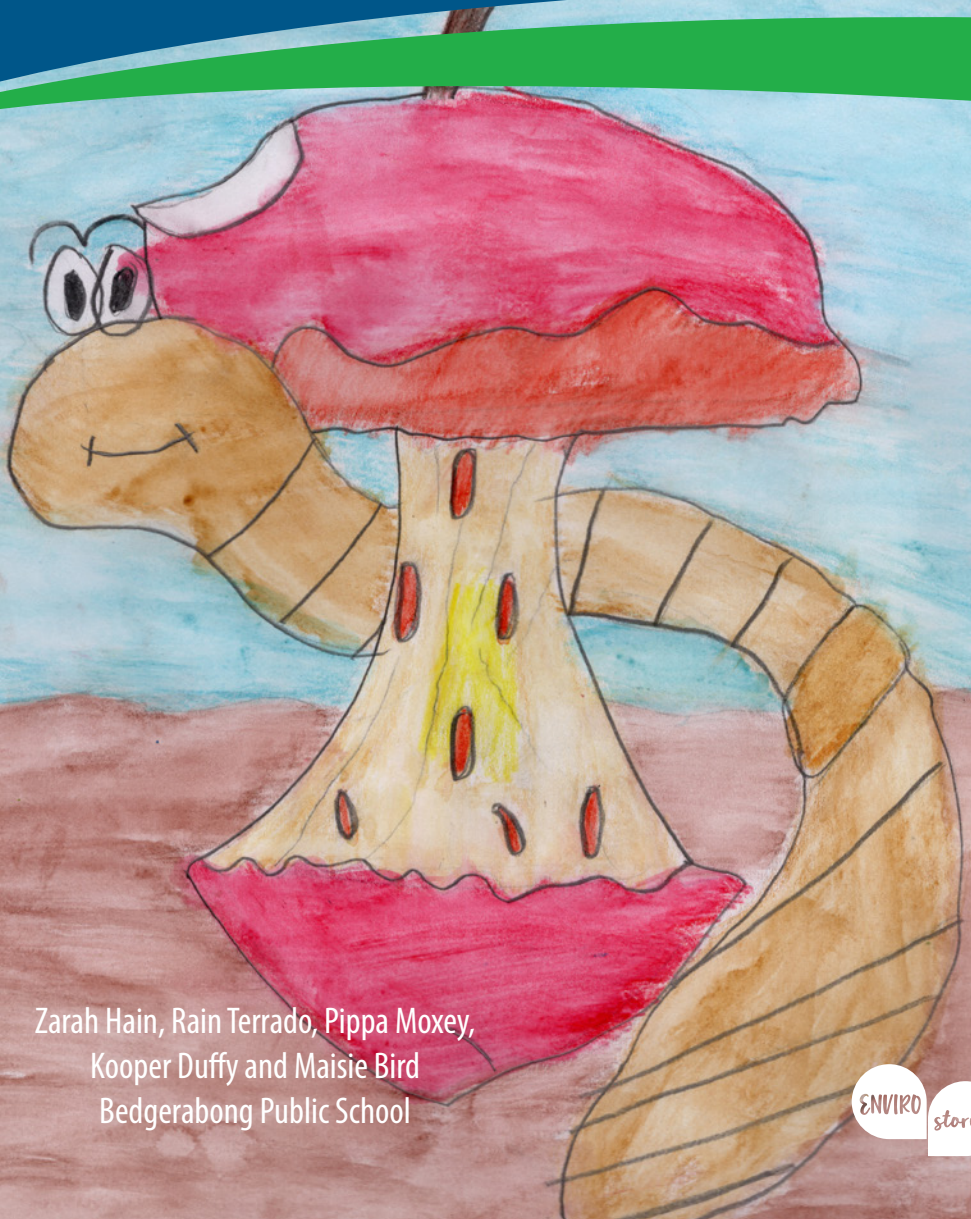


Wigglin' Willy the Compost Worm



Zarah Hain, Rain Terrado, Pippa Moxey,
Koooper Duffy and Maisie Bird
Bedgerabong Public School



Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by Peekdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

www.envirostories.com.au

Forbes Shire Council

Forbes is located on the Lachlan River in Central West NSW in Wiradjuri country. With European occupation Forbes became famous for its rich bushranging history and for its historic buildings dating back to the Forbes gold rushes.

