

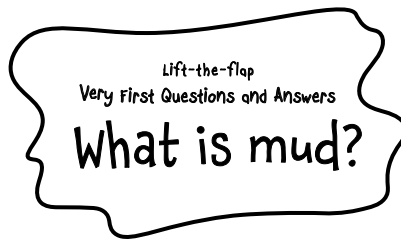
usborne  
Lift-the-flap

Very First Questions and Answers

# What is mud?

Teachers' Notes





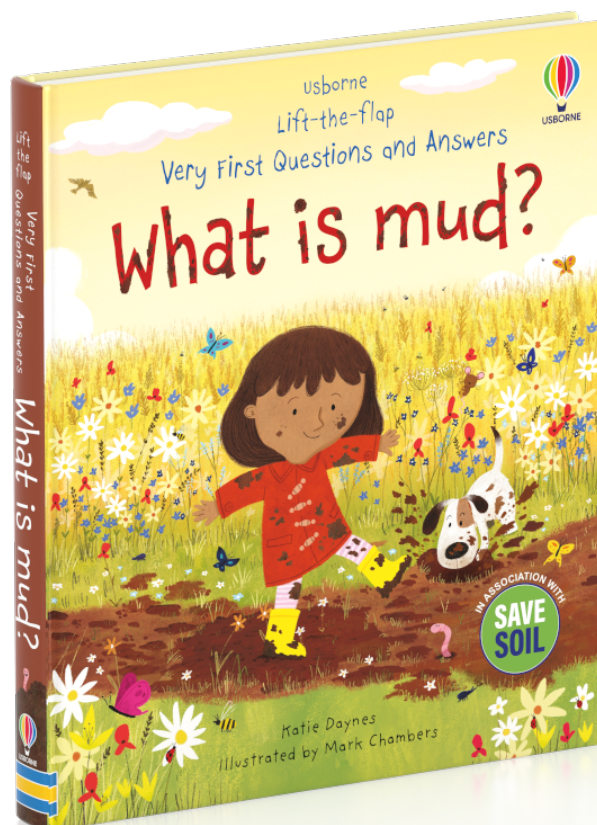
## Teaching Ideas & Activities for Ages 3+

This pack has been created to support the reading of *What is Mud?* The activities are designed to encourage children to get curious about mud, learn about its importance and discover how they can help protect the soil.

**Themes:** Muddy Play • The Role of Earth Worms • The Importance of Healthy Soil • Growing Food • Animals that Live Underground • Protecting our Soil

### About the Book

Mud is so much more than squelchy brown stuff. It's why our food grows, why our forests stand tall, why our water and air are less dirty and why billions of living things have somewhere to live. This engaging new title encourages young readers and their grown-ups to delight in mud, to value it in a new way and to help protect the planet's soil for the future.



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## Let's Get Muddy!

Have a look at this picture from page 2 of *What is Mud?* What can you see? What do you think the children are making?



### Activity: Muddy Play!

It's time to get your hands in some mud!

**You will need:** a natural area where you can dig up some mud or a container of soil or compost, a trowel, a bucket, a watering can, waterproofs or clothing suitable for messy play, cake or pie cases or old baking trays.

# What is mud?

## Play Prompts

What happens if you add water to the mud?  
How does it change?

Can you make a mud pie or mud fairy cakes?  
What ingredients will you use? How will you decorate them?

Can you make a face using mud? Perhaps you could gather leaves, stones, branches, grass or other natural materials to make the nose, eyes, ears and mouth? Who does your face belong to? Maybe a fairy, a magician or a character from a book?

Can you write the first letter of your name in mud?

Can you make a magic mud potion? What spells will you cast with your magic potion?

Can you make an animal out of mud? Perhaps you could make a hedgehog with sticks for spines? Or maybe you could invent a new animal?

\*Always wash your hands after playing in the mud, and never put it in your mouth!

