

Looking at minibeasts up close

Lesson at a glance

Open by asking who has spotted a tiny creature under a stone, naming snail, woodlouse (slater) and worm as the hunt targets. Model the gentle cycle once: guide with a soft brush into a pot, hold the pot still, look through a chunky magnifier for legs, shell or feelers, then put the creature straight back. Groups hunt inside a tight outdoor boundary (or indoor look-stations), take turns noticing one body part, return together, wash hands, then draw that part on the Investigation Journal page. Close on the carpet naming what they saw and how they cared for the creatures.

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: check the damp corners of the school garden (under pots, leaves, logs, bed edges) or collect snails, woodlice and worms into look-stations just before the lesson to return after. Set out chunky plastic magnifiers, pots and soft brushes per group of 3–4. Have clear snail/woodlouse/worm photos and any empty shells ready as backup.

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	provided printable	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; guide with a brush, never poke or squeeze. Every creature goes back to the same spot. Wash hands with soap before touching pencils or Journal pages.

Teaching moves

- **Body parts we can see:** Show the snail and woodlouse images on the IWB. Ask what body parts they think a snail has. Accept “slater” and pair it with woodlouse. Hold up one chunky magnifier and say you will use it later — keep the board free of glossary lists.
- **How we look gently:** Model the full cycle once outdoors or at a station, thinking aloud: look first, guide with the soft brush, hold the pot still, name one part through the magnifier, put it straight back. Say the order clearly: find → look at the spot → return together → come in → wash hands → then draw.
- **Find, look and return:** Keep groups of 3–4 inside one tight boundary so you can see everyone. One creature per group is enough. Coach short turns: pot still, both hands on the magnifier, each child names one part, then the group returns it to the same damp spot. If a group finds nothing, share another pot or check one more leaf.
- **Wash hands:** Send groups to wash with soap in a calm queue before any pencils or Journal pages appear. Check every creature is returned and no pots are left outside. Wipe tables if soil or damp pots were nearby.
- **Draw your minibeast:** Hand out the Investigation Journal page only after hands are clean. Show one simple mark on the IWB — a spiral for a shell, short lines for many legs, a wiggly line for a worm. Welcome emergent labels; do not require writing from every child.
- **What did we notice?:** On the carpet, invite two or three children to show their drawing and name one part. Revoice gently: “You noticed the snail’s shell.” “Lots of little legs on the woodlouse.” Close the care thread: soft hands, every creature went 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 legs” or “no legs” is enough — do not expect exact leg counts. Affirm feelers on a snail’s head if offered. If a drawing shows only a blob, revoice one part they said outdoors and invite them to add that mark.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Children call every small creature a “bug”, or think a worm has legs like we do.** — Gently name what is actually in the pot: “This worm has a long soft body and no legs.” Point through the magnifier to the part they can see.
- **Children want to poke, squeeze, tip the pot, or keep the creature on the desk to draw from.** — Stop and restate the rules: soft hands, pot stays still, one careful look at the spot, then straight back before we wash and draw from memory.



Lesson 7

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Pair at the teacher table for a shared magnifier turn; scribe or gesture one body part they name for the drawing. • Offer the backup photo or empty shell if live creatures are scarce so they still notice and draw one part.	• Prompt a second part: “You saw the shell — can you spot little feelers on its head too?” • Invite a simple mark or word for where they found it (under a pot, under a leaf).	• Ask them to say how two minibeasts differ (shell vs lots of legs vs no legs) using their drawings. • Early finishers draw a second creature they glimpsed and name one part on each.

Cross-curricular hook

Ties to oral language and early drawing — children name shell, legs or feelers and show that part in a simple mark.