The Forbes Shire is a safe, connected and welcoming rural community where residents and visitors enjoy a clean, safe environment enhanced by our unique heritage and country lifestyle.

www.forbes.nsw.gov.au

Wigglin' Willy the Compost Worm

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Teacher: Mrs. Vanessa Faulkner

School: Bedgerabong Public School

The Amazing Forbes Enviro-Stories program involves Forbes Shire Council working with local schools and young people to celebrate how amazing the area is and how important it is to work together to protect their home for future generations.

Students have the opportunity to become published authors by writing and illustrating a short story, focusing on different aspects and issues within their community. Stories that are published will become resources to teach others about Forbes.

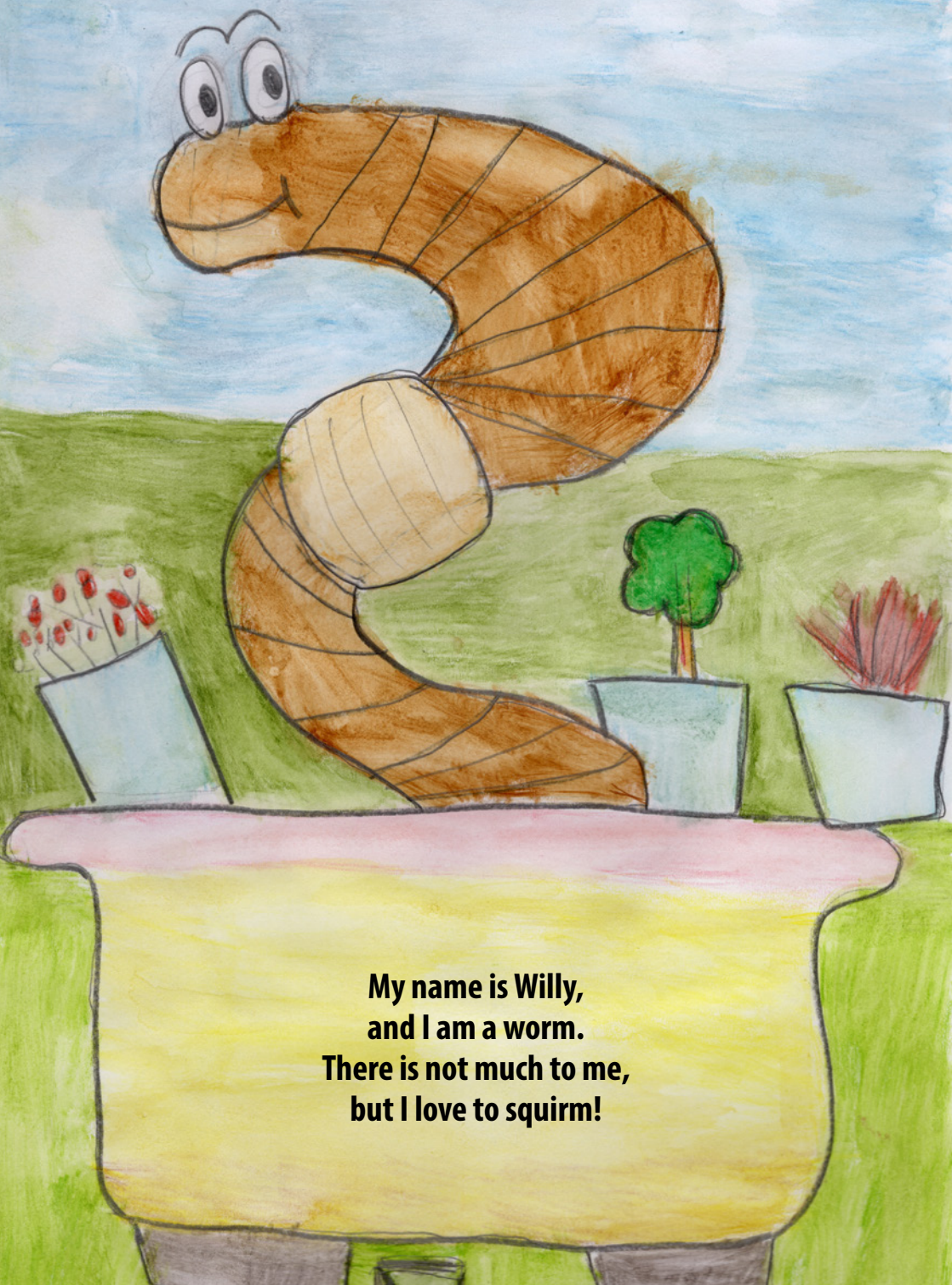
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Enviro-Stories is a Peekdesigns initiative, www.peekdesigns.com.au.

