Food to die for

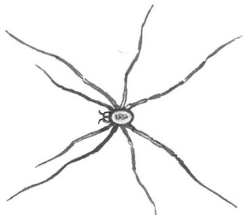
Background knowledge

When living things die, other living things feed on them. If they have a skeleton or shell, it will be the only part left after all the soft parts are eaten. Earthworms feed on dead plants. Other animals, such as the maggots of flies, feed on dead animals. There are also tiny living things called *microbes* that feed on dead plants and animals. Bacteria and some fungi are microbes. When dead things *decay*, they are really being eaten by microbes!

Science activity

Here are some animals found in woodlands, where there are decaying leaves. Can you use this yes/no key to find their names?

Clue 1	Does the animal have six legs? If yes, it is a springtail.
	Does the animal have more than six legs? If yes, go to clue 2.
Clue 2	Does it have eight legs? If yes, it is a harvestman.
	Does it have more than eight legs? If yes, go to clue 3.
Clue 3	Does it have a broad, flat body? If yes, it is a woodlouse.
	Does it have a long, thin body? If yes, go to clue 4.
Clue 4	Does each section of the body have two legs? If yes, it is a centipede.
	Does each section of the body have four legs? If yes, it is a millipede.



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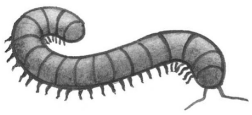

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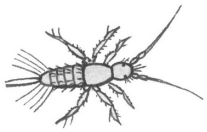

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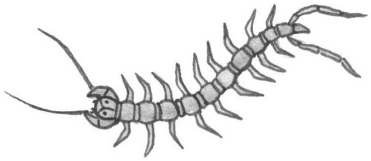

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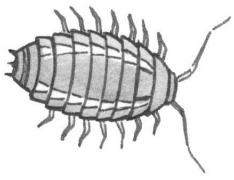
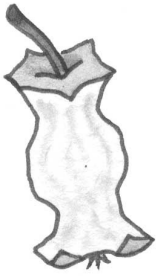


This is a .....

Science investigation

! Take extra care - ask an adult to supervise you.

Design and conduct an experiment to see what factors in the environment can affect the decay of an apple core. Examples of some factors are temperature, light, and moisture. Only one factor should be tested at a time.



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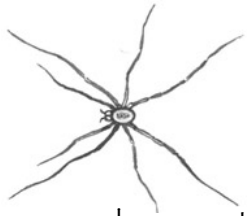
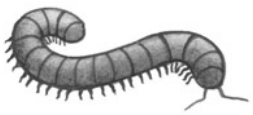
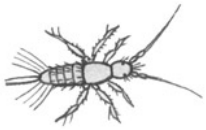


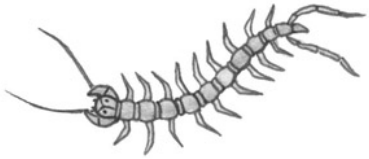
This is a harvestman.



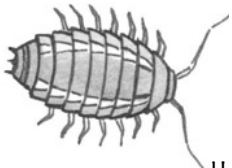
This is a millipede.



This is a springtail.



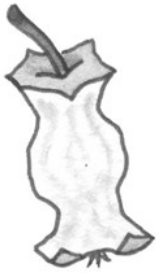
This is a centipede.



This is a woodlouse.

Science investigation

(!) Dead animals and plants provide food for a range of living things. Decay organisms recycle important nutrients back to the soil and air. They are called reducers or decomposers. Decay is affected by temperature, heat, moisture, and oxygen.



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