Yucky Worms by Vivian French, illustrated by Jessica Ahlberg (Walker)

You can’t be FRIENDS with an earthworm...You can’t even tell WHICH end is which! OR CAN you?

But there’s more to these lowly creatures than meets the eye. With the help of this book, rich in a variety of narrative and non-fiction text, children are invited to find out where worms live, see how they move, and understand why gardeners consider them friends. This is a humorous and informative look at an unappreciated - and fascinating – creature, challenging our ideas about worms and inspiring children to find out more. Ahlberg’s illustrations beautifully support children’s understanding and add to the humourous tone; an enjoyable read and wonderful introduction to our much maligned earthworm.

Overall learning aims of this teaching sequence.

- To write for meaning and purpose in a variety of non-narrative forms.
- To know where information can be found in non-fiction texts
- To know that information can be retrieved from a variety of sources
- To use talk to give explanations and opinions
- To listen to books attentively and respond to what their have heard
- To identify some of the features of non-fiction texts
- To talk to reflect on past experiences
- To sustain relevant listening, responding to what they have heard with relevant comments and questions
- To use vocabulary influenced by books
- To enjoy an increasing range of books

This teaching sequence is designed for a Nursery or Reception class.

Overview of this teaching sequence.
This teaching sequence is approximately 3 weeks long if spread out over a series of sessions. Many of the sessions can be taught in small groups as focus activities whilst other sessions could work with larger groups, depending on your children. The book is an amusing and memorable read and children will enjoy sharing the book and talking about the story together.

Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework 2012:

Prime Area: Communication and Language
Listening and attention:
Listen attentively in a range of situations;
Listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions;
Give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity.

Understanding:
Follow instructions involving several ideas or actions;
Answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events;

Speaking:
Express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners’ needs;
Use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future;
Develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.

Specific Area: Literacy
Reading:
Read and understand simple sentences;
Use phonics knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately;
Read some common irregular words;
Demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read.

Writing:
Use phonics knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds;
Write some irregular common words.
Write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others.
Spell some words correctly and make phonetically plausible attempts at others.

Cross Curricular Links:
Understanding the World:
- Investigate and research earthworms; their habitat, behaviour, physical features, food and predators;
- investigate and compare earthworms and garden minibeasts. Explore why some animals are good for our garden and some are not;
- create a wormery or worm farm and make careful observations over a period of time
• Talk about how we feel about, treat and care for animals.

Expressive Arts and Design:
• Make worms from salt dough or clay and paint in various shades;
• make worm sock puppets with brown socks with googly eyes;
• make a storybox of an underground setting;
• create worm tracks with string, wool or cooked spaghetti dipped in paint and trailed or wriggled along paper.

Physical Development:
• Move along the floor and through tunnels and courses like a worm;
• use playdough to make a diverse range of earthworms;
• make provision for malleable play with cooked, coloured spaghetti or jelly worms (set in straws);
• sing worm songs, such as Wiggly Woo, with finger actions.

Mathematics:
• Use positional language to describe where the worm is;
• how long is your worm? Gather some things that are the same length as a worm. Sort worms by length;
• counting worms in the wormery, flower bed or bird’s beak; one more, one less;
• addition problems using worm friends, e.g. Worm invited 5 friends to stay and then 2 more came, how many altogether;
• subtraction problems using worms and birds, e.g. Bird caught 9 worms for her young. She ate 2 of them. How many were left?

Technology:
• Use the Internet and other to find out more and to look more closely at what worms are like;
• demonstrate how technology can be employed to enhance our experience and understanding of the earthworms we find, e.g. show the class an earthworm through a digital microscope plugged in to a computer or the IWB or show footage taken with a digital camera.

Ideas for Continuous Provision:

Reading Area:
• Turn the book corner into a worm’s underground habitat. Involve the children in setting it up, creating dark cosy spaces, allusions to tunnels and undergrowth. Place a worm toy inside for children to read with and have a ‘Worm’s book of the week’ display to feature other worm stories, poetry and non-fiction books.

