

Looking at minibeasts up close

Lesson at a glance

Open by asking who has spotted a tiny creature under a stone, and name snails, woodlice (slaters) and worms as today's hunt. Model the gentle cycle once: soft brush into a still pot, magnifier look for legs, shell or feelers, then return. Groups of three to four search one tight outdoor boundary (or indoor look-stations), take short magnifier turns and put every creature back. After handwashing, pupils draw their minibeast on the Investigation Journal page showing at least one part, then share orally 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

Gather chunky plastic magnifiers, clear pots and soft brushes per group the day before. Scout one tight yard boundary (pots, damp leaves, logs). Have snail/woodlouse/worm photos and empty shells ready; if the yard is bare, collect three live look-station creatures just before the bell and plan to return them.

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; never poke, squeeze or tip pots. Return every live creature to the same spot before coming in, then wash hands with soap before drawing.

Teaching moves

- **Body parts we can see:** Keep the board light: one short idea plus ‘What body parts might we see on a snail?’ Name woodlice once and accept ‘slater’. Hold up a chunky magnifier when you say you will use one later; do not hand them out yet.
- **How we look gently:** Model the full cycle aloud at one damp spot: look first, soft-brush into the pot, still-pot magnifier look for legs, shell or feelers, then return straight away. Say the order clearly: find → look outside → put back → come in → wash hands → draw.
- **Find, look and return:** Keep groups of three to four inside one agreed boundary so one adult can see everyone. Coach short beats: pot still, both hands on the magnifier, each child names one part, group returns the creature together. One creature per group is enough; share a pot if a group finds nothing.
- **Wash hands:** Send groups to wash with soap in a calm queue before any pencils or Journal pages. Check every creature is returned 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 clean. Show one simple IWB mark (spiral shell, many short leg lines, or a wiggly worm). The drawing is the record — emergent labels are welcome; do not require writing from every child.
- **What did we notice?:** Carpet talk only. Invite two or three children to show a drawing and name one part; revoice with shell, feelers, lots of legs, or 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 hard 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 require exact counts. If a group only scribbles a tiny mark, affirm the shape and prompt one clear part (spiral, legs, long body).

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Every small creature is just a ‘bug’, so they all have the same parts.** — Point at what is actually in the pot and revoice: ‘This snail has a shell and no legs like ours; that woodlouse has lots of little legs.’ Use the three target names side by side.
- **Worms have legs, or we can poke and tip the pot to make it move faster.** — Hold the pot still and look together: ‘I see a long soft body and no legs.’ Restate soft hands, one creature, pot stays still, then return it to the same damp spot.

**Differentiation**

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Pair at the teacher's look-spot and offer a sentence stem: 'I can see the ____' while they take one short magnifier turn. • Accept a simple shape mark on the Journal page and help them add one part (spiral, legs or long body) with a finger prompt.	• Ask them to name a second part on the same creature, or say where they found it (under a pot, under a leaf).	• Invite a quick compare: 'How is your snail different from the woodlouse's legs?' or a second minibeast drawn from a glimpse at another group's pot.

Cross-curricular hook

Link to oral language: pupils revoice one body-part sentence from their drawing on the carpet.

