

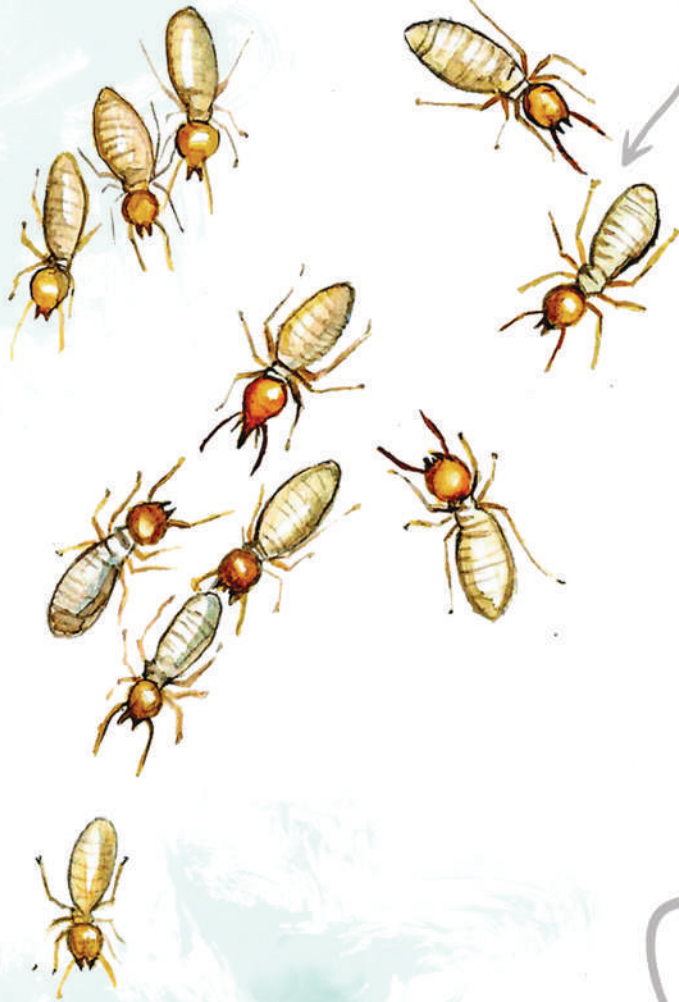
Termites & Termite Mounds

A termite is a small insect with a soft, whitish-brown body. Like ants and bees, termites live together in large groups called colonies.

Each termite has its own job to do in the colony: there are the workers, soldiers and a king and a queen.

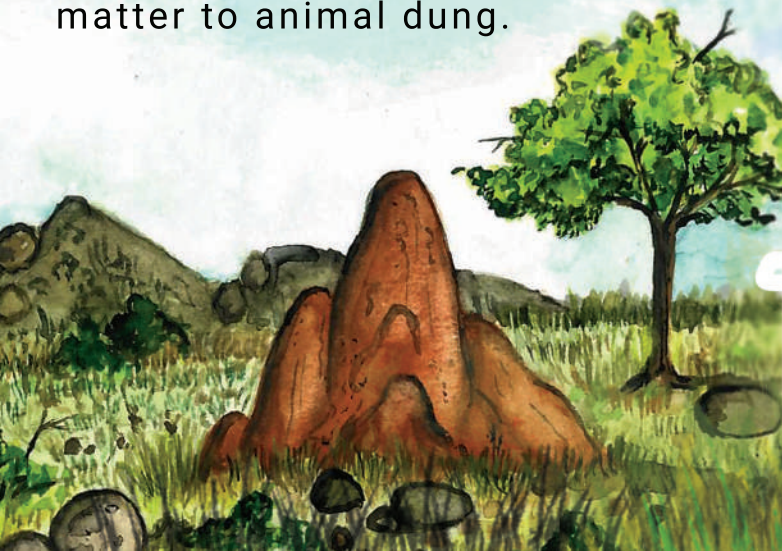
Worker termites build the mound, find food, grow a garden of fungus and care for the queen and her young.

Soldier termites protect the colony from attack and work quickly to patch up any damage to the termite mound.



Millions of termites can live in a single colony. Termites love to eat a variety of things, from wood and dead plant matter to animal dung.

