



W H A L E C L A S S

Circle Time Guide

Everything you need, one page per day.

Week 26 • Animal Habitats

6 – 9 April 2027 • 13 minutes a day • ages 2.5–6, English learners

⚠ A FOUR-day week — 清明节 falls on Monday 5 April, school is closed • Tuesday carries two homes and two words • four verses, and Friday is untouched

WEEK OVERVIEW



Print · laminate · ring-bind · hold this all week

Every animal has a home — and it is **exactly the right home for that animal**. A nest is no use to a fish and a pond is no use at all to a fox. Say that plainly on the first day and let every game prove it. The week ends on the one question the children can answer about themselves: *where do **you** live?* Every script here is word-for-word the same as the teachers' page.



THIS IS A FOUR-DAY WEEK

清明节 falls on Monday 5 April — school is closed, and we run Tuesday 6 to Friday 9 April. Tuesday carries **two** Magic Box objects (the nest *and* the den) and **two** words; the song has **four** verses, not five, and Tuesday's is the long one. **Friday is untouched**: the whole song top to bottom, the *who lives here?* review, the awards and the parent wrap-up all still land on Friday. Nothing is cut from the end of the week.

FIVE WORDS THEY'LL OWN BY FRIDAY

nest den pond web live

Littles (2.5–3) — one word + a gesture is a win: “Nest!” (hands cupped into a bowl), “Pond!” (one hand swims like a fish), “Web!” (ten fingers spread wide).

Bigs (4–6) — sentence frames: “The bird lives in a nest.” · “The fish lives in the pond.” · “Where do you live?”

Never ask a little for a sentence. They will get there by watching the bigs.

THE 13-MINUTE FLOW, EVERY DAY

- 2 MIN** Magic Box hook — chant, shake, sniff, dramatic peek, the day's real object.
- 4 MIN** Teach — the day's home, held up so everyone can see it. Get it wrong once on purpose.
- 3 MIN** Song — chorus → today's new verse → chorus.
- 3 MIN** Game — one named game, tied to the day's word.
- 1 MIN** Close — whisper → normal → SHOUT.

IN THE MAGIC BOX, DAY BY DAY

Mon no class — 清明节 · **Tue** a real bird's nest, *and* a shoebox den with a little fox tucked inside it · **Wed** a jar pond — water, pond weed and a model fish, screwed shut and carried flat · **Thu** a wool web on a hoop with a spider in the middle, and a spray bottle · **Fri** every home at once, plus a basket of small animal figures to match up.

THE WEEK'S CLOSE

Everyone: “Where do you live? — HOME!” (*open hands questioning · cup the ear · both arms thrown wide into a roof on the shout*)

THEME SHELF · FOUR TRAYS

- 1** • Animal ↔ home matching — bird-nest, fox-den, fish-pond, spider-web, bee-hive. *Control:* matching symbols on the backs. Out from Tuesday.
- 2** • Animal-home 3-part cards — nest 窝 · den 洞 · pond 池塘 · web 网 · hive 蜂巢. *Control:* the uncut control cards.
- 3** • Build a nest — twigs, moss, cotton wool and tweezers. *Control:* the five eggs fit the finished nest exactly, no more and no fewer.
- 4** • Land / water / air sorting — three coloured trays and a basket of figures. *Control:* a coloured dot under each one.

CHINESE ANGLE

One 汉字 card a day beside the day's home: 窝 · 洞 · 池 · 网 · 家 — finished on Friday and put up on the wall. 鸟窝 · 狐狸洞 · 池塘 · 蜘蛛网 · 我的家. One line of 《小蝌蚪找妈妈》 on Wednesday: the tadpole is looking for exactly what we are. Monday was 清明节 — the week opens by asking what they saw outside on 踏青.

FRIDAY'S DARK PHONICS

All Our Sounds — the whole-alphabet **review** lesson; no new letter this week. “cat, pig, dog — woof!” The habitat animals carry the hunt: fish, bird, bear, camel, mole.

MONDAY · NO CLASS · 清明节

No class — 清明节

There is no circle time today. This week is **four days**: Tuesday 6 to Friday 9 April.

Nothing to grab. School is closed for 清明节 and we start the new theme on **Tuesday 6 April** — with a real bird's nest, first thing out of the Magic Box.

