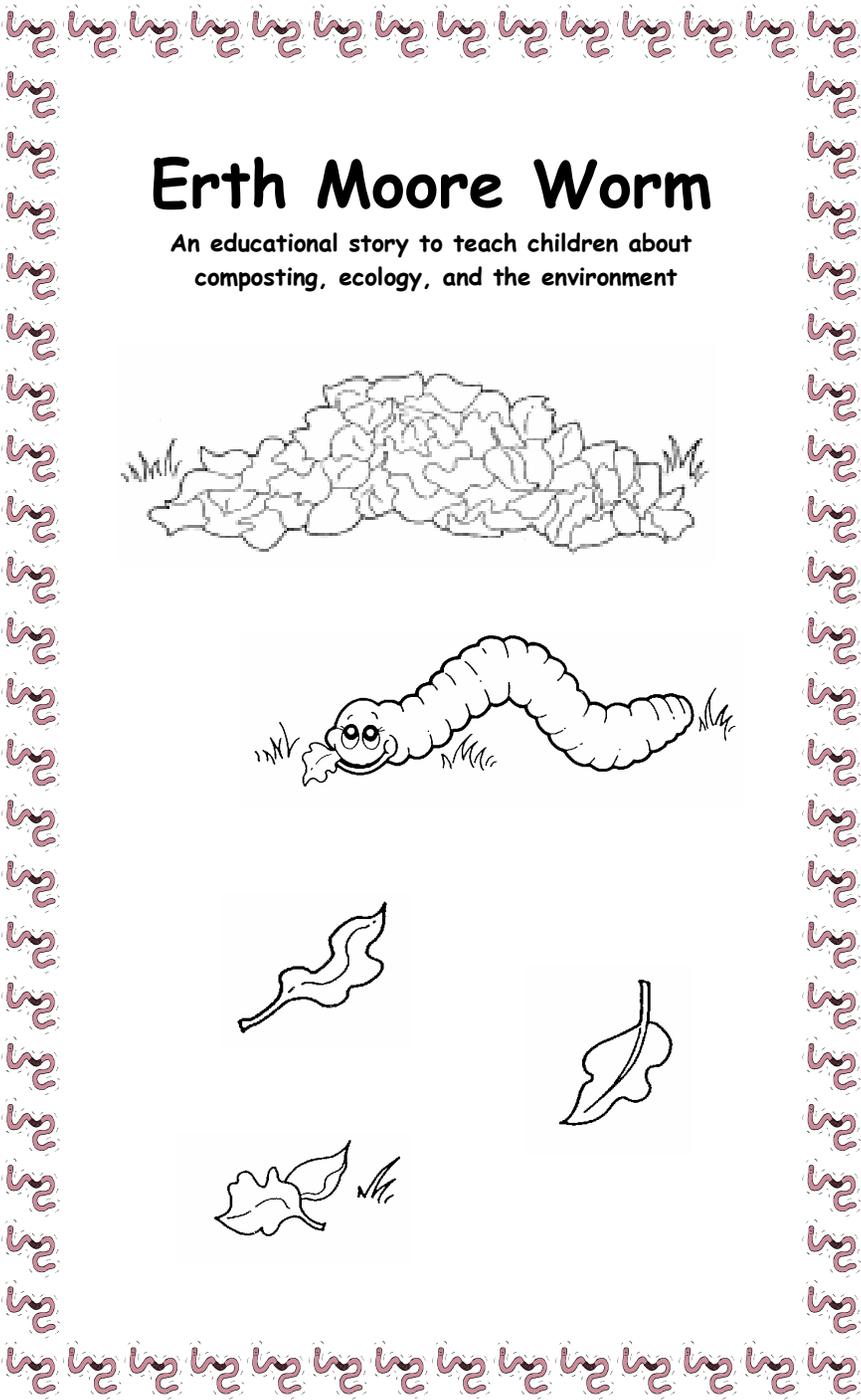
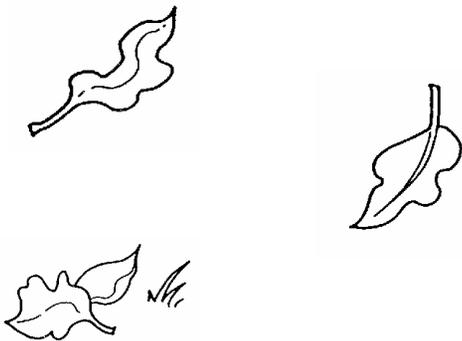
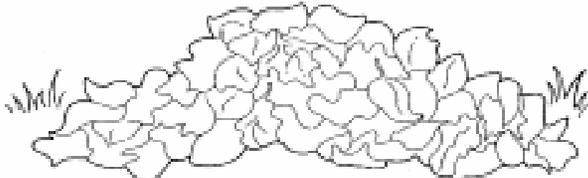