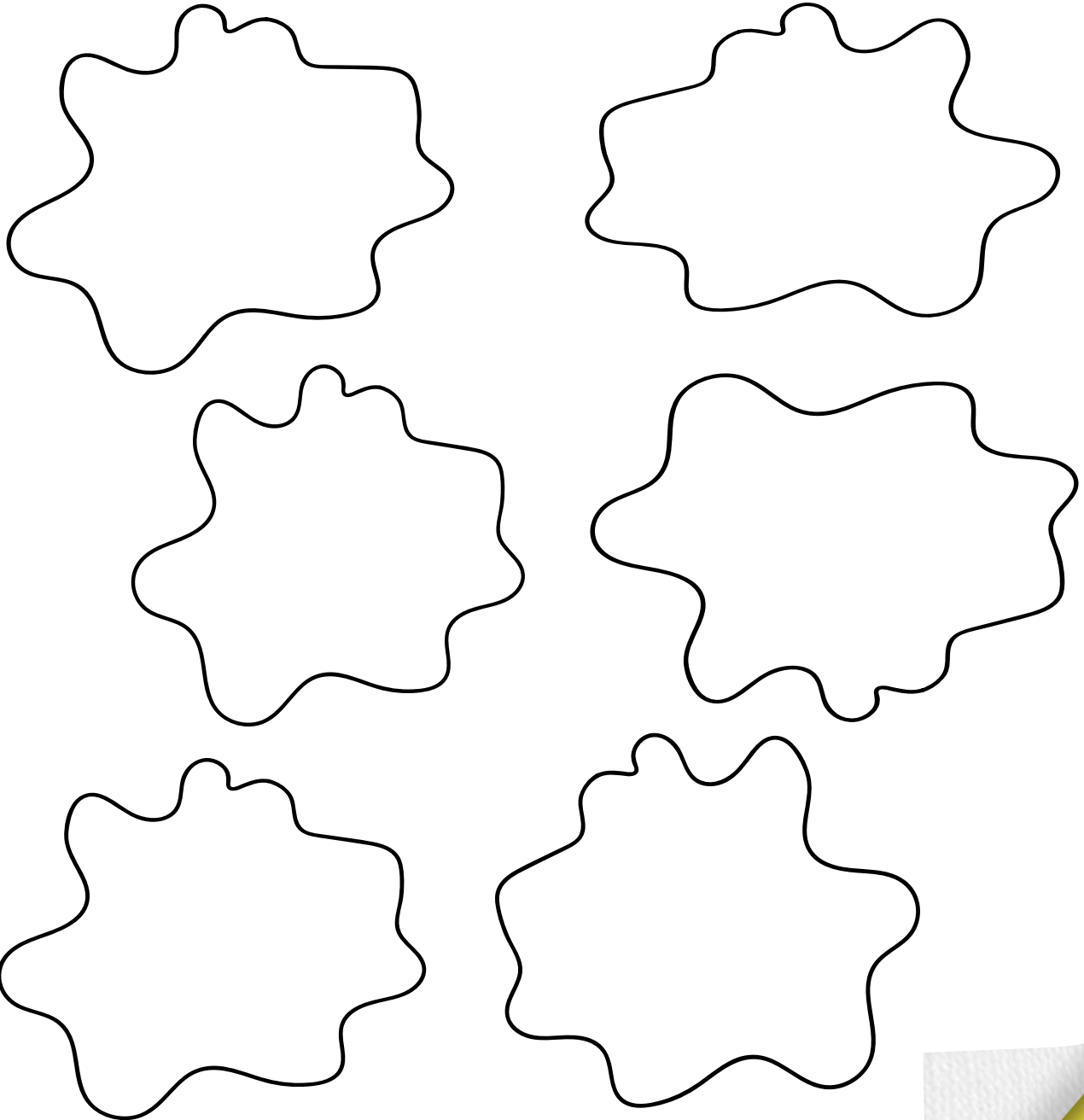
Further Ideas: Have a close look at some mud using a magnifying glass. What can you see? What do you think mud is made from? Read page 3 to find out more!

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**Activity: Talking about Mud**

How does mud feel? What sounds does it make? Can you think of some words to describe mud?

Write your words in the shapes below:



Further Ideas: Why not use the descriptive words you have collected to write a poem about mud?



## Wonderous Worms!

They may be small, but earthworms are very important creatures. Open the flap on page 4 of *What is Mud?* to find out more about how earthworms help to keep the soil healthy!

### Activity: Make Your Own Wormery!

**You will need:** an empty 2 litre plastic bottle (or any clear container), gravel, sand, damp soil, black paper, some fallen leaves or grass cuttings, water in a spray bottle, silver foil to make a lid, tape.

#### Method:

Ask an adult to cut the top off your plastic bottle using sharp scissors.

- Pour a thin layer of gravel into the bottom of your bottle. This will help with drainage.
- Add a layer of soil, approximately 3cm deep. If necessary, spray the soil lightly with water to make sure it is moist.
- Add a layer of sand, about the same depth as the soil and spray lightly.
- Repeat adding alternating layers of sand and soil and spraying with water as required.

Continue until your bottle is about three quarters full.

