

living-things

Looking at minibeasts up close

Lesson at a glance

Open by asking who has spotted a tiny creature under a stone, and name snail, woodlouse (slater) and worm. Model the gentle cycle once: look first, soft-brush into a pot, still-pot magnifier look, return to the same spot. Groups of three to four hunt inside a tight outdoor boundary, take turns with a chunky plastic magnifier and say one part they see. After return and handwashing, pupils draw their minibeast on the Investigation Journal page showing at least one body part, then share on the carpet.

Learning objectives

- Look gently at a minibeast with a magnifier and notice body parts
- Count legs or notice a shell or feelers on at least one minibeast
- Draw a minibeast showing one or more of its parts and help return it safely

Before the bell – prep

Day before, scout one tight boundary (plant pots, damp leaves, log edge) and gather chunky plastic magnifiers, soft brushes and clear pots—one set per group of 3–4. Have soap ready. Backup if the garden is bare: IWB photos of snail, woodlouse and worm plus any empty shells.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
chunky plastic magnifiers	1	pupil	school kit	one magnifier shared between two children
bug pots with air holes	1	group	school kit	clear food container with a few small air holes punched by an adult
soft brushes	1	group	classroom	a clean, soft paintbrush from the art shelf
child-sized gloves	1	pupil	classroom	wash hands well instead; gloves optional
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	classroom	a blank A4 sheet for a labelled drawing
clear photos of snail, woodlouse and worm	1	class	classroom	any clear picture book or nature card showing the three creatures
empty snail shells (optional)	3	class	outdoors/ nature	photos only if no shells
soap and water for handwashing	1	class	classroom	classroom hand sanitiser only if soap and water are not available, then wash at next opportunity

Safety watch-point

Soft hands only; one creature per pot; every minibeast back to the same spot. Tight outdoor boundary. Wash hands with soap before pencils. Never poke, squeeze or tip pots.

Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Keep it light on the carpet. Ask who has spotted a tiny creature in the garden. Draw out snail, worm, spider and woodlouse—pair “slater” if children use it. Do not hand out pots or magnifiers yet.
- **Body parts we can see:** Put the three hunt targets on the board: snail, woodlouse (slater), worm. Ask what parts they might see on a snail. Hold up one chunky plastic magnifier when you say you will use it later. Head off “every small thing is a bug” and “worms have legs” by naming only parts we can see.
- **How we look gently:** Model the full cycle once outdoors or at a station before groups go: look first, soft brush into the pot, pot stays still, magnifier with both hands, then put the creature straight back. Say the order clearly: find → look at the spot → return together → come in → wash hands → draw.
- **Find, look and return:** Keep groups of 3–4 inside one agreed boundary so one adult can see everyone. Coach short beats: pot still on the ground, each child a short magnifier turn, each says one part (legs, shell, feelers, long body), then the group returns the creature together and lines up. One creature per group is enough; share a pot if a group finds nothing. Do not bring live creatures into the classroom.
- **Wash hands:** Queue groups calmly to wash with soap before any pencils or Journal pages. Check every creature is back and no pots are left outside. If indoor stations were used, return those creatures once the class is settled.
- **Draw your minibeast:** Hand out the Investigation Journal page only after hands are washed. On the IWB show one simple mark: a spiral for a shell, short lines for many legs, or a wiggly line for a worm. Drawing is the record—emergent labels welcome, writing not required. Look for a clear shape and at least one part shown.
- **What did we notice?:** Carpet talk only. Invite two or three children to show their drawing and name one part. Revoice: “You noticed the snail’s shell.” “Lots of legs on the woodlouse.” “The worm had no legs.” Close the care thread: soft hands, every creature back, hands washed.

What it should show

Most Senior Infants will notice a snail’s spiral shell and soft body, a woodlouse’s many little legs, or a worm’s long soft body with no legs. “Lots of little legs” or “no legs” is enough—do not require exact counts. Affirm feelers if offered. If a drawing is a tiny corner scribble, prompt one big shape and one part mark from the IWB example.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Children call every small creature a “bug”, or say worms have legs.** — Gently name what is actually in the pot: “This worm has a long soft body and no legs.” “This woodlouse (slater) has lots of little legs.” Point to the part through the magnifier.
- **Children want to poke, tip the pot, or keep the creature on the desk to draw later.** — Stop and restate the rules: pot stays still, soft hands, look then return together at the spot. Drawing is from memory after handwashing—no live creature at the table.



Lesson 7

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Pair at the teacher's group for the magnifier turn; prompt with "shell, legs, or long body?" and accept a shared look at another group's pot. • Offer the IWB example marks (spiral, short lines, wiggly body) as a starting shape on the Journal page.	• Ask them to tell the group one more part after the first (e.g. shell and feelers), still using everyday words.	• Early finishers add where they found it (under a pot, under a leaf) as a simple mark or word, or draw a second minibeast they glimpsed.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to oral language and Art—children name parts aloud and record one observed feature through drawing.

