

[Carl and The Meaning of Life](#) Lessons & Activities

by Deborah Freedman

Learn more about Deborah, her books, and find more teaching resources at www.deborahfreedman.net

Twitter @DeborahFreedman • FB @deborah.freedman.author.illustrator • Instagram @freedmanillustrates



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CARL AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

Earthworms: Activities for PreK—K

Hands-on

- What is mud?
- Paint outside with mud
- Dig for worms

Arts & Crafts

- **Finger paint.** Make Carl's tunnel and once painting is dry, glue on worms (of paper, cooked spaghetti, or yarn).
- **Paint with worms,** using cooked (& slightly oiled) spaghetti.
- **Make a worm stage.** Paint, draw, or collage (with shredded paper, dried leaves) on a paper plate, and then poke hole for finger to act as the worm.
- **Make worm puzzles.** Cut a large, curvy, paper worm into "segments" and have the children put it back together.

Math

- **Make shapes with worms,** using yarn, cooked pasta, paper, pipe cleaners or gummy worms.

Science

- **Observe,** ask questions, & describe. Make a list of observations.
- **Make a book** with each child contributing different worm observations and drawings.
- **What do worms eat?** Discuss, and then experiment with real worms.
- **Worm observation jar**—in a 2 liter plastic soda bottle or glass jar, layer dirt & sand. Cover jar with black paper and over time, see earthworms churn the soil.
- Learn about "Squirmin' Herman" and the body of the worm. From University of Illinois Extension, "The Adventures of Herman the Worm"—
<https://web.extension.illinois.edu/worms/>

Snack Time!

- Worms & Dirt—mashed chocolate cookies or graham crackers, chocolate pudding, & gummy worms
- Worm foods, like lettuce, etc.
- Mash chocolate cookies in a baggie & add a gummy worm, raisins
- Muffins or cupcakes topped with cookie crumbs & a worm

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Earthworms: Lesson Ideas

STEAM Activities

- **Science**
 - **Observe** worms outside and take notes on their behavior, using specific, descriptive words.
 - Watching Worms: **worm observation jar** experiment—
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/nrcs144p2_037379.pdf
 - Start a **compost bin**.
 - **Compare Soils**: Plant seeds in two different kinds of soil — rich and not. Watch them grow. Is there a difference?
 - **Edible soil project**: in a clear cup, create soil layers using foods like mini marshmallows, cheerios, ground chocolate cookies or graham crackers, chocolate pudding. Add gummy worms!
- **Math**
 - **How many worms long?** Create your own worm measuring unit (using yarn, cooked pasta, paper, or gummy worms), and measure things around your home or classroom using your worm.
- **Art**
 - **Draw a flow chart** to show how the animals in the story are connected.*
 - **Make a poster** showing the things you can do with your family or class to help the earth.
 - **What do worms eat?** Draw a picture or poster.
 - **Underground mural**: with the entire class and a roll of kraft paper, paint, draw or collage the underground environment of the worm. Add worm facts.
 - Make a **bookworm bookmark**.

Questions & Writing Prompts

- Read the Author's Note and answer its final question, *How do you help the earth?*
- Observe creatures outside. Is there one that makes you wonder, *why do you do that?* Read nonfiction about that animal, and then write a fictional or non-fiction story.

Community Outreach

- Work together as a class or family to do a small action that has big consequences, like recycling, picking up trash outside*, or planting a garden.
- Celebrate and promote Earth Day.

*Thanks for these ideas from <http://books4learning.blogspot.com/2020/04/carl-and-meaning-of-life-deborah.html>

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Earthworms: Resources

Other Activities

- Draw the segments on Carl, using the coloring page attached.
- Label the different parts of Carl's body.

