

Name: _____

The Farmer's Friend

By Guy Belleranti

I'm thinking of an animal. It has no arms. It has no legs. It has no teeth. It has no eyes and no ears. It has no nose. It has no lungs and no bones. What is it? It's an earthworm!



While an earthworm seems to be missing many common body parts that other animals have, they do have complex bodies.

Even without arms and legs, earthworms have the ability to move around underground. First, it uses tiny bristles (called setae) to grip the soil. Second, it uses sets of muscles to shorten or lengthen its segmented body as it burrows forward and sometimes even backward.

How many segments does an earthworm's body have? It's body can be divided into 150! The mouth is in the first segment. It eats as it burrows, pulling dirt and decaying plant matter into the mouth. This burrowing turns and aerates the soil.

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The hearts pump blood around the body. The brain connects with nerve cells that detect light, the vibrations of other animals, and even some tastes.

But how can an earthworm breathe without a nose and lungs? It breathes through its skin! An earthworm keeps its skin moist with a slimy substance called mucus. If the earthworm dries out it can't capture oxygen and will die. That's why it usually stays underground. However, after dark on a humid evening or after a late-day rain, earthworms sometimes come to the surface. That's when fishermen search for big earthworms, called night crawlers, to use as bait.

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1. Circle the body parts that an earthworm has.
Cross out the body parts that an earthworm does not have.

nose	skin	eyes	teeth	lungs	gizzard
hearts	brain	ears	mouth	intestine	muscles

2. Name two things mentioned in the article that are eaten by earthworms.

3. Why do earthworms die if their skin dries out?

4.  **PREVIEW**
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- a. in the afternoon, just before a rainstorm
- b. at night, after the lawn has been watered with a sprinkler
- c. in the evening, on a hot, dry summer day
- d. during the hottest part of the day, when there is less water in the soil

Explain why you chose the answer above.

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The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.



1. _____

r w r o b u s

hint: digs a tunnel through the ground

2. _____

g d z a z i r

hint: muscular stomach for grinding food

3. _____

e n t r i n u t s

hint: substances found in food that provide nourishment

4. _____



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5. _____

6. _____

m i h u d

hint: having lots of water vapor in the air

7. _____

c r f a s e u

hint: to rise to the top

ANSWER KEY

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1. Circle the body parts that an earthworm has.
Cross out the body parts that an earthworm does not have.

~~nose~~ (skin) ~~eyes~~ ~~teeth~~ (lungs) (gizzard)



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