Bird, M. Duffy, K. Hain, Z. Moxey, P. and Terrado, R. 2021. *Wigglin' Willy the Compost Worm*. Forbes Shire Council, NSW.





**My name is Willy,
and I am a worm.
There is not much to me,
but I love to squirm!**

When we look at a worm, most of us would agree they are a simple animal. They have a mouth, gut, anus and elongated body, which means they can stretch out. The two sides of a worm's body are identical.

This is called *bilateral symmetry*. Many worms have special sensory organs so they can detect light and chemical changes in the soil. The bump around the middle is called the clitellum.



**Just like you,
I love to eat
Veggie scraps
and sometimes meat.**

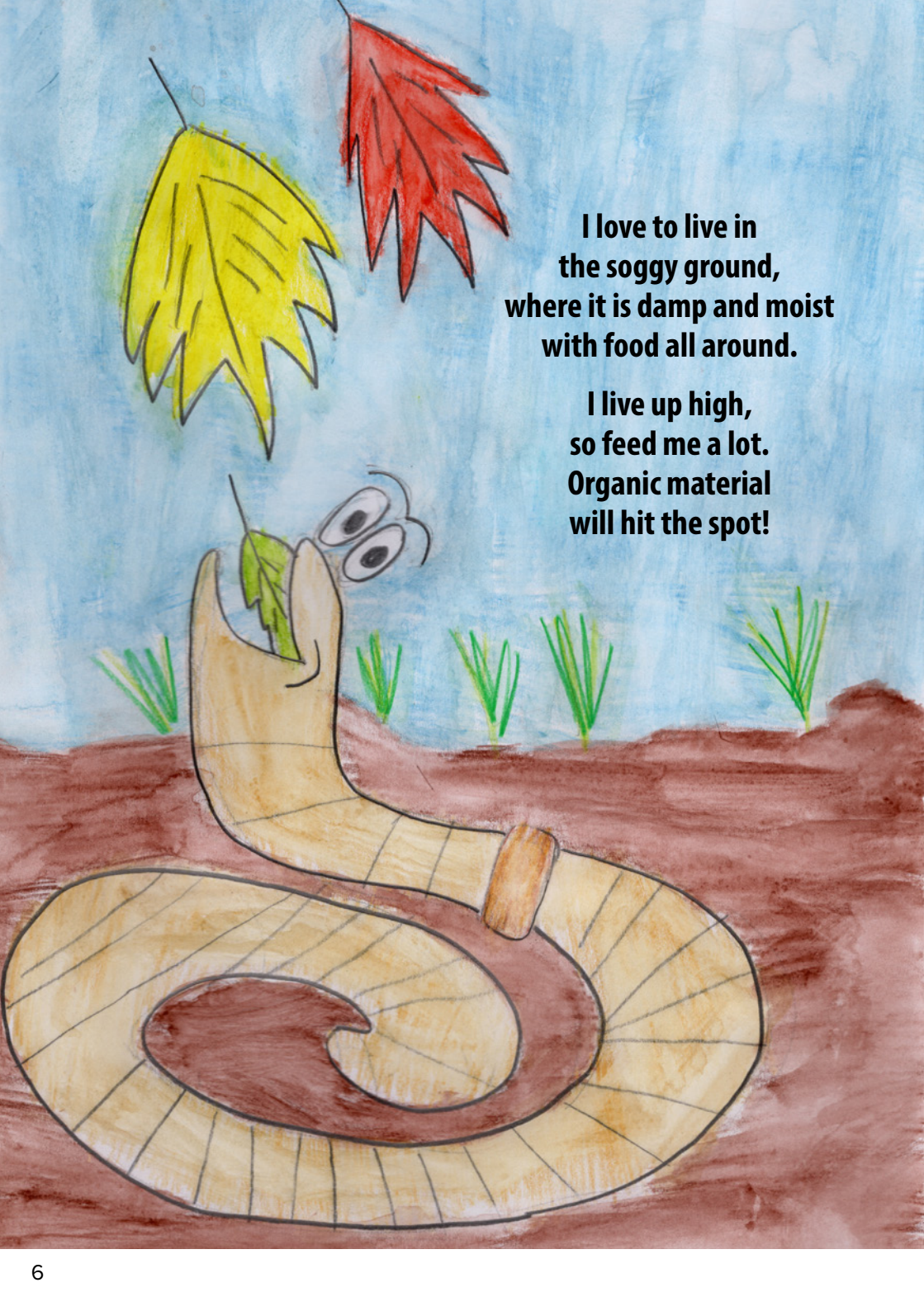


**But please hold the onion
and citrus fruit.
In fact, I'd prefer sheep
and juicy cow poop.**



Just like you and me, compost worms love a well-balanced diet. Raw foods that decay quickly are best. This mostly includes any organic materials such as vegetable and fruit scraps, manure, grass clippings and even hair!

Meat is a definite 'sometimes' food, while citrus, onion, dairy foods and some processed foods, like chocolate, should be avoided.

A hand-drawn illustration of a caterpillar in a hole. The caterpillar is yellow with a brown band and is eating a green leaf. Above the hole, a yellow leaf and a red leaf are shown falling. The background is a light blue sky, and the ground is brown soil with several tufts of green grass. The caterpillar has large, white, oval eyes.

