

The Life Cycle of a Butterfly

Objective:

To learn the characteristics of each stage of the life cycles of a butterfly.

Background Information:

An adult butterfly lays an egg, often on a leaf or stem. The egg is commonly grey or white and has rib-like structures. After the egg has hatched, a tiny larva emerges that resembles a caterpillar, although it is much smaller. The larva grows rapidly and develops into a caterpillar. Caterpillars munch on leaves, and they eat so much that they literally outgrow their own skin. In fact, a caterpillar will shed a whole layer of skin approximately 4 to 5 different times! A caterpillar will eventually spin some silk and make a cocoon, or a chrysalis, on a twig or leaf. The chrysalis tends to be brown or green and easily blends into the background. While it is in the chrysalis, the adult structures of the butterfly begin to form. The butterfly has a short life span, but it may travel thousands of miles! During this lesson, students will build a mobile that contains drawings of the four stages of the life cycle of a butterfly: egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, and butterfly. This lesson plan works well before the lesson “Modeling Butterflies”.

Materials:

Paper plates (one for each student)

Markers

Crayons

Butterfly Life Cycle print outs (included at the end of this lesson plan)

Yarn

Tape

Scissors (one for each student)

Preparation:

1. Print out a copy of the drawings of the four stages of a butterfly’s life cycle (egg, caterpillar, cocoon, and butterfly) at the end of this lesson plan.
2. Make a photocopy of each drawing for each child.
3. Draw a spiral with a black marker onto the bottom of each paper plate. Students will cut along the spiral to make a structure from which they can hang the four pictures of the life cycle.
4. Gather crayons and any other materials needed.
5. Make a demonstration model of the butterfly life cycle. Color the bottom of the paper plate. Cut along the spiral. Color the four images of the life cycle of the butterfly. Cut these images out. Tape one piece of yarn of different lengths to each image and tape the other end of the yarn to the cut paper plate. Be sure to tape a piece of yarn to the center of the mobile so that you may hang up the mobile as well.
6. Cut a 3 foot piece of yarn out for each student. Students will cut this yarn into smaller pieces to hang the different pictures on their mobile.

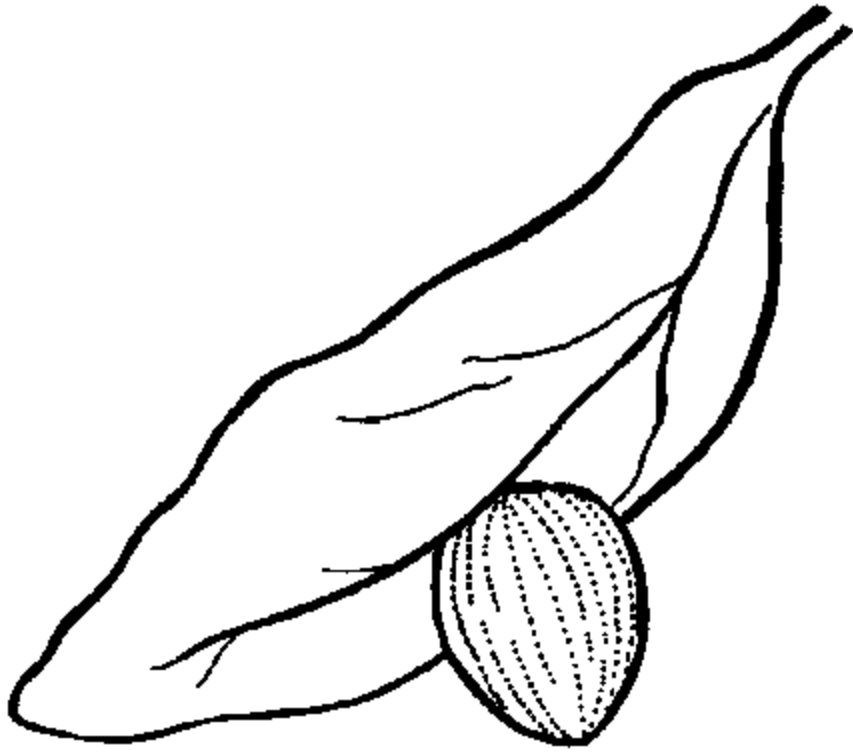
Procedure:

1. Inform students that they are going to study the life cycle of a butterfly today. Ask students if they know how a baby caterpillar is born. For example, does a caterpillar hatch from an egg or are they born without an egg like a puppy? Show students the picture of the egg that they will be coloring.
2. As students now know, caterpillars hatch from an egg. What do caterpillars look like? What do they eat? Explain that they eat leaves. They eat so much that they literally outgrow their skin four or five times! Now reveal the picture of the caterpillar.
3. Ask students "What is a chrysalis?". Ask them if they have ever seen a cocoon. What does one look like? Explain that a caterpillar spins silk, which becomes attached to a twig and a cocoon forms.
4. Lastly, the final stage of the life cycle of a butterfly is the actual development of a butterfly. This occurs in the cocoon. By the time the butterfly is ready to emerge, it is fully formed. Butterflies can travel for thousands of miles but only live for a short period of time.
5. Ask students the following question: If we went outside right now, what life cycle stage of a butterfly do you think would be most common? In other words, would we find eggs, caterpillars, cocoons, or butterflies?
6. Take students outside for 10 minutes to search for these forms. Remind students that caterpillars eat leaves, so encourage them to look for signs of chewed leaves. This may be evidence that a caterpillar is nearby.
7. Go back to the classroom. Pass out the life cycle drawings. Have students color the images and cut them out.
8. Now pass out the paper plates. Have students color the bottom of the paper plate however they want.
9. Instruct students to cut along the spiral of the paper plate.
10. Now have the students cut their piece of yarn into 5 different pieces. The pieces may be in unequal lengths.
11. Take the longest piece and tape it onto the top of the spiral. Students may hang the mobile with this piece of string.
12. Have students tape each piece of yarn to a different image.
13. Now have students tape the other end of the yarn to the spiral.

