

living-things

A senses hunt in the school garden

Lesson at a glance

Open by wondering what careful looking, listening, touching and smelling might reveal in the school garden. Name the four hunt jobs (something colourful, a sound, something rough, a smell), then partner-share quick ideas under see/hear/touch/smell. Lead a short outdoor loop with planned stops; pupils notice with empty hands only. Back indoors they fill the four Investigation Journal boxes from real walk memories, then talk living vs non-living and which sense helped most.

Learning objectives

- Use sight, hearing, touch and smell to notice living and non-living things outdoors
- Record what each sense revealed on a simple observation sheet

Before the bell – prep

Check weather and a safe short loop; mark four stop points (hedge/tree, grass, wall/fence, bed/planter). Print the four-box Investigation Journal page (or plain A4 with I saw / I heard / I felt / I smelled); leave clipboards and pencils on desks for return. Optional fabric gloves if bark or ground is wet or cold.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
clipboard	1	pupil	classroom	a firm book or piece of cardboard to lean on
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	classroom	a plain A4 sheet with four boxes labelled I saw, I heard, I felt, I smelled
pencil	1	pupil	classroom	crayon
gloves (optional, for wet bark or cold hands)	1	pupil	brought from home	touch only dry safe surfaces the teacher chooses; skip gloves

Safety watch-point

No tasting or picking. Touch only teacher-named safe surfaces — no thorns, nettles or litter. Head-count at each stop; no running. Wash hands on return.

**Teaching moves**

- **Our words:** Show only the two words with their tiny examples. Have pupils echo 'senses outdoors' and 'observation' once. Stress that observation means saying what you really noticed, not guessing the name.
- **Our hunt jobs:** Point to each icon as you name the four jobs so early readers can hold them. State clearly: no tasting outdoors, no picking unless you say so, stay with the group. If useful, run the short modelled observation (wonder-try-observe) just before you line up.
- **What might we notice?:** Partner whispers first, then collect a few ideas on the board under see, hear, touch, smell — leave them up for the return talk. Do not hand out journals yet. Rebrief safety in plain words before lining up.
- **Senses hunt outdoors:** Lead four short stops (sight, hearing, touch, smell); aim 1–2 minutes quiet noticing each. At every stop, get a choral name-back cue (e.g. 'Yellow daisy, eyes') and hold it for the group before you move. Touch only safe surfaces you name; head-count each stop. Outdoor block is about 17 minutes including exit and return — if late to the first stop, drop to three stops but still collect all four sense finds. No clipboards outside.
- **Record what our senses found:** Hand out clipboards and the Investigation Journal page only now. Oral rehearsal first: I saw... I heard... I felt... I smelled... Replay the shared stop cues so empty boxes get real memories. Accept a drawing, one word, or a dictated phrase. Protect this indoor time — the four boxes are the objective-bearing record and stay in-lesson.
- **What did our senses help us notice?:** Display-only talk. Invite three or four pupils to share one journal box. Compare with the pre-walk board ideas. Revoice living (bird, daisy, leaf still on the plant) vs non-living (stone, fence, fallen dry leaf) and that different senses give different clues about the same place.

What it should show

Expect four genuine walk-based notices: a colourful living or non-living find; a sound such as bird song, wind or a gate; a safe rough surface (bark, wall, grass); a smell such as soil, cut grass or a safe flower. Drawings or one word count. Empty boxes usually mean a forgotten stop — replay the class name-back cue rather than inventing a new find.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Pupils think a good observation means naming the plant or animal correctly.** — Praise the careful sense first ('rough bark', 'yellow flower'). Say names only if known; 'a small bird' or 'a leaf still on the plant' is enough.
- **Pupils fill a box with a guess or a board word instead of something from the walk.** — Point to the empty or copied box and replay that stop's choral cue. Prompt: 'What did we really notice with our ears at the hedge?'
- **Pupils call a fallen dry leaf or a stone 'living' because it is outside or was once part of a plant.** — Hold the contrast live: a leaf still on the plant is living; a dry leaf on the path, a stone or a fence is non-living. Both belong in the garden record.



Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Pair at the teacher table for oral stems (I saw... I heard...) and accept a drawing or dictated word in each box, using the shared stop cues. • At outdoor stops, stand them near you and name one clear find together before the choral cue.	• After the four boxes, ask which sense helped most and whether that find was living or non-living. • Prompt one extra label word on a drawing (e.g. rough, yellow, bird).	• Challenge them to note one living and one non-living find across their four boxes and say how they know. • Ask what a second sense might add about the same object (e.g. bark: rough to touch, brown to see).

Cross-curricular hook

Link to English oral language — sentence stems I saw/heard/felt/smelled — and local Geography of the school grounds.