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EGG CARTON CATERPILLAR

Design your own caterpillar and learn what it will eventually become.
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About the Activity
Caterpillars may look like simple insects, but they live a very fascinating life! They start their life as squirmy larvae, change into a chrysalis or cocoon, and then transform into a moth or butterfly! In this activity, kids will create their own caterpillar and learn facts about the insect’s life cycle.

Supplies
These simple art supplies are all you’ll need to create your caterpillar:

- Egg carton (the cardboard/paper kind will work better than foam or plastic)
- Scissors
- Paint
- Paint brush
- 2 pipe cleaners
- Black permanent marker

Optional:

- Two small googly eyes
- Glue

Grades: Pre-K - 2
Topic: STEM, Biology, Crafting
Time: 20 minutes
Activity Steps
Let’s create our own colorful caterpillar!

1. First, you will need to cut your egg carton. Make sure to have an adult’s permission and supervision while using the scissors. You will only need one section of the egg carton for this exercise, so start by cutting off a single row.

DID YOU KNOW? Not all caterpillars are created equal. Some will grow to spin a silk cocoon and turn into a moth, while others will shed their skin to reveal a chrysalis before transforming into a butterfly.

2. Now, it’s time to get creative by painting the egg carton. Green and black are colors seen in different types of caterpillars, but since this is your own caterpillar creation, you can use as many colors and patterns as you like.

DID YOU KNOW? While a moth or butterfly is not necessarily reminiscent of its younger caterpillar self, it can be fun to guess how a caterpillar will turn out once its metamorphosis is complete.

3. After you’re finished painting your caterpillar, allow 15-20 minutes for the paint to dry before moving to the next step.

DID YOU KNOW? Have you ever seen a caterpillar munching on a plant? As it eats the caterpillar grows and becomes too big for its own skin. Eventually it will have to shed or molt the old skin.

4. It’s time to insert the antennas on your caterpillar! Poke two holes with a tack or pen at the top of the first egg cartridge. You may want to ask an adult for help. Now that you have two holes at the top of the carton, thread one pipe cleaner through each hole and then tie the two pipe cleaners together on the inside of the carton. If you want, you could twirl each pipe cleaner around a pen to make them spiral.

5. Finally, glue your googly eyes to the side of the caterpillar’s head. If you don’t have googly eyes, use a marker to draw them on.

DID YOU KNOW? Butterflies and moths are holometabolous, meaning that they undergo a complete metamorphosis from egg to caterpillar and from chrysalis to adult.
Test Your Knowledge

See how much you learned about caterpillars!

QUESTION 1
True or false? All caterpillars turn into butterflies.
- a. True. All caterpillars form a chrysalis and eventually change into a butterfly.
- b. False. Some caterpillars turn into butterflies and some turn into moths.

QUESTION 2
Butterflies and moths are holometabolous, meaning:
- a. That they are insects
- b. That were once caterpillars
- c. That they undergo a complete metamorphosis from egg to caterpillar and from chrysalis to adult.
- d. That they fly

QUESTION 3
What happens after a caterpillar outgrows its skin?
- a. It will shed or molt the old skin
- b. It will transform into a butterfly or moth
- c. The old skin will adjust to the new body
- d. It will turn into a cocoon or chrysalis

QUESTION 4
A caterpillar will either form a chrysalis or a _________ to help it transform.
- a. Silk
- b. Antennae
- c. Cocoon
- d. Pattern

Reflection Questions

Bonus questions to inspire wonder:

- What do you think is happening to a caterpillar while it’s in the cocoon or chrysalis?
- Do you think you could spot the difference between a cocoon or chrysalis?
- Do you think moths and butterflies have differences other than the type of structure they use to transform?
Investigate & Explore

Take your new knowledge to the next level.

Whether a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly or moth, it will see four stages of life—egg, larva, pupa, and adult. A mother moth or butterfly typically lays eggs on a plant, which will later serve as food for the offspring. Over time, a caterpillar (known as the larvae) will hatch from the egg. The caterpillar’s first meal is its own egg shell, and after that it will eat plants. Once the caterpillar is ready, it will make a transformation into the third stage of life—the pupal stage. During this time, the caterpillar will spin itself into a cocoon or chrysalis to transform into its final form. When the time is right, the butterfly or moth will emerge from the cocoon or chrysalis, dry their wings and fly!

Brought to you by:

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