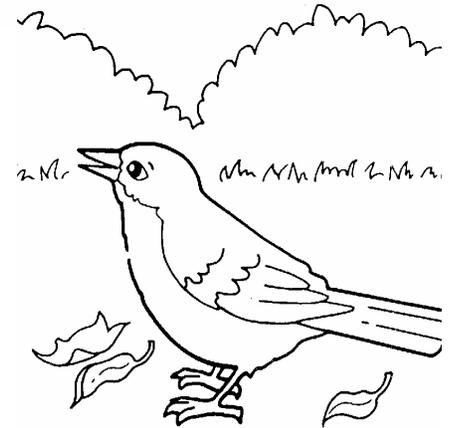
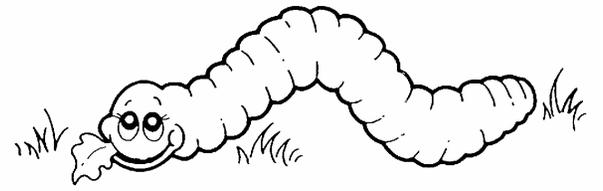
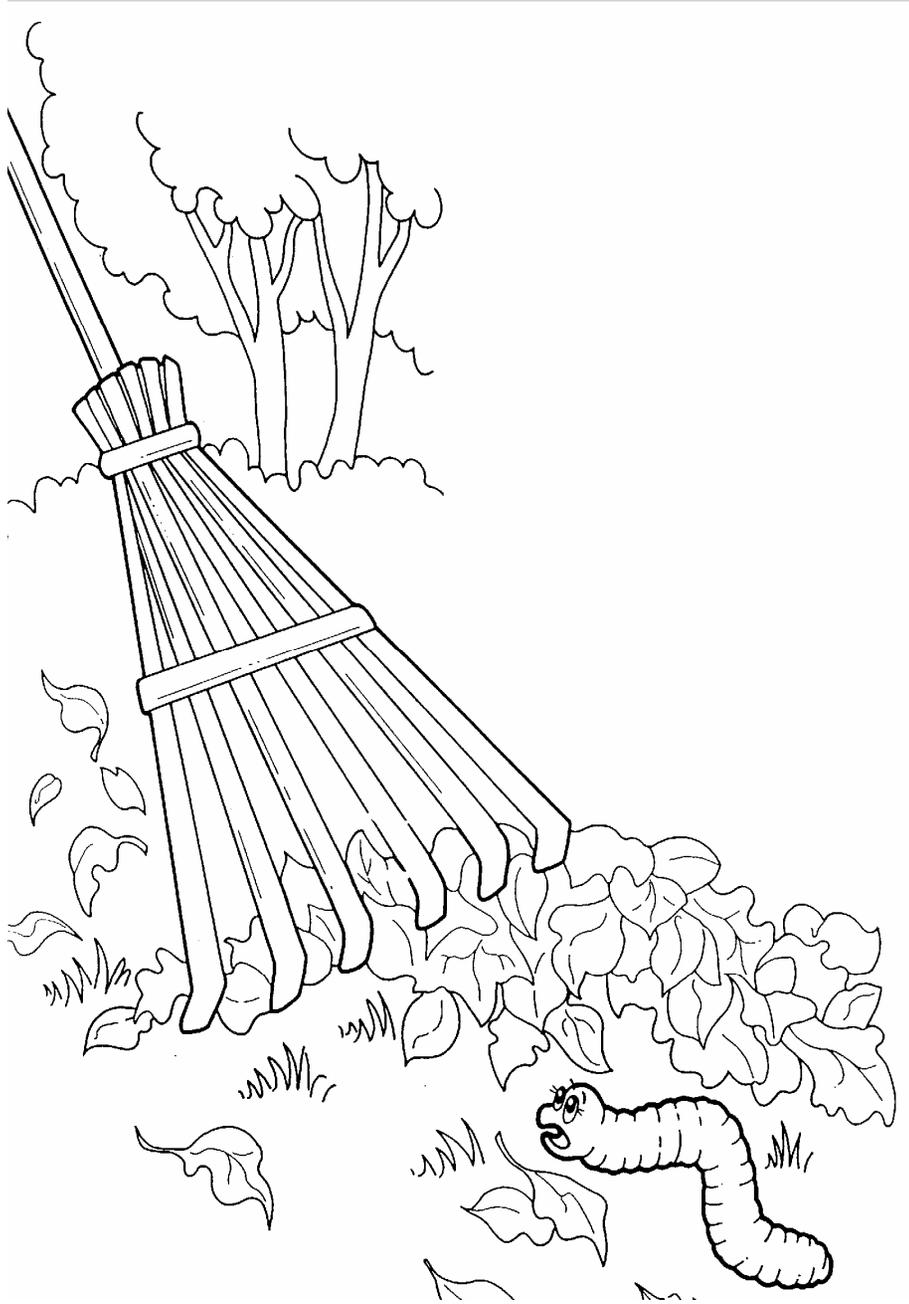
Our thanks to the folks at ...



