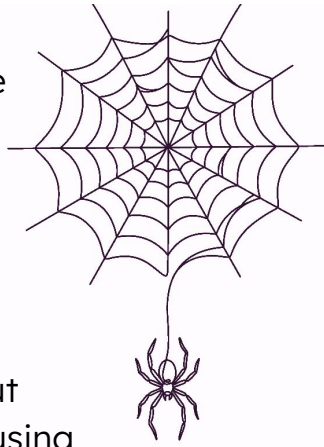


Creepers, Crawlers, and Critters

6-8 Activities

October invites us to look a little closer at the creatures around us. This month you'll explore the science behind the animal kingdom's often misunderstood residents, including those that creep, crawl, slither, and burrow.

You'll get to research the field of entomology, fact-check claims about animals, and create a masterpiece using the beauty of nature. You'll also get a chance to encourage others to see a misrepresented creature in a different light and create a fun treat inspired by a critter that you may know very well.



This packet includes the following activities:

- Wild Reads
- Entomology 101
- Fact Detectives: Critter Edition
- Critter Craft
- Creepy-Crawler PR Campaign
- Ladybug's Garden Crackers
- Creepy-Crawly Hand Art
- Creepy Critters + Coloring

Explore More



Create a bug slideshow or journal about three or more critters in nature that interest you! Highlight the good things they do for the ecosystem.



Talk to an expert at a local county, state, or national park about the wildlife in the area. Try to learn a few facts that you can teach to others, too!



Go on a critter search to find five or more different critters that live near you. Try to identify the critters by doing an internet image search or by searching based on a description of the critters you see.



Check out these book suggestions to learn more about creepers, crawlers, and critters! From misunderstood animals to amazing reptiles and insects, there's something here for every curious reader. Then, turn your reading adventure into an article for our October Newspaper Contest!

Book List

***Dangerous... Or Not?* by Tracie Santos** (Grades 6-7)

Are bats, sharks, snakes, and spiders really as scary as they seem? Learn the truth about animals that are often feared or misunderstood.



***Deep in the Heart: A Texas Wildlife Story*, by Ben Masters** (Grades 6-8)

Explore the wild side of Texas! Discover remarkable animals, their habitats, and the people working to protect them.

***The Ultimate Book of Reptiles*, by Ruchira Somaweera and Stephanie Warren Drimmer** (Grades 6-7)

Meet amazing snakes, lizards, turtles, crocodilians, and more while discovering the adaptations that help reptiles survive.



***Bee Fearless: Dream Like a Kid*, by Mikaila Ulmer** (Grades 6-8)

Read the true story of a young entrepreneur who turned her fear of bees into a mission to help protect them and built a business along the way.



October Newspaper Contest

This October, our Community Newspaper Contest theme is “Reading Adventures”!

Write about a favorite book, a new author or genre you discovered, a memorable reading experience, or even one of the books on this page!

How to participate: Select **Newspaper Contest** as your category, include “**Reading Adventures**” in your title, and submit your approved entry by **October 31**.

Three winners from each site will receive a special Contest Feather and 1,000 Gold/\$coops! Remember to follow all Site Rules and Community Guidelines.



Read the following information about entomology, then complete the research activity on the next page.

What Is Entomology?

Of the 2,000,000 animal species scientists have discovered and named, over half are insects. Insects affect many parts of human life. While some are harmful, many more help us by pollinating plants, eating harmful insects, and cycling nutrients through the soil. Because our world is teeming with so many different species of insects, entomology is vitally important.



Entomology is the study of insects. More specifically, entomology is the study of insects and their relationship to humans, the environment, and other living things. An **entomologist** is a scientist who studies entomology. What exactly an entomologist does depends on what area of entomology they focus on.

What Do Entomologists Study?

There are many different types of entomology that focus on an insect's interaction with other organisms, whether that includes a farmer's fields or the forest floor. Other entomologists choose instead to study a particular type of insect, like lepidopterologists, who study butterflies, or apiologists, who study bees.



