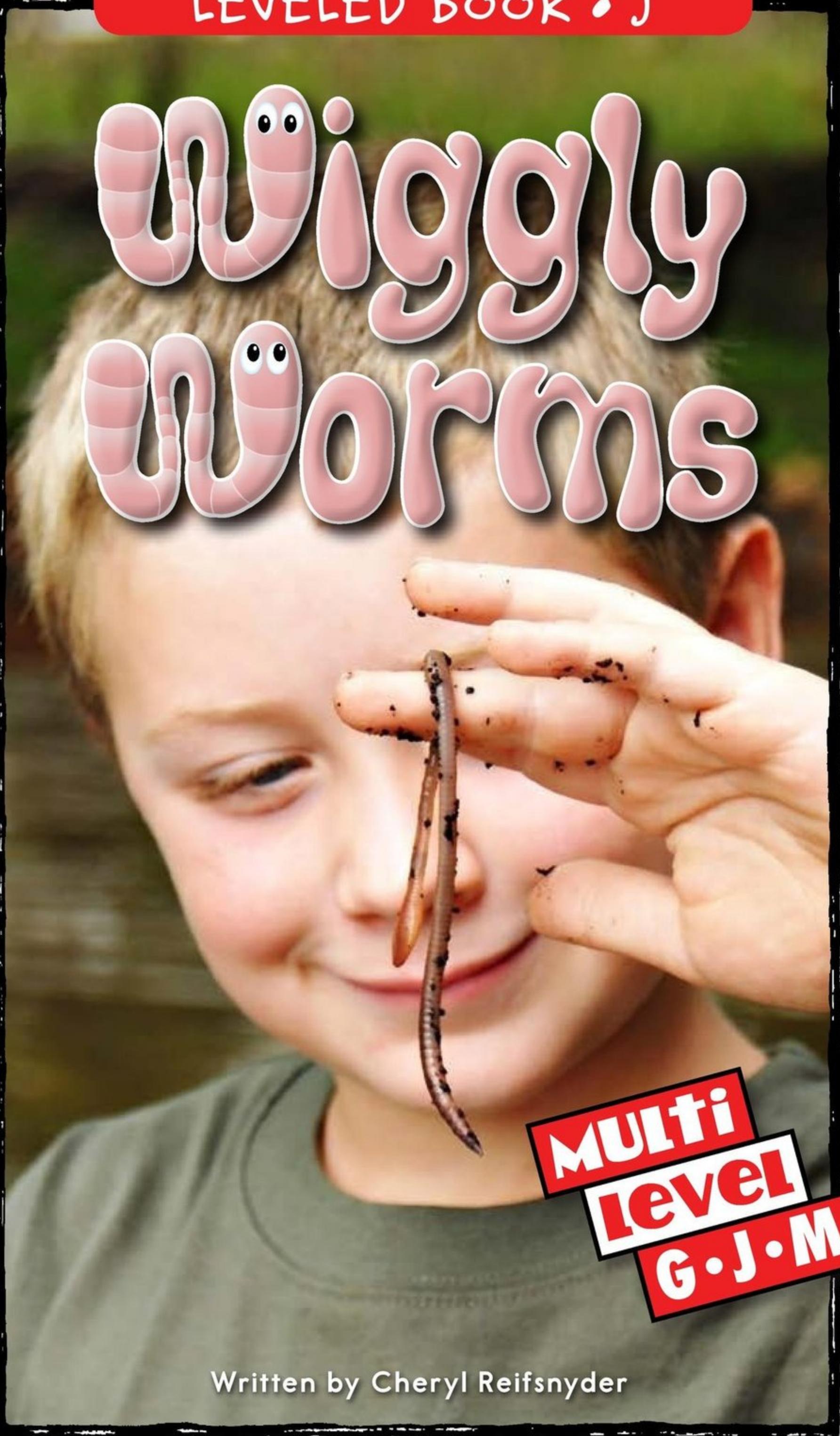


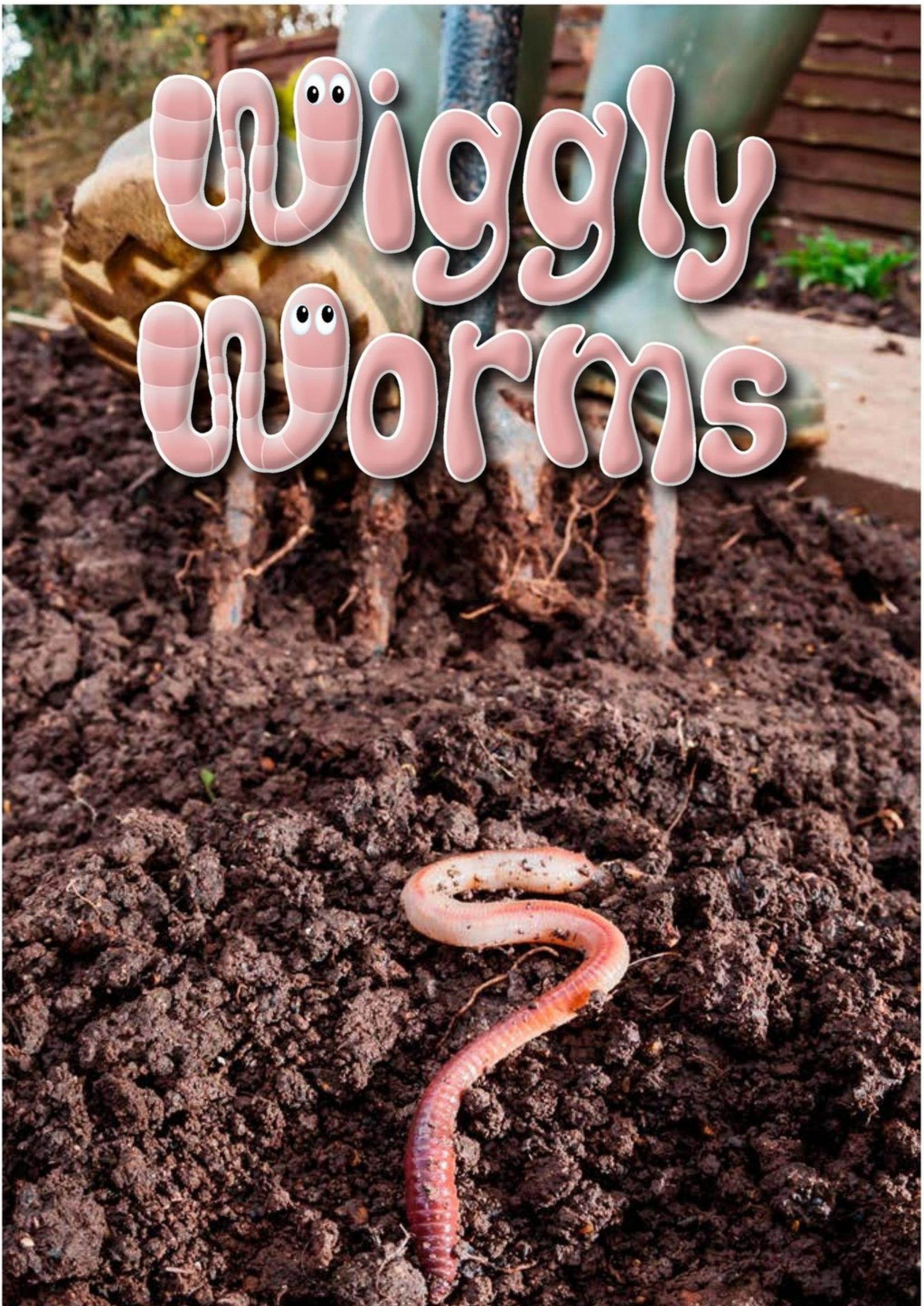
LEVELED Book • J

wiggly worms



MULTI
level
G•J•M

Written by Cheryl Reifsnyder



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An earthworm's body can twist and turn.