Erth Moore Worm

An educational story to teach children about composting, ecology, and the environment



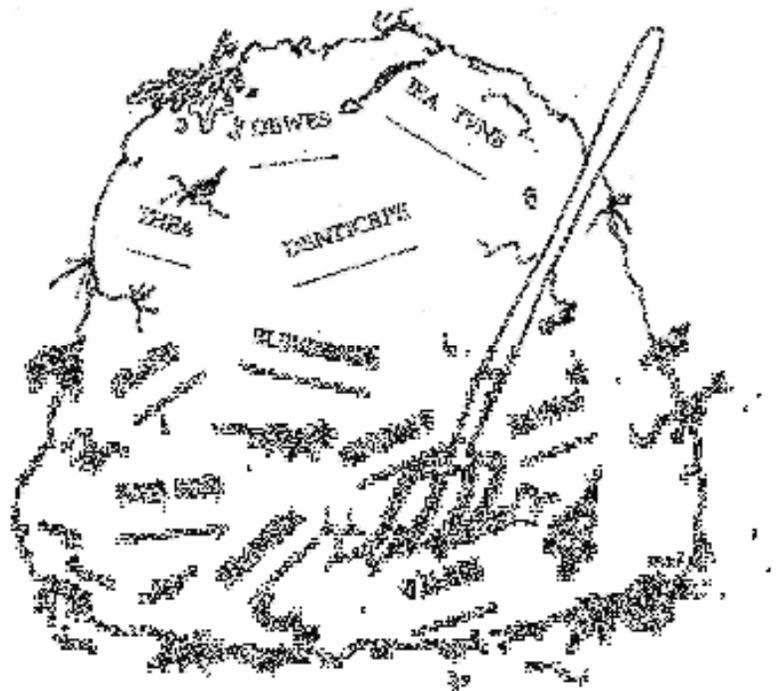


Mr. Gardener's Compost Pile

A Closer Look

The decomposition of organic matter takes place naturally in woods, meadows, and in your own yard. The process, which takes many months, is aided by heat, moisture, and many kinds of creatures. Gardeners and farmers speed up decomposition by making compost piles. They build a pile by layering materials such as leaves and other plant waste, grass clippings or manure, and water.

Directions: Unscramble the words in the compost pile. Write the correct word under the scrambled word. Words to find are: Air Vent, Manure, Heat, Worm, Centipede, Sow Bug, Leaves, Grass, Vegetable, Fungus, Weeds



Erth Moore was a very busy earthworm. She wriggled happily through the grass and fallen leaves. Erth Moore chomped lazily on the leaves. She knew her job was VERY important. She helped to make the soil. The vegetables and flowers and the mighty oaks and maples would grow tall and strong in the soil. She knew that her work made the birds and bees, rabbits and other animals happy. They would have food to eat and a place to live because she made soil out of the leaves and grass.

Erth Moore continued to wriggle through the grass. Suddenly something large fell on her. She was startled. She quickly wriggled into a hole. She looked back. The large thing came down again. It was a rake! The rake pulled up the leaves, grass and twigs. Then she saw the gardener. The gardener raked the leaves, grass and twigs into a pile. He put them into a plastic bag. Erth Moore was surprised! Why did the gardener put those things into a bag? Erth Moore could turn the leaves and grass into fine compost for the gardener's vegetable and flower gardens. The compost would be good for the plants. They would grow strong and healthy.



Erth Moore was puzzled. As she watched the gardener rake, a dark shadow fell over her. She looked up. She was frightened. Something sharp and yellow was jabbing at her. She ducked back into her hole. The sharp thing jabbed at her again. It was a robin!

