

Name _____

Date _____

Topic: Natural Science – Slugs and Snails

Reading/Discussion:

Imagine a creature that has eyes sprouting on tentacles from its head, that breathes through a hole in its back and has a foot attached to its stomach! It sounds like an alien, doesn't it? But, in fact, there are probably lots of them living in your back garden. Slugs and snails might be common garden pests but they have some very interesting characteristics. In addition to the description above, they also have a second pair of tentacles in front of their heads which they use to smell and taste, and a tongue, called a **radula**, which is like a rasp, covered with rows of little teeth. If that wasn't strange enough they have only one foot which moves along on a trail of slime produced by a gland under the foot.

We can classify these strange creatures in a number of ways. First of all, they belong to a group of animals called **molluscs**. Most molluscs are **aquatic**, in other words, they live in water, like oysters, squid and clams. Because slugs and snails are land molluscs they have to be careful to keep their bodies from drying out. So, during the day, when it is hot, they stay hidden in cool, damp places, under rocks and leaves for example, and only come out to eat when the sun goes down. They usually eat rotten and decayed vegetation, but sometimes enjoy the flowers and vegetables in your garden. When it is too hot snails are able to pull themselves into the shell which coils around their bodies and seal the opening with mucus. It is harder for slugs to survive in extreme heat because, although they are closely related to snails, they don't have shells.

Another group to which they belong is the **invertebrates**. An invertebrate is an animal without a backbone, in fact, without any bones. About 98% of all animals are invertebrates. Animals, like us, that have backbones are called **vertebrates**.

Lastly, they belong to a group called **gastropods** which means 'stomach-foot'. They are called this because their bodies are twisted around so that the stomach is just above the foot. About 80% of all molluscs are gastropods.

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Activities:

A. What do I know about slugs and snails?

Read through the article carefully. Did you know that slugs and snails were such interesting creatures? Let's see how much you can remember about them.

1. The article mentions 3 different groups to which slugs and snails belong, can you name them?
2. What do slugs and snails use their tentacles for?
3. Can you remember what a snail's tongue is called?
4. Can you describe a snail's tongue?
5. Snails and slugs are very closely related. What is the main difference between the two?
6. Where does the slime that makes the snail's track come from?
7. How do slugs and snails breathe?
8. Most molluscs are aquatic – what does that mean?
9. Can you name three aquatic molluscs?
10. What does gastropod mean?

B. An alien snail portrait

Use the description of the snail or slug to draw an alien. Don't forget the raspy tongue, the tentacles and the single foot! Use as many of the descriptions of the snail as you can and then label your alien to show where all the parts are.

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Answer Sheet

Activity A

1. Molluscs, invertebrates and gastropods
2. To see, smell and taste
3. A radula
4. It is like a rasp, covered with rows of little teeth
5. A snail has a shell
6. From a gland under the foot
7. Through a hole in their backs
8. It means that they live in water
9. Oysters, clams and squid
10. It means 'stomach-foot'.