WHY THE SHORT WEEK

清明 falls on the Monday, so the week starts a day late and every day after it does a little more:

- **Tuesday carries two objects and two words** — the **nest** comes out of the box first, then the **den**. Two homes, side by side, is actually the better lesson: high and open versus low and dark.
- **Five words on four days: nest → den** together on Tuesday, then pond, web and live one a day.
- The **song has four verses**, not five — Tuesday's verse is the long one, with a couplet for the bird and a couplet for the fox. Nothing is missing; that is the whole song.
- **Friday is not touched.** The whole song top to bottom, the *who lives here?* review, the awards and the parent wrap-up all still land on Friday, exactly as they would in a five-day week.

OUTDOORS WHAT TO LOOK AT OVER THE LONG WEEKEND

清明 is the day families sweep the graves and then walk out into the green — 踏青, treading the new grass. Everything this week is out there today, for free. Tell the parents on Friday afternoon:

- **Look UP.** The trees are only just in leaf, so a **nest** from last year is still easy to see in a bare fork. Point, don't touch.
- **Look DOWN.** Any pond, any puddle: something lives in it. Watch the water for one whole minute before you decide it is empty.
- **Look in the corners.** A doorway, a fence, a gate — a **web** with the morning wet still on it is the best thing a three-year-old will see all weekend.
- **Bring one thing back** for the nest-building tray: a twig, a feather, a scrap of dry moss. One each is plenty.

If your Monday does run (a make-up day, or a class that is in): don't start the theme. Go outside and do the looking. Then Tuesday opens exactly as written and they arrive already full of it.

NEXT COMING BACK

We start on **Tuesday 6 April** with **Animal Habitats**. First circle back: the box is heavier than it looks and smells faintly of the outside, and inside it is a **real bird's nest**. Every child holds it with two hands before a single word is taught.

TUESDAY · DAY 1

Nest and Den

Today's words: **nest** and **den** (two homes today — this is the four-day week)

Grab: a **real bird's nest** in the Magic Box (or one you build from twigs and moss the night before); a **shoebox den** with a flap for a door and a little **fox** tucked inside it; five small eggs (wooden, or stones wrapped in wool) hidden round the room **before** the children come in; the 窝 and 洞 cards; the picture cards from print pack page 11.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is light and it smells faintly of outside. Hold it up. Whole class chants:

Everyone: "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Shake it — a dry little rustle, nothing solid. Lift the lid a crack and **sniff**, loudly, eyes shut. Sniff again. Let your face go amazed.

Teacher: "Something in here is made of **sticks**... and **grass**... and somebody **lived** in it." (lift the nest out on two flat palms, very slowly, and hold it at their eye level)

The nest goes right round the circle on two hands and every child holds it. Hands cupped into a bowl: **"Nest!"**

Say it once, plainly: nobody is at home in this nest, which is why we may hold it. A nest with eggs in it is looked at from far away and never touched.

4 MIN TEACH · NEST, THEN DEN

Everybody makes a nest with their own two hands. We say it twice — small and slow, then big:

Twigs and moss and a bit of my hair, (cup both hands into a bowl)
Round and round till the nest is **there**. (turn the cupped hands round and round)
Up in the tree, where the wind can blow — (lift the nest hands right up high and sway)
That's where the **bird** lives. Now you know! (one finger points at the real nest)

Then the second thing. The box is not empty — there is a flap in the side of a shoebox and the room goes quiet while you open it. Inside, curled up, a fox.

Teacher: "The bird's home is **high** and **open**. The fox's home is **low**... and **dark**... and it is called a **den**." (both hands make a low arch on the floor and everybody peeps into it)

Littles do the two gestures and the two words: **"Nest!"** **"Den!"** Bigs owe you the frame: **"The bird lives in a nest."** **"The fox lives in a den."**

Teacher fails: try to put the **fox** into the **nest**. Push. Wedge him in. Stand back, delighted with yourself. Wait. They will take him off you and put him back where he belongs, and they will tell you why.

Chinese moment: lay the 窝 card beside the nest and the 洞 card beside the den, and say 鸟窝 and 狐狸洞 once each. Leave both cards out; the row grows by one card a day and stands finished on Friday.

3 MIN GAME · NEST HUNT

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" The empty nest sits in the middle of the mat. Five eggs are hidden round the room, two of them in plain sight at knee height for the littlest ones.

Teacher: "The eggs have rolled **out** of the nest! **Walking** feet... find **one** egg... and carry it home." (two hands, held against the chest, all the way back)

One egg per child, carried in two hands and laid in the nest — not dropped. Littles say **"Nest!"** as they lay it down; Bigs give the sentence: **"The egg lives in the nest."** Count them into the nest out loud together: one, two, three, four, five.