"Wait!" cried Erth Moore. "Wait!"

Robin Redbreast stopped. He tilted his head to one side. A beady eye peered at Erth Moore. "What!" exclaimed Robin. "I'm hungry."

"Maybe you can help me," said Erth Moore.

"Why?" asked Robin.

"Well, Mr. Gardener is cleaning his yard. He's putting his grass and leaves and twigs into bags."

"Is that bad?" asked Robin.

"Yes," replied Erth Moore.

"Why?" asked Robin.

"Because," said Earth Moore, "it will be taken to a landfill."

"So-o-o?" replied Robin.

"Our landfills will fill up and we won't have any place to put our trash. Besides," said Erth Moore, "my earthworm friends and I can make compost."

"Compost? What is compost?" asked Robin.

"Compost," said Erth Moore, "is what I make the leaves and grass into when I chew them up."

"Oh. So what good is that?" asked the puzzled Robin.

"Well," said Erth Moore, "after I chew up the leaves and grass, I mix it with the dirt. I make a very good soil for the flowers and trees to grow in."

"Okay," said Mr. Gardener.

"If that's all there is to do. I bet it will save me money, too. I won't have to pay to have the leaves go to a landfill. Maybe my grandchildren can help me. They like to grow things. Okay, I will compost the leaves."

"Grrr-reat," chorused the group. "Next year, there will be a beautiful garden!" "Yeah!" "Good going, Erth Moore," said Robin, Ricardo and Felitia.

"Yes," said Mr. Gardener. "Thank you for telling me about composting."

"You're welcome," said Erth Moore.

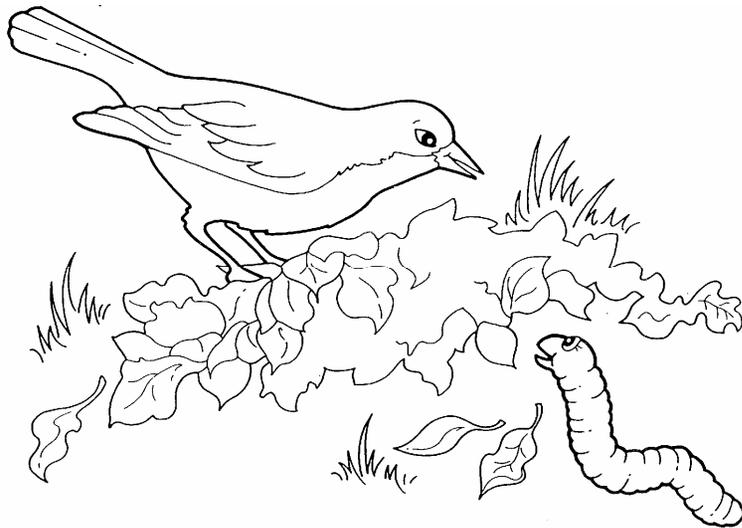
Erth Moore was very pleased. But she had a lot of work ahead of her. She had to find her earthworm friends and take them to the leaf pile.

She had a lot of chewing ahead of her, too. "Oh, well. There would be beautiful flowers and vegetables and trees." She was very excited.

Robin Redbreast was excited too. He couldn't wait for all those earthworms. There would be plenty in the leaf pile. Ricardo Rabbit hopped away very happy, too. Next spring there would be delicious carrots and beans .. his favorite dinner. Felitia Fox looked forward to the spring also. There would be plenty of rabbits for her hungry family.

Mr. Gardener was happy too. Next year his garden would be the best in the neighborhood. Maybe he would win a prize!

"Well," thought Erth Moore, "back to work."