Fiction:
– ‘Superworm’ by Julia Donaldson
– ‘Worms (Dirty Bertie)’ by Alan MacDonald
– ‘Diary of a Worm’ by Doreen Cronin
– ‘Don't Poke a Worm Till it Wriggles’ by Celia Warren
– ‘Eddie’s Garden: and How to Make Things Grow’ by Sarah Garland
– ‘Grandpa’s Garden’ by Stella Fry and Sheila Moxley

Non-fiction:
– ‘Wonderful Worms’ by Linda Glaser
– ‘The Worm (Disgusting Critters)’ by Elise Gravel
– ‘Wiggling Worms at Work (Let’s-Read-and-Find-Out Science 2)’ by Wendy Pfeffer and Steve Jenkins

Listening Area:
• Provide the children with worm songs, stories, poems and rhymes to listen to and take to heart

Mark making/ writing:
• Write friendly messages or thank you cards to the worms;
• label worm diagrams;
• provide a display board for children to add their own work as they produce it. In the centre of the board draw a large worm so that later the children will be able to label the parts of a worm e.g. head, tail, cast, hearts, etc.;
• create a worm fact display. Provide some worm-shaped paper or post-its so that children can write any worm facts that they find out at home or through further investigation. Encourage children to get their parents to write any facts on the board that they may know to add to the display.
• encourage children to work together to create an underground scene on large pieces of paper. Invite children to come up and draw pictures of things that they would expect to see underground. Encourage children to talk about
what they are drawing and use a variety of mark making equipment. Try playing music or underground sound effects (squelching, scraping, etc.) and ask the children to listen to the sounds as they make their marks.

**Small world play:**
- Create underground and garden minibeast small worlds;
- make underground storyboxes for the children to play with in small groups – encourage parental involvement.

**Role play:**
- Children could pretend to be scientists and presenters on nature programmes as well as being birds and the underground animals and worms themselves.
- children could re-enact stories read aloud to them about worms and other garden minibeasts and animals.

**Website Links:**
- The Amazing World of Earthworms in the UK – BBC Two Springwatch: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZHTerQJYMA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZHTerQJYMA)
- Minibeast Adventure with Jess - Worm – CBeebies - How to make a wormery (6:27): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sa1RmloQooc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sa1RmloQooc)

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**Teaching Sessions:**

**Before beginning this book:**
- Gather a number of photographs, video clips, information books, posters and leaflets about worms. Collect together sticks, pebbles, soil, vegetation and other resources so that children will be able to create underground worlds.
- Make a class journal in paper or on the interactive whiteboard to capture the talk and the activities that the class create around worms.
- Put together a collection of story and information texts about worms for the children to browse and read together and display them along with magnifying glasses and other observational tools - perhaps create a ‘bug hunt’ kit together that the children can use and maintain which includes useful texts to reference.

**Responding to illustration and debate and argument:**

- What do we think about worms?
- Children enjoy an increasing range of books
- Children use talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events
- Children can listen and respond to ideas expressed by others in conversation or discussion

- Begin by talking with the children about first double spread illustration after the title page where the boy looks horrified at Gran holding the worm. At this point the illustration should be shown without text and the worm concealed with a question mark (see resources).
  - **Who is the boy…the woman?**
  - **Where do you think they are? What are they doing there?**
  - **What is the boy thinking or saying? Why is he pulling that face? Can you pull that face?**
  - **What is she holding in her hand? Why do you think that? How would you feel?**
- Ask the children to freeze frame the scene in pairs, eliciting ideas about each of the characters thoughts and what they might be saying. Ask some children to voice this and scribe ideas on thought or speech bubbles around the illustration.
- Slowly reveal the worm in Gran’s hand and gauge the children’s reactions if you do so. Invite comments and responses. Discuss how the children feel about worms:
  - Are worms yucky or not yucky?
- Discuss how the children feel, asking them to justify their responses. They might begin to use words to describe the feel or the movement of worms which can be expanded upon. They might know something of the benefits of worms and their role. Collect children’s thoughts together in a comparison chart:

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<th>We like worms because….</th>
<th>We don’t like worms because….</th>
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- Provide the children with a worm shape with their name on it and invite them to place their worm on the ‘Scale of Yuckiness’. They can change the position throughout the sequence if their opinions change. This will provide a stimulus for further discussion and debate as the weeks pass.