Then, with the last two minutes, **animal-home charades:** you call a home, they do the way in. **Den** — crawl in low. **Nest** — fly up and land. **Pond** — swim down. (Pond is tomorrow; let them meet the word here first.)

Five eggs, five and no more — the nest on the shelf tray is built to hold exactly five, and that is its control of error all week.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody's hands cupped into a nest. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: "Where do you live? — HOME!" (open hands questioning · cup the ear · both arms thrown wide into a roof on the shout)

Got 3 spare minutes? A Nest Is Noisy (Dianna Hutts Aston) — page after page of nests that are nothing like each other. Or just take the nest to the window and look for the real one outside.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Tuesday's verse → chorus, the nest held up in both hands. This is the **long** verse: two homes, because this is a four-day week.

"The bird lives up in a cosy nest, / Twigs and moss — she likes it best! / The fox lives down in a dark, dark den, / Sleeps all day and comes out again!" (cupped nest hands lifted high; then both hands into a low arch)

WEDNESDAY · DAY 2

The Jar Pond

Today's words: **pond** (*nest · den come back*)

Grab: a **jar pond** in the Magic Box — a big clear jar with water, a strand of pond weed and a model fish in it, screwed shut and carried flat; a shallow basin, paper fish with a paperclip on each nose, and a stick-and-string rod with a magnet on the end; a towel on the floor **before** the children sit down; the 池 card.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is **heavy**, and you carry it with two hands and a worried face. Whole class chants:

Everyone: "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Do **not** shake it. Tell them you can't. Tip it a few degrees instead — and something inside **sloshes**. Do it again. Let them hear it.

Teacher: "It's **wet**... it's got **weed** in it... and somebody in here is **swimming**." (*lift the jar out and hold it up to the window so the light comes through the water*)

The jar goes round the circle, held in two hands, and every child looks *through* it. One hand swimming like a fish: **"Pond!"**

4 MIN TEACH · POND

Everybody's hand becomes a fish. We say it twice — slow and deep, then quick:

Down in the water, cool and green, (*one hand swims down low, past your knees*)

The quietest home you've ever seen. (*finger on tips, eyes wide*)

No twigs, no moss, no door, no bed — (*shake your head at each one*)

Just **water** over the fish's head! (*flat hand passes right over your own head*)

Now the true thing, said slowly, with the jar in your hands: a nest is no good to a fish and a pond is no good to a bird. Hold the nest up beside the jar so they can see both at once. **The right home for the right animal** — that is the whole week in one picture.

Littles swim one hand and say **"Pond!"** Bigs owe you the frame: **"The fish lives in the pond."** **"The fish does not live in a nest!"**

Teacher fails: take the little fox from yesterday's den and lower him, very carefully, into the jar. Look pleased. Hold it. Wait for the roar.

Chinese moment: the 池 card joins 窝 and 洞 on the mat — 池塘. Then one line of 《小蝌蚪找妈妈》: the little tadpole swimming round the pond asking everybody 你是妈妈吗? One line only, then stop — the tadpole is looking for exactly what we are: the right home.

3 MIN GAME · MAGNET FISHING

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" The basin is the pond, the paper fish are floating in it, and there is one rod. Towel down first.

Teacher: "Fish for **one**... lift it out... and **tell us where it lives**." (*hand the rod on to the next child, never fish twice yourself*)

Every catch is said out loud before it is put down: **"The fish lives in the pond."** Littles hold the fish up and say **"Pond!"** — a full win. Everybody gets one turn; the ones waiting count the catches out loud.

One rod, one turn, and the rest of the class watching is the point — this game is really a lesson in waiting, and the fishing is the sugar. If the water goes everywhere, that is what the towel is for; do not stop the game to mop.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody's hand swimming. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: "Where do you live? — HOME!" (*open hands questioning · cup the ear · both arms thrown wide into a roof on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? Leave the jar pond on the window sill and look at it again at the end of the day. Ask what has moved. Something always has.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Wednesday's verse → chorus, sung low as the hand goes down.

"The fish lives deep in the cool, cool pond, / Swish, swish, swish — he swims along!" (*one hand swims down low, then right across in front of everybody*)

THURSDAY · DAY 3

A Silky Web

Today's words: **web** (*nest · den · pond come back*)

Grab: a **wool web** in the Magic Box — white wool wound across a bent wire hoop or a forked stick, with a small **spider** sitting in the middle of it; one big **ball of wool** for the circle game (a whole ball, not a scrap); a water spray bottle; the 网 card.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box makes no sound at all, however hard you shake it. Whole class chants:

Everyone: “What’s in the box? What’s in the box?”