**I love to live in
the soggy ground,
where it is damp and moist
with food all around.**

**I live up high,
so feed me a lot.
Organic material
will hit the spot!**

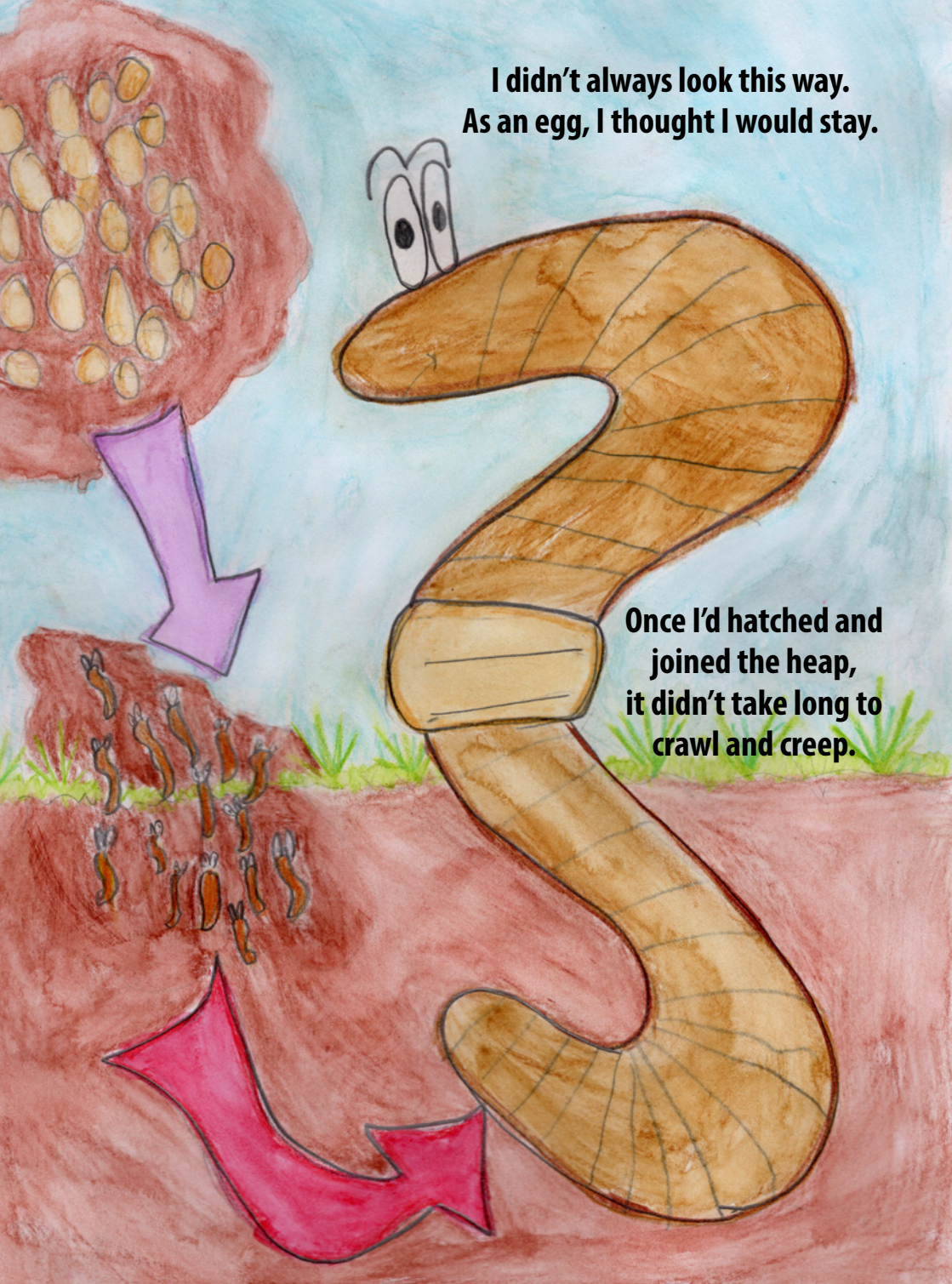


Unlike earthworms who prefer to live deeper in the soil, compost worms are mostly surface dwellers. They like to live in moist soil, which is full of organic material to eat.

If they are to survive in your compost bin, you need to make sure the conditions are wet and there are plenty of scraps for them to munch on.