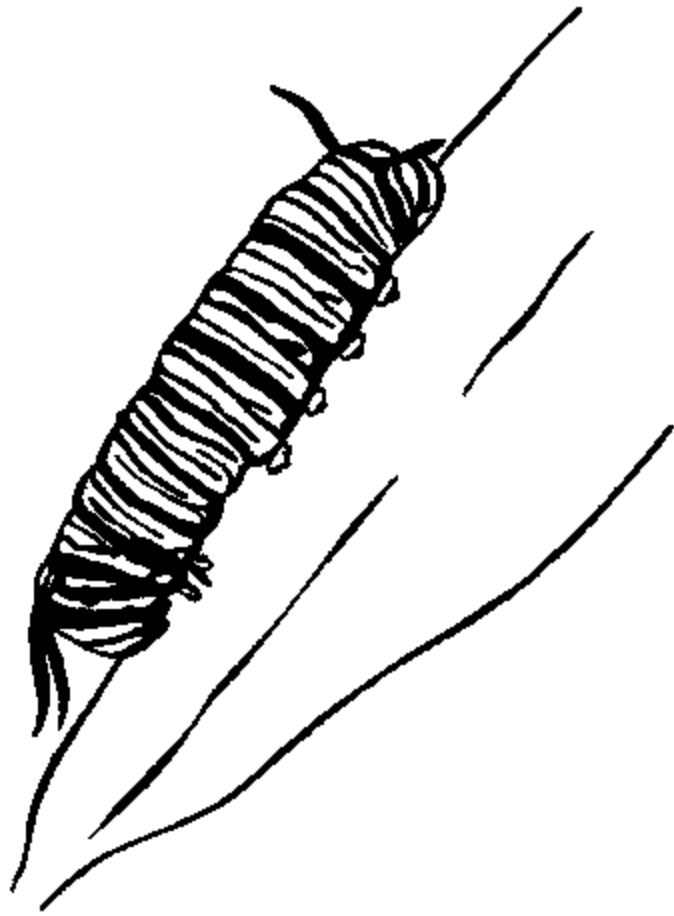
Sources:

Printouts: <http://www.mesc.usgs.gov/resources/education/butterfly/life-cycle/butterfly-life-cycle.asp>

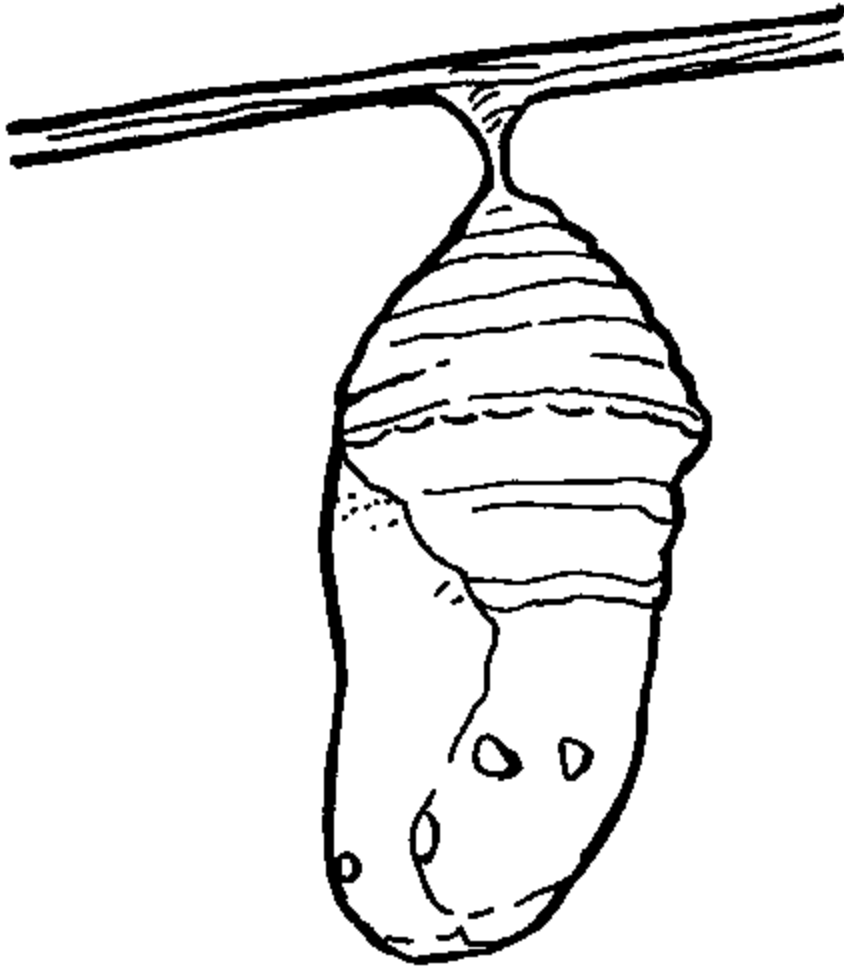
Mobile: <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/butterfly/lifecyclemobile/>



The Egg



The Caterpillar



The Chrysalis



The Butterfly