The king and queen termites are responsible for starting a new colony. The queen is the only one that can lay eggs. She is taken care of by the workers and soldiers. She can produce up to 30,000 eggs a day!



Let's take a tour of a termite mound

Termites build giant nests called mounds or hills with soil, water and termite saliva. They build these mounds by joining bricks just like we do when we build our houses. Tiny, rolled up balls of soil are the 'bricks' for these termites.

Termite mounds can take upto 4-5 years to build.

A mound that breathes!
Termite mounds have tiny holes that allow outside air to enter.

Central chimney
The top of the mound has a network of tunnels and passages. Warm air from the mound rises up and mixes with fresh air. Cool air circulates in the mound and keeps it from becoming too hot.

Underground nest
Termites spend most of their time in the nest below the ground. This ground section of the mound has a special space for the queen. This is where she lays eggs, a **nursery**- where the young are cared for. For their food, there is also a garden that is planted and taken care of and is made of fungus.

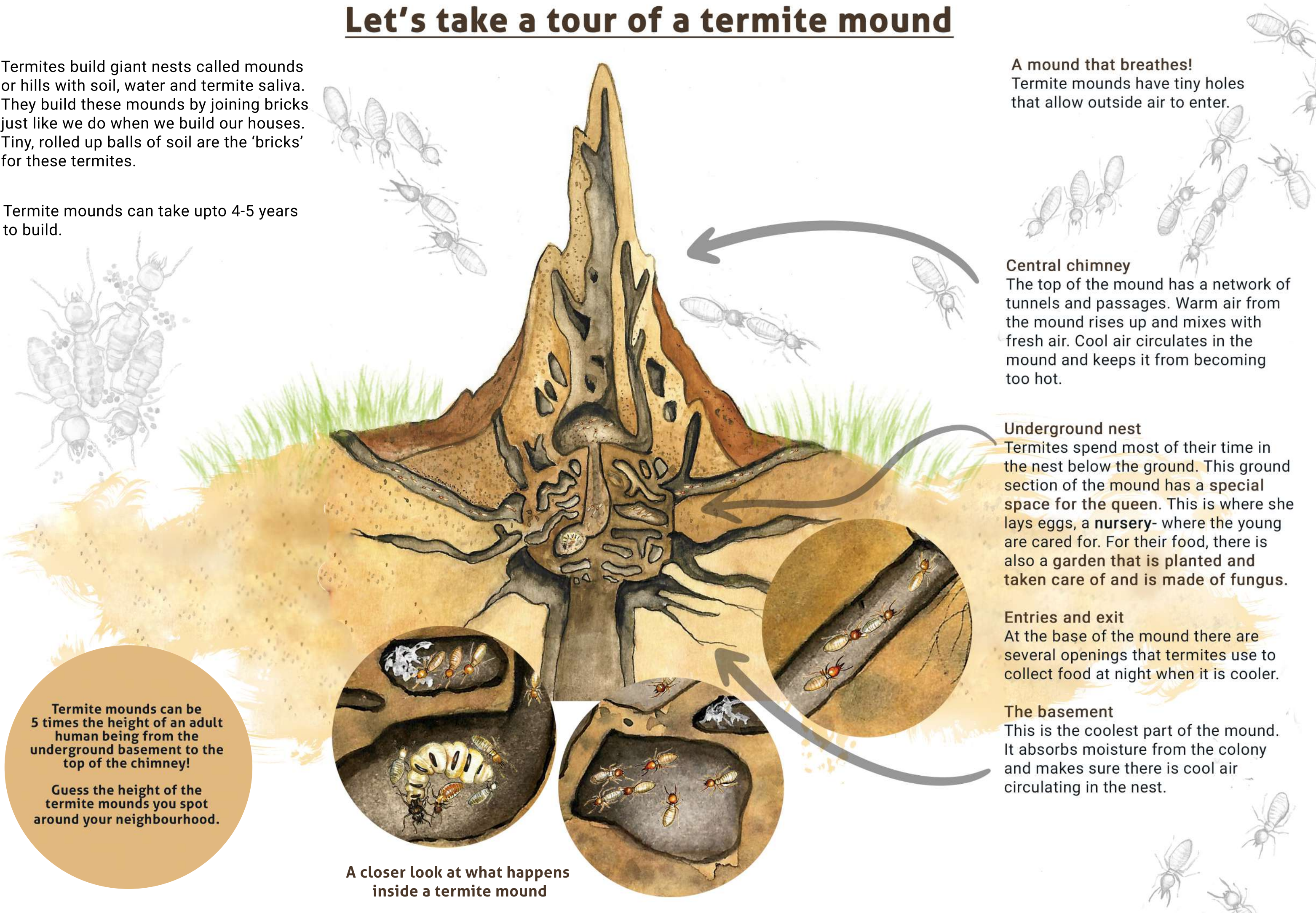
Entries and exit
At the base of the mound there are several openings that termites use to collect food at night when it is cooler.