- Now, you need to collect about 5 or 6 worms. You can find worms by looking under damp logs or dead leaves or by digging in the soil. Be gentle and handle the worms carefully making sure they don't dry out.
- Place your worms on the top layer of your wormery.
- Add some dead leaves or cut grass on top of the worms. (This is yummy food for your worms!)
- Create a lid for your wormery using foil. Make sure there are plenty of holes in the lid so that air can get in.
- Worms live in the dark and don't like bright lights so wrap some black paper around your wormery and tape it in place. Put your wormery in a cool, dark place such as a cupboard.
- Check on your wormery regularly. Make sure your soil remains moist but not soaking wet and add extra leaves if needed.
- Remove the black paper and observe your worms after about a week.

What has changed? Why do you think worms are important for soil health?

- Put your worms safely back in the earth outside when you have finished your observations.



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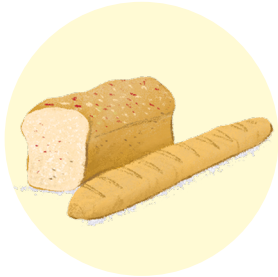
# Why Do We Need Mud?

Read pages 5 and 6 of *What is Mud?* to find out about the importance of mud.

## Activity: Match the Foods with the Plants

Plants need muddy soil to grow. Can you draw a line from each food to the plant it comes from?

FOOD



PLANTS

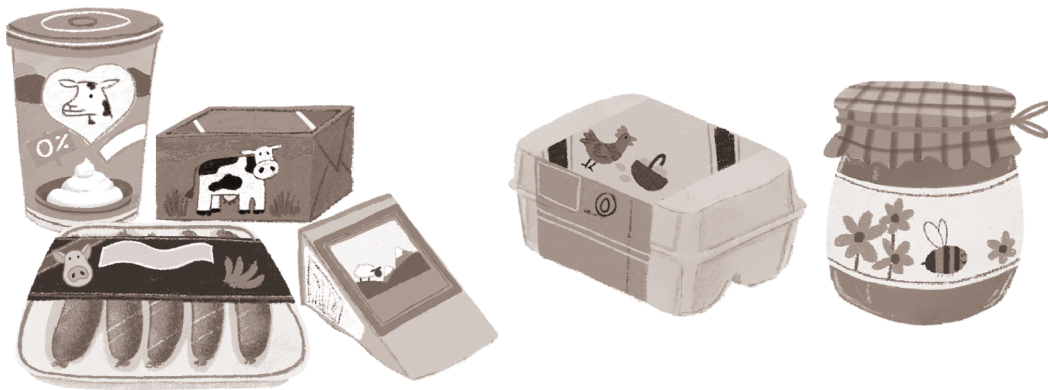


# What is mud?

## Discussion Questions:

- Do you know what cheese is made from? Why do we need soil to make cheese?
- Think about what you had for breakfast. Did any of the foods you had for breakfast come from the soil?
- Have a look around your classroom. Can you spot any objects that we need soil to produce?

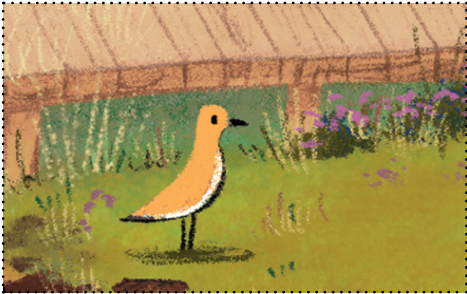
(Hint: Wood comes from trees and cotton comes from plants that grow in the soil. Plus, clay comes from the earth!)



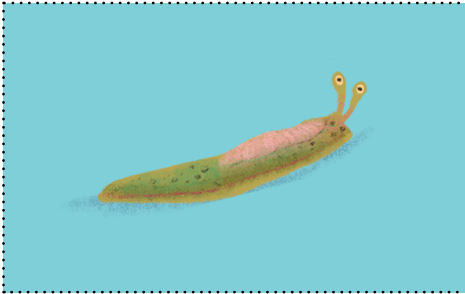
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**Activity: Sort the Creatures**

On page 7 of *What is Mud?*, we learn that mud gives a home to a quarter of all types of living things in the world! Cut out the living creatures below. Can you sort them into those that live underground and those that live above the ground?