Small Animals, Big Changes

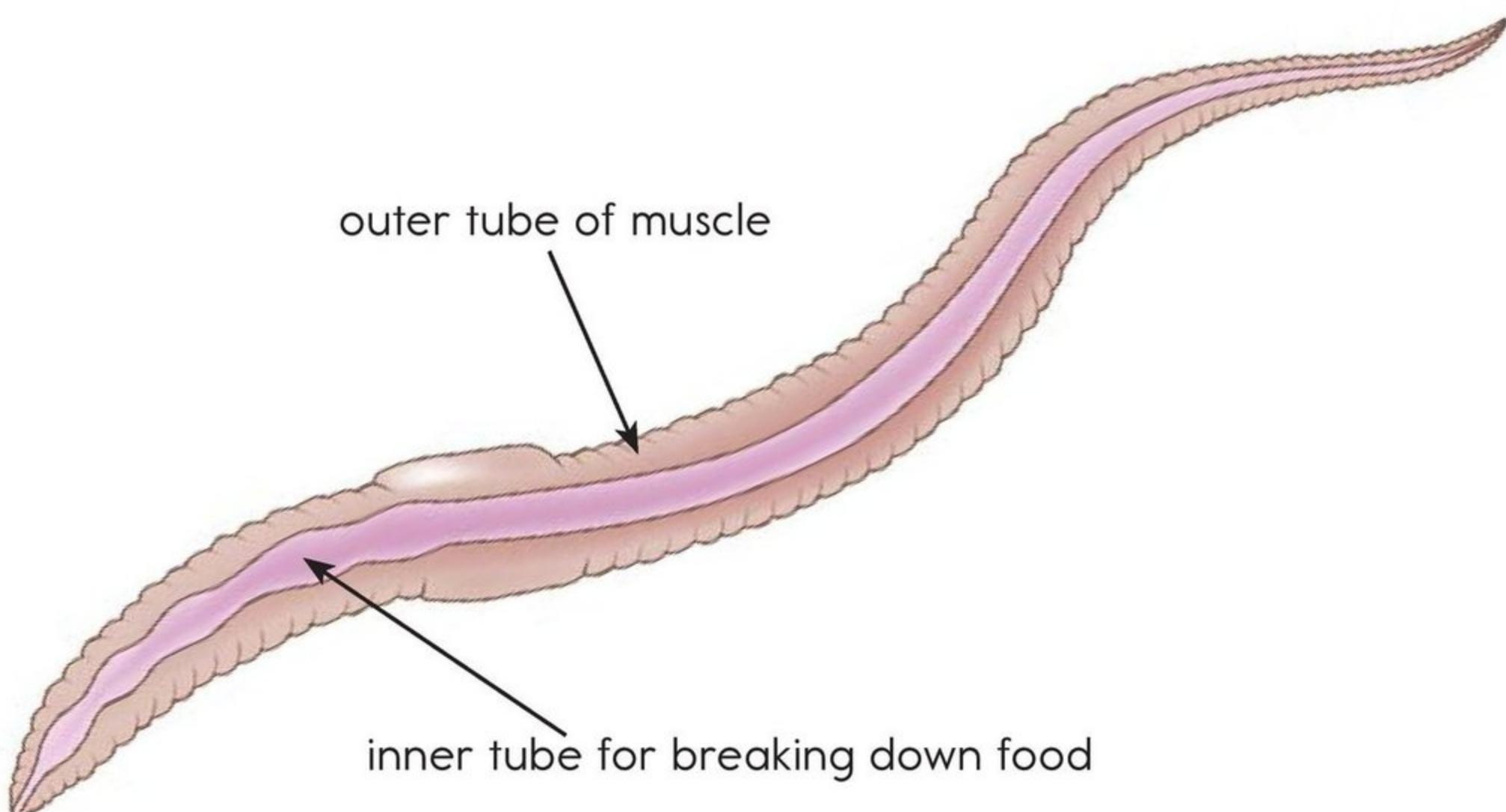
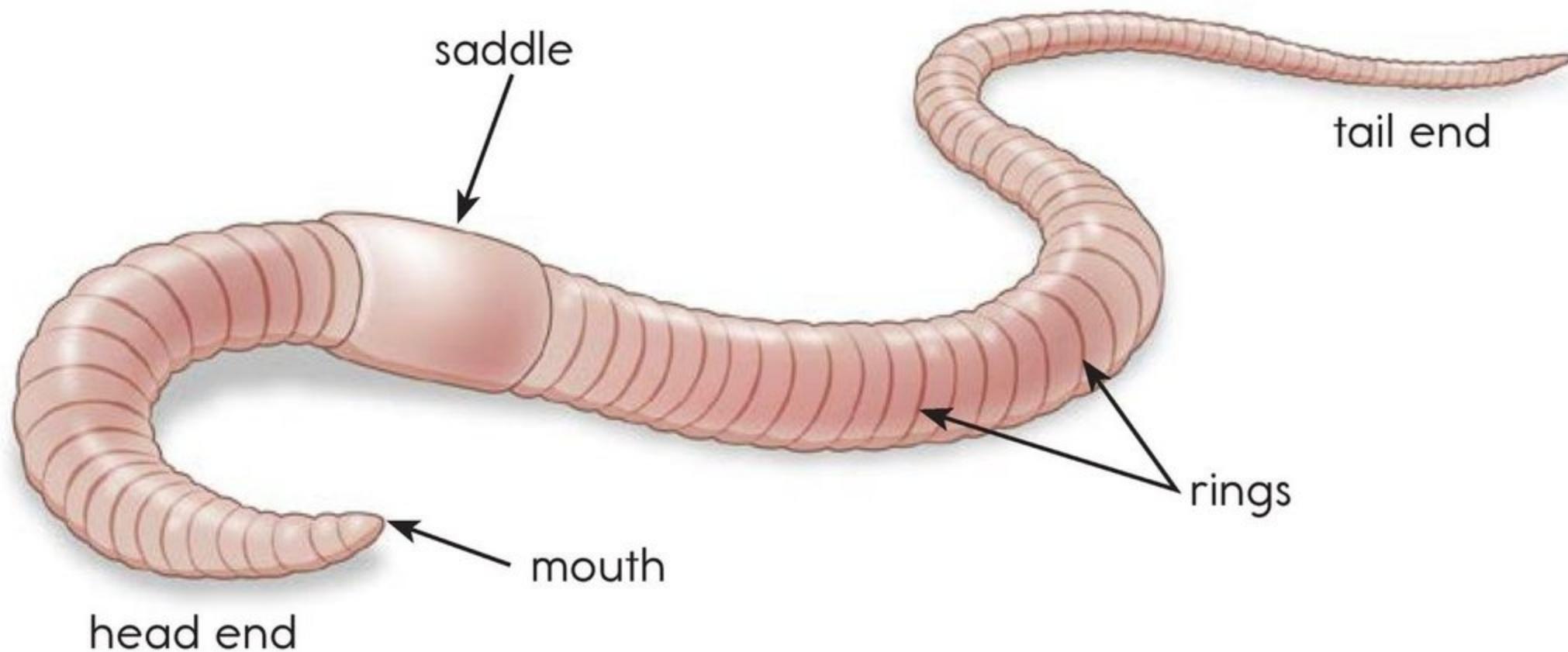
Do you know about earthworms?

