

The Early Years Count **Literacy** Connection



Carl and the Meaning of Life

Written and illustrated by
Deborah Freedman

Preschool edition

Overview of Book

Carl is an earthworm who does typical earthworm things. Then he gets asked a question that shakes up his world: "Why? Why do you do that?" He embarks on a journey to discover his purpose and his impact on the earth. Deborah Freedman's soft illustrations and gentle approach to self-discovery make this a delightful read aloud.

Genre: Picture book

Vocabulary

Books are a rich source of words new to children. Here are some words from *Carl and the Meaning of Life* to introduce in your classroom:

digested	barren
burrowing	trundled
echo	casting

Each time you read the book, choose 2 or 3 words to highlight.

Use age-appropriate definitions and/or the illustrations to help children gain an understanding of each word's meaning.

Use these new words throughout the day, reminding the children, "That's a word from our story!"

Connecting with the HighScope Curriculum

COR Advantage 1.5

Approaches To Learning
Item B (*Problem solving
with materials*)

Language, Literacy and
Communication
Item L (*Speaking*)

Creative Arts
Item AA (*Pretend play*)

Science and Technology
Item DD (*Natural and
physical world*)
Item EE (*Tools and
technology*)

Reading Tips

Read slowly to make sure the children see the details in the pictures. As the story progresses, notice the landscape becoming more barren. You might ask, "Where are the grass and trees?" or, "Why can't the beetle find any grubs?" After the story ask, "How was everyone connected?" This will begin a discussion that can be revisited each time you read the book.

Three readings are recommended to familiarize children with the story. Each reading provides an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary words, pose open-ended questions, and engage children in activities that make the story "come alive."

At the end of each reading, display the book in the book area so children can read it on their own.

Throughout the Routine

Refer to the book throughout the day and use new vocabulary words in meaningful ways. Active engagement with the story helps the content come alive.

Move like Carl the earthworm for **Transitions**—wiggle, crawl, burrow, and tunnel.

Give children a supply of twist-ties, pipe cleaners and cotton balls at **Small Group Time**. Make pretend worms and fluffy soil.

Take a playground tour during **Outside Time**. Invite the children to look for where worms might be hiding (explore with eyes only). Take dictation of children's comments as they "search for Carl."

Around the Room

Highlight the book's content and build on the children's excitement in a variety of locations.

Start a worm composting for your classroom. See details at:
<https://www.wormcompostinghq.com/caring-for-worms/worm-composting-for-kids/>

Place soil in the **Sand and Water Area**. Add worm counters, animals, trowels and cups.

Add additional worm books to the **Book Area**. Two examples are *Diary of a Worm* by Doreen Cronin and *Inch By Inch* by Leo Lionni.

Open-ended Questions

Enhance active engagement and early critical thinking skills by asking open-ended questions. These questions encourage children to explain why or how things happen, make predictions, or brainstorm possibilities rather than give one "right" answer.

Here are some questions you might ask for *Carl and the Meaning of Life*:

What do you think it would be like to live underground?

What would you ask a worm if you could?

What would you say if someone asked you "Why do you do what you do?"

What do you do at your home that helps everyone?

For more information on how to use books and stories with children to enhance your curriculum, contact
The Family Connection:

website—
www.famconn.org

Facebook—
@famconnsjc

phone—
574-237-9740

@ Home

Since many of the children in our county will have this book at home, use it as a way to further the home-school connection. In your daily contact—in person or by text, email or other notes home—encourage families to share *Carl and the Meaning of Life* with their child. Here's a sample message you can send:

Carl and the Meaning of Life is a beautifully illustrated story about one worm's journey to discover his purpose. When you read this picture book to your child, ask questions like, "How do you think the animals know what they are supposed to do?" and "Do the animals know how they all need each other?" You might use the conversation as a springboard to talk about how your child contributes at home, how everyone in your family needs one another, and how everyone works together to get things done. Have fun helping your child figure out, "How does what you do help connect all of us?" With questions like these, there is no wrong answer.