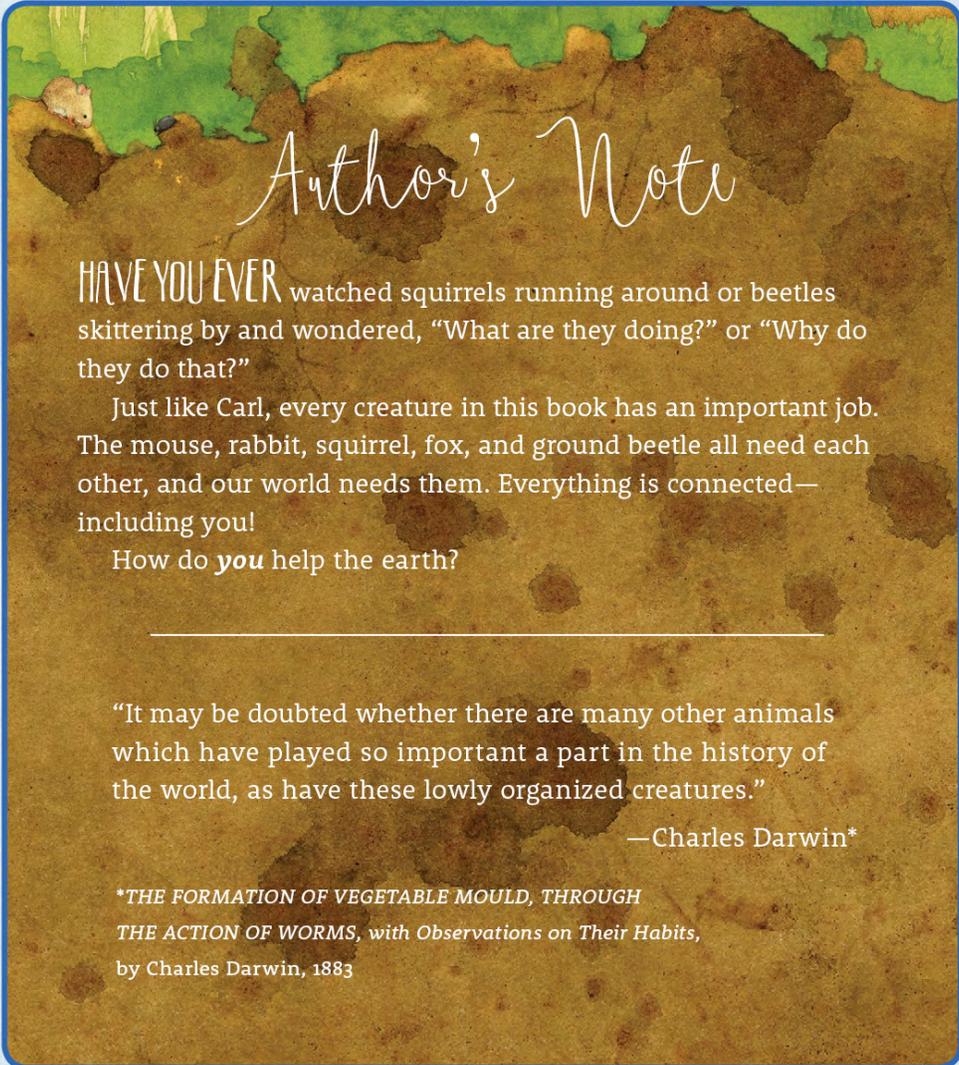
Further Reading

- Read non-fiction books about earthworms
- Read non-fiction books about the environment
- Picturebooks About **Gardens & Natural Spaces** — <https://seedlings.libib.com/i/prek-gardens-and-natural-spaces> (from the Seedlings Educators Collaborative)
- A few books I like about how **everything is connected** — <https://www.deborahfreedman.net/news/2019/4/22/everything-is-connected>
- Picturebooks **about worms** —

Resources for Educators

- "Engaging Young Learners in the Practices of Science – Starting with Questions about Earthworms" + resources and suggested reading about earthworms from The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA)— <https://www.nsta.org/blog/engaging-young-learners-practices-science-starting-questions-about-earthworms>
- Learn about earthworms from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service— https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/features/?cid=nrcs143_021958
- University of Illinois Extension, "The Adventures of Herman the Worm"— <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/worms/>



A watercolor illustration of a cross-section of soil. The top layer is green, representing grass or moss. Below it is a layer of brown soil. A small mouse is visible on the left side, partially buried in the soil. The background is a light blue sky with soft, wispy clouds.

Author's Note

HAVE YOU EVER watched squirrels running around or beetles skittering by and wondered, “What are they doing?” or “Why do they do that?”

