Life Cycles Activity

• In this lesson we were discussing how life cycles of animals differ. An ideal activity for this lesson is showing the life cycle of a mealworm because it is cheap, easy, and hands-on.

• Materials needed are:
  1. Mealworms – 20 can be purchased for around $4 at any pet shop.
  2. An open container to keep them in.
  3. Whole grain cereal – for their food
  4. A bottle cap to put their water in.

• I printed off sheets with four empty squares on them labeled egg, larva, pupa, and beetle. The students drew each stage of a meal worm’s life in the designated box whenever they saw it.

• The first day they only drew eggs and the larva /mealworm. After about 2 weeks all the mealworms are pupas and then a week later they are beetles.

• This is a 4 week long activity.

• This activity would be appropriate for all grades.

• I gave the students background information about the life cycle of a meal worm using these pictures and definitions before I introduced the actual worms.
The First Stage of a Mealworm: An Egg

The first stage of a mealworm's life is an egg. The egg is smaller than the egg picture shown here. The color of the egg is white or cream.

The Second Stage of a Mealworm: A Mealworm
The second stage of a mealworm's life is the larva stage, during this stage, it moves about by crawling and it also sheds its skin several times and this process is known as moulting.

The Third Stage of a Mealworm: A Pupa
The third stage of a mealworm's life is the pupa stage. It is white in color. During this stage, same as the pupa of a butterfly, it sleeps and does not eat at all!

The Fourth Stage of a Mealworm: A Darkling Beetle
The fourth and last stage of a mealworm's life is the adult stage. As the beetle grows older, it gets darker in color. This 'beetle stage' is the most active stage in a mealworm's life cycle. To protect themselves from their enemies in this stage, they bite hard and move very fast!
Here is the box with cereal, water in a bottle cap, and the mealworms.

This is the first day of the activity, when the students are drawing the eggs and the mealworms.