Agricultural Entomology

Studies the positive and negative impacts of insects in farming



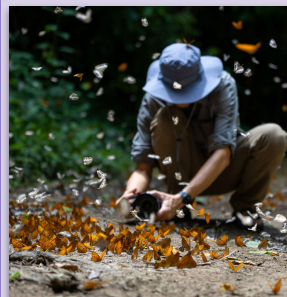
Medical Entomology

Studies insects and arthropods that carry disease, like mosquitoes and ticks



Forest Entomology

Studies insects that live in woodland ecosystems to see how they help or harm trees in the forest



Specialized Entomology

Studies one type of insect, like beetles, flies, butterflies, ants, or bees

Want to learn more about entomology? Continue to the research activity on the next page!



Choose an area of entomology from the previous page to research. With your instructor's permission, use the internet to research your chosen topic. Use your research to answer the questions below.

Prepare

Which area of entomology will you research? Why did you choose it?

Research and Take Notes

1. What does this type of entomologist study?
2. Consider the area of research these entomologists do. What questions are they trying to answer, and what problems are they trying to solve?
3. Find out a few species of insects this type of entomologist studies. How do those insects interact with their environment?
4. How do those insects impact humans?

Summarize and Share

Part of the scientific method is sharing your findings with others. Consider making a video, article, or poster to summarize what you learned during your research, then sharing it with the online Mia community.



Choose a claim, **investigate** the facts, then **create** a poster that reveals the truth!

What's a Critter Claim?

A critter claim is a statement that people often make about a certain type of animal, but just because people say it doesn't mean it's always true. Claims about animals stick around for different reasons. Sometimes a claim spreads because of one dramatic encounter or a mix-up between similar-looking animals, and it turns out to be exaggerated or false. Other times, a claim sounds too strange to be true, so people dismiss it, even though the science backs it up. Either way, most people never actually check whether what they hear is true, so they believe or disbelieve it without finding the facts.

Your job is to pick one claim about a critter, investigate what the evidence really shows, and spread the word about what's true and what's made up.

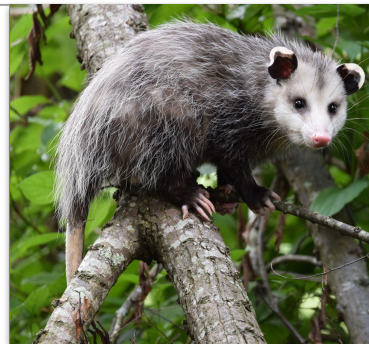
Step 1

Choose a Claim To Investigate!

Check the box next to the claim you want to investigate, or write your own below.



- ☐ Armadillos are naturally resistant to rabies because of their unusually low body temperature.



- ☐ Opossums eat thousands of ticks a season, single-handedly reducing the spread of Lyme disease.



- ☐ Bats drink blood as their main food source and sometimes will even attack humans to feed.



- ☐ All you need to tell whether a snake is venomous is to check its head shape and eye shape.

- ☐ Think of a statement you've heard about an animal that may or may not be true.



Step 2

Make Your Prediction

Before you research anything, make your best guess.

- ❖ Is this claim **true** or **false**? Select one.

True

False

- ❖ Why do you think that?

Step 3

Build Your Case

With a trusted adult's permission, use the internet to investigate. Don't land on your final answer yet; just gather evidence.

For: What evidence supports this claim?

Against: What evidence challenges it?

Ecosystem Role: Regardless of whether this claim is true or false, what role does this critter actually play in its ecosystem? Is it harmful, helpful, or both?



Step 4

The Reveal

Now, build a fact poster and reveal the truth. Was your claim true or false?

- ❖ **Pro-Tip:** A good fact buster poster grabs attention first, then proves its point. Try opening with the most surprising thing you learned while researching, then explain the answer to the claim.

Critter: _____

The Claim

What's True About the Claim

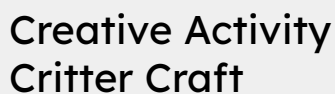
How This Critter Helps (or Hurts) its Ecosystem

Draw Your Critter Here

Select the Verdict

CONFIRMED!

BUSTED!



For this project, you'll **collect leaves** from trees and other plants. The kinds of leaves you're able to find will depend on where you live. You might gather green leaves from trees or bushes in your yard, leaves that are just starting to change color for fall, or even leaves from houseplants.

