

# Butterfly Life Cycle



VIRGINIA  
**AQUARIUM**  
& MARINE SCIENCE CENTER

*Students will make a physical representation of the butterfly life cycle.*

## Duration

Preparation: 5 minutes

Activity: 30 minutes

## Supplies

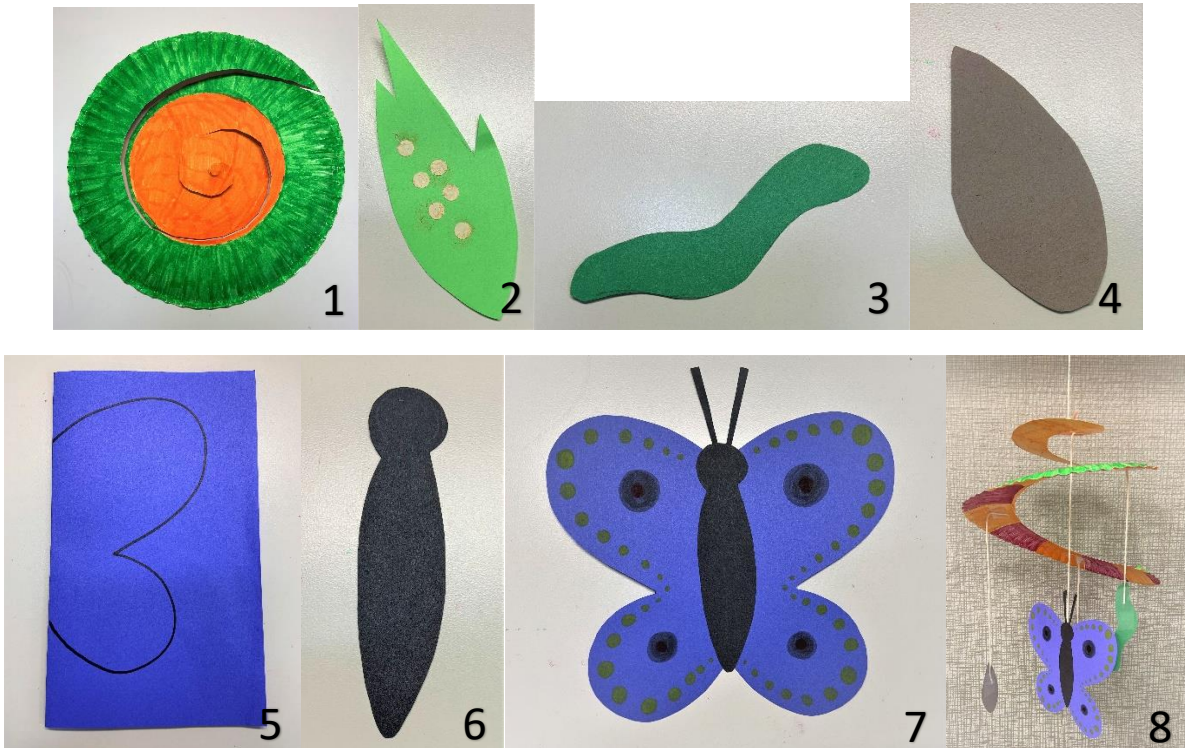
- Many colors of construction paper
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Yarn or string
- sturdy paper plate
- Markers, crayons, or paint
- Stapler or tape

## Background

There are many steps in the life cycle of a butterfly. Caterpillars are born from tiny eggs laid by a butterfly on a leaf. After eating lots of leaves, the caterpillar starts to build a pupa around its body. The caterpillar stays in the pupa and slowly starts to turn into a butterfly. When the butterfly is ready, it breaks through the pupa with fresh new wings and hangs them out to dry before flying off to find flowers and laying eggs of its own. Then the cycle starts all over again!

## Instructions

1. Decorate the paper plate using markers, crayons, or paint. Draw a spiral on the paper plate and cut along the line.
2. Using green construction paper, draw a leaf and cut it out. Either draw tiny butterfly eggs on it or glue on tiny paper circles (cut out with scissors or using a hole punch). A cluster of butterfly eggs are usually laid on the underside of a leaf; the eggs are white, yellow, or greenish, and are circular or oval.
3. Draw and cut out a caterpillar (the egg hatches into a caterpillar, which spends its entire time eating leaves). Decorate it so that it has 2 eyes, 3 pairs of legs (near the front), and camouflaged in the plants' leaves. You may wish to explain to the students that caterpillars only have 3 pairs of true legs (like adults) but may have other "legs" that are made of body protrusions that help the caterpillar move and grasp.
4. Draw and cut out the **pupa**. Decorate it so that it is **camouflaged** in the plants' branches.
5. To make butterfly wings, fold a small piece of paper in half, and draw half a butterfly along the fold line, so that it has symmetry.
6. Using dark paper, make a body for your butterfly (it's basically a long oval with a circular head). Glue the body to wings and decorate the butterfly.
7. Staple or tape the stages of the butterfly's life cycle to string and then to the paper plate. Attach another short length of string to the plate; it will be used to hang the mobile up.



## Vocabulary

**Pupa:** stage during which the caterpillar makes a protective case around itself and turns into a butterfly.

**Camouflage:** the hiding or disguising of something by covering it up or changing the way it looks.