

Suggested Minibeast Script

Topic Introduction

There are a huge number of animals that live in the world alongside us. Scientists split these animals into two groups, depending on whether they have a backbone or not. Some animals, like cats and dogs, birds, snakes and frogs have a backbone like us.

Ask children if they can feel their own spine. Animals with a backbone are called Vertebrates.

Today though, we are going to be learning about animals that don't have a backbone. We are going to call them mini-beasts today, but scientists use another name for them. They call them invertebrates.

Although these small animals don't have a backbone, they sometimes have a hard outer shell or outer skeleton. Lots of types of animals belong to this invertebrate group – it includes insects, such as flies, bees and beetles, but also spiders, snails, and worms.

Mini-beasts are very important. If you were to count up all the animals in the whole world, almost all of them would be invertebrates. Invertebrates are not always small though – some invertebrates are huge, for example the spider crab, colossal squid are giant calm all belong to this group.

Invertebrates are important for lots of different reasons. Many of them do very important jobs for the planet, and all of them are food for lots of different animals. We are going to learn more about this while we are studying this topic.

Indoor Minibeast Handling

We are going to spend some time looking at some live invertebrates, which are on the tables here. While I explain what we are going to be looking at, we need to remember something very important.

All these live animals are very small, can be easily damaged and could get scared if we make loud noises. This means that for this activity, we need to be as quiet as we can so that we don't scare the animals.

We have three stations with different live animals at them. Number one has woodlice, number two has snails, and table number three has worms. On each of these three tables, you are able to hold the mini-beasts if you would like – but the most important thing is to look very closely at them. Scientists look very closely at animals to learn about their features and behaviour. This is what we are going to do today. We are all going to be scientists and use our skill of OBSERVATION to discover what we can learn about these creatures.

At each of these tables, read the information out about the animals first, and then you can have a closer look at the animals, either in the bug boxes or in the trays. You can hold them if you would like, but you must spray your hands for the worms and the snails, and always keep your hands over the table.

Reminder of behaviour: Before we get started, we must remember that we have live animals in the classroom here with us, so we need to be very quiet so we don't scare them. If you would like to hold any of our live animals, please remember that they are very delicate, and much smaller than we are. You must keep your hands over the trays, and if you have a mini-beast on your hands, stay very still while you are holding them and make sure your hands are damp if there is a spray on your table.

Instruct pupils to start looking at the tables they are on. Move round once each table has had

sufficient time (5-10 minutes). Ensure that all pupils wash hands at the sink after handling the minibeasts.

Outdoor Mini beast Hunt.

For the next activity, we are going outside to look for some mini-beasts in their own environment. Different mini-beasts live in different areas and we are going to work in groups to see how many we can find. Each group will have a clipboard and pencil to write down the number of the different mini-beasts that we find while outside.

Garden Behaviour There are a few very important rules to remember when we are out in the gardens. We have to remember to respect the living things in our playground and not damage any plants or hurt any animals. Don't pick any flowers unless you have checked if it is ok and if we find any mini-beasts it is very important to put them back in the same place we found them once we have finished looking at them. If you turn over any logs or stones, then make sure you put them back the same way you found them.

Reminder of activity once outside Now we are in the part of the playground that we are going to be using to look for some mini-beasts in different places. We are going to work in groups to see how many mini-beasts we can find. Each group has a clipboard and pencil to write down the number of the different mini-beasts that we find while we are out here. When you find a mini-beast, you can pick it up very gently with the spoon and put it in your bug box so you and the rest of your group can have a closer look.

Some of the mini-beasts that we see, we will not be able to put in our bug boxes – make sure you point to them so that the rest of the group can see them, and record them on your sheet. Mini-beasts that fly shouldn't be put in boxes, neither should slugs or snails. It is important to remember that these are living things, and we don't want to cause them any harm. If you see a Bee or a Wasp it is important to just stand still and it won't bother you.

If there is a mini-beast that you find that you are not sure what it is, then have a close look at the table on the clipboard and see if you can find a picture that matches.