If leaves aren't available to you at all, you can still complete this activity by tracing other objects instead, such as coins, measuring cups, cookie cutters, or anything else you can think of.

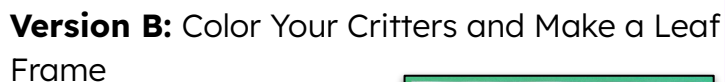
Supplies needed:

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| ☐ 10+ leaves | ☐ Scissors | ☐ Markers, colored pencils, or |
| ☐ Paper or cardstock | ☐ Glue | crayons |

There are two versions of this craft. Choose Version A, Version B, or both!

Version A: Create Your Own Critters

1. **Glue** leaves on your paper or cardstock.
2. **Draw** legs, heads, eyes, or other body parts to create your own critters.
3. **Color** some of the critters on the following page. **Cut** them out and **glue** them on.



- 1. Color** the critters on the following page.
- 2. Cut** along the dashed lines where indicated by the scissors symbol.
- 3. Glue** leaves around the border to create a frame.



Tip: Place a heavy object, like a book, on top of your artwork overnight so it lies flat as it continues to dry.

Looking for inspiration? Ready to try a new technique? Click or scan the QR code to see creative examples for how to make this craft.





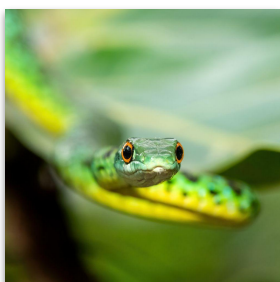


PR, or public relations, refers to how something is seen by the world at large, and many critters would benefit from a positive PR campaign! Create a poster or video that takes an often misunderstood creepy-crawler and presents it in a better light.



Spiders: From Spooky Scuttlers to Our Best Buds

A large number of people are arachnophobic, meaning they are afraid of spiders. A common concern when encountering a spider is that it might be venomous, but did you know that of the 4,000 species of spider in North America, only two are venomous to humans? Spiders do a lot more good than harm by catching and eating dangerous insects.



Snakes: More Noodle Than Nemesis

Like spiders, snakes are often feared, with many being wary of being bitten by a venomous snake. While there are more venomous snakes in the U.S. than venomous spiders, most venomous snakes live in the wilderness, away from human-made structures. Nonvenomous snakes help us by scaring pests like rodents away from our homes and gardens.

Directions:

1. Choose an animal that is often misunderstood, like spiders, bees, snakes, frogs, worms, or bats.
2. With your instructor's permission, use the internet to research what ways they can be helpful to humans.
3. Use what you discover to create a poster, video, or other piece of media that shows these creatures in a new light.

Brainstorming Questions

- What **animal** do you want to research?
- What are some common **misconceptions** about your chosen animal?
- What are some ways your animal actually **helps** humans?
- If your chosen animal does have the potential to hurt humans (stinging, biting, etc.), **why** does it hurt humans, and what can people do to **avoid** this?

What To Include

- ☐ An **introduction** that **describes** your chosen animal and **explains** why they are often misunderstood
- ☐ A correction of any **misconceptions** about the animal
- ☐ A description of how your chosen animal is **helpful** to humans, other animals, or the environment
- ☐ Any other information you feel is **important**



Cooking Activity Ladybug's Garden Crackers

Creepers, Crawlers, and Critters
6-8 Activities

Create a delicious snack that celebrates a critter with style!

 **Did you know that ladybugs aren't just stylish critters?** They are also good for your garden, are a symbol of good luck, and aren't actually bugs at all!

Ladybugs work as a **natural pest control** in your garden, devouring the plant-eating insects!

Stories of ladybugs as **symbols of good luck** have been passed down for hundreds of years!

Ladybugs aren't actually classified as bugs; they **belong to the beetle order, Coleoptera!**



Ready to make some ladybug crackers? Make sure to ask an adult for help with this activity!

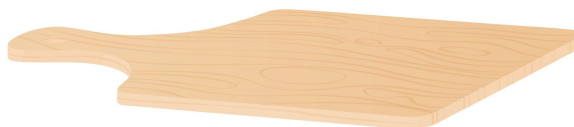
Tools You May Need



Bowl for mixing



Butter knife



Cutting board



Toothpicks

Turn the page for the ingredients and directions.



