reference books and the internet, have students work in pairs to research interesting worm facts to share with the class. Each day hold a Worm Fun Fact whole-group session and record each new fact on a chart posted in the classroom. This permanent placement allows children to study the environment throughout the school year.

“All I Need Is ... the Earth”

Read aloud the March 20th entry from *Diary of a Worm*, which includes “The earth gives us everything we need.” Ask students if they can explain this statement from a worm’s perspective. Use this discussion as a starting point for a lesson about our ecosystem. Explain to students that

the earthworm is responsible for healthy soil, which in turn is needed to grow healthy plants. Have students create a life-cycle wheel to show how different ecosystems relate to one another—worms contribute to the soil, which affects plant growth, which affects the food cycle for other animals. Use paper plates or oak tags cut into a circle to create the wheel.

“See Me in Action”

Turn students into scientists by creating a worm box in your classroom. Students will be able to observe the worms in their environment and record their findings in their science journals. Visit the website www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/worms for information about how to make a worm box.

“A Feast Fit for a Worm”

Ask students if they know what worms like to eat. As a class, brainstorm a list of items and record them on chart paper. Then have students research which items were correct and which were not. Divide the list into two columns: “Delicious” and “Yucky.” Student can then create a worm menu with items from the list.

“Long Worm, Short Worm, Stretched Worm”

Worms come in all different sizes and lengths. Bring in a bag of gummy worms for students to measure. The students can work in groups and record the findings in a science journal. Measure the worms as is. Ask students to make predictions as to the new length once the gummy worm is stretched to full capacity. Cut the gummy worms into varying lengths and repeat the activity.

“Worm Crawl”

In *Diary of a Worm*, the worm characters do the hokey pokey. The only body part that they can put in (i.e. “you put your left foot in ...”) is their heads! Ask children to think about which other animals move similarly to worms. Then discuss some other ways that animals move—slithering, jumping, crawling, etc. As a writing lesson, teach students about nouns and verbs, and write phrases to describe different animal movements (either as a group or individually). For example, snakes slither, cats stretch, dogs run, etc. As an extension activity, do the hokey pokey by making the different animal movements that students have brainstormed.

“Journaling Fun”

Many students practice their writing by keeping a journal at school and/or at home. Use selections from *Diary of a Worm* to discuss different ways of recording information—sentences, numbered lists, photographs, illustrations, and so on. Encourage students to use various techniques in their own journals.

“Diary of a ...”

Ask the students to choose a favorite animal and to write diary passages from that animal’s perspective. Read select passages from *Diary of a Worm* and call attention to the humor in the book. Look at the July 29th entry and as a group, name all the funny things that you see (for example, Dr. D. Kay name tag). Discuss different styles of writing and ask students to include humor in their animal diary writing. Suggested writing topics can include:

- What does the animal eat?
- How does the animal move?
- What is the animal's living environment?
- How does the animal's size compare to people, buildings, etc.?

“A Picture Tells a Thousand Words”

Spend some time as a group looking at the photos and captions on the endpapers of *Diary of a Worm*. Introduce the concept of setting and discuss why the photo of the worm's family vacation to “Compost Island” is so funny. Bring in old magazines and have students cut out images of different animals and places. Next have students match an animal to a setting different from its natural environment, and then write a caption to describe the unusual location.

“Wiggly Worm Bank”

Cut writing paper and brown construction paper in a worm pattern. As a creative-writing exercise, have students write and illustrate their own version of *Diary of a Worm* on the worm-shaped paper. Use the construction paper for the front and back covers.

“Noodle Necklace”

The worm characters in *Diary of a Worm* make macaroni necklaces. Purchase various shapes of pastas. Prepare for this activity by dyeing the pasta beforehand, using a food coloring and vinegar soak. Have students sort the pasta in a variety of ways (e.g. color, shape). Introduce the idea of patterning to students and have them make stringed necklaces in a pattern of their choice.