Shake — nothing. Shake harder — still nothing. Sniff — nothing. Now lift the lid and go completely still.

Teacher: “It’s so **light**... it’s made of **string**... and it was made by somebody with **eight legs**.” (*lift the hoop out by its edges and hold it up against the light; then spray it once, and it glitters*)

The web goes round the circle held by the frame, never touched in the middle. Ten fingers spread wide: **“Web!”**

4 MIN TEACH · WEB

Ten fingers up, spread as wide as they will go. Twice — slowly, then fast:

Round and round and round I go, (*wind one finger round and round*)

Out of my **body** the silk does grow! (*pull an invisible thread out of your tummy*)

Sticky and shiny and strong as string, (*pinch and stretch the thread between two hands*)

My house is a **web** — and I made the thing! (*ten fingers wide, very proud*)

Then the plain true thing: the bird **collected** her nest, the fox **dug** his den — but the spider makes her whole house **out of herself**, in one night, and if it breaks she makes another one. Say it once. Let it sit there.

Littles spread ten fingers and say **“Web!”** Bigs owe you the frame: **“The spider lives in a web.” “The spider made her own home.”**

Teacher fails: announce that you will now make a web, out of yourself, exactly like a spider. Strain. Go red. Produce nothing whatsoever. Ask them, wounded, what you are doing wrong.

Chinese moment: the 网 card joins the row — 蜘蛛网. Four cards now: 窝 · 洞 · 池 · 网, and tomorrow the fifth one finishes it. Say all four together, pointing, quickly.

3 MIN GAME · WEAVE THE WEB

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” Everybody sits in a circle, cross-legged, knees nearly touching. You hold the ball of wool.

Teacher: (*hold the end of the wool tightly*) “I’m sending it to... **Mei**. Hold your thread and **don’t let go**. Now Mei sends it to somebody else.”

The ball rolls across the circle, child to child, each one keeping hold of their bit. Say the name every time. Slowly the whole class becomes one enormous web, and then everybody **lifts it together**, gently, off the floor. Look at it. Bounce the spider on it if you have a light one.

Littles just hold their thread and say **“Web!”** Bigs say who they are sending it to: **“I send my thread to Leo.”**

Wind the ball back up together at the end, child by child, in reverse — it takes one extra minute and it is the calmest minute of the day. Do not cut the wool.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody’s ten fingers spread wide. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: “Where do you live? — HOME!” (*open hands questioning · cup the ear · both arms thrown wide into a roof on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *The Very Busy Spider* (Eric Carle) — every animal asks her to come and play and she just keeps building. It is the same lesson as the whole week and they can feel the web on the page.

3 MIN · Today’s song moment — chorus → Thursday’s verse → chorus, almost still — only the winding finger moves. “The spider sits on a silky web, / Round and round on a silver thread!” (*ten fingers spread wide; then wind one finger round and round, faster and faster*)

FRIDAY • DAY 4

Where Do You Live? + Big Review

Today's words: **live** — and **nest** • **den** • **pond** • **web**, the whole week

Grab: everything from the week packed back into the box — the nest, the den, the jar pond, the wool web — plus a **basket of small animal figures** (bird, fox, fish, spider, bee, and two or three more); the awards (print pack page 17); the 家 card. Next week is **The Earth**.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

The box comes out bulging and will not quite shut.

Teacher: "Today the box is **FULL** — it's got everybody's **HOUSE** inside it!"

Pull each home out and stand it on the mat in silence. They will supply the word before you can.

The nest → "**Nest!**" The shoebox → "**Den!**" The jar → "**Pond!**" The hoop → "**Web!**"

Four homes in a row on the mat. Then tip the basket of animals out in the middle, in a heap. Nobody lives anywhere yet.

4 MIN TEACH • LIVE, THEN THE WHOLE WEEK

Everybody stands. We tell the whole week with our bodies, twice — slow, then fast:

The bird lives in a **nest**, *(cup both hands into a bowl, lifted high)*

The fox lives in a **den**, *(both hands into a low arch)*

The fish lives in the **pond**, *(one hand swims down low)*

The spider in her **web** — *(ten fingers spread wide)*

And **I** live in my **HOME!** *(both arms up into a big roof over your own head)*

Then, one at a time, round the circle: every child picks one animal out of the heap and walks it to the home it belongs in. Nobody is corrected out loud — if it goes in the wrong place, ask the **class**: "Is the fish happy in there?"