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<thead>
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<th>Scale of Yuckiness</th>
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<tr>
<td>Not yucky</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Very yucky</td>
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Drawing and annotating: What do we know about earthworms?
- Children can comment and ask questions about aspects of their familiar world such as the natural world
- Prepare and read aloud a letter from an unappreciated earthworm to the class telling the children that it doesn’t want people thinking it is yucky anymore and asking the children to find the real facts about how wonderful worms can be. Have the worm ask them to share these facts with other people – spread the word: worms are wonderful.
- With the children’s help draw a large worm on a display board and around the outside of the drawing write everything the children already know about worms.
- Inside the drawing write all the questions they would like to find answers to. They might ask: What do worms eat? What are baby worms like? How can you tell which end is which?
- This display can act as a working wall upon which the children will also be able draw on this chart as a word bank in their own independent writing as well as adding to as the sequence progresses.

Reading aloud and Book Talk: Introducing and responding to the story in the book
- Children listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions
- Read aloud the whole story to the end.
- Talk with children about their initial responses to this story, using ‘Book Talk’.
  - What did you like about it? What didn’t you like? Did anything puzzle you? What have you found out
- Scribe their comments as shared writing into a ‘Book Talk’ chart in class journal and add any new information onto the large worm display, noting any questions that have already been answered.
- Invite the children, parents and any class visitors to research worms further and add to the working wall.

Response to a range of texts - ‘How to be a Wormologist!’
- Children can talk about some of the things they have observed such as plants, animals, natural and found objects
- Children demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read
- Remind the children that we have found things out from a story in the book. How else can we find things out. Elicit ideas and jot down suggestions.
- Explain that this book has got both a story as well as some facts written about worms on each page. Show the children one of the double page spreads and invite them to find facts presented in different ways, like diagrams,
speech bubbles or captions. Show the children the author’s note to her readers about the different types of print to look out for (above the index on the final page). Read aloud the last double page spread to the children, ‘How to be a Wormologist’.

- Discuss how we might go about becoming Wormologists and preparing for our Worm Hunt.
- Watch ‘The Amazing World of Earthworms in the UK’ (BBC Two Springwatch): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZHTerOJYMA to learn more about earthworms in the UK with a leading wormologist.

### Drawing on real experiences, shared and group reading and writing: Worm hunt

- **Children can talk about some of the things they have observed such as plants, animals, natural and found objects**
- **Children know that information can be retrieved from books and computers**

- With the help of the children design and prepare worm hunt kits prior to this session. The kits might be equipped with magnifying glasses, paper, crayons and other writing materials, digital cameras, containers for collecting worms and simple texts and images about worms, such as fact files for reference, and a kit checklist.
- **Go on a worm hunt in the outdoor environment:**
  - *Where do the worms live?*
  - *What are they doing?*
  - *How are they moving?*
  - *How do they feel?*

- **Draw out and model the descriptive language and vocabulary used by Vivian French in the book.**
- **Refer to what the children remember from the story as well as making explicit reference to the additional non-fiction text in the book that provides us with worm facts.**
- **Model using the index to find answers to the children’s questions more swiftly.**
- **Use the Internet and other age-appropriate non-fiction texts to find out more and to look more closely at what worms are like, such as:**
  - ‘Wonderful Worms’ by Linda Glaser
  - ‘The Worm (Disgusting Critters)’ by Elise Gravel
  - ‘Wiggling Worms at Work (Let’s-Read-and-Find-Out Science 2)’ by Wendy Pfeffer and Steve Jenkins
- **Demonstrate how technology can be employed to enhance our experience and understanding of the earthworms we find, e.g. show the class an earthworm through a digital microscope plugged in to a computer or the IWB or show footage taken with a digital camera.**

### Following instructions, drawing and annotating: How to make a wormery

- **Children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions**
- **Children use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future**

