**Snails Discussion Ideas**

Snails – come from the mollusk family (invertebrate animals) which include squids, cuttlefish and the octopus. Snails are included in the class of mollusks called gastropod mollusks. Within this class are 3 groups

1. Sea snails
2. Freshwater snails
3. Land snails & slugs

Gastropod comes from the Greek words: *gastro=stomach & podo=foot. Which means it is a “Stomach-foot”*

**Basic Features of a Snail**

1. 2 pairs of tentacles. The EYESPOTS are on the top pair of tentacles. The bottom pair are for feeling and smelling.
2. Snails have a high sense of smell but cannot see very well.
3. Snails cannot hear.
4. Snails have a respiratory system (allows them to breathe). If you look carefully you can see its breathing hole at the side of its body.
5. Snails have a mouth which is pointed downward. This allows it to eat while it travels over a surface.
6. Inside of its mouth is a tiny tongue called a RADULA. There are 14,175 tiny teeth located on the tongue. Scraps food rather than chews. If you are quiet you can hear them eating.
7. Shell - grows in a spiral pattern. A snail never loses its shell. The shell grows with them. Made of calcium it gets from eating rocks.
8. Body of the snails consists of a foot and at the bottom of the foot…the sole. Slugs have a mantle where the shell would be.
9. The foot is a large muscle. This muscle sends waves of contractions forward from the back of the foot towards the front. This muscle allows them to walk upside down on a vertical surface.
10. Slime – purpose
    1. Lubricant – allows the snail to move across dry rough surfaces
    2. Prevents the snail from drying out
    3. Protects snail from sharp objects, even the blade of a knife
    4. Protection from predators
    5. Can be made into a mucous like plug that closes off the entrance to the snail’s shell during hot & dry climates.

**What do they eat?**

Snails are mostly HEBIVORES. They eat plants, algae, stems, flowers, decaying plants & soil.

**Interesting Facts**

* Like moist humid environments. They do not like hot dry climates
* Nocturnal animals
* Hibernate in the cold winter months and live on stored fat.
* The slowest creature on earth. Garden snails at top speed go 50 yards per hour.
* Important to the food chain. Many animals feed on snails: birds, lighting beetles, snakes, hedgehogs, raccoons & crows.
* Land snails can live about 2-3 year but a few species can live up to 5 years.
* Snails have a homing instinct up to 40 feet.
* Escargot – a delicacy of France
* The largest land snail is the GIANT AFRIACAN SNAIL. It can grow up to 15 inches long and weigh as much as 2 pounds. Locals in West Africa eat these snails in a local dish mixed with rice and fish.
* The largest land slug in North American is the BANANA slug. It lives in the redwood forest
* World’s largest Snail is the sea snail called the AUSTRAILIAN TRUMPET SNAIL. It can grow up to 30 inches and weigh up to 40 lbs.
* Snails are being researched for use in medicines
* Snail slime being researched to heal scars
* Currently used in beauty products
* In France – snail digestive secretion being researched to heal stomach ulcers & bronchitis