BUTTERFLY BASICS: LIFE CYCLE
SUGGESTED AGE RANGE: K–3RD GRADE

Did you know that butterflies taste with their feet? How much does a monarch caterpillar grow in two weeks? Learn fascinating factoids about each stage of a butterfly's life cycle, insect anatomy, camouflage, and other amazing defensive and adaptation strategies. Then try creating your own life cycle model with materials you have at home!

MATERIALS

Butterfly Life Cycle Part One Video
Butterfly Life Cycle Part Two Video
Pencil and paper for answering questions and sketching.
If doing the life cycle model extension activity, you will need:

    Paper plate
    Markers, colored pencils or crayons
    Various materials at home to represent the different stages of the life cycle (rice, tissue paper, etc.)
    Glue

VOCABULARY

Metamorphosis: a major change in the form or structure of some animals or insects that happens as the animal or insect becomes an adult.

Camouflage: something (such as color or shape) that protects an animal from attack by making the animal difficult to see in the area around it.

Texture: the way that something feels when you touch it.

DIRECTIONS

Watch and Learn: Life Cycle Part One Video

Watch this video and then answer the questions below. Pause the video to write down your answers or to make notes.

1.   How many changes does a butterfly go through in its life cycle?

2.   How many eggs on average can an adult monarch butterfly lay in the wild?

3.   What is the record for the highest number of eggs laid by a monarch in captivity? (See this website for the record.)

4. Which butterfly egg shown in the video is your favorite? Describe it or draw a picture.

5. A caterpillar eats its weight in leaves every day. If a bag of potatoes is five pounds, how many bags of potatoes would you have to eat in one day to eat your own weight in food?

Watch and Learn: Life Cycle Part Two Video

6. What letter of the alphabet does a caterpillar look like right before it turns into a chrysalis?

7. Pause the video on your favorite chrysalis you see. Describe it or draw a picture.

8. Why is it a dangerous time for a butterfly when it is in the chrysalis stage of its life cycle?

9. Describe what happens when the butterfly comes out of its chrysalis. How does it change to get ready to fly?
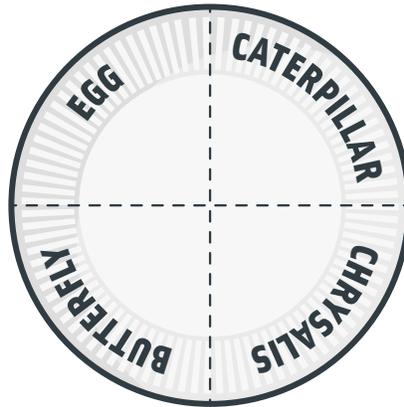
EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Create It: Butterfly Life Cycle Model (Science, K–3rd)

Use materials you have at home to create a model of the four stages of a butterfly life cycle.

Divide a paper plate into four sections with a marker (a piece of paper will work too). A butterfly goes through four separate stages in its life cycle: egg, caterpillar, chrysalis and adult butterfly. Label the four stages on the sections of your plate.

Draw what happens in each stage or use things you find in your house to represent each of the stages. What could you find in your house or cupboards that you could glue to your plate to represent eggs, caterpillars, chrysalids or butterflies (rice, noodles, pipe cleaners, tissue paper, etc.)?

Write About It (Language Arts, 3rd)

Choose a stage in the butterfly life cycle and imagine you are a butterfly, chrysalis, caterpillar or egg. Write about what it is like to be you. What do you look like? What are you thinking about? What are you feeling? What is something that you need?

Explore Where You Live (Science, K-3rd)

Explore outside and notice the colors and textures of trees and plants. What colors, textures or shapes would help a chrysalis to blend into a plant near where you live? Design an imaginary chrysalis that would blend in to a plant you see.

References:

Egg. (n.d.). Retrieved from: https://monarchjointventure.org/monarch-biology/life-cycle/egg

Definitions for vocabulary sourced from: https://learnersdictionary.com/

FREDERIK MEIJER Gardens & Sculpture Park
promotes the enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of gardens, sculpture, the natural environment and the arts.

1000 E. Beltline Ave. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525 TF: 1-888-957-1580
MeijerGardens.org | #MeijerGardens | @MeijerGardens