Ladybug's Garden Crackers (Serves four to six)

This simple and healthy snack brings the ladybug's garden to your table with delicious cherry tomatoes, fresh herbs, olives, crackers, and cream cheese!

Some of these ingredients and steps require using a knife to chop or slice. **Always ask an adult for assistance when using knives.**

Ingredients

- ❑ 10-12 round buttery crackers, or your favorite crackers with a flat surface!
- ❑ 4 oz cream cheese, softened; substitute nondairy if needed
- ❑ 1 tbsp fresh parsley or dill, finely chopped
- ❑ 10 fresh cherry tomatoes, washed and cut in half lengthwise
- ❑ 10 black olives without pits
- ❑ Fresh chives, cut into 1-inch pieces for antennae
- ❑ Balsamic glaze (or tiny black olive bits) for spots

Steps

1. Set aside a spoonful of cream cheese if you'd like your ladybug to have eyes!
2. Mix the spread: Stir softened cream cheese and chopped herbs together in a small bowl until smooth. If you'd prefer to decorate with herbs instead of mixing them in, you can skip this step!
3. Spread a layer of cream cheese (or your cream cheese mix) on to each cracker.
4. Ask an adult help you form the wings by having them slice the cherry tomatoes in half lengthwise. Then you can place them on the crackers!
5. Ask an adult to help you make the head by cutting the black olives in half crosswise or into pieces. Then you can place them at the top of the tomato bodies!
6. Add details to the ladybug! Put tiny dots of balsamic glaze or minced black olive pieces on the tomato wings for spots. Then, tuck two 1-inch chive pieces into the top of the olive for antennae. Last, add tiny dots of the reserved cream cheese to the black olive head to make eyes, and use balsamic glaze or olive pieces for pupils.





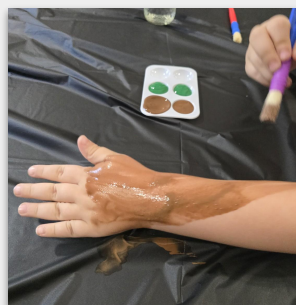
With just a little color, bring your hands to life by creating ASL critters!

Supplies Needed: Paint, brushes, paint tray, and a covered working area



1. Choose Your Critter

Choose a critter and find the ASL sign for that animal on the next two pages. Think about the colors you'll need for your design.



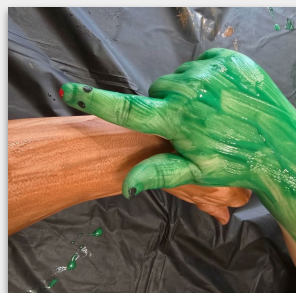
2. Paint Your Hand(s)

Paint the parts of your hand and arm needed for your design, starting with your critter's main color.



3. Add the Details

Add spots, stripes, eyes, patterns, or other features to make your hand look like your creepy-crawly.



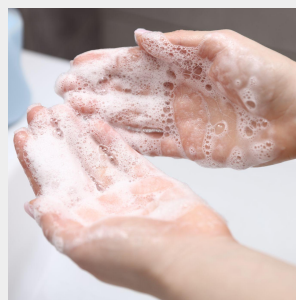
4. Make the ASL Sign

Put your hands into the correct handshape and show off your creepy-crawly sign!
*Use the next two pages for support with this step.



5. Share It

Take a photo of your hands to share with your family and friends to show them your critter hand(s)!

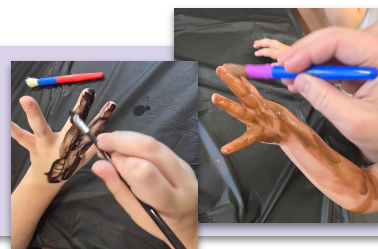


6. Clean Up!

Wash the paint off your hands with soap and water. Rinse out your brushes and clean your work area.