**I didn't always look this way.
As an egg, I thought I would stay.**

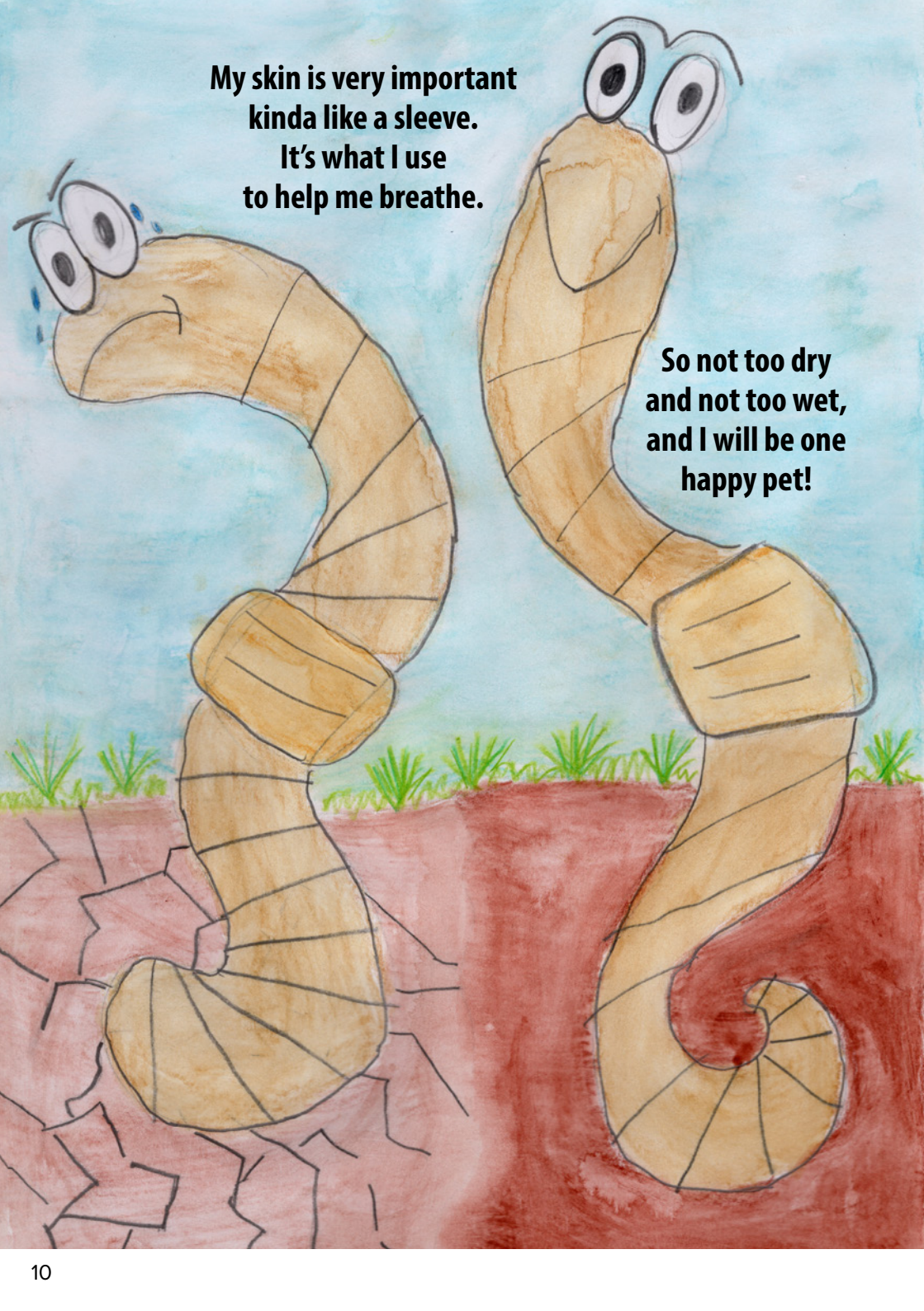


**Once I'd hatched and
joined the heap,
it didn't take long to
crawl and creep.**

Worms are hermaphrodites. This means they are both male and female. Compost worm eggs usually hatch after three to four weeks. They don't stay