

living-things

Living, once-living or never-living?

Lesson at a glance

Open with a covered sorting tray (plant, snail photo, leaf, feather, stone, plastic toy) and a whisper-partner guess. Name the three groups with anchor objects, then groups sort every item into labelled hoops, saying one noticing clue each time. A short shared magnifier look compares snail and plastic toy, then the class checks tricky cards on the sorting-tree interactive. Pupils record one example and one clue per group on the Investigation Journal page before a quick classroom hunt for once-living materials.

Learning objectives

- Sort objects into living, once-living and never-living using observable features
- Justify each sort with evidence from careful noticing

Before the bell – prep

Night before: one tray per group with small potted plant, snail photo card, fallen leaf, feather, stone and plastic toy; three labelled hoops/paper circles (Living, Once-living, Never-living) per group. Optional one shared live snail in a clear pot. Write group labels on card so they stay readable on the floor.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
sorting tray items (small potted plant or cutting in water, fallen leaf, feather, stone, plastic toy, snail photo card)	1	group	classroom	picture cards of the same six items if real objects are short
snail photo card (optional: one shared live snail in a clear pot with a damp leaf for the class)	1	group	classroom	a clear snail photo on the IWB for the whole class
labelled sorting hoops or large paper circles (Living, Once-living, Never-living)	3	group	classroom	three labelled areas of desk marked with masking tape
magnifying glass	2	group	school kit	clear plastic jar lid used as a simple lens, or careful looking without a magnifier
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	classroom	plain paper folded into three labelled columns

Safety watch-point

If using a live snail: one child holds the pot still, no poking, return it outside after, and wash hands after snail and natural items.

Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Keep the tray covered until you hold it up. Point talk partners first, then hold a surprising pair (leaf beside plastic toy) and ask whether they are the same kind of thing. Listen for ‘moves = living’ talk but do not correct yet.
- **Three groups to sort into:** Land each group with its anchor object in hand: plant = living, dry leaf = once-living, stone = never-living. Model one worked noticing cycle aloud on the leaf, then take two quick call-outs on what we can notice before the tray sort.
- **Sort the tray:** Say clearly: we sort the animal in the picture, not the card. Circulate asking ‘What did you notice that made you put it there?’ If a group parks the leaf in living, ask whether it is growing or changing now.
- **Look carefully:** Run one shared front-of-class magnifier look: snail photo (or live pot) beside the plastic toy. Keep it oral only — prompt smooth, rough, shiny, shell shape, no plant pattern on plastic. Sketches wait for the Journal page.
- **Sort on the board:** Open the sorting-tree interactive in explore mode on the IWB only. Start with tray disagreements, then feather and stone-vs-leaf. Drag a card only after the class agrees and can name a clue aloud.
- **Record our sorts:** Hand out the Investigation Journal page now, not earlier. One example and one clue per group is enough. Voice the stems: ‘It is living because...’ Support writers with picture labels copied from the board.
- **Share what we sorted:** Revoice one tricky sort with its evidence, then hunt two or three classroom once-living items (wooden pencil, paper, wool) and one never-living (plastic ruler). Finish the talk before pack-up; return any live snail and wash hands in the last minute.

What it should show

Expect plant and snail in living; leaf and feather in once-living; stone and plastic toy in never-living. A leaf left in living usually means the group is treating ‘from a plant’ as still alive — ask if it is growing now. A group sorting the photo card itself as never-living needs the reminder: we sort the animal in the picture.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **‘The fallen leaf is living because it came from a plant.’** — Hold the dry leaf and ask: is it growing or needing water right now? Revoice: living means alive now; once-living means it used to be part of something alive.
- **‘The stone is once-living because it is natural / from outside.’** — Compare stone beside feather or leaf. Ask: did this ever grow, move, or come from a plant or animal? Never-living was never part of a living thing.
- **‘Anything that does not move is not living’ (so the plant is sorted out of living).** — Point to the potted plant: it is alive now even while still. Ask what living things need (water, light) and whether the plant is growing.



Lesson 2

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Start the tray with only the plant and the stone (clear contrast), then add one item at a time with an adult prompt for the clue. • Offer board picture labels to copy onto the Investigation Journal stems.	• Ask for a second noticing clue on one tricky item (feather or leaf) before it stays in a hoop.	• Add one extra classroom object they choose and justify its group with evidence; fast finishers do the same on the Journal page.

Cross-curricular hook

Link to English oral language: pupils rehearse because-clauses when they justify each sort aloud.