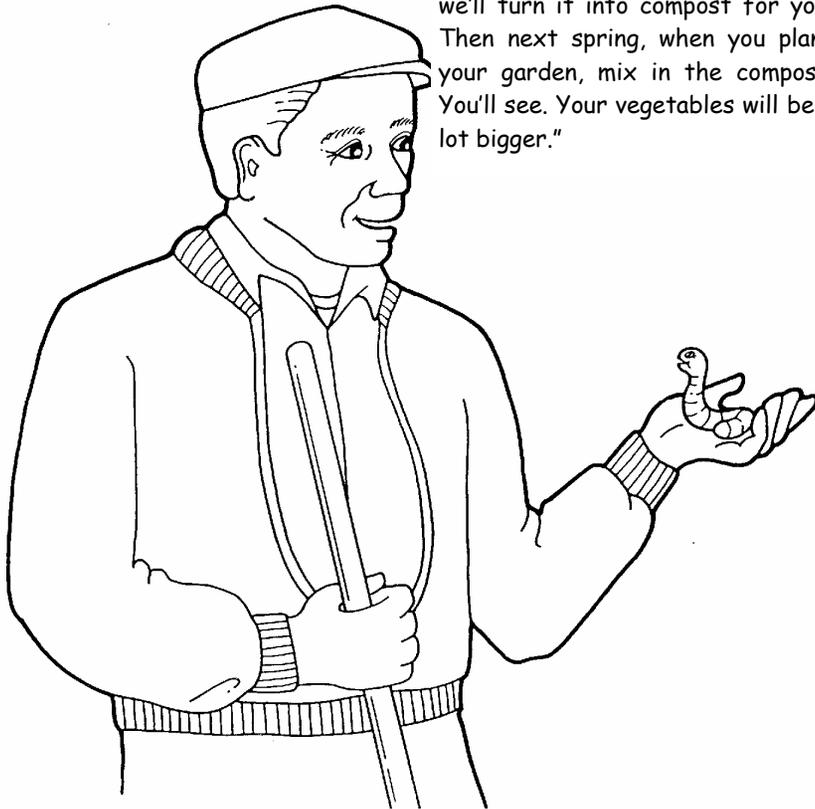
"Yep," chimed in Ricardo. It helps to make the vegetables grow bigger and the flowers to get REALLY BIG flowers. I really like big vegetables, especially carrots, lettuce and beans."

"I'll bet you like big vegetables," said Mr. Gardener.

"And that makes bigger rabbits," said Felitia. "I like big rabbits."

"It's not much work?" asked Mr. Gardener.

"No," said Erth Moore. "Just rake the leaves in a pile. You can put them wherever you like. I'll call my earthworm buddies and we'll turn it into compost for you. Then next spring, when you plant your garden, mix in the compost. You'll see. Your vegetables will be a lot bigger."



Robin became excited. "Oh, I get it," he exclaimed. "If the soil is good, the trees will grow. If the trees grow, I'll have a place to live. And if the flowers grow, there will be more bugs for me and my family to eat."

"Yes!" cried Erth Moore. "Will you help me?"

"Of course," replied Robin.

Erth Moore and Robin went through the grass. It was a very beautiful day ... the sun was shining ... the sky was a deep blue ... the grass was very tall and green. Erth Moore felt proud. Her hard work was paying off. The grass was growing very well. She knew she could help the gardener's garden grow too. Today they would tell the gardener about composting.

"What's that?" asked Robin. "I hear something."

"What?" said Erth Moore. "I don't hear anything."

"That!" said Robin. "It sounds like puffing."

Two large ears appeared above the grass.



Ricardo Rabbit hopped towards Erth Moore and Robin Redbreast. He was puffing hard. He had a worried look on his face.

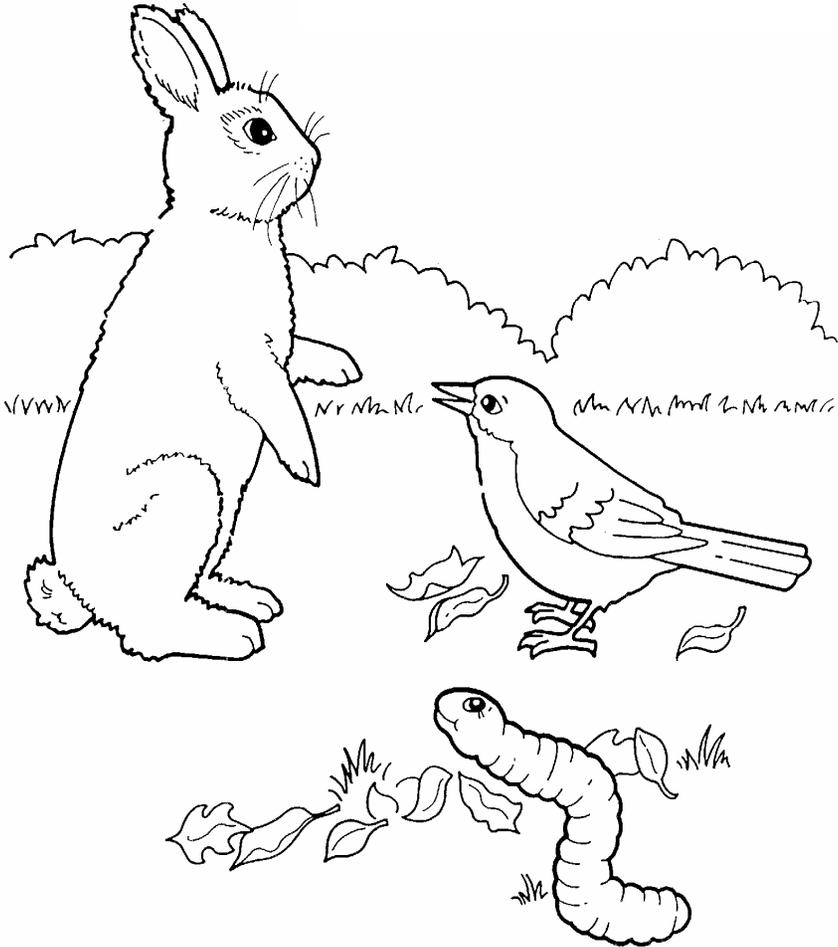
"Hi!" shouted Erth Moore. "What's wrong? Why are you puffing so hard?"

