

The Missing Link *Key Stage 1*

The Missing Link is based on Attainment Target two of the National Curriculum for Science and covers the sections on environmental biology and basic human biology. These notes are intended as a guide to the scientific content and can be used for preparatory work. However we aim to present the science in such a way that it becomes self-explanatory so the performance can be used as an introduction to the topic.

We begin with our heroine Georgie Lionheart and her Uncle 'Gerbil' Jones, the famous adventurer. In his London home he begins by sorting his animals.

THINGS THAT ARE LIVING AND THINGS THAT HAVE NEVER BEEN ALIVE

By asking certain questions one can decide whether something is living or has never been alive. Georgie compares herself to a book and with the help of the audience establishes that living things move and eat. She then asks the audience what else living things do. Do they drink? do they grow? were they born? will they die? She explains that if you answer yes to these questions you can be sure that you have a living thing.

'Gerbil' has a catch phrase which he teaches the audience: food, water and exercise, that's what animals need. This epithet sums up the basic human requirements for survival.

CLASSIFYING ANIMALS

Once Georgie has established the difference between animate and inanimate objects 'Gerbil' realises all his animals are living things and need to be sorted into groups according to observable features. You can choose any heading for a group, like number of legs, what they eat, what colour they are or where they live but 'Gerbil' opts for 'number of legs'. 'Gerbil' has a bat, a parrot, a fish, a centipede, a spider and a turtle. With the help of the audience Georgie sorts them into groups of 0 legs, 2 legs, 4 legs, 8 legs and lots of legs. She then demonstrates that you can sort

according to different features and they are re-sorted into groups of things that fly, swim or walk. We discover that some animals can swim AND walk or walk AND fly. So Georgie suggests that it might be better to sort them according to their family ie. all spiders or all birds etc.

'Gerbil' and Georgie sing a song about classifying animals and the audience learns the chorus:

Food, water and exercise, that's what animals need.
We need to drink, we need to sleep, we certainly need to feed.
All animals move, all animals grow, all are born and die,
And with the right conditions as surely we will thrive.

In the classroom children could make their own headings and group 'Gerbil's animals according to the features they have chosen. Gerbil's animals were a parrot, a bat, a spider, a centipede, a piranha and a turtle. You could choose your own animals and make different groups out of them using their colour, number of legs or how they move as your headings.

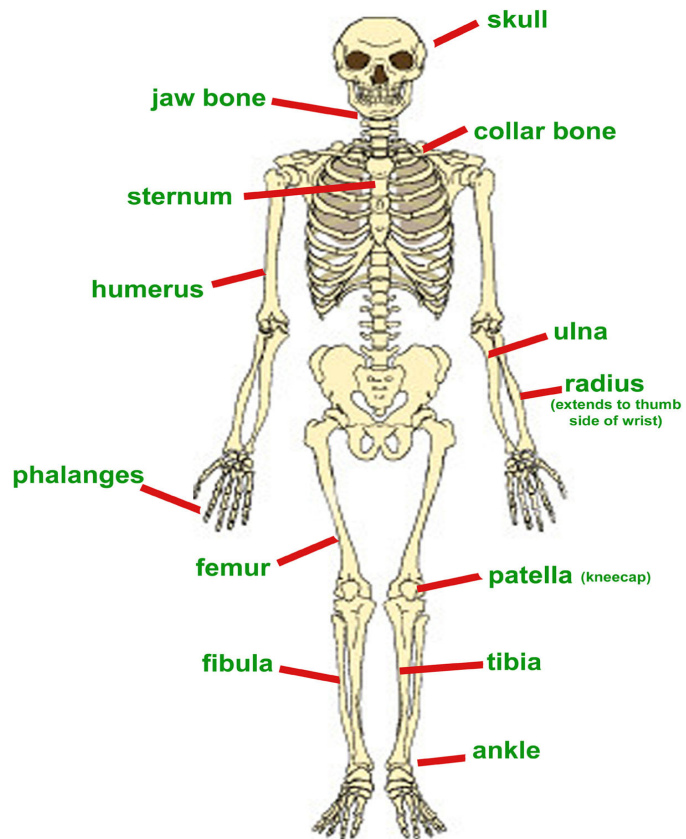
THE ADAPTATION OF ANIMALS TO THEIR ENVIRONMENT

'Gerbil' goes back to the jungle. We discover that he has gone there to find a particular beast that he was sure he had seen the last time he was there which he thinks might be The Missing Link, the link between man and the beasts. Georgie looks up The Missing Link in her book and discovers that a man called Charles Darwin thought man had descended from the apes. She wonders if all animals have adapted to where they live. She asks the audience to tell her when they see an animal and together they can work out how it has adapted to its environment. 'Gerbil's elephant is discovered to have big ears to keep her cool on the hot, grassy plains. A monkey has long arms to swing through the trees, a tail to help him balance and fingers to allow him to peel the fruit in the jungle. A green snake appears, whose colouring acts as camouflage and whose long muscular body helps him to squeeze his prey. George concludes that indeed it seems that animals have adapted to fit in with their surroundings.

Further study could include an investigation of the animal life in and around the school grounds. The children could compare creatures that live in ponds and streams with those that live on land and see what the differences are. They can see which features are most suited to living in water or on land.

THE SKELETON

Georgie finds a pile of bones and with the help of the audience constructs the skeleton. she shows the audience sections of the body and together they work out where it all should be.



THE SENSES

Georgie and Gerbil discuss the five senses and Georgie teaches everyone a little rhyme to help us remember why we have them and what they do:

*'Our sight and hearing, smell and taste and touch
Will keep us safe from danger and help us very much.'*

Gerbil and Georgie discuss with the audience which senses we use when we cross a road: sight to see the cars, hearing to listen out for traffic, smell to smell the fumes, They then discuss the senses used to eat fish and chips: taste to taste the food, touch to eat the chips, we smell the food and see it too.

In the classroom the children could test their senses. They can find out how far round they can see in each direction, they can try identifying foods just through taste, try identifying substances through smell alone, try identifying sounds without seeing what is making them and test the sensitivity of their sense of touch by comparing the feeling in fingertips with the feeling in the middle of the back.

Show Requirements

The actors will be arriving approximately forty minutes prior to the start time in order to set up and will need to have access to the school hall from then. They bring the set, lighting and sound equipment with them so only need access to a plug socket. They'll need a space approximately 15' wide by 10' deep with the children sitting in front, either seated or on the floor. The show works well 'on the flat' but if it's more convenient for the actors to use your stage, please let them know on arrival. This show lasts one hour with a two minute 'q & a' session at the end.