

A Butterfly's Life Cycle Dance

What are the life cycle stages of a butterfly?

Grades K-2 Lesson: A Butterfly's Life Cycle Dance

Grade Band: K-2

Arts Subject: Dance

Other Subject: Science

SUMMARY

In this K-2 lesson, students will choreograph an original dance that communicates the life cycle stages of the monarch butterfly. They will read Eric Carle's book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, and explore the monarch butterfly migration process.

PREPARATION

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Determine important details from Eric Carle's book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.
- Recall events from *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* through illustrations.
- Describe the sequence of a butterfly's life cycle.
- Examine photographs of the stages of the monarch butterfly life cycle.
- Plan a sequence of movements that demonstrate the monarch's life cycle stages.
- Choreograph and perform a dance focusing on the life cycle of the monarch butterfly.

Recommended Materials

Editable Documents: *Before sharing these resources with students, you must first save them to your Google account by opening them, and selecting "Make a copy" from the File menu.*

- [Slide: The Monarch Butterfly](#)
- [Elements of Dance](#)
- [Criteria of Success: Butterfly Dance](#)
- [Brainstorm Facilitation Questions](#)
- [Criteria for Success: Butterfly Dance](#)

Books

- [The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) by Eric Carle

Videos

- [Illuminated Films: The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Monarch Butterfly Amazing Migration, Monarch Metamorphosis Time Lapse](#)

Websites

- [Eric Carle's Cocoon Explanation](#)

Teacher Background

Teachers should have an understanding of life cycles and be comfortable with creative movement for learning. For early elementary, the elements can be described as an art form in



which a dancer moves through space and time with energy. For more detail, use the [Elements of Dance Organizer](#) from the Perpich Center for Arts Education.

Student Prerequisites

Students should have some general knowledge of dance, but it is not necessary.

Accessibility Notes

Modify movements and allow extra time as needed.

INSTRUCTION

Engage

1. Display the monarch butterfly image from the [Slide: The Monarch Butterfly](#).

2. Discuss the butterfly. *Ask the students: What do you know about butterflies? Have you ever seen a monarch butterfly, like this one? How would you describe this monarch butterfly?* Using the Life Cycle Diagram from [Slide: The Monarch Butterfly](#), explain that some animals, like cats, are born small and get bigger, but keep just about the same shape. Others, like butterflies, grow through metamorphosis, a process of changing from one form to another.

3. Read Eric Carle's book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* aloud to the class, showing the illustrations. This book can usually be found in your public or school library or you can view [Illuminated Films: The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#).

4. Review the life cycle of the butterfly as described in the book: egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, and butterfly. Optionally, display the image of the four stages of the monarch butterfly life cycle. Discuss with the class that the book uses the word "cocoon" when monarch butterflies actually have a chrysalis. Read [Eric Carle's Cocoon Explanation](#) to the class to understand Carle's use of the word "cocoon" in his book.

5. Invite students to share comments, questions, and scientific observations about what they see as you visit each image of the Life Cycle Diagram from the [Slide: The Monarch Butterfly](#). Define chrysalis for students. The enclosing case or covering of a pupa. *Ask students: What physical features do you notice about a butterfly?*

Build

1. Share information about the life of the monarch butterfly. Monarch butterflies are very unusual and migrate like birds. There are no other butterflies that do this. Butterflies don't live as long as birds, so the butterflies that fly south for the winter are not the same butterflies that return to their homes as far north as Canada.

2. Watch the short video [Monarch Butterfly Amazing Migration](#). As students watch the video, ask them to observe the life cycle stages and behaviors of adult butterflies.



3. Tell students that like scientists, artists use their skills of observation and analysis.

Many artists observe their natural surroundings and use what they see to give them ideas and inspiration for their pictures, dances, and music. Artists also use their imaginations to take what they see and make it different from what it might seem to be.

4. Tell students they are going to brainstorm movements to create, or choreograph, a dance that tells a story of the life cycle of the monarch butterfly. To do this, they will need to think about the movements a monarch butterfly makes throughout its life cycle like gliding, pulsing, flowing, sailing, wiggling, being still, and squirming.

5. Introduce the basic [Elements of Dance Guide](#). Dance is a form of communication. It is an art form in which a dancer moves their body through space and time with energy. This can be broken down with a simple demonstration by the teacher or a student volunteer, who can move as you explain *Who?* (the dancer) *does what?* (moves) *where?* (through space) *when?* (and time) *how?* (with energy.)

6. Connect the movements of a monarch butterfly to those of a dancer. *Do butterflies “dance?”* Tell students that there are specific things to look for in dance and to utilize the [Criteria for Success: Butterfly Dance](#) as a guide.

7. Show students the [Monarch Metamorphosis Time Lapse](#) video. Lead a discussion around each of the stages of the monarch’s metamorphosis: *coming out of the egg, the walking caterpillar, emerging from the chrysalis, eating and gently flapping, flying from flower to flower.* Encourage students to observe and use descriptive words for the movements they see, as well as use their imaginations to “fill in the blanks” of what they might not have seen. Remind them they will be using the movements of the butterfly as the basis of their dance to express the life cycle of the butterfly.

Apply

1. Tell students they will work together in small groups to create or choreograph a dance focusing on the life cycle of the monarch butterfly. Students will use the information they’ve learned to develop their dances.

2. Use the [Brainstorm Facilitation Questions](#) to generate ideas about how to create a butterfly dance. Remind them that dance is a form of communication and that they will express the life cycle stages of the monarch butterfly in their dances.

3. Give each group a [Butterfly Dance Organizer](#) to record their dance. Optionally, display the [Elements of Dance Guide](#) as they work to meet the criteria. Encourage students to experiment with different kinds of movements that could show the four stages of the butterfly’s

life cycle. Walk around the groups as they are trying out different steps and movements, assisting as needed.

4. Share and review the ways each group's dance will be assessed using the [Criteria for Success: Butterfly Dance](#).

5. Give students time to plan and rehearse their dances.

Reflect

1. Assess students' knowledge with a performance. Allow time for each group to present its dance to the class, school, or community. Invite the class to provide positive comments and feedback.

Credits

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