



EarthLearn

History Detectives Learning Activities

Searching the world for clues about the history of minibeasts on our planet

1. What is a minibeast?

Requirements: access to the online learning world interactive map; minibeasts cards pre-cut; writing materials

7-11 years: teacher-led class activity or working in small groups after an introduction on how to use the map by the teacher

12-14 years: in small groups after an introduction on how to use the map by the teacher

Curriculum: Science (living organisms; biology); English (oracy); Computing (responsible online use)

Time: 20 minutes

Watch this [3-minute film](#) showing you how to use [the Map](#). Place the individual [minibeast cards](#) face down on a table and shuffle them. A volunteer chooses a card and another searches for the minibeast represented on the map. Another volunteer reads out the minibeast story discovered for the group/ class. Continue this activity for 10 minutes.

What have you learnt about these animals we are calling minibeasts? Are they mini? Would you call them 'beasts'? What distinguishes them from all other living organisms? What other term might you choose to call them, if not minibeasts?



Teacher Notes

‘Minibeasts’ is a term that was first used in education about 50 years ago as a friendly term for small land-based and water-based invertebrates. However, it is now becoming less popular with education specialists because it is not scientifically accurate, can be misleading in terms of scale (invertebrates can be large as well as small), and can give the impression that these animals are ‘beastly’ when actually they play critical roles in our ecosystem. Without them we would not exist.

We are using the term, however, as it is an engaging term that helps inspire young learners’ immediate excitement and curiosity.

In this activity, you can explore this issue with pupils and see what they think. All the ‘minibeast’ stories on the learning world map are about animals that share one thing in common - they have no backbone (invertebrates). More than 99% of invertebrates measure less than a few centimetres long (though there are some notable exceptions – past and present).