

How to Eat Fried Worms

• Library Lessons •

by | Lynne Farrell Stover

Billy tells his three friends Tommy, Alan, and Joe he is capable of eating anything. The next thing he knows he has accepted a “challenge” from Alan to eat fifteen worms in fifteen days. At stake is fifty dollars, enough money to buy a used mini-bike at 1973 prices. Once the ground rules have been established, the contest begins. Billy may use any condiment he chooses on a worm that has been boiled, broiled, fried, or baked. Alan and Joe are to select the worms. Things heat up when it appears Billy may win the wager and evil plots and blatant cheating ensue. In the end, Tommy’s little brother Pete saves the day by getting the last worm to Billy who eats it raw.

Note: It is not necessary for the students to have read *How to Eat Fried Worms* to successfully complete these lessons.

Lesson I: “How-to” Book Review

Contrary to its title, *How to Eat Fried Worms* is not an instructional manual describing the preparations needed for the human consumption of wiggly invertebrates. It is actually a fictional account of the misadventures of a typical group of high-spirited boys. However, the library is full of how-to books the students may enjoy investigating.

Time Required: 25–35 minutes

Objectives:

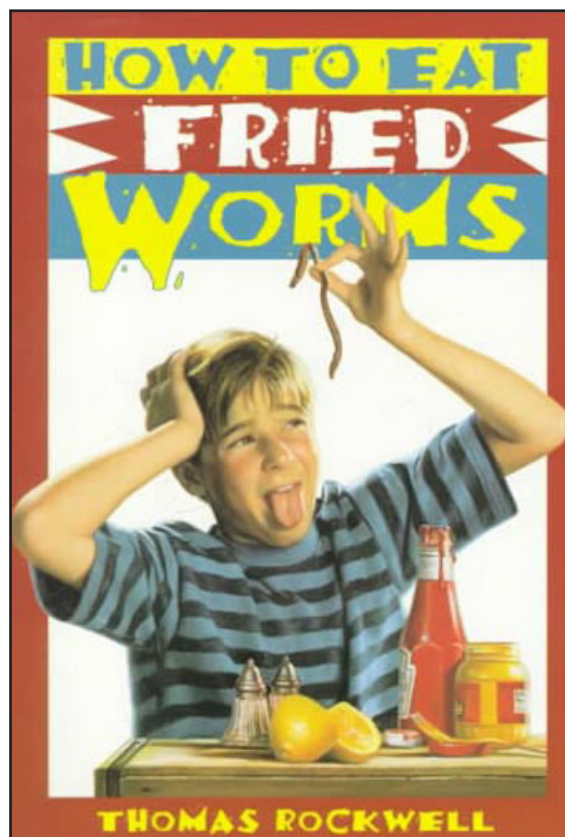
- The students will investigate nonfiction books available in the library’s collection
- The students will complete an assigned activity sheet

Materials:

- How-to Book Review Visual on page 4
- How-to Book Review Activity on page 5
- writing tools
- examples of how-to books from the collection (*optional*)

Directions:

1. Prepare the visual and activity sheets prior to class. Select several interesting how-to books from the library’s collection to display as examples.
2. Introduce the lesson by telling the students they will be investigating the how-to books



in the library’s collection. Tell the students they will be looking through the library’s nonfiction section for books they could review and good behavior and time on task are important. **Note:** If classroom management and/or time constraints are factors, it may be prudent to pull the desired books off the shelves and have them available in a central location for student selection.

3. Display the visual, How-to Book Review, and read over the content with the students.
4. Remind students, as the example on the visual demonstrates, that how-to books do not necessarily have the words “how-to” in the title.
5. Pass out copies of the activity sheet.
6. Quickly remind students where the nonfiction books are located. Allow students to explore the shelves or use the patrons’ catalog while looking for a book they would like to review. Students may work individually or in pairs.
7. Encourage students to booktalk their reviews with the class.

Lesson II: Titles—Terrible or Terrific?

Believe it or not, *How to Eat Fried Worms* makes an appearance on the American Library Association’s “The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books” list. Could it be that some people find the title disgusting? (Actually the objections were due to the main characters’ misbehavior and the plot focus on the making of a wager, i.e., gambling.)