- **Re-read/re-run and discuss the required resources and steps we need to take. Talk with partners and take notes in the class journal.**
- **With the children’s help, gather and check the resources and begin to follow the instructions. You will need to take a tablet or laptop to watch to video outside as you make the wormery.**
- **Provide a digital camera for the children to record each step. This may need modelling.**
- **When the wormery is finished, take about what we did and how the children found the task. What else do we need? Leave a Wormery log book for the children to record observations through drawing and annotation. Leave occasional notes from the unappreciated worm asking them to respond, perhaps prompting them to find a specific fact or encouraging them in their quest to make him/her better understood.**

### Writing instructions: How to make a wormery

- **Children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners’ needs**
- **Children answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events**

- **Show the children the finished wormery and explain that there are children in another class who would like to learn**
how to make a wormery. How can we help them? If they didn’t have internet access what would we do? Elicit ideas about how we could instruct them? What if we weren’t there to teach them?

- Once the need to record in writing has been established, discuss what we would need to tell the other children. Talk about and recount what we did, recasting sentences orally to include useful time markers and other adverbial phrases.
- Through shared writing, model writing a set of instructions – ‘How to make a wormery’ – using the photographs taken as a stimulus for oral rehearsal and writing each step. Mirror the adverbial phrases used in the recount and model the explicit use of imperatives, demonstrating the difference between ‘bossy’ (but helpful!) instructions, telling the children what to do for themselves rather than telling them what we did, how it felt, etc. Ensure that the instructions are presented clearly and ask a group of children to take them to that class as a present.
- Read a thank you card from the unappreciated worm for passing information on to others who might not understand him.

Word collecting, visualising through artwork, movement and dance, and reading aloud: Being worms

- Children can use language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations
- Children can use talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events
- Children can attempt to write short sentences in meaningful contexts

- Play some footage of worms in action, including any taken by the children themselves. As the children watch, ask them to sketch the worms using shades of red, brown, yellow, cream and orange chalk pastels on dark brown or black paper.
- Play again, this time asking the children to tall each other words or phrases that come to mind to describe the worms. Jot down the children’s oral descriptions on strips of paper and share with the class, noting the onomatopoeic quality of lots of the words and how they enhance the meaning and imagery.
- Provide ribbon (or strips of fabric in varying widths) in similar colours to the chalk. Ask the children to co-ordinate themselves in small groups to move themselves and the ribbons around the floor and each other as if they were worms.
- Play appropriate music and support the children in choreographing their worm dances.
- As the groups to perform to the class, invite children to discuss anything they liked about the worm dances, offering suggestions as to how they could be enhanced.
- Elicit and model descriptive language and scribe on further strips. Display al the strips together as a list and read aloud to the class, talking about how all these words and phrases sound together, i.e. the poetic quality. Read again as a poem, emphasising onomatopoeic words by modelling appropriate intonation in the performance. The children might join in if they recognise their contributions or remember particular phrases.

Shared writing and performance: Composing a worm poem

- Children answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events
- Children attempt to write short sentences in meaningful contexts

- Read the children ‘Today I saw a little worm’ from Spike Milligan’s collection of poetry ‘Silly Verse for Kids’:

  Today I saw a little worm
  wriggling on its belly
  perhaps he’d like to come inside
  and see what’s on the telly?

- Encourage responses to the poem: What did you like about it? What didn’t you like about it? Why? How did the worm move? Re-read the poem. Can you ‘wriggle on your belly? How else could the worm move? Encourage the children to demonstrate their ideas and collect suggested words, (recasting to eventually replace ‘wriggling’) e.g. “squirm” to ‘squirming’,

- Shared read the printed poem, encouraging the children to spot the word ‘wriggle’ if they can. Hide the word and ask the children to suggest alternatives, such as replacing ‘wriggling’ with ‘slithering’.

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- Shared read the new poem together, encouraging the children to join in as they begin to learn the poem by heart.
- Support the children in making various substitutions and extend with ideas about what the worm might do when it comes inside instead of watching the telly.
- Children can illustrate each of their new poems to be published in a class poetry book. This can be placed in the reading corner for the children to enjoy.
- Children can visit the reading corner or the library to browse the poetry books, looking for worm poems that they can add to a class anthology.

