

My Worm House

by Julie Ellis

photographs by Adrian Heke

Overview

In this procedural text, a child describes how she prepared a house for some wriggly, squiggly worms. The photographs, the list on the inside back cover and a link to a *School Journal* article could lead on to further study. The subtle text changes throughout this book provide opportunities to observe children's use of visual and syntactic information. There is an audio version of this text on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong* 2003.

Curriculum links: science (the living world), technology (production and process): recycling

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the repeated high-frequency words “a”, “for”, “got”, “I”, “my”, “some”
- the repeated initial letters “f” – “food”, “for”; “m” – “made”, “my”; and “s” – “soil”, “some”
- the rhyming adjectives “squiggly” and “wiggly”
- the silent “w” in “wiggly”
- the plural noun “worms”
- the repetitive text structure but with subtle text changes from page to page
- the technical terms “straw” and “soil”
- the illustrated worms wriggling about on each page
- the labelled list on the inside back cover
- the way the child is directly addressing the reader.

Setting the scene

Familiarise yourself with the *School Journal* article (Part 1 Number 2, 2002) so that you can answer the children's questions. Have an ice cream container with soil and worms in it ready to show the children. (Release the worms back into the soil outside afterwards.) Watch the worms and talk about how they move. Draw out (or feed in) the words “wiggly” and “squiggly”. Introduce the idea that some people keep worms as pets. Tell the children that in this book, a girl is telling them how to make a worm house. Talk about what a worm house is.

This book introduces a number of technical terms and new ideas. It would be best to look through the book, talking about the process of building the worm house and introducing new vocabulary such as “soil” and “straw” before the reading. That gives children the background knowledge to draw upon when they are faced with the actual reading task. Examine the photograph on the cover. *What has the girl used to make her worm house? Identify the box, the soil, and the straw. Is there anything else? Let's read the book to find out.*

The first reading

Listen to the children read the title themselves, prompting them if necessary to cross-check using the visual information. *Who does the worm house belong to?* Draw out the idea that the girl is addressing the reader directly. Read the names of the author and the photographer.

Title page – Examine the photograph of the empty worm house. *Why does it have holes in it? Why does it need a lid?* Listen to the children read the title again.

Page 2 – Establish the pattern of the text by asking *What did she get first? What are the worms like?* Refer to the earlier discussion to recall the word “wriggly”. You may need to reassure the children about the silent “w” in this word. *This next word looks a lot like “wriggly”, but it starts differently.* Support the children with the articulation of “squ”. *It rhymes with “wriggly” but it starts with “squ” – what could it be?* Draw the children’s attention to the “wriggly, squiggly” worms decorating the other pages.

Work through the text, identifying the new element in each photograph. *What is she showing us on this page? Show me the word that says “box”? How do you know?* Listen to the children read the text to themselves, offering support as necessary. Observe how they manage the text changes from page to page. Encourage them to read rhythmically and expressively as they gain confidence with the repetitive structure.

Page 4 – *What do you think the straw is for?*

Page 5 – The children may say “dirt” instead of “soil”. *Could that word be right? How do you know?* Establish the idea that worms move away from the light, which is why they need to live in soil.

Page 6 – *What sort of food do you think worms eat?*

Page 8 – *What did she do?* Listen to the children read the text, observing their response to the text change from “got” to “made”.

Encourage the children to think critically. *Why do you think that she made a worm house?*

Read through the list on the inside back cover together.

Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children as they reread the text to themselves. Observe how they respond to the subtle changes in the text pattern and the strategies they use to work out the interest words.

Review any of the high-frequency words in the text that caused difficulty. Ask the children to find the word in the text then write it on the whiteboard. *Tell me the letters in the word “got”. Can you write it for me again?*

Find the words in the text that start with “f”, “m”, or “s”. Say the words together, emphasising the initial sound. List other words that start the same way.

Look closely at the rhyming words “wriggly” and “squiggly”. *How are these words the same? How are they different?* Briefly talk about the silent “w” in “wriggly”.

Examine the plural noun “worms”. *If I wanted to write about only one worm, what would I need to do to this word?*

Recall the items the girl needed to make her worm house. *Can you tell me without looking at the book?*

Find out what the children know about worm houses or worm farms. Talk about why worms are useful.

Suggestions for further activities

Enjoy the book and the CD at the listening post.

Read parts of “Worm Wise” by Jude Southee in *School Journal*, Part 1 Number 2, 2002 to the children.

Read the Ready to Read poem card *Noke*, which features a wriggly, squiggly worm.

Help the children to research answers to some of their questions about worms.

Make a worm house.

Visit a local worm farm.

Compare the worm house with other homes for pets.

Make a flow chart from the sequence of instructions.

Observe worms, then draw them. Keep in mind that worms should be exposed to light for only very short periods.