babies for very long - after a couple of months, most have matured into adults.

Worm eggs can sometimes lay waiting in the soil for as long as fifteen years - waiting for the soil condition to be just right!





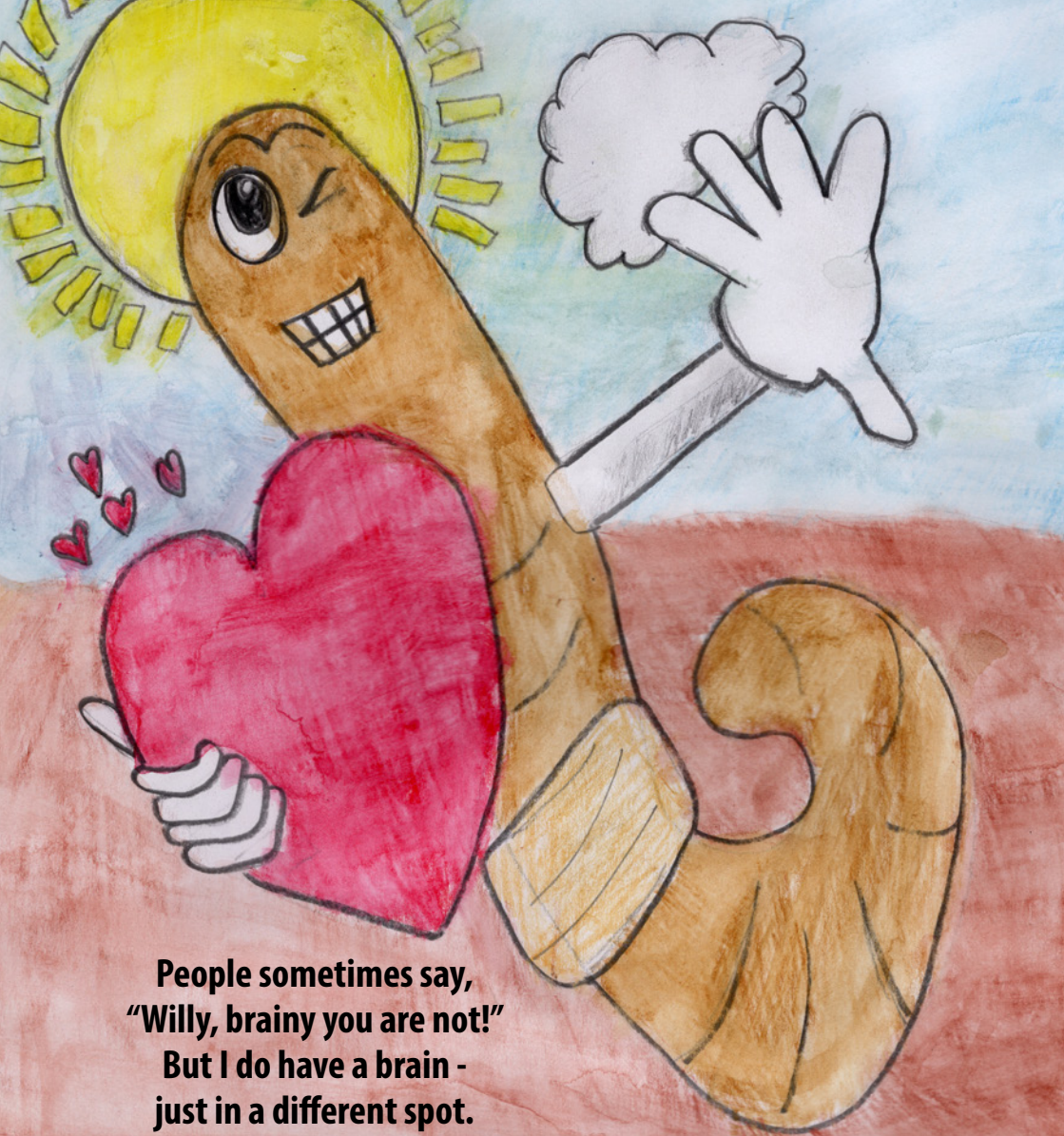
**My skin is very important
kinda like a sleeve.
It's what I use
to help me breathe.**