Researching worms: Reading non-fiction texts and observation
- Children can talk about some of the things they have observed such as plants, animals, natural and found objects;
- Children know that information can be retrieved from books and computers

- Put together a collection of information and storybooks about worms and other creepy crawlies for children to look at, read and talk about. This will be a useful collection to draw on both in reading aloud sessions and for children to choose from when taking books home.
- Provide a variety of resources nearby that children can use to draw or write about anything of interest they find out.
- Make a regular time for children to talk to the class about anything that they have discovered for themselves or would like to draw other children’s attention to.

Shared writing: Information writing
- Children attempt to write short sentences in meaningful contexts
- Children develop their own explanations by connecting ideas or events

- Write a class book about worms in shared and group writing, adding a new page each day about something that the children have observed or found out.
- Children can illustrate each page using a variety of media.
- More experienced writers should go on to write their own information books using homemade books.
- When finished these should be shared with the class and put into the book corner for everyone to enjoy.

Book-making: Publishing information booklets, poetry anthologies or instruction manuals
- Children attempt to write short sentences in meaningful contexts
- Children can answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events

- Make individual homemade books in which children should draw and write their own versions of ‘Yucky Worms’, perhaps changing the title to ‘Wonderful Worms’ to please our unappreciated worm.
- Show children how to draw a worm and attach it by ribbon to the book so that the children can move it in and out of the book as they read their work to each other and anyone else that might need convincing about earthworms.

Shared Writing: Letter to the unappreciated worm
- Children develop their own explanations by connecting ideas or events
- Children attempt to write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others.

- Re-read the letter and messages from the unappreciated worm. How do we feel about worms now? Discuss how the class ‘Scale of Yuckiness’ compares to the first session.
- Have we done what it asked? Refer to the working wall display. Have we answered our questions? How did we find out about earthworms? What did we have to do? Jot down contributions in the class journal under the title ‘Guide to Wormology’. Congratulate the children on becoming wonderful wormologists!
- Shared write a letter to our worm reassuring him how much we have found out and how we feel about earthworms now.
- Children can write their own letters to the worm or to people they know that need convincing about Earthworms. An
outdoor postbox could be prepared in which to post the letters.

Other ideas and Activities:

Phonological Awareness:

1) Word collection:
   Make collections of the words that describe the movement, features and appearance of worms: slinky, slimy, slithery, wiggly, slow, vanishing, yucky, squirmly, wriggly, pointy, rounded, long, curly, bristly, ridged, pushing, weird.
   Act these out so that children know and understand their meaning.

2) Use and Application of Phonics at Phases 2-4:
   Phase 2 words:
   dug, dig, end, can, put, bits, rot, bed, big, not, get, lots, but, cut, wet, tip, did, sun, nod, tap
   Phase 3 words:
   fox, yes, finish, them, back, yucky, yuck, check, pick, long, things, rotting, off, tell, well, pull, kill, tail, see, seed, keep, feel, too, poo, cool, food, roots, rain, right, might, soil, now, arm, park, garden, for, sort, fork, hurt, turn, air, ear, near, hear
   Phase 4 words:
   Gran, grass, skin, brain, crop, grit, frogs, slugs, snack, sticking, strong, slither, trick, insects, bent, point, end, left, help, under, just, think, best, list, wink, thump, landing, flower, flowerbed, sunflower, seedling
   Regional Pronunciation:
   The following words are considered Phase 5 as the ‘a’ has an alternative pronunciation of /ar/. However, its pronunciation remains /a/, and therefore Phase 4, with when taught in some regions:
   after, plants, ask, fast

3) High Frequency Words:
   a, i, in, up, it, is, as, of, the, and, had, be, does, but, like, you, into, do, why, are, my, their, that, then, them, for, now, down, so, her, him, his, said, they, she, me, look, we, was, with, will, what, when, one, little, out, have, come, some, there

4) Rhythm and Rhyme:
   Sing and explore the actions for the song Wiggly Woo... You could also make up new descriptions for the things that your worm does, e.g.
   There’s a worm at the bottom of my garden
   And her name is Slithery Sue
   There’s a worm at the bottom of my garden
   And all that she can do is
   slither all night
   And Slither all day
   The people round here they all do say
   There’s a worm at the bottom of my garden
   And her name is Slithery Sue