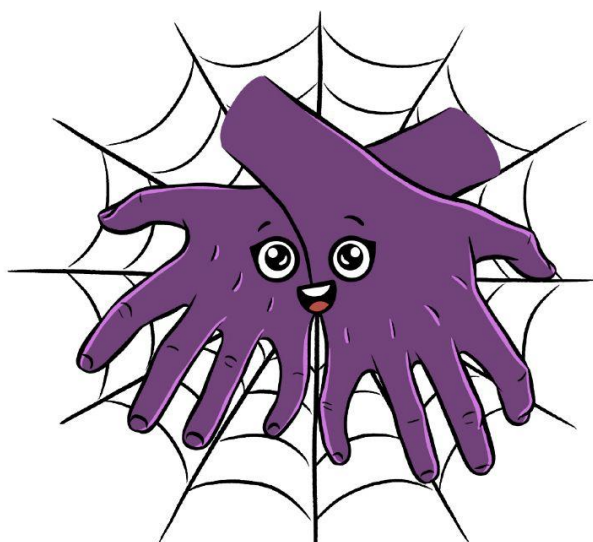
Tips:

- Use a smaller brush to paint around your fingers, knuckles, and other small spaces.
- Ask someone for help with areas that are hard to reach.



Not sure what to paint? Check out the next two pages for colorful creepy-crawly ideas! You can choose any critter shown, not just the spider or lizard in our examples.

Don't want to paint your hands? That's OK! Use the blank hand pictures to design and color your own creepy-crawly hands instead.



