Butterfly Observation Journals

Teacher’s Guide

Introduction

Keeping a journal will assist your students in the investigation of the painted lady butterfly lifecycle.

On the first day of your journal-keeping, have children spend time studying the caterpillars, and determine if there is something that makes each one unique (usually a slight variation in size).

Because all the caterpillars are about the same age, it’s not a big deal if a student accidentally forgets which one s/he’s observing. The important thing is to keep watching all the caterpillars and record the findings in your journals each day.

Journals as tools for math and science

Many math and science skills are based on observation and prediction. A scientific journal is the core for making this process come ALIVE.

Journal evaluation

Journals can be lenses into seeing a child’s thinking process. Check each student’s journal for attention to details, observation, synthesis, capability, effort and participation.

Publishing journals

Using journal pages from each student, create a Big Book. Be sure to include drawings or paintings in addition to the text. Prepare a cover page with the title, and staple or brad the sheets together. Display your classroom’s Big Book in the school library!

Each individual Butterfly Observation Journal should include

• Front and back covers
• Growth and measurement chart
• Life cycle information
• Observation pages: After the butterfly release, kids can count the days their insects spent in each stage. Knowing that painted ladies spend about 2 weeks (14 days) as caterpillars, ask your students how old they think their caterpillars were when the class began keeping journals.
Questions

Some things to notice while exploring the life cycle

Here is a list of questions you can use to get students thinking about what they are seeing.

How are the chrysalis and caterpillar alike?  
(Example: They both use spiracles to breathe.)

How are the caterpillar and butterfly alike?  
(See anatomy and vocabulary handouts.)

When the butterfly first emerges from the chrysalis, its abdomen is large. As it pumps fluids into the wings, the abdomen shrinks to regular size. Why do you think this happens?  
(Hint: The fluid from the abdomen is used to form the wings.)

How is a proboscis formed?  
(Hint: Find a zipper and zip it up! That’s how the butterfly forms its proboscis.)

Compound eyes have thousands of tiny lenses that see in all directions at once. How do you think these might help butterflies?  
(Hint: Watch for predators, find food.)

Notice that the chrysalises shake if you touch the cup.  
Why do you think they do this?  
(Hint: Shaking is a defense mechanism.)

How does the butterfly see, hear, feel, taste and touch? How is it similar to the way we use our senses? How is it different?

What are the names of a butterfly’s body parts?  
Do we have the same body parts?
Cut out this ruler for each child. Use it to find out how much a caterpillar grows! Each rectangular section equals one inch.
Looking Closely at Butterflies!

by
My Observations and Predictions

Name _________________________________________________________

Date  _________________________________________________________

Time  _________________________________________________________

This is day number ______ that the painted lady has been a  
(circle one)

What does it look like today?  draw here

How has it changed since I last looked at it?  ______________________

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

What I think it will look like tomorrow:  __________________________

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

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Caterpillar Growth Chart

Measure your caterpillar each day.
Record its length on the chart below by coloring a section for each inch.