**So not too dry
and not too wet,
and I will be one
happy pet!**

Compost worms do not have lungs like we do, instead they breathe through their skin. If the conditions get too dry, their skin will dry out and they can suffocate. Worm bodies are 75% water. It is very important to make sure their environment is wet so they can breathe easily.

To keep worms alive and happy, the worm farm temperature should be between 15-25°C, slightly acidic, contain oxygen and a 75% moisture level.





**People sometimes say,
“Willy, brainy you are not!”
But I do have a brain -
just in a different spot.**

**As for a heart
to keep me alive.
Would you believe,
I actually have five?**



Even though they are simple creatures, worms do have brains. The human brain sits in a protective skull. A worm's brain can be found close to its organs where it can easily control the nerves, muscles and skin.

Worms don't just have one heart – they can actually have more than five! We only have one heart, but it is big and very complicated. In worms, the five hearts work together to operate the same as our one heart.



**So why do I live at
Bedgerabong School?
It's because I find the place
rather cool.**

**I help keep the soil fresh
all year round,
to make our veggie patch
have healthy mounds.**

**From the food scraps –
castings I make.
To keep the plants
looking great.**

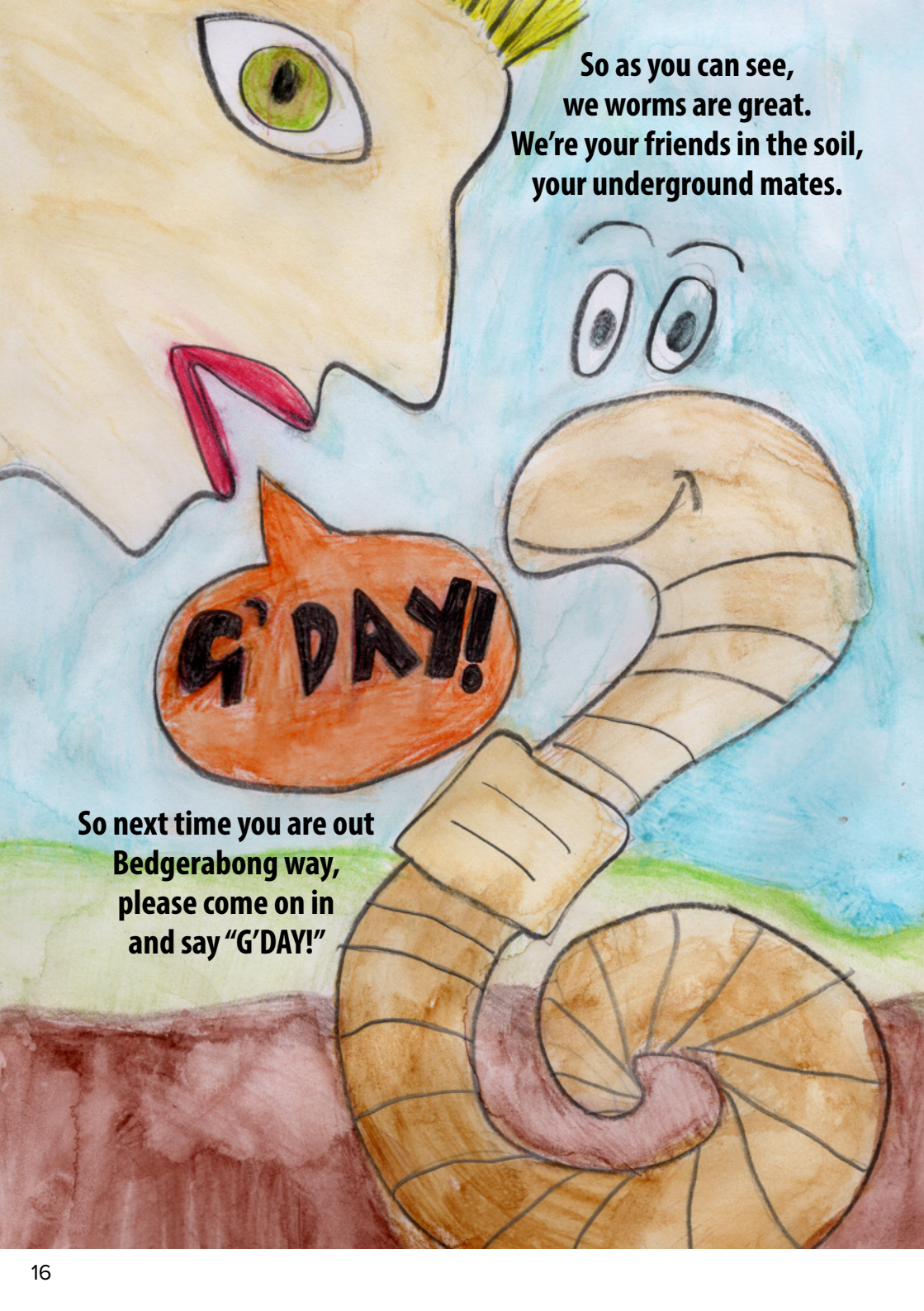
**My place is important
and that's a fact.
Recycle and fertilise,
you can't beat that!**

When we put food scraps in the compost, we are helping to avoid unnecessary landfill. This also helps to stop increasing methane gases.

Worm castings will produce a rich compost. They help to improve the soil's ability to hold water, stabilise pH levels and increase nutrient levels in the soil. All this is good news for successful plant growth.

Worms are important! They are our underground friends, working hard to keep the soil in the best condition possible both now and in the future.





**So as you can see,
we worms are great.
We're your friends in the soil,
your underground mates.**

**So next time you are out
Bedgerabong way,
please come on in
and say "G'DAY!"**

Bedgerabong Public School is a small school located 32 kilometres west of Forbes. There are currently two classes – an infant and a primary class. The creators of this book are the Year 5 cohort of 2021. They have worked tirelessly to produce this wonderful book.



The inspiration for this work has stemmed from the Bedgerabong School 'Tootie Fruity' Kitchen Garden Program. For over a decade, B'bong kids have participated in and learned a great deal about growing and cooking their own food. Along the way they have had to consider many things that both adversely affect and benefit their school garden environment. The children decided worms were a very important element in the successful propagation of a healthy, high yielding crop. We hope this story goes a little way to explaining why we at Bedgerabong School think worms are pretty cool!

Zarah Hain, Rain Terrado, Pippa Moxey, Kooper Duffy and Maisie Bird



Bedgerabong Public School

Year 5 2021

