

Lesson 2 · living-things

Living, once-living or never-living?

Lesson at a glance

Open by holding up a live snail and a stone — is each one alive, and how can you tell? Introduce three groups: living, once-living, never-living. Model sorting three items aloud, then groups sort a tray (plant, snail photo card, leaf, feather, stone, plastic toy) using magnifiers, justifying each choice. Children draw one tricky item on the Investigation Journal page and line it to a hoop. Check together on the IWB sorting-tree interactive, then a display-only talk on the tricky middle group.

Learning objectives

- Tell living things from things that were once alive and things that never were
- Justify a sorting choice with what I notice

Before the bell – prep

Catch a snail into a ventilated jar (loose lid) the day before, plus a stone for the hook. Per group of three or four: a sorting tray, three labelled hoops, at least one magnifier, and the items — small potted plant, snail photo card, fallen leaf, feather, stone, plastic toy. Keep a spare wooden peg or cork aside as a stretch item. Load the sorting-tree interactive in explore mode.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
varied sorting tray (small plant, snail photo card, fallen leaf, feather, stone, plastic toy)	1	group	outdoors / classroom	use a twig, a piece of wool and a coin if a feather or leaf is hard to find
three labelled hoops (living, once-living, never-living)	3	group	school kit	three labelled paper plates or chalk circles on the floor
magnifier	1	group	school kit	look closely with careful eyes
live snail in a ventilated jar (front demonstration only)	1	class	outdoors	a clear photo of a snail and a woodlouse in a pot
optional stretch items (wooden peg and cork, for differentiation)	1	class	classroom	a small twig or a wine cork already in the room
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	printable provided	plain paper



Lesson 2

Safety watch-point

Keep the snail jar lid loose so it always has air, and never leave it sealed. Everyone washes hands after handling the snail, soil and natural items; return the snail gently outside at the end.

Teaching moves

- **Our Three Groups:** Read each row aloud and point to a matching real object from the tray as you go — the snail for living, the leaf for once-living, the stone for never-living. Keep the spotting clue concrete: for once-living, always ask 'Where did it come from?'
- **The Teacher Sorts One Tray:** Model the full noticing-then-justifying-then-placing cycle aloud for three items, using a magnifier so children copy careful looking. Say 'I notice this leaf is brown and dry, but it fell off a tree, so it was once-living' before you place it. Make your thinking the loudest part.
- **Sort Your Tray:** Circulate and ask each group to justify one choice: 'How do you know the feather is once-living?' Watch for the leaf and feather landing in never-living — prompt with 'Where did the feather grow?' In the last two or three minutes each child draws their one tricky item and lines it to the hoop they chose.
- **Check With the Sorting Tree:** Drive the interactive one question at a time. Show 'Is it alive right now?', have groups tell each other, take a hands-up vote, then reveal. If the answer was no, ask 'Was it ever part of a living thing?' and vote again before you drag the item. Don't move anything until the class has voted.
- **What Did We Find Out?:** Display-only talk, no writing. Use the tricky items children drew as talking points. Revoice good reasoning: 'Aoife noticed the feather came from a bird, so it was once part of something alive.' Keep it to two or three voices and land the clue: where did it come from?

What it should show

Plant and snail go to living; leaf and feather to once-living; stone and plastic toy to never-living. The once-living group is the predictable stumble — children put the leaf or feather in never-living because it is still and dry now. That's not a wrong tray, it's the exact misconception to surface: ask where it came from and most self-correct to once-living.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Pupils say 'the feather isn't alive and it's not moving, so it never lived' and put it in never-living.** — Hold up the feather and ask 'Where did the feather grow? Was it ever part of a bird?' Once they see it came from an animal, move it to the once-living hoop together.
- **Pupils think a wooden lolly stick or peg is never-living because a factory made it.** — Ask 'What is wood made from?' Trace it back to a tree, which is alive, so the wood is once-living. Use the spare peg or cork as the on-the-spot test item.

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give the group fewer, clearer items — the snail photo card, a stone and a leaf — so the three groups stay obvious. • Pair them at the front near the modelled sort and ask them to point to the living thing first. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add the spare wooden peg or cork to the tray and ask which group it goes in and why. • Ask 'How do you know?' for each placement, not just the tricky one. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand them the cork and peg and ask them to explain to another pupil why both are once-living. • Ask them to find a never-living thing in the room and justify it against the 'was it ever alive?' question.

Cross-curricular hook

Link to SPHE caring for living things — the class looks after the snail and returns it safely outdoors to its habitat.