Time Required: 25–35 minutes



Objectives:

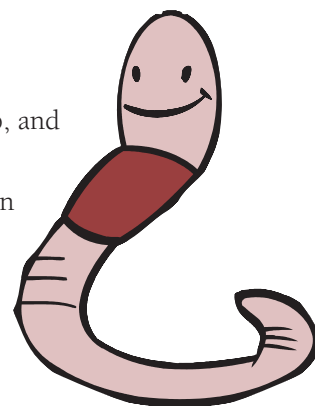
- The students will review the grammatical terms noun, verb, and adjective
- The students will participate in a creative writing exercise

Materials:

- Titles—Terrible or Terrific? Visual on page 6
- Titles—Terrible or Terrific? Activity on page 7
- writing tools
- overhead transparency marker
- dictionaries for student reference

Directions:

1. Prepare materials prior to class. **Optional:** collect copies of books like *How to Eat Fried Worms* that have unusual titles to share with students. Suggested books with “out of the ordinary” titles include:
Diary of a Worm by Doreen Cronin
Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! by Mo Willems
Freckle Juice by Judy Blume
The Sticky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales by Jon Scieszka
The Teacher’s Funeral: A Comedy in Three Acts by Richard Peck
The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig by Eugene Trivizas
Summer of the Monkeys by Wilson Rawls
2. Display the visual. Read the introduction and review the parts of speech with the students.
3. Conduct the Check for Understanding activity as a class. Answer: The happy boy cheered
4. Pass out the activity sheet and review the directions with the students. Explain that in Part I they will be creating a title based on the format of *How to Eat Fried Worms*. Part II of the assignment asks the students to make up the characters, setting, and a plot inspired



by the newly created title. Students may work independently or in small groups. **Note:** The words provided are vocabulary words found in *How to Eat Fried Worms*.

5. Encourage students to share their stories.

Lesson III: How Much Do You Know About Worms?

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While the thought of eating a wriggling slimy creature may seem gross to most people, it is not an unhealthy thing to do. Thomas Rockwell, the author of *How to Eat Fried Worms*, did his research and knew that earthworms at about 80% protein are nutritious, if unappetizing. Students will discover they know more about worms than they thought when they take a quick quiz

Time Required: 20–25 minutes

Objectives:

- The students will participate in a quick quiz based on common knowledge concerning earthworms

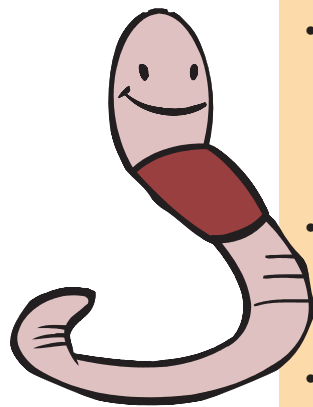
Materials:

- How Much Do You Know about Worms? Quiz on page 8
- writing tools
- reference tools to facilitate research of curious students (*optional*)

Directions:

1. Prepare materials prior to class.
2. Copies of worksheet. **Note:** The activity may also be presented as a visual and completed as a teacher directed class activity.
3. Pass out the activity sheet and inform the students they are to take a quick quiz concerning earthworms. This quiz is actually a teaching tool and may be used as an introduction to the book *How to Eat Fried Worms* or nonfiction books dealing with invertebrate animals. (This quick quiz has a high student success rate as the word bank contains one logical answer for each question.)
4. Allow students to complete the quiz and check as a group. **Answers:** 1. 2,700; 2. Slimy; 3. Charles Darwin; 4. Germany; 5. cold-blooded; 6. eyes; 7. healthy; 8. night crawlers; 9. five.
5. Encourage students to discover other worm facts by doing their own research.

Lynne Farrell Stover is a Teacher Consultant at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She is the author of Magical Library Lessons, More Magical Library Lessons and From Snicket to Shakespeare: Connecting Contemporary Tales to the Classics from UpstartBooks.



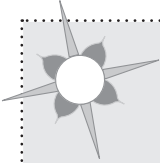
McREL Standards

Language Arts

- **Writing**
Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process
Gathers and uses information for research purposes
- **Reading**
Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts
- **Listening and Speaking**
Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

How-to Book Review

The library shelves are full of books with information on how to do certain things. Want to know how to make a yummy peach cobbler? The cookbooks are in the 600s. Thinking about starting your own business? There is probably a book for you in the 300s. Wish you could draw a creature from outer space? The 700s are where the drawing books are usually located.