The basement
This is the coolest part of the mound. It absorbs moisture from the colony and makes sure there is cool air circulating in the nest.

Termite mounds can be 5 times the height of an adult human being from the underground basement to the top of the chimney!

Guess the height of the termite mounds you spot around your neighbourhood.

A closer look at what happens inside a termite mound



Spot a termite mound!

Go for a walk in your neighbourhood and see if you can spot these structures. Note down the places where you spot them. Write and draw what you observe.



Some people call termite mounds 'Ant Hills' or 'Snake Hills'.

Sometimes, ants visit termite mounds to feed. You might also find snakes using the old abandoned holes in termite mounds to rest.

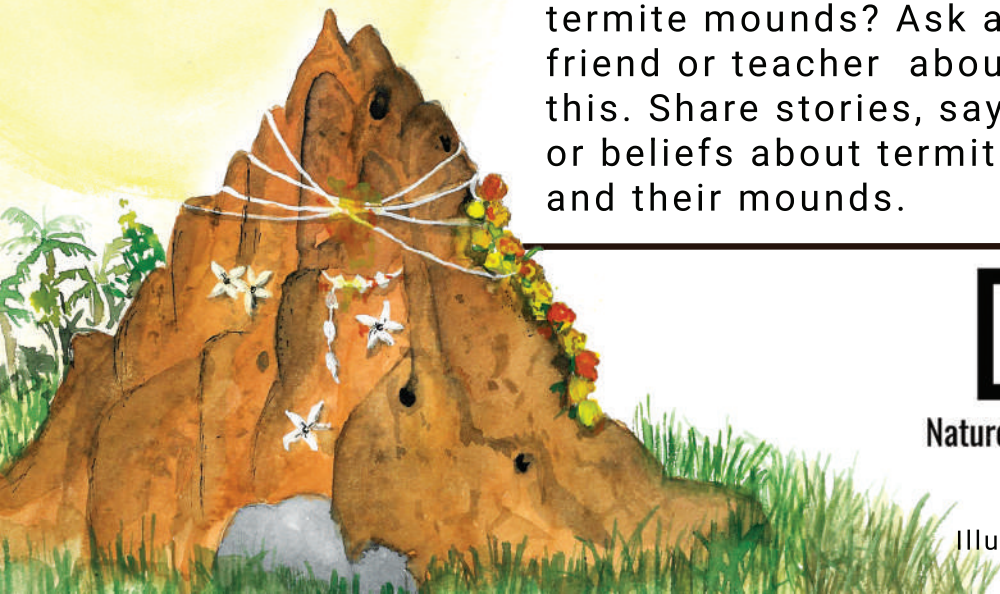
What name do you know termite mounds by?

Have you seen photos of gods and goddesses or flower garlands near termite mounds? Ask a friend or teacher about this. Share stories, sayings or beliefs about termites and their mounds.

During the rainy season you can observe termites with wings near street lights or lights in and outside your home. These winged termites have just emerged from the ground and are looking to start a new colony.

You might see creatures like lizards, bats and even some birds hunt and feed on termites!

Termites are a good source of protein and many people catch and eat these insects during the rains. Have you ever eaten a dish made of termites? Write down the recipe and share it with others.



**nature
conservation
foundation**

Nature Classrooms *science for conservation*

This work is licensed to Nature Classrooms under CC BY-SA 4.0

Illustration and Design: Ravi Jambhekar