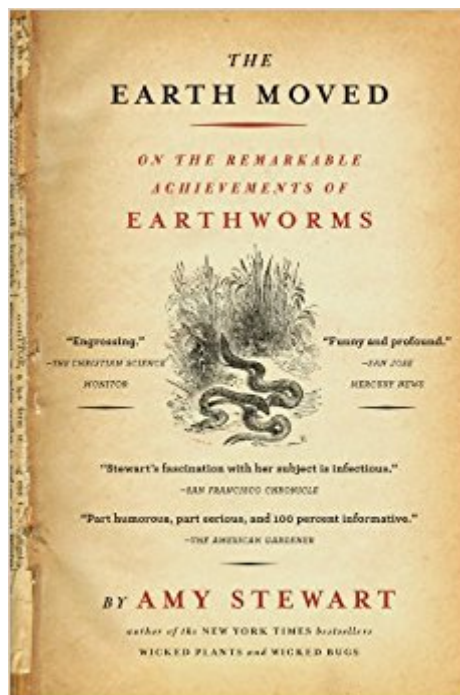




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# The Earth Moved: On The Remarkable Achievements Of Earthworms



## Synopsis

In *The Earth Moved*, Amy Stewart takes us on a journey through the underground world and introduces us to one of its most amazing denizens. The earthworm may be small, spineless, and blind, but its impact on the ecosystem is profound. It ploughs the soil, fights plant diseases, cleans up pollution, and turns ordinary dirt into fertile land. Who knew? In her witty, offbeat style, Stewart shows that much depends on the actions of the lowly worm. Charles Darwin devoted his last years to the meticulous study of these creatures, praising their remarkable abilities. With the august scientist as her inspiration, Stewart investigates the worm's subterranean realm, talks to oligochaetologists – the unsung heroes of earthworm science – who have devoted their lives to unearthing the complex life beneath our feet, and observes the thousands of worms in her own garden. From the legendary giant Australian worm that stretches to ten feet in length to the modest nightcrawler that wormed its way into the heart of Darwin's last book to the energetic red wigglers in Stewart's compost bin, *The Earth Moved* gives worms their due and exposes their hidden and extraordinary universe. This book is for all of us who appreciate Mother Nature's creatures, no matter how humble.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Even Charles Darwin found the lowly earthworm fascinating: all their tiny individual labors in tilling the soil and nourishing it with their droppings add up over time to a massive collective impact on the landscape. In this absorbing, if occasionally gross, treatise, gardening journalist Stewart (From the

Ground Up) delves into their dank subterranean world, detailing their problem-solving skills, sex lives (Darwin noted their "sexual passion") and shocking ability to re-grow a whole body from a severed segment (scientists have even sutured together parts of three different earthworms into a single Frankenworm). Intriguing in their own right, earthworms stand at the fulcrum of the balance of nature. In the wrong place, they can devastate forests, but in the right place, they boost farm yields, suppress pests and plant diseases, detoxify polluted soils and process raw sewage into inoffensive fertilizer; indeed, humanity's first great civilizations may have risen on the backs of earthworms, say some of the creature's most fervent champions. Stewart writes in a charming, meditative but scientifically grounded style that is informed by her personal relationship with the worms in her compost bin. In her telling, worms become metaphors-for the English working class, for the process of scientific rumination, for the redemption of death and decay by life and fertility-and serve as a touchstone for exploring the ecological view of things. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Adult/High School-In this fascinating book, readers are taken on a journey underground to see the impact worms have on humans and on our planet. Referring often to Charles Darwin's *The Formation of Vegetable Mould, through the Action of Worms, with Observations of Their Habits*, Stewart educates on the vital role these creatures play in growing crops, how they can neutralize the effects of nuclear waste on soil, and their ability to regenerate new body parts. An avid gardener, the author begins with the worms crawling through her own backyard before visiting them in such destinations as an endangered redwood forest in California, a sewage-treatment plant in San Francisco, a nature preserve in Minnesota, and The Giant Worm Museum in Australia (which is shaped like a 325-foot-long worm). A book that's as enlightening as it is entertaining.-James O. Cahill, Fairfax County Public Library, VA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I had no desire to read about worms, but I've read Amy Stewart's Kopp series, enjoyed those novels, and thought I'd give this book a chance. (It didn't hurt that my local librarian mentioned enjoying this book as well.) Did I like this book? Yes! Am I surprised? Maybe, a little. The subject matter wasn't on my list of things to learn about, EARTHWORMS, and yet the writing was so enjoyable, I would recommend this book to others. I would throw this book into the cosy/nonfiction