Ricardo stopped. He was surprised to see Erth Moore and Robin Redbreast together. Were they friends?

"I can't talk now," Ricardo said quickly "Felitia Fox is chasing me!"

"Why is she chasing you?" asked Robin.

"She says she's hungry," said Ricardo. "She can run really fast."



"I love carrots and lettuce," chimed in Ricardo Rabbit. "They make me really healthy."

"I like healthy rabbits," thought Felitia Fox, "They're good for my family." Out loud, Felitia said, "Okay, I'll help you."

"I'll help too," said Ricardo.

Together they walked towards Mr. Gardener. He was raking some leaves into a big plastic bag. "This is hard work," Mr. Gardener mumbled to himself. He shoved more leaves into the bag. He filled the bag up and tied it with a string. He started to drag the bag to the road. Suddenly he was surrounded. He was very surprised. "Who are you?" Mr. Gardener exclaimed.

"Hi! I'm Erth Moore. These are my friends Robin Redbreast, Ricardo Rabbit and Felitia Fox."

"Hello," said Mr. Gardener, "I'm Mr. Gardener. It's nice to meet you. What can I do for you?"

"We noticed that you put your leaves into bags. Why do you put your leaves into plastic bags?" asked Erth Moore.

"I want my yard to look nice," said Mr. Gardener.

"Do you know that you can compost your leaves?" asked Ricardo.

"Compost? Oh, yeah. I heard about that", said Mr. Gardener. "But that sounds like too much trouble."

"Oh, no. It's not a lot of trouble. Not any more trouble than raking up leaves and putting them in a bag." said Felitia.

"Yes," said Erth Moore. "I do most of the work."

"You do?" asked Mr. Gardener.

"Yes," said Erth Moore. "I chew up the leaves and mix it with the soil. It's good food for the vegetables and flowers."

"It is?" asked Mr. Gardener.

Suddenly a black nose and two red ears appeared above the grass. Felitia was running towards Ricardo. She reached out with her mouth and grabbed Ricardo's cotton tail.

"Ouch!" cried Ricardo.

Robin Redbreast flew into Felitia's face. Felitia was startled. She let go of Ricardo's tail.

"Whew!" said Ricardo. "That was close!" Erth Moore wriggled quickly towards Felitia.

"Stop," said Erth Moore. "Stop that right now!"

"Who are you?" asked Felitia. "What do you want?"

"I'm Erth Moore. And these are my friends Robin Redbreast and Ricardo Rabbit. We've come to talk to Mr. Gardener about composting. Do you want to help us?"





"Help you! Why would I help you? I have to feed my family. They're very hungry."

Then Felitia Fox reached over to grab Ricardo. Robin flew into Felitia's face and pecked her on the nose. "Ouch!" cried Felitia.

"Now stop it!" cried Erth Moore. "If you help us, there will be more rabbits for you to feed your family." Felitia's ears perked up. "Okay. How can I help you?"

"We have to talk to Mr. Gardener about composting," said Erth Moore. "He puts his leaves and grass into bags."

"So what," said Felitia.

"So," said Erth Moore, "they're put into the trash for the trashman to take to the landfill."

"So what," said Felitia again.

"Mr. Gardener can compost the leaves and grass. He can put the compost on his garden. That will make his vegetables grow better. He'll have lots of lettuce and tomatoes and carrots and beans."