

Lesson 2 · living-things

Is It Living or Non-Living?

Lesson at a glance

Hold up a small potted plant and a stone and ask which one is alive — pupils become 'living-thing detectives'. In pairs they predict, then sort a tray of real objects and photo cards (snail in a tub, daisy, stone, toy car, teddy) into two hoops using three tests: does it grow, need food and water, move or change? The sorting-tree interactive on the IWB checks the class answers, then pupils draw their sort on the Investigation Journal living · non-living page.

Learning objectives

- Sort real things and pictures into living and non-living
- Say one reason why something is living or non-living

Before the bell – prep

Gather one safe living item (a small potted plant) and a stone, plus a snail in a clear tub from the yard or a damp wall the morning of — keep it cool and shaded. Two sorting hoops per group and the living/non-living photo cards (plant, snail, daisy, stone, toy car, teddy). No live minibeast? A daisy on its roots and the photo cards carry the lesson on their own.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
potted plant	1	group	classroom	a daisy or weed dug up with roots from the yard
snail in a clear tub	1	group	outdoors	a woodlouse, or a living/non-living photo card if none can be found
stone	1	group	outdoors	a pebble or piece of brick
small toy car	1	group	classroom	any small toy
daisy or buttercup	1	group	outdoors	a leaf or sprig of grass
teddy or soft toy	1	group	classroom	any soft toy or doll
living and non-living photo cards	1	group	school kit	pictures cut from a magazine or catalogue
sorting hoops	2	group	school kit	two loops of string or two large plates laid on the table



Lesson 2

Safety watch-point

Children handle the snail gently and keep it in its tub. Everyone washes hands after handling the snail, and return it gently outdoors after the lesson.



Teaching moves

- **What Do You Think?:** Show the tray and have pairs predict with a reason aloud — 'I think the snail is living because it moves'. Don't confirm yet; just note who calls the toy car or clock 'alive' and who thinks the still plant is non-living. These are the threads the sort untangles.
- **Let's Sort the Tray:** As groups sort, give the snail and daisy time — they're the rich talkers. Ask 'does the teddy ever grow? does it eat?' at the teddy. Model the three tests out loud for one tricky item, then let them try. Remind little hands to keep the snail in its tub and handle it gently.
- **Sort It on the Big Screen:** Drive the sorting-tree interactive with the six items. Pupils call out living or non-living and watch each drop into place. Pull the toy car and snail up together: both move, but only the snail grows, eats and drinks — that's the whole point, made in one pair.
- **Record Our Sorting:** Hand out the Investigation Journal living · non-living page. Pupils draw two or three things on the correct side and mark one reason for at least one. Say the starter aloud: 'The snail is living because...'. Drawing is how this age records thinking — keep it short.



What it should show

Most pupils will sort the stone, toy car and teddy as non-living and the plant, snail and daisy as living. Expect wobble on two: the toy car (it moves, so 'it's alive') and the teddy (it looks like an animal). Affirm the noticing, then steer back to the test — moving alone isn't life; it must also grow, eat and drink. A still plant counted non-living is the other common slip.



Misconceptions & interventions

- **Pupils think anything that moves is alive — 'the toy car moves, so it's living'.** — On the IWB sorting-tree, pull up the toy car and snail side by side. Ask 'does the car grow? does it eat?' — show the snail does all three, the car none. Moving alone isn't enough.
- **Pupils think a plant isn't alive because it stays still — 'it doesn't move, so it's non-living'.** — Hold the potted plant and ask 'does it grow? does it drink water?' Remind them a daisy opens in the sun and grows bigger — living things grow and change, not just move.
- **Pupils think the teddy is living because it looks like an animal.** — Ask at the hoop 'does the teddy ever grow? does it eat or drink?' Agree it looks alive but never grows or eats, so it goes in non-living.



Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give these pupils the clear-cut items first — the stone and the teddy — so they sort confidently before meeting a tricky one. • Pair with the teacher table and run the three tests aloud together for each item. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask them to explain a tricky one — 'the toy car moves, but is it alive? why not?' • Have them mark a reason for two items on the Journal page, not just one. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask them to find something in the room the class hasn't sorted and decide which hoop it belongs in, with a reason. • While others finish, have them watch the next pair sort and judge — 'are they right? why?'

Cross-curricular hook

Tie to Maths sorting and classifying — the two hoops are a sorting diagram pupils group objects into by one rule.