

Spirit Play Lesson Life Cycle of a Butterfly

Materials:

- • Blue underlay
- • Seven pieces:
 - Leaf and egg
 - Leaf and tiny caterpillar
 - Munched leaf
 - Big caterpillar
 - Chrysalis and leaf
 - Mature butterfly

We'll begin this lesson with this big blue felt. I wonder what it could be? Sky? Water?

Lay out the felt underlay.

This is the story of the life of a butterfly. Or maybe it's the story of the life of a caterpillar. During a butterfly's life, there are all kinds of changes. In a caterpillar's life there are all kinds of changes too. Each new step is a life a stage. First comes the egg stage. A butterfly starts out as a tiny, tiny egg.

Tell this story in a circular format to represent the cyclical nature of the butterfly's life. Imagining a clock facing out toward the children, begin laying the 'leaf and egg' piece down at about 2:00 and continue in a clockwise fashion with the following pieces.

An adult butterfly lays an egg on a leaf or a stem, usually a leaf that will make good food for the caterpillar. The egg sticks to the leaf. It's very tiny – only as big as the head of a pin.

Lay the 'leaf and tiny caterpillar' piece next to the egg in a clockwise circular position.

Next comes the larva stage. When the egg hatches, the tiny larva comes out. We can also call the larva a caterpillar. Wait wait wait! I thought a butterfly laid this egg. What happened? How did a caterpillar come out of the egg? This is very curious. Caterpillars can have stripes or dots or spikes or hairs. They move around with the help of lots of little legs. The tiny caterpillar is already very hungry. I still don't see where the butterfly is.

Lay out the 'big caterpillar' and the 'munched leaf' pieces next.

The caterpillar uses its little mouthparts to munch on leaves and stems. The more it eats, the more it grows. It grows so much that it grows right out of its skin! Sometimes a caterpillar will shed its skin four times as it grows up. All the caterpillar does is munch and grow and shed and munch. It needs lots of energy for what's coming next. I am still wondering where this butterfly is. Do you think it hides under all those skins? Still looks like a caterpillar to me.

Lay out the 'chrysalis and leaf' piece.

When the caterpillar is finished growing, it makes a sticky silk button to help it hang upside down from a twig. Then the caterpillar changes into a chrysalis. This is called the pupa stage. The chrysalis is usually green or brown and blends in with its background. They're hard to spot! From the outside, it might look like being a chrysalis is a restful stage, but inside, the caterpillar is changing in every way. The pupa's old caterpillar body is dissolving and new butterfly parts are forming. Some kinds of caterpillars spend a whole winter in the pupa stage.

Lay out the 'mature butterfly' piece.

Finally, when the changes are all finished, a beautiful butterfly emerges. Wait a minute! What just happened? I thought a caterpillar was in the chrysalis! And now a butterfly comes out! How did that happen? What a mystery that a caterpillar comes from a butterfly egg and a butterfly comes out of a caterpillar chrysalis. The story says the caterpillar dissolved and made a butterfly. That's amazing! And strange! And wonderful! When all the changes are finished a beautiful butterfly emerges. At first, its wings are floppy and weak. The new butterfly hangs upside down and stays quiet until its wings are strong enough to fly. The wings are covered in soft, sometimes colorful scales and they allow the adult butterfly to fly around from place to place. Butterflies fly around to find flowers to drink from, because instead munching mouths, they have sipping straw mouths instead. Sometimes, they fly around looking for other butterflies. Monarchs and other butterflies sometimes fly hundreds of miles to find a warm place for the winter.

Point to the egg on the leaf again.

Most importantly, when it's time to lay an egg, female butterflies fly around looking for just the right leaf for a new caterpillar to hatch on. Then, the whole story begins all over again and a new butterfly's life cycle will start. Or the new caterpillar's life cycle will start. Maybe both.

Wondering Together:

- I wonder what part of the story you liked best?
- I wonder what part of the story was most important?
- I wonder if you were someone or something in the story, who or what would you be?
- I wonder if there is any part of the story we could leave out and still have all the story we need?

Craft materials: coffee filters, chenille stems, markers or water colors

Children should be able to do much of this on their own. You might show them a finished product in case they need to visualize what a completed butterfly might look like.

1. Have children decorate the coffee filters with markers or water colors, spraying them lightly with water to help the colors run.
2. Scrunch the filter along the diameter. Fold a single chenille stem in half and around the center of the filter. Twist together and curl the remaining length into antennae.