

Note: The transactional processes suggested in CISCE curriculum are highlighted in grey.

Learning Outcomes

- To introduce students to a world they normally would not take notice of
- To help them scratch beneath the surface and realise that wonderful and exciting things can exist in the unlikeliest of places
- To instil an appreciation for language and the rhyme scheme

Summary: ‘Underground’ by James Reeves paints a marvellous and different picture on Nature which describes the activities of life below the soil.

While the surface of the earth is all green with ample light, the underground is dark and devoid of it. However, that does not mean it is any less lively than the life on the surface. It is in fact teeming with life with rabbits, and moles turning explorers and burying deep underground. Like the animals on the surface hunt and forage for food, so do the ants and other lifeforms underground toil for food. Some animals choose to rest safe and snug in the womb of the earth and are disturbed, at times, by a shovel or spade which intrudes upon their space. The trees that are so lush and green above the surface of the ground because their strong roots are deeply furrowed and rooted in the underground. Last, but not the least, the underground serves not only as the land of the living and land of birth for a number of lifeforms above the surface, but it also serves as the land of the dead!

Pre-reading

Predict

Write the title on the board.

Ask students:

1. What do you think the poem is about?
2. What will you find under the ground?

3. How would you feel if I told you there is a whole kingdom underground?
4. What would it look like?

In groups, students discuss and depict an underground world. Pictures can be used. They then share their ideas with the class.

READING

Tell students they are going to read a poem about an underground world.

Vocabulary to pre-teach:

Introduce these words to the class, and discuss their meanings.

mole	quarrying	populous	tread	toil
gigantic bones	marvellous	secure	intrudes	earthly solitudes

1. Ask students if they would like to change their predictions about what the poem is about.
2. Encourage them to listen carefully and let their books remain closed. Read the whole poem aloud. / Play the audio.
3. Put students in groups and tell them to pick out words from the poem associated with:
 - Life underground
 - Interruptions to underground life
 - Descriptive words used for life in the ground
 - Words denoting any kind of movement underground
4. List the words on the board as the groups call out their answers.
5. Now, ask students to:
 - a. *List out what other animals, plants and insect they might find underground.*
 - b. *What are some other unlikely places where we would find life? (Underwater, in space...)*
 - c. *What is the rhyme scheme in the poem? (ground/sound, floor/explore, fro/grow, overhead/tread, toil/soil, intrudes/solitudes, spread/dead...)*
6. Now ask the groups to summarise the poem:
 - a. *What are the main ideas?*
 - b. *What are the crucial details necessary for supporting the ideas?*
 - c. *What information is irrelevant or unnecessary? (Tell them to use key words or phrases to identify the main points from the poem.)*

Post-reading

Group work

Ask students to discuss about life in an unlikely place. (Example: Underwater (seas / rivers), in space, the North Pole)

Ask each group to choose one location and create a presentation about life in that place. The presentation can be in the form of a poem or a graphic presentation with an explanation.

STUDENTS' BOOK ANSWER KEY

Under Ground

Comprehension

- A.**
1. The speaker thinks that rabbits, moles and ants living underground will stop their work. The rabbits and moles will stop exploring the dark underground while the ants would stop digging and running to and fro. They will stop to hear the speaker's footsteps when he passes overhead.
 2. The fork and the spade may disturb animals that bury themselves in the warm underground and sleep through the cold months of winter.
 3. The speaker calls the underground 'the country of the dead' because he is referring to the graves of dead people who are buried underground. The speaker refers to the buried rocks and stones as the earth's gigantic bones.
- B.**
1.
 - a. 'Populous empires' refer to the crowded colonies of the ants that live below the ground.
 - b. These empires are being built by ants.
 2.
 - a. The speaker refers to the underground as the 'dark kingdom' as there is no light there. In the very first stanza, they say that there is no light deep under the

ground. It is also said to be the dark kingdom due to the graves of the dead people buried underground.

- b. The 'marvellous things' refer to all the creatures that are found underground—from the rabbits and moles that are busy exploring and the busy ants to the creatures who bury themselves in the warmth of the earth and sleep, safe from the cold above the ground. Along with these are the roots of trees that go deep under the ground and the gigantic rocks and stones.
- C. At the outset of the poem, the speaker says that no light or sound penetrates the deep underground. It is so quiet down there that animals can peacefully and safely hibernate under the ground, away from the cold above the ground. He also refers to the dead lying buried there, thereby taking ahead the idea of complete silence. But he brings out a contrast when he talks about the rabbits and moles exploring the underground, ants building nests for their large colonies and even the slowly but steadily growing roots of trees. Also, the images of footsteps and forks and spades digging the ground add to the activity under the ground. Using these images, the speaker is able to bring out the contrast.

Appreciating the poem

A. 1. b

B. 1. ground, sound 2. spread, tread 3. stones, bones 4. grow, fro

Vocabulary

- a. No light and little sound
b. Some creatures sleep and do not toil
c. Quarrying ants run to and fro
d. Deep down, the buried rocks and stones are like the earth's gigantic bones

Going Further

Free response.

QUESTION BANK

Under Ground

A. Answer in brief.

Who, according to the poet, is busy under the ground?

Ans: The poet is able to visualise many creatures busy under the ground. The rabbits, the mole and the ants make place under the earth to live peacefully. He is also able to imagine some creatures which sleep and do not toil.

B. Answer in detail.

What thoughts cross the mind of the poet as he walks on the ground?

Ans: While visualising some insects and animals busy underneath the ground, the poet wonders whether they would stop their work and hear him walking on the ground

above. He thinks of the ants that run to and fro, always busy trying to make their densely populated empires grow. There are some creatures which the poet feels are quiet. These creatures feel secure underneath the ground but sometimes are disturbed when people decide to dig the earth for some work. The roots of the tree, he feels, are also busy spreading into the graves of the dead. The poet says, further down there are buried rocks and stones which are like earth's huge sharpening tools. Overall, the poet is wonderstruck at the marvellous world that exists under the ground.

C. Choose the correct answer.

In the poem 'Under Ground', the poet describes

- a. a lifeless dark world under the surface of the ground
- b. about rabbits, moles and other living creatures underground
- c. a world under the ground teeming with life.

Ans: c

D. Read the given lines and answer the questions that follow.

1. *Sometimes a fork or spade intrudes*

Upon their earthy solitudes.

- a. How can fork and spade intrude life under the ground?
- b. What is *earthy solitude*?
- c. What else do you think can interfere with their quiet life?

Ans: a. Forks and spades are mostly used to dig the earth for planting saplings, for making a well, burying the dead and so on. These tools could accidentally wedge into the homes of the creatures living underground.

b. *Earthy solitude* in the above line refers to living alone under the earth's surface, without disturbance from the outside world.

c. *Free response.* (Suggestion answer: heavy rain, tractor/vehicle running above, drilling or piling machines, children playing and so on.)

2. *In the dark kingdom under ground*

How many marvellous things are found.

- a. Why does the poet call the place a kingdom?
- b. Why is it dark?
- c. Name two other marvellous things one can find underground.

Ans: a. He calls it a kingdom because there are plenty of creatures that live underground almost as if there is a separate kingdom present there.

b. It is dark because light does not reach there as the kingdom is below the ground.

c. *Free response.* (Suggested answer: water, precious stones, farmer's friends – the earthworms)

E. Answer in detail. (Think and answer)

The poet speaks of a few living things and their activities underground. Have you ever imagined the world under the ground and how it is so different from the world above? Write briefly how you perceive it.

Free response