How-to Book Review

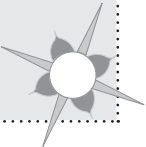
Example

Title: Sign Language for Kids: A Fun & Easy Guide to American Sign Language

Author: Lora Heller

Number of Pages: 95

Dewey Decimal Number: 419

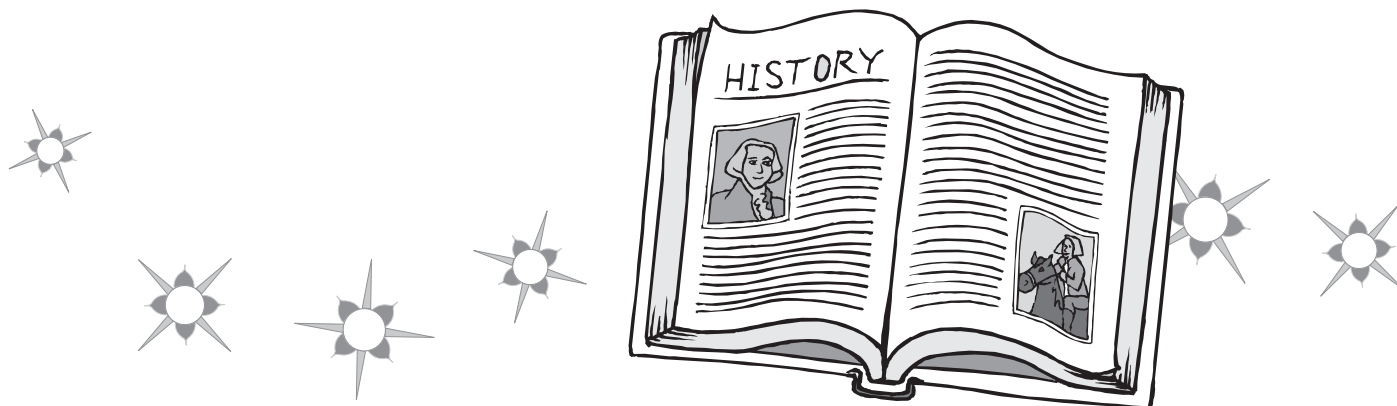


What does this book tell you how to do? This book shows you how to make the signs for many things including colors, numbers, and the days of the week.

List three interesting things about this book:

1. There are photographs of people showing how to make the correct sign.
2. There is an index to help you find a word.
3. The book is organized into sections like holidays and nature.

Rate this Book: I give this book a G—this means number one, or the best!



How-to Book Review

Think of something you would like to know how to do and see if there is a book about this subject in the library. Find the book and give it a quick look. Complete the book review below. Remember, not all books telling you how to do something need to start with the words "how-to."



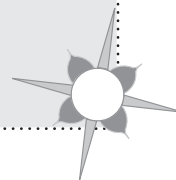
How-to Book Review

Title: _____

Author: _____

Number of Pages: _____

Dewey Decimal Number: _____



What does this book tell you how to do? _____

List three interesting things about this book:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Rate this Book: *(Create your own rating system.)*

Titles—Terrible or Terrific?

When you first hear the title *How to Eat Fried Worms* by Thomas Rockwell you may get tickled, curious, or queasy. However you react to this strange title; it is one you will not easily forget.

Quickly review the parts of speech below to help you create an unforgettable title of your own.



Creative Activity Preparation

Parts of Speech Review

- ☐ A **NOUN** is a person, place, thing, or idea. Examples: doctor, home, trout, and courage.
- ☐ A **VERB** is an action word. Examples: swim, read, sleep.
- ☐ An **ADJECTIVE** describes a noun. It can tell what kind, what color, or how many. Examples: big, red, few.

Check for Understanding

Circle the noun, underline the verb, and draw a box around the adjective.

The happy boy cheered.

Titles—Terrible or Terrific?

The title *How to Eat Fried Worms* may make some people queasy, but it does get their attention. If Thomas Rockwell had titled this book *Four Boys Dig for Trouble* or *Billy Makes a Bet*, chances are it would not have received nearly as much attention.

Part I

Create an attention grabbing title of your own by selecting a word from each group and writing it on the correct line. If you like the sound of a word, but don't know the meaning, look it up in the dictionary.

HOW TO _____

- Verb (action word) Adjective (describes noun) Noun (person, place, thing, or idea)
- **Verbs:** disguise, haul, insult, fricassee, gulp, gnaw, nip, poach, scramble, smother, smuggle, wrestle
- **Adjectives:** chunky, gooey, grimy, knobby-kneed, lousy, naughty, nonchalant, ordinary, poisonous, sizzling, stagnant, yucky
- **Nouns:** antidotes, blubber, crayfish, fungus, horseradish, muck, pudding, salmon, tapeworms, thumbnails, toadstools, weasels

Part II

Now that you have a new terrific or terrible title, develop a good story idea to go with it. Answer the questions below and you may be on your way to writing a best-selling story.

Title: _____

Names and brief descriptions of two or three main characters: _____

Where does the story take place? _____

What is the problem in the story? _____



A Quick Quiz: How Much Do You Know About Worms?

Using the words provided in the word bank fill in the blanks.

1. There are about _____ different kinds of earthworms.
2. The worm on Sesame Street is named _____.
3. Many years ago the scientist _____ spent 39 years studying earthworms.
4. Worms is a city in the country of _____.
5. Worms are _____ animals.
6. A worm has no _____.
7. Having worms in your garden means you have _____ soil.
8. Earthworms are also known as _____.
9. The earthworm has _____ hearts.

Word Bank

Slimy

Charles Darwin

Germany

2,700

night crawlers

eyes

five

cold-blooded

healthy