Just like Carl, every creature in this book has an important job. The mouse, rabbit, squirrel, fox, and ground beetle all need each other, and our world needs them. Everything is connected—including you!

How do **you** help the earth?

“It may be doubted whether there are many other animals which have played so important a part in the history of the world, as have these lowly organized creatures.”

—Charles Darwin*

**THE FORMATION OF VEGETABLE MOULD, THROUGH
THE ACTION OF WORMS, with Observations on Their Habits,
by Charles Darwin, 1883*

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CARL AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

Word Search

Do you know all of these words?

ALAS

AWAITS

BARREN

BLOSSOM

BURROW

CASTING

DECLARE

DIGEST

FEAST

FLUFFY

HUNT

KITS

LURE

PUSH ON

SILENT

SNIFFLE

STARTLED

TRUNDLE

TUNNEL

Find them hidden in the puzzle, → ↓ and ↘.

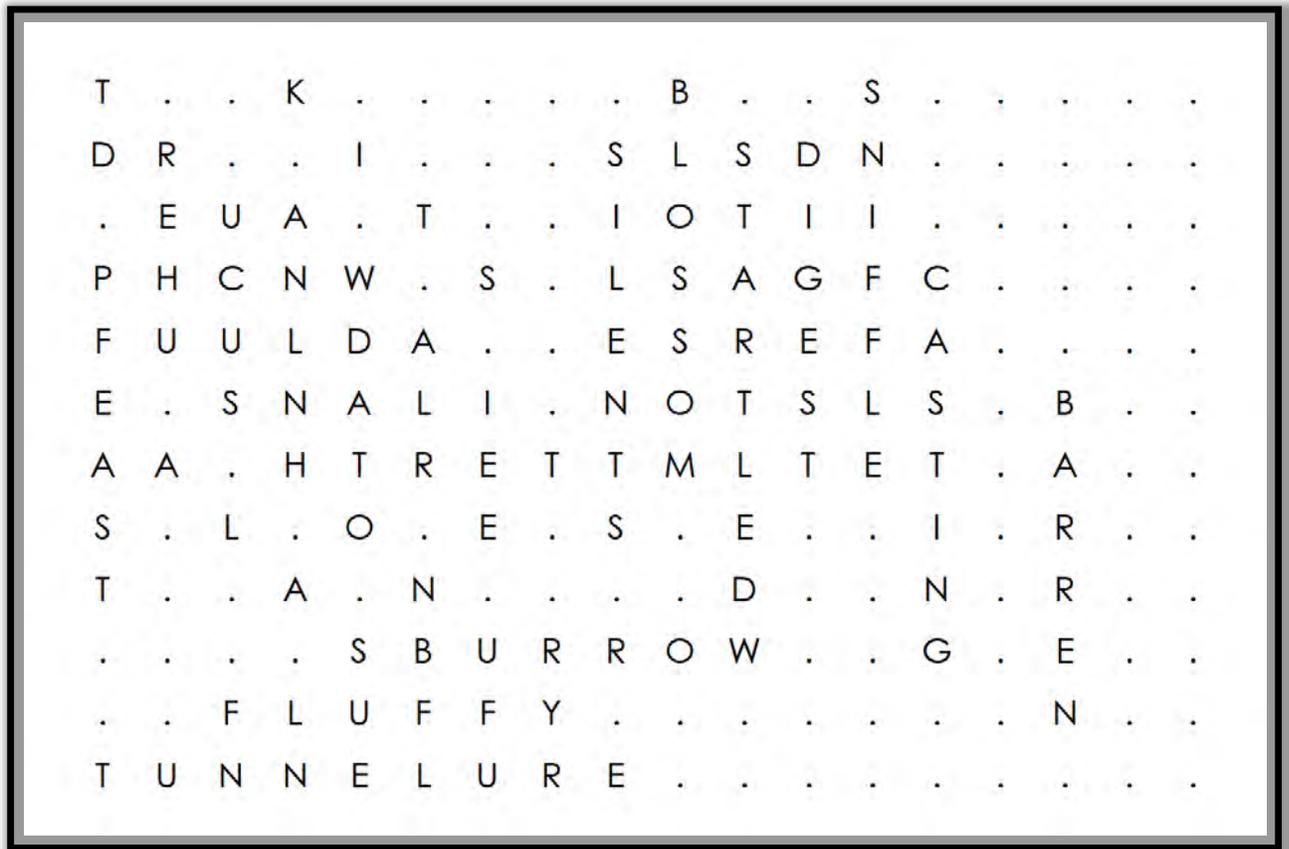


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Solution:

