

Centipedes & Arthropods in the Leaf Litter

Big World of Insects, Spiders & Bugs Series

Subject Areas: Science, Life Science, Biology

Synopsis: A variety of different arthropods, including centipedes, millipedes, insects, spiders and more are shown in the leaf litter on the forest floor. The important role that these creatures play in keeping the forest clean is discussed. Many interactions between predators and prey are shown. Students will also clearly see the differences between centipedes and millipedes.

Learning Objectives:

- Objective 1)** Students will be able to describe the importance of camouflage.
- Objective 2)** Students will be able to compare and contrast centipedes and millipedes.
- Objective 3)** Students will be able to list a variety of arthropods that may be found in the leaf litter.
- Objective 4)** Students will be able to describe the many unusual shapes that arthropods have.

Vocabulary: Define and discuss the following key terms:

Multitude, discreet, camouflage, *Scolopendrid centipede*, centipede, predator, carnivorous, ecosystem, decomposed, compost, emerge, wood louse, millipede, vegetarian, forelegs, evolved, instinct, venomous, species, cannibalism, adversary

Pre-Viewing Questions and Discussion:

- 1) Have you ever taken a walk in the woods? Did you notice any animals living among the leaves on the ground? What types of creatures do you think live there?
- 2) How can you tell the difference between a centipede and a millipede?
- 3) What are arthropods? How are insects different from spiders? How are different arthropods classified?

Post-Viewing Questions and Discussion:

- 1) What creatures are shown living in the leaves on the forest floor? List as many as you can as the program plays.
- 2) Why is camouflage so important to these creatures?
- 3) Many of these creatures have unusual shapes or forms. Describe them.
- 4) Why is the centipede vulnerable when it is shedding its skin?
- 5) How many legs do centipedes have for each body segment? How many legs do millipedes have for each body segment? Compare and contrast these two arthropods.

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- 6) What does the millipede do when approached by the predatory centipede?
- 7) Describe how the centipede moves. Why are a centipede's antennae so important?
- 8) What have the centipede's forelegs evolved into?
- 9) What animals are considered prey for a centipede?
- 10) How long can a centipede live?
- 11) Why are the creatures that eat dead and decomposed leaves so important? What do you think the forest would be like if these creatures didn't exist?

Additional Activities:

- 1) Create a chart or table that describes the different arthropods shown in this program. Include in the chart sections on how the creature is classified, what it looks like, how it moves, if it is a meat eater or a plant eater and any other important facts. You should also include an illustration for each animal.
- 2) Write a fictional story about a person who discovers what life is like in the leaf litter of a forest.
- 3) Research different kinds of centipedes. Are some more poisonous than others? How are these animals classified? In your report, compare and contrast centipedes with millipedes. Also include a drawing that illustrates the similarities and differences between these animals.
- 4) Create a food web that shows the different interactions among the various animals that live in the leaf litter.

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