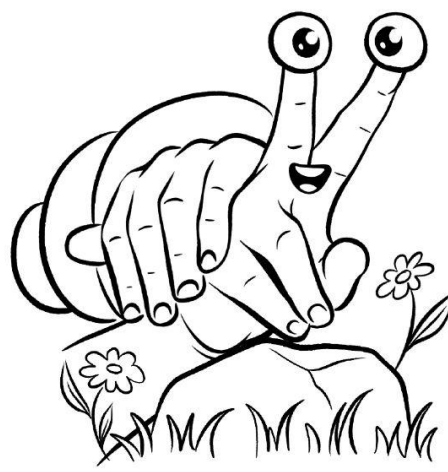
Spider



Spider



Snail



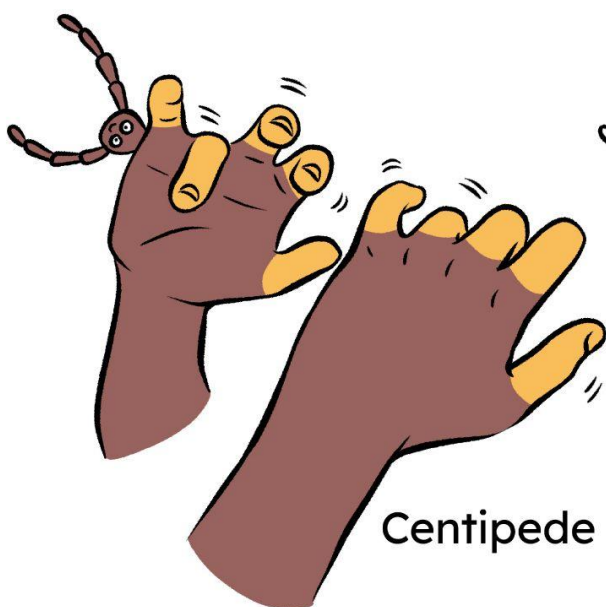
Snail



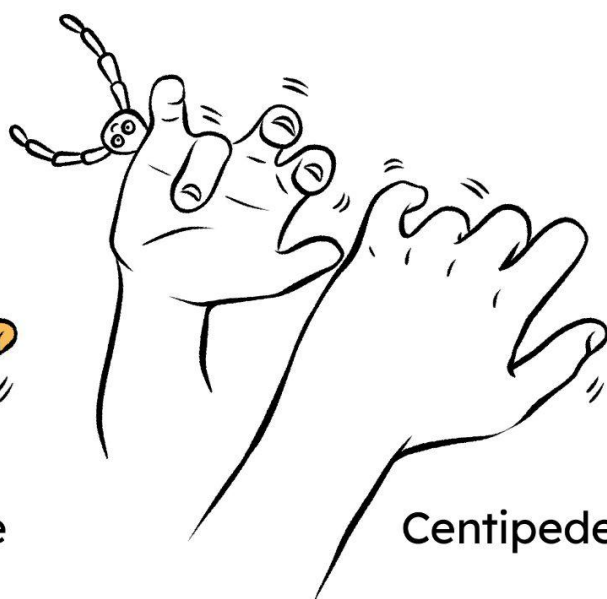
Snake



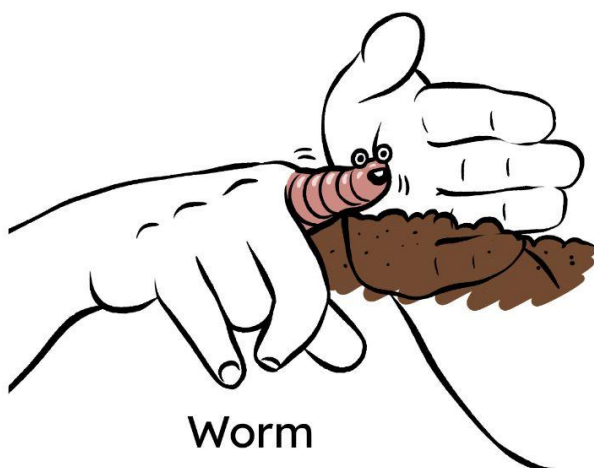
Snake



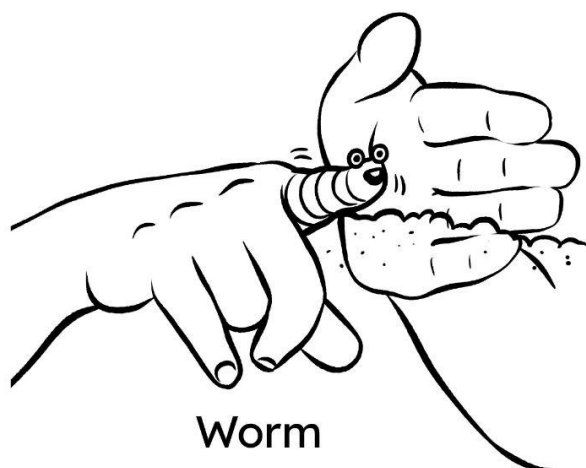
Centipede



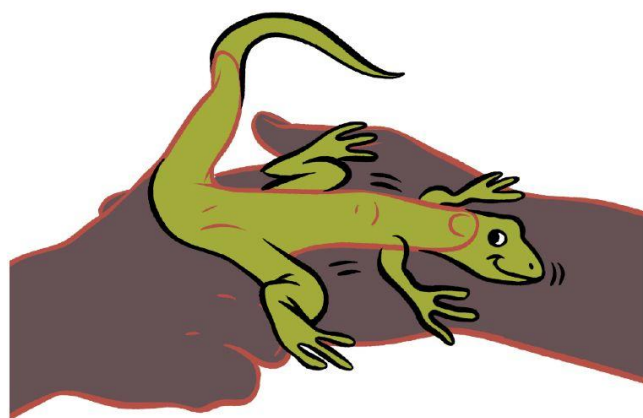
Centipede



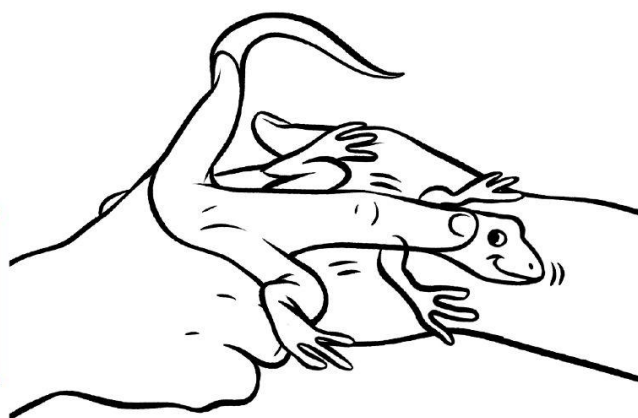
Worm



Worm



Lizard



Lizard