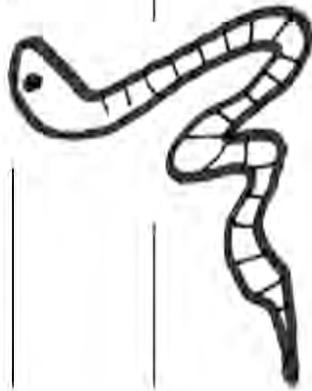


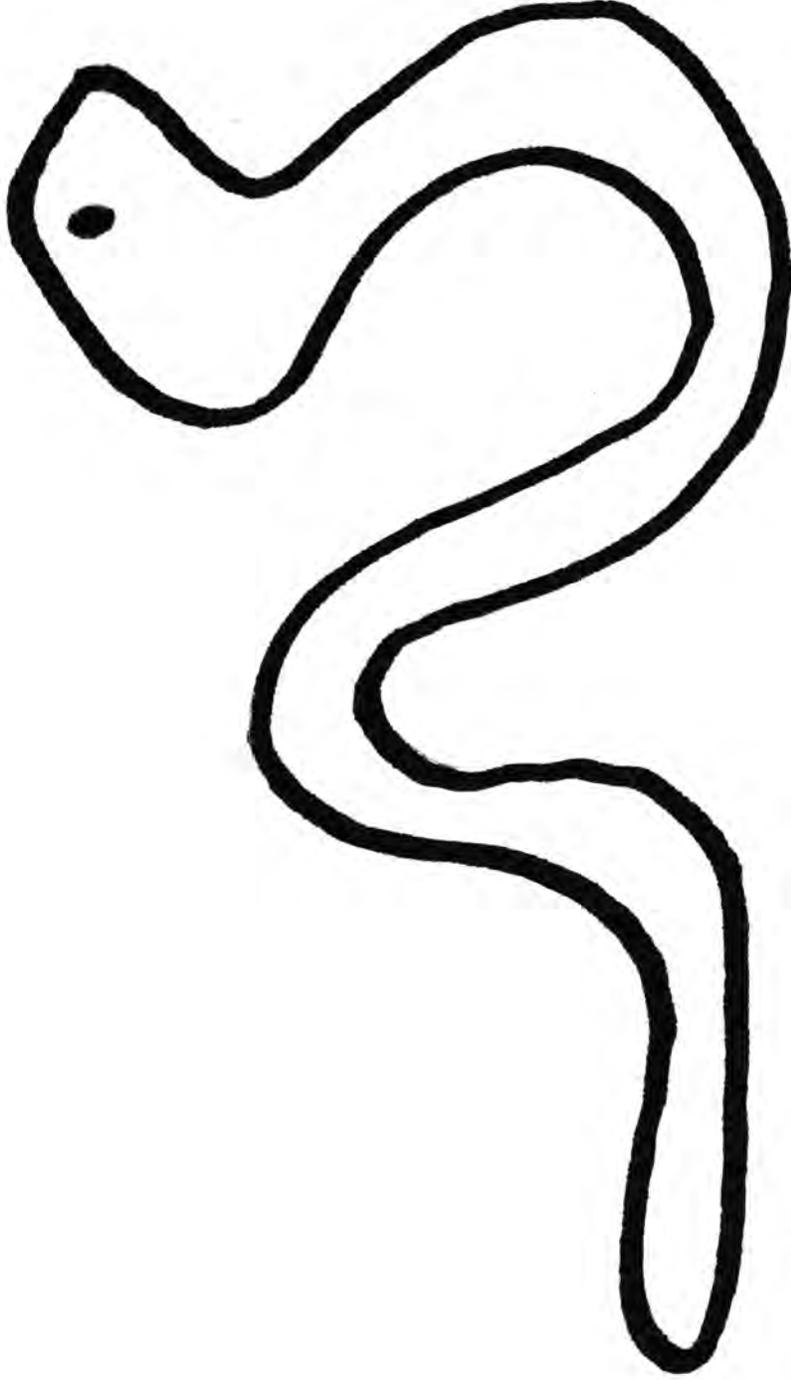
Puzzle created using the Word Search Generator on www.superteacherworksheets.com.

