

Name _____



The Wonderful World of Worms

Worms are fascinating creatures that play an important role in the environment. Though they might not look very exciting, worms are some of the hardest-working animals on Earth. They can be found in soil, water, and even inside other animals, depending on their type.

The most common worm people know about is the earthworm. Earthworms have long, soft, tube-like bodies with no legs or bones. They are covered in tiny bristles that help them move through the soil. Earthworms can grow from a few inches to several feet long, depending on the species.

One of the most important jobs of earthworms is improving soil health. As they burrow through the ground, they create tunnels that allow air and water to reach plant roots. Worms also eat organic matter, like dead leaves, and break it down into nutrients. Their waste, called worm castings, enriches the soil and helps plants grow.

Worms don't have eyes, but they can sense light and vibrations. This helps them avoid predators like birds and frogs. They also breathe through their skin, which must stay moist for them to survive. That's why you often see worms on the surface after it rains—they're avoiding drowning in waterlogged soil.

Not all worms are as helpful as earthworms. Some, like parasitic worms, live inside other animals and can cause harm. These worms, such as tapeworms and roundworms, survive by taking nutrients from their hosts. Scientists study these worms to understand how to prevent and treat the diseases they cause.

Worms are more than just small, wiggly creatures. They help keep our ecosystems balanced and teach us about life in unique ways. Whether they're enriching the soil or helping scientists solve problems, worms are essential to life on Earth.