Bird



Slug



Chicken



Mole



Hippopotamus



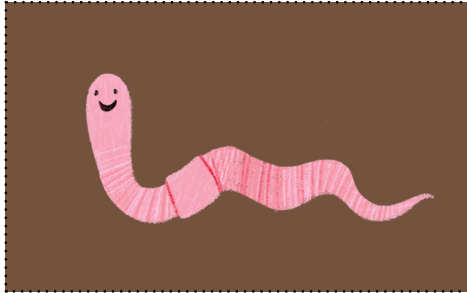
Rabbit



Badger



Bee



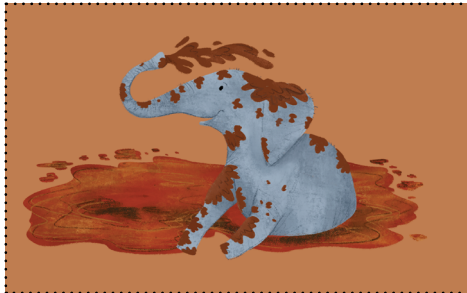
Earthworm



Centipede



Sheep



Elephant

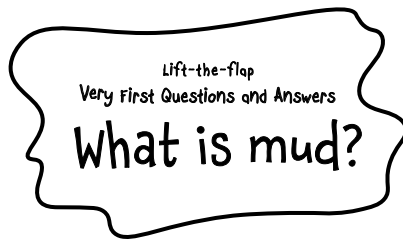
# What is mud?

## Discussion Questions

- Can you spot each of these creatures in the book?
- Creatures that live above the ground still need mud. Choose one of the creatures that lives above the ground. In what ways does this creature need mud to live?
- Mud is pretty amazing, it helps plants grow and provides a home for many living creatures. But that's not all!

Using page 7 to help you, can you describe what else mud does?





## Save Our Soil!

Read pages 9 and 10 of *What is Mud?* to find out how we can all help look after the soil and keep it healthy. As a class, can you think of one thing you could do this week to help the soil?

Here are some ideas:

- Arrange a visit to some local allotments or gardens to see what plants are growing.
- Grow your own! There are lots of vegetables you can grow at home or at school even if you don't have space for a vegetable patch. For example, you could grow salad leaves in containers on a sunny windowsill or potatoes in growbags in your outdoor area. What would you like to grow?
- Experiment with different natural methods of controlling pests that might eat your plants (such as releasing ladybirds to eat aphids or using wool pellets to deter slugs.)
- Make your own compost!
- Learn more about mud by downloading our [Mud Experiment Activity Sheet here](#).
- Explore different types of soil. Take a soil sample from different locations around school then use a magnifying glass or the glass jar activity from the sheet to compare the soil samples. How are they similar or different? Why do you think this is? Which soil do you think would be best for growing plants?
- Talk about mud and tell people how marvellous it is! Perhaps you could read *What is Mud?* to another class in your school? Or maybe you could organise an assembly to share everything you've learnt from the book? [\(Assembly resources can be downloaded here.\)](#)

When you have decided what you would like to do, write your idea in the space below.

**To save the soil we will:**

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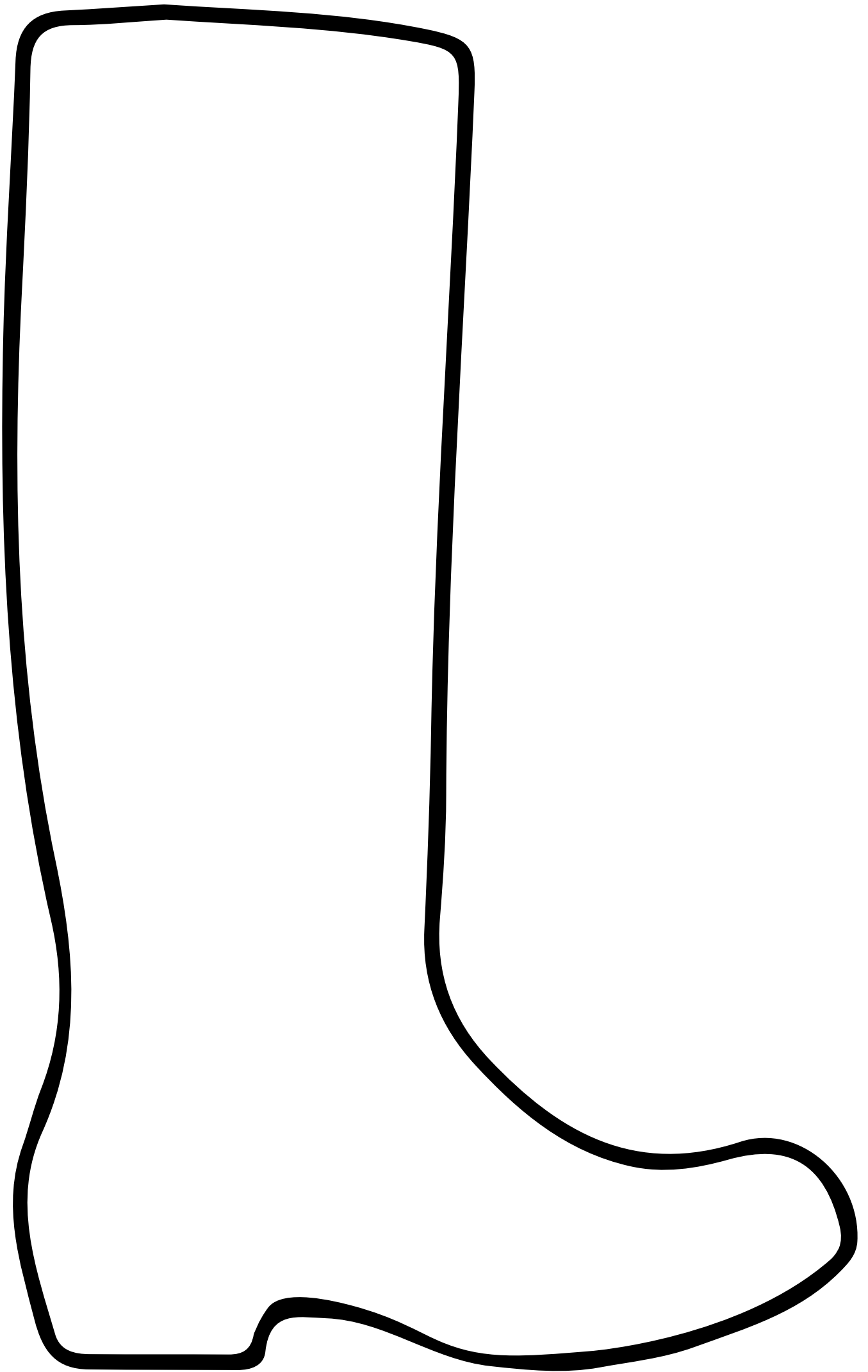
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### Activity: Share the Wonders of Mud!

