

LESSON PLAN

CREATED FOR TEACHERS BY EDEN'S EDUCATION TEAM

Minibeast Trackers

Overview

This is a 60 minute lesson plan in which primary school pupils explore their natural environment looking for minibeasts.

What's more exciting or compelling to children than minibeasts? In this session children use their senses to look, listen and touch their way around their outdoor space - encouraging a sense of curiosity that could lead to adventures and imaginative play.

Who: Children in EYFS and KS1

How long: 60 Minutes

Objectives and Curriculum links

This lesson enables students to:

- Treat animals in the environment with care and sensitivity.
- Observe and recognise some simple characteristics of minibeasts and other living things.
- Work together as part of a group or in pairs, taking turns and sharing fairly.
- Develop curiosity and interest by exploring their surroundings using their senses.
- Communicate through conversation by sharing experiences, ideas and information with each other.

We've designed the lesson to help teachers cover the following subject areas:

EYFS

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, and the environment.

KS1 Science

Year 1 - Working scientifically

- observing closely, using simple equipment
- performing simple tests
- identifying and classifying

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Year 2 – Living things and their habitat

- identify that most living things live in habitats to which they are suited and describe how different habitats provide for the basic needs of different kinds of animals and plants, and how they depend on each other
- identify and name a variety of plants and animals in their habitats, including micro-habitats
- describe how animals obtain their food from plants and other animals, using the idea of a simple food chain, and identify and name different sources of food

Resources

- Outdoor space with some sticks, stones and leaves available for use (if not available in the grounds collect some beforehand). Even the edge of your playing field or a nearby public park will do.
- Clean washed container with no lid – one between two.
- Magnifying glasses – one between two.
- Plastic spoon to help pick up bugs – one between two.
- 10-15 assorted unnatural objects; some big and bright, some small and camouflaged in the surroundings e.g. plastic animals or toys, cutlery, a pen.
- Hand wash gel.

Optional Resources

- Minibeast identification sheet
<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/activities/minibeast-hunt/>
- The Field Studies Council has some great reference material
[http://www.field-studies-council.org/publications/pubs/woodland-name-trail-\(mini-beasts\).aspx](http://www.field-studies-council.org/publications/pubs/woodland-name-trail-(mini-beasts).aspx)

Prior to the Lesson – set up the Unnature Trail.

Unnature trails are a great way to encourage pupils to look more closely at the world around them. Essentially the activity involves the pupils trying to spot unusual objects placed in the natural world. The trail must be set up prior to the lesson starting. Choose a route for your trail and place the unnatural objects along the route. Some of the objects should be fairly obvious and some should be more difficult to spot - blending into their surroundings. Make sure you know how many you've put out.

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Lesson Plan

Getting started (0-10 minutes)

Start by asking the pupils some quick questions;

- What is a minibeast? This is a good chance to talk about animals without backbones (invertebrates)
- How many minibeasts can you name in 30 seconds?
- Where do you think they would live? In soil, inside rotting logs, under stones, on leaves.
- What do they eat? They eat a wide variety of things - dead or alive, plant or animal, fresh or decaying. Many of them help dead things to rot down!

Introduce the 'Body Sculptures' warm-up game. Set clear boundaries for the children to stay within. Ask the children to pretend to be different minibeasts showing how they move. For example scuttle like a spider, flap your arms like a butterfly, or wriggle like a worm. This activity can be developed further by getting them into groups of three and then seeing if they can make the minibeast's shape with their bodies. Do they have the right number of legs/body parts?

Bring them all back into a group. Explain that life can be tough for these little creatures but there are things we can do to help them. First, however, they need to train their sense of sight so they can spot them and become expert minibeast trackers.

Unnature trail (10-20 minutes)

Get the children lined up at the beginning of the trail that you created earlier. Explain that they are going to go on a short journey where they need to look out for unusual things that they wouldn't normally expect to see. Don't tell them how many objects you have put out. Slowly lead them through the trail allowing them to spot and count (but not pick up) as many of the random objects as they can. When they get to the end ask them which were the easiest and trickiest to spot? This is a great opportunity to talk about camouflage and how it helps animals and insects. If no one managed to spot them all, this activity can be repeated again until they are all seen.

Minibeast Safari (20-40 minutes)

Explain to the pupils that they are going to go on a minibeast safari to find out which minibeasts we have here and what they are doing. Set clear boundaries for where the children can roam. Talk about the health and safety aspects of the area that they are exploring and not to put their hands in their mouth, ears and eyes! This is also a

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good time to get the children to agree upon a set of rules to follow about how to look for/handle minibeasts. For example:

- Be calm and quiet – otherwise they will all run/slither/fly away!
- Be gentle – they are delicate so do not squash them.
- Do not touch their wings.
- If you move rocks or logs make sure they go back exactly as you found them.
- If they do pick any of the minibeasts up they must be returned to the same place.

Challenge the pupils to work in pairs and see if they can find 5 different kinds of minibeast. Once they have found a minibeast encourage them to examine it using the magnifying glass. They can look at size, shape, colour, number of legs, eyes and how it moves. They could use a minibeast picture guide to work out what each minibeast is. Ask them to tell you each time they find something new. You can keep a record of what they are finding on a notepad.

It is up to you whether you want the children to actually collect the minibeasts in a container or simply observe them in their microhabitats. Some minibeasts are hard to catch without damaging them – so this must be avoided. If you do want to collect some then you need to show the children how to use a plastic spoon to carefully pick up delicate creatures. It is good practice to place a small amount of leaves or grass in the bottom of the container so they feel at home. Also slugs and snails produce a slimy mucus so they **must** have their own separate container.

You may need to have a conversation about how to find the minibeasts; looking around flowers, bushes, in the grass or at the base of trees. The pupils will usually be able to find some sorts of minibeasts by turning over small or medium sized rocks (ensuring that they go back where they were found).

Minibeast hotel (40-55 minutes)

Bring the pupils back together as a group. Explain that sometimes minibeasts run out of good places to live because humans build things and also because we like to tidy up places in the garden where they might have lived (e.g. rotting piles of wood).

Explain that we are going to build them somewhere to live. The aim is to give them a little bit of luxury – a minibeast hotel! Within the boundaries set earlier, ask the children to get into groups of 3 or 4 and find a suitable safe space to build their



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minibeasts a hotel. Try to get them to think about whether it would be best if the hotel is somewhere damp or dry? Light or shaded? They will need to collect sticks/logs, bark, leaves, stones and anything else they think the minibeasts will need to be safe. When they have found a suitable place ask them to thoughtfully build the hotel making sure that there are lots of cracks, crevices so that different minibeasts can find a home.

Finally (55-60 minutes)

Once all the children have completed their hotel, go around each group and ask them to talk about what they have made, which minibeasts they think will like to live there and why. You can pay your minibeast hotels regular visits over the next few days and weeks to see if the hotel has managed to entice any visitors.