These small animals change the **soil**
in big ways.

Earthworm Bodies

An earthworm's body is shaped like one **tube** inside another.

On the outside is a tube of **muscle**.
On the inside is a tube that breaks down food.





How many rings can you see on this worm's body?

The body of an earthworm is made up of many parts.

Each part is shaped like a ring and can bend and stretch.

Earthworm Facts

Common names	Earthworm, night crawler
Animal group	Invertebrate (no backbone)
Life span	Up to 6 years
Size (common species)	3½–12 inches (9–30 cm)
Habitat	All types except deserts and areas where the ground is always frozen; prefer moist, rich soil



Earthworms move by stretching out their bodies and pulling themselves forward.

Short, tough hairs on their bellies help them hold onto the ground.



slime on a worm's skin



slime trail on a log

Slimy Worms!

Earthworms are slimy.

The slime helps keep earthworms cool and wet.

It also helps earthworms slide through soil.



After worms **mate**,
a ball of slime forms.

The slime dries into a **cocoon**.
Baby worms come out
of the cocoon.

How do earthworms breathe?

Earthworms don't breathe through their mouths. They breathe through their skin. That's why you'll often see earthworms on sidewalks when it rains. They can drown if they stay underground. Earthworms can't survive if their skin dries out, either. They can only breathe when their skin is wet.



A bird has to work to pull a strong worm out of its hole.

Earthworm Behavior

Earthworms build long tunnels underground.

The tunnels protect worms from heat and sunlight.

They also help earthworms hide from hungry animals.



A worm pulls a rotting leaf into its hole.

Earthworms are sometimes called *night crawlers* because they come out at night to feed.

They use their mouths to pull dead leaves and plants into their tunnels.



Earthworm tunnels help water and air reach plant roots.

Earthworms Are Good for the Soil

Farmers love earthworms!

When earthworms dig tunnels,

they make space in the soil.

The space helps plants get what
they need to grow.



Worms can turn food scraps (main photo) into dark, rich soil (inset).

Some people raise earthworms
on worm farms.

The earthworms eat food scraps,
turning them into rich soil.

Earthworm **waste** helps plants grow
big and strong.



A mole (top left), a toad (bottom left), and a shrew (right) all make meals of worms.

Wanted: Earthworms!

Farmers aren't the only ones who love earthworms.

Moles, rats, and toads love juicy night crawlers.

They love to eat them!

Worms make good fishing bait because fish think earthworms are tasty, too.

Earthworms are important food for these and other animals.



An earthworm pokes its head out of its hole.

Earthworms may be small, but they have a big job.

Earthworms help plants grow!

In one night, an earthworm can...

- Eat up to one-third of its body weight
- Travel up to 60 feet (18 m)—the distance from the pitcher's mound to home plate in a baseball diamond.

Glossary

cocoon (n.) a covering that protects something (p. 9)

mate (v.) to come together to reproduce, or make babies (p. 9)

muscle (n.) a type of body tissue that contracts and relaxes to allow movement (p. 5)

soil (n.) the top layer of the ground in which plants grow; dirt (p. 4)

tube (n.) a long, hollow cylinder (p. 5)

waste (n.) solid matter passed out of the body of an animal (p. 13)

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Title page: An earthworm crawls away after being dug out of the ground by a gardener.

Page 3: A worm sticks its head out of its tunnel near some mushrooms.

Wiggly Worms
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