category. The writing is similar to books written by Mary Roach, one of my favorite authors. This book would be suitable for young adults and older. A very pleasant read. A good book when you'd like to learn something, but don't want to get into anything too heavy. This book is the literary equivalent of Fig Newton's at snack time. I have new respect for the earthworms in my garden. I will certainly read other nonfiction books by this author, as well as her stories about the Kopp sisters.

This book by Amy Stewart lacks some of the dry wit and excellent illustrations of her later books, but is non-the-less filled with facts about a subject we just don't know enough about - the earthworms of our gardens and crops. Amy gets the message across that we sadly take worms for granted (if at all), but they are as important to us as mycelium or bees for providing good soil and abundant harvests. Underground and out of sight, they aerate the soil, digest and produce compost and are part of the important food cycle ecology. Makes you wonder the effect of non-organic approaches on diminishing yields by poisoning these workhorses of nature.

I haven't reviewed any of my reading in several months. Since I visited my frozen earthworms out in the shed recently, I've decided to begin with Amy Stewart's book. I loved *The Earth Moved: on the Remarkable Achievements of Earthworms* in the same way that I love my frozen earthworms. It was surprising to find someone else who had the same earthy interest in those small, wiggly creatures. The fact that they're not all so small was also a surprise. The book is filled with interesting stories and facts. Would it surprise you to know that there are giant worms living under the soil in some places, like Oregon and Australia? Did you know that Darwin kept and studied worms in his senior years? Reading the book gave me a new respect and understanding for the residents of my worm farm. They help the earth, but at times can also be a danger. However, none of it is intentional. They just do what worms do, which is a lot more than I ever realized. I'm wondering if any of the worms in my worm farm will survive this cold winter. If they don't, I'm seriously thinking about not raising any more little garbage eaters. I don't think of them in the same way after reading *The Earth Moved: on the Remarkable Achievements of Earthworms*. It was definitely a significant read!

I have no idea why I bought this book. I do like to garden, but am not especially organic about it. I do have a compost pile, and have sort of watched my local earthworm population over the years with

about the same level of interest as the local ladybug population. They are there, I think they are doing good, but not really all that interested.---The Good Points---\* Amy Stewart seems to know her worms. She is certainly full of knowledge and opinions on what worms do, how they do it, where they do it, and why they do it.\* I never really thought I cared, but the book just sort of sucks you in. Now that I know that bananas are one of the worms favorite food, it sort of makes carrying the scraps out to the compost pile, including banana peels, somewhat more rewarding. Bon Appetite, little guys!\* There was quite a bit of info in the book that I hadn't been exposed to before, and it was written in such a way that I ended up reading it.---The Not So Good Points---\* My biggest criticism is that the material is not referenced. In some cases, Stewart identifies an authority in the narrative for her information. In others she indicates direct observation. But in the majority of her narrative, the earthworm facts are presented without attribution. I have no doubt that Stewart knows a great deal about them, and would be 90% confident in anything she said, but the book does not stand as a reference source. I admit being somewhat picky about this issue, but I am careful about what I read because I do not like to remember someone's opinion as a "fact". For example, the book makes a statement about cases where earthworms can actually be harmful to an environment. To me that is an interesting little tidbit, and one I am likely to remember and repeat. The problem is I don't really know if this is Stewart's opinion, a common perception among earthworm observers, a current scientific theory, or a proven fact.---Summary---I am glad I read the book, and enjoyed it far more than I thought I would. I appreciate any book that stimulates my interest in new topics, and based on that criteria, the book is a success. In a way it makes me feel better knowing that my little vegetable garden has a staff of thousands of hardworking little gardeners working for me.

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