Littles carry the animal and say the one word: "**Pond!**" Bigs owe you the whole sentence as they set it down: "**The fish lives in the pond.**" Then the last question, to every single child by name: "**Where do you live?**"

Teacher fails: pick up the spider and announce that she is going to live in the jar pond from now on, because it is nicer. Start unscrewing the lid. Wait.

Chinese moment: the 家 card finishes the row — 窝 · 洞 · 池 · 网 · 家. 家 is the one that matters: *home*. Point at each child and say 我的家, and let them say it back. Then tell them the whole row is going up on the wall.

3 MIN GAME • WHO LIVES HERE?

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" Quick-fire, and fast is the whole point. You hold up one animal; they shout the home. Then you hold up one home; they shout the animal.

Teacher: "Bird!" → "**NEST!**" "Fox!" → "**DEN!**" "Fish!" → "**POND!**" "Spider!" → "**WEB!**" "Bee!" → "**HIVE!**"

Then throw in one wrong one on purpose — hold up the fish and say "nest?" with a hopeful face — and let them shout you down. Finish on the one that is not a trick: "**Where do you live?**" and every child gets to answer, in any language, in any number of words.

Keep it under two minutes. The moment it slows down, stop it and do the awards — a quick-fire that outstays its welcome loses everything it just proved.

1 MIN CLOSE + AWARDS

Every child gets a "You are a STAR!" award to take home with the wrap-up. Then, standing round the four homes with the animals all in their right places:

Everyone: "Where do you live? — HOME!" *(open hands questioning · cup the ear · both arms thrown wide into a roof on the shout, as loud as it has been all week)*

Got 3 spare minutes? Leave the four homes out over the weekend and tell them the nest stays up in the classroom all month. Next week is **The Earth** — the biggest home of the lot, and it is the one everybody in this room shares.

3 MIN • Today's song moment — Friday's verse, then the **WHOLE song**, top to bottom, standing round the four homes with every animal in its right place. That run-through **is** the review of the week.

"Bird and fox and fish and me — / Everybody has a home, you see!" *(point round the circle, then at yourself; big roof over your head)*

SONGBOOK

★ “Where Do You Live?”

C (0003) F (2010) G7 (0212) · Strum: Down · Down · Down-Up (“where — do — you-live”)

Easy and walking-pace, with a real **stop** after “where do you live?” so the class can answer into the gap. **Three chords, no Am this week**, and every verse is only C and G7. C is one finger, F is two, G7 is three; learn them in that order. Chant it without the uke first; add the chords once they know the actions.

CHORUS — EVERY SINGLE DAY

- C Where do you live? Where do you F live? C (*open hands, questioning*)
- F Tell me, C tell me, where do you G7 live? C (*cup your ear and lean in*)
- C Every animal F has a C home, (*roof over your head with both hands*)
- F A little C home to G7 call their C own! (*hug yourself*)

TUESDAY · NEST & DEN — THE LONG VERSE, TWO HOMES

- C The bird lives up in a cosy nest, (*cupped nest hands, lifted high*)
- G7 Twigs and moss — C she likes it best! (*pat the rim of the nest*)
- C The fox lives down in a dark, dark den, (*both hands into a low arch*)
- G7 Sleeps all day C and comes out again! (*head on your hands, then pop out*)

WEDNESDAY · POND

- C The fish lives deep in the cool, cool pond, (*one hand swims down low*)
- G7 Swish, swish, swish — C he swims along! (*swim the hand right across*)

THURSDAY · WEB

- C The spider sits on a silky web, (*ten fingers spread wide, very still*)
- G7 Round and round C on a silver thread! (*wind one finger round and round*)

FRIDAY · LIVE

- C Bird and fox and fish and me — (*point round the circle, then at yourself*)
- G7 Everybody C has a home, you see! (*big roof over your head*)

Each day: chorus → today's verse → chorus. **A four-day week** (清明 on the Monday), so there are **four** verses and Tuesday's carries both the nest and the den. Friday: sing the whole thing top to bottom standing round the four homes with every animal in its right place — that run-through is the review of the week. If your fingers get stuck, put the uke down, hold the nest up in both hands and do the finger-play instead; the actions carry the meaning either way.