

# Caterpillars to Butterflies



VIRGINIA  
**AQUARIUM**  
& MARINE SCIENCE CENTER

Students will learn about the many life cycles of a butterfly.

## Duration

Preparation: 5 minutes

Activity: 10-15 minutes each

## Supplies

- Copy of Life Cycle of a Butterfly worksheet (1 for each student)
- Crayons or markers
- White or colored paper (1 for each student)
- Copy of Butterfly Pattern (enough for students to share)
- Safety Scissors (enough for students to share)
- Paint
- Graham crackers
- White icing
- Skittles (or other colorful candy)
- Eric Carle's [The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) (optional)
- Deborah Heiligman's [From Caterpillar to Butterfly](#) (optional)

## 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 chrysalis around its body. The caterpillar stays in the chrysalis and slowly starts to turn into a butterfly. When the butterfly is ready, it breaks through the chrysalis 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

### Activity 1: Butterfly Life Cycle in Motion

Ask: How many of you have ever seen a real butterfly? Where do you think that it comes from?

Read: Eric Carle's [The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) or a similar book that discuss the life cycle of a butterfly

Ask: Were you right? Looking back through the story, we will recall the stages a caterpillar must go through before it becomes a butterfly.... *egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, butterfly*

With hand motions, children will recall stages of a butterfly:

- *Egg*: hand clutched tight like a fist
- *Caterpillar*: index finger extended, scrunched, extended, scrunched, etc.
- *Chrysalis*: index finger of one hand wrapped by other hand (like a hotdog)
- *Butterfly*: with thumbs interlocked, fingers wiggle and do flying motion

Now they'll do the stages with their whole body:

- *Egg*: child in fetal position
- *Caterpillar*: inch worm across the floor
- *Chrysalis*: standing up the child covers face with hands and spins in a circle
- *Butterfly*: with arms extended, the child flies across the room and all around

### **Activity 2: Life Cycle of a Butterfly**

Before Activity 2 begins, read the book: [From Caterpillar to Butterfly](#) by Deborah Heiligman or a similar book

- 1) Students will be given a piece of paper that has been divided into four equal sections (one for each stage of the butterfly's development).
- 2) With paper ready, the children will use markers/crayons to illustrate the different stages of development.

### **Activity 3: Beautiful Butterflies**

Symmetry is defined as: having two parts (cut by an imaginary line) that are exactly the same.

- 1) Child will be given paper and butterfly pattern. Have the child fold the paper in half and place the butterfly pattern on the fold. The middle of the butterfly should be on the fold with wings extended outward.
- 2) The child will trace the around the pattern.
- 3) After the pattern is traced, the child will carefully cut the butterfly out on the line.
- 4) The child will open the butterfly and note symmetry.
- 5) Paint is applied to the inside of the butterfly on one side.
- 6) The butterfly is closed and child presses on butterfly gently.
- 7) Open the butterfly carefully to see the beautiful butterfly that has been constructed. It is symmetrical!

### **Activity 5: Symmetrical Sandwich**

Now students will create an edible butterfly symmetry experience.

- 1) The child will go to the table and get a graham cracker. He or she will snap it in half, so the cracker is symmetrical.
- 2) The child will spread white icing on both pieces of the graham cracker.
- 3) With various Skittles or other colorful candy, the child will decorate his or her edible insect... making sure it is symmetrical.

## **Extension**

Recall the day's activities and how they relate to [The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#). Follow up questions and questions for thought might include:

- Where did the little egg come from?
- Could this story really have happened or is it make believe? How do you know?
- Tell what the caterpillar does that caterpillars really do then tell what caterpillars DON'T do.
- Tell about a time you got a stomach ache from eating too much.
- What do you think a caterpillar does when he is inside the chrysalis?
- Would you rather be a caterpillar or a butterfly...why?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Life Cycle of the Butterfly

1 – The Egg

2 – The Caterpillar

3 – The Chrysalis

4 – The Butterfly