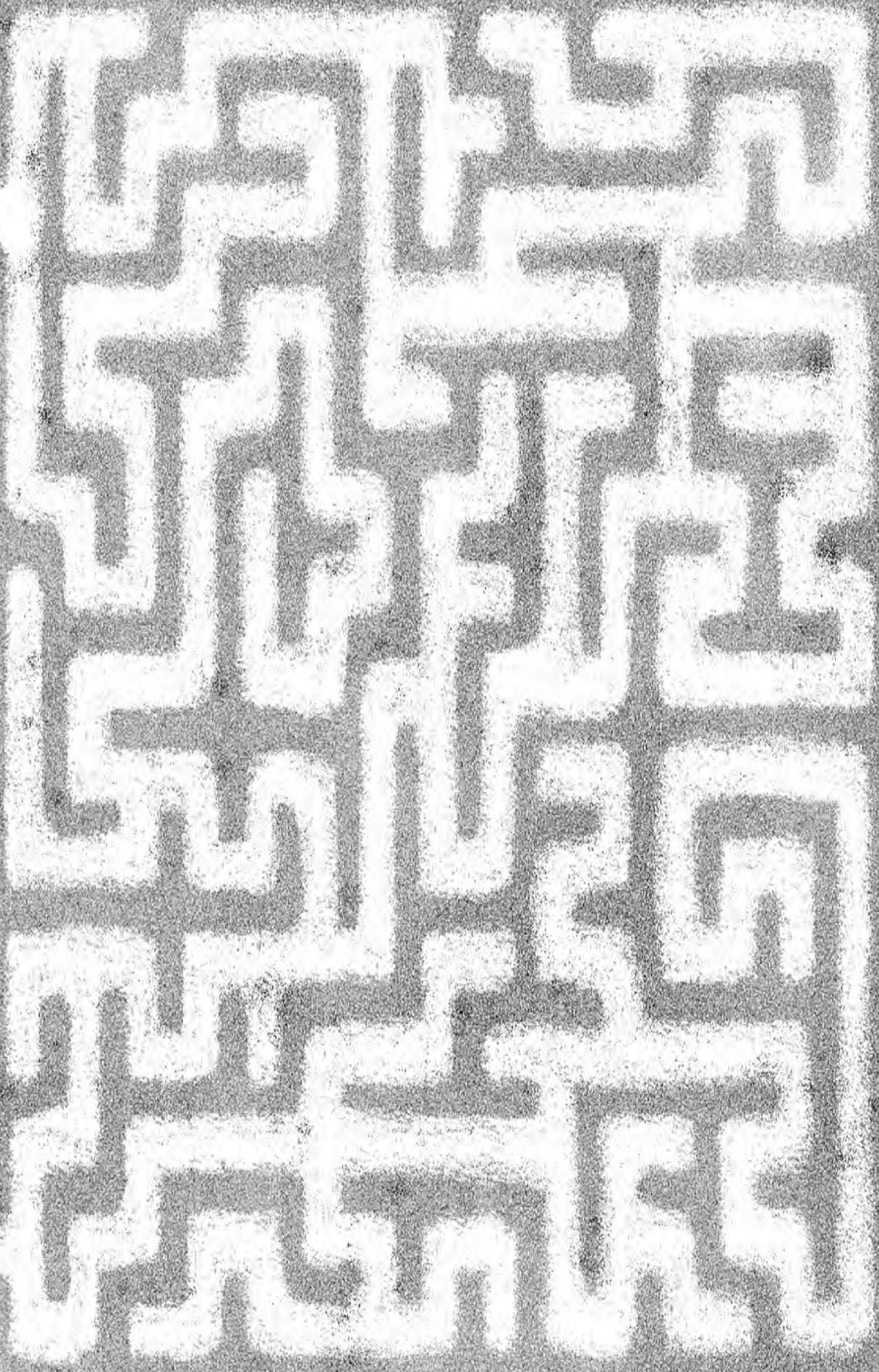
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