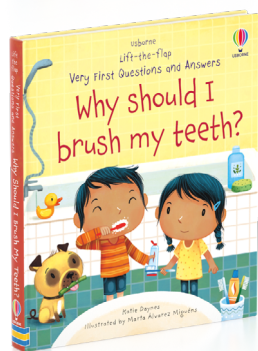
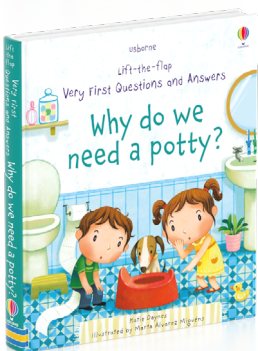
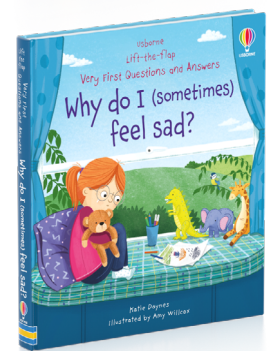
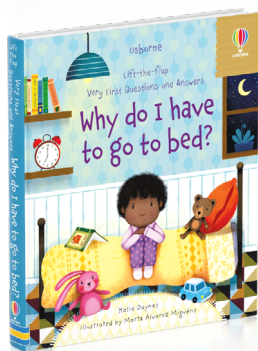
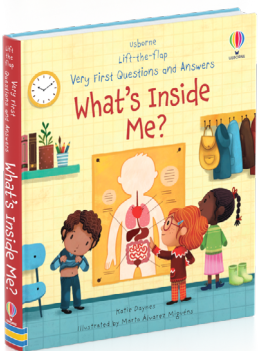
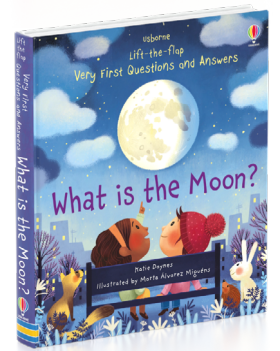
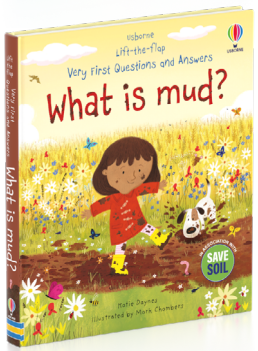
It's time to share your love of mud! Discuss everything you know about mud with your class. Why is mud marvellous? In what ways do we need mud? Now, create a collage all about mud inside the welly boot template. You could draw or paint pictures or cut them out of magazines. Try to include pictures that show just how amazing mud is. For example, you could include pictures of different animals that make their home in the mud or plants that grow in the mud. You could show some of the fun things you can do with mud and how you feel when you are playing with mud!

Ask your teacher if you can display your welly boots around the school to spread awareness about the wonders of mud.





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