

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

The Book Experience

- (Session 1)**
- Settle the children conformably around you, show them the cover of the book, and read them the title and the name of the author. Then, without showing them the inside of the book, ask what they think it is going to be about. Record the children's predictions, using their initials to indicate who said what.

The caterpillar is going to eat lots of food. I. L.
Maybe the caterpillar will eat someone's plant. C. B.
The caterpillar might change into a butterfly. R. H.

As the children predict the outcome of the story, you will be able to get a sense of what experiences they bring to this book especially those related to "bug watching" and what happens to caterpillars, butterflies, moths and so on.

- Turn to the first page, read the title and author's name once more and, briefly discuss the dedication. Turn the rest of the pages slowly without reading the text.
- Once again provide the opportunity for the children to comment on what they think the book is about before they have actually read the text. Add any new predictions to the list.

The caterpillar eats lots of stuff. J. L.
He eats fruit. T. N.
He eats ice cream and watermelon. G. R.

- Session 1**
- Settle the children conformably around you, and read the story through to the end, making sure your enthusiasm for the book is reflected in your voice, facial expressions and gestures.
 - The children will be pleased to learn that they were successful at predicting much of what happens in this story from just looking at the pictures. Return to the list on the board, read each prediction with the child who made it, and be generous with your praise for such "good guesses".
 - Encourage the children to share their reactions to the book. Did they like the story? What was their favorite part? Did they like the caterpillar's diet? How do they feel about the ending? Do they like Carle's illustrations? What do they like most/least about them? How do they respond to the holes in the pages? Do they like finding special things like this in a book? Does the story remind them of something they've seen or done, or of another book they like?
 - Recapping the main events of this story should not pose many difficulties for the children. They'll be able to recognize the familiar Sunday-to-Sunday pattern and the life cycle of the caterpillar from egg through to adult butterfly. Responses to your "What happened next?" questions will probably range from the general "He hatched and ate lots of food," to specific answers from children who will actually recall what and how much he ate on a particular day.

- Session 2**
- As you read the story through a second time, underline the words with your hand or a pointer to help the children see that the actual story they are reading comes from the text, and not from Carle's wonderful pictures which correspond so supportively to the text. Pause at the end of each page so the children can make comments or ask questions about something they've just heard or seen. If someone asks a question like "Is that the egg, that little white dot?" and another child says, "Maybe it's the big round thing," return to the text whenever possible for confirmation or clarification. In this case, you could read the line again, and help each child see that the "little egg lay on the leaf" and it did so in

"the light of the moon."

- If you listen carefully to such questions and comments, you should be able to get a good sense of what the children already know about the subject material Carle draws upon in his story, and which words are unfamiliar to some of them. The pictures won't help beginning readers very much if they aren't familiar with such foods as *plums*, *Swiss cheese* or *salami*.
- After this reading, give the children an opportunity to respond to the story by making a picture of a giant caterpillar, a beautiful butterfly or a colorful array of food - whatever comes to mind. Some may wish to write a story about the caterpillar or about some bug or butterfly they watched one day. A few may even want to write or draw a picture about the day they got a terrible tummy ache from eating too much.

Session 3

- This time when you read the story, indicate through nods, hand gestures and your tone of voice that the children are more than welcome to chime in as you come to passages they remember.
- Follow the reading with a discussion during which you encourage the children to share what clues they used to help them predict what came next as you were reading.

I knew "But he was still hungry" because it's said lots of times.

I know which day comes after Tuesday, so I said it.

Hearing about the strategies their peers used to read along with you will help even the most hesitant readers feel more confident about joining in the next time.

Session 4

- If the children seem to be very familiar with the text by now, you might want to dramatize a fourth reading somewhat by inviting one child, then two, three, etc. to join you in a cumulative fashion, with the whole group joining in to read the feast on Saturday.
- There should be no shortage of remembered phrases when you ask for them after this reading. Print each one on chart paper, reading each word as you print it. Then read the list together as a group. Point to each word as it is read.

Session 5

- Incorporate some oral cloze into a fifth reading. Pause deliberately in several specific places to encourage the children to fill in what comes next.
- Afterwards, do some written cloze too. Present the children with some sentences from the text which you have printed on chart paper. Use small strips of card to cover all or parts of the words you would like the children to predict. Encourage them to use rereading strategies as well as picture and repetition clues to decide if the word they say belongs in the covered space makes sense.

Language Learning

- There are many more opportunities for written cloze activities using *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Depending on the reading experience of your group, you might want to select more passages that enable you to focus on a particular initial consonant or consonant blend sound.
- Making lists of what the caterpillar ate (apple, pears, plums, strawberries, etc.) will help the children add to their sight vocabulary. If you've already done some work with alphabetical order to help focus attention on initial letters of words, you could have the group work together to rearrange this list in that order.

- The caterpillar eats one of some things, and two or more of other things. You might want to look briefly at the singular and plural forms of what he eats by making a chart with the children. On the board print *One* to the left, and *More Than One* to the right. Then ask the children under which list the things he ate should go.

<i>One</i>	<i>More Than One</i>
apple	pears
chocolate cake	plums
ice-cream cone	strawberries
pickle	oranges
swiss cheese	
salami	
lollipop	
sausage	

Then you could make a new chart which matches the singular and plural forms of each of these words.

- If you've spent some time with the children looking at the food they eat under the major food groups needed for a balanced diet, you could work with them to draw up a chart which places each of the caterpillar's choices under its appropriate food group heading.
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar* provides a wonderful opportunity to review the days of the week, or to introduce their printed forms for the first time if you haven't already done so. List them on the board as the children name them, and transfer them to chart paper if you have no other charts or cards on which they are available for reference in the room. You could do the same with the numbers from one to ten (that hungry little caterpillar eats ten things on Saturday).
- The children might enjoy reading with you the nursery rhyme "Solomon Grundy" which you have printed out on chart paper.
- The caterpillar eats *through* each of the food items named. You could ask the children why Carle uses this word instead of simply saying it *ate* these things. The holes in the pages should help make the point for anyone having difficulty with the concept. Then you could go on to look at other situations where we use the word *through*. Invite the children to suggest some sentences that illustrate other uses of this preposition and print them on the board or on chart paper.

I go through the door.

He walked through the puddle.

The ball went through the window.

Now might also be a good time to distinguish between *through* and *threw*. You could print the following on the board, reading each word as you print it.

Carlos threw the ball.

Ask which word says *threw* in this sentence. Invite the children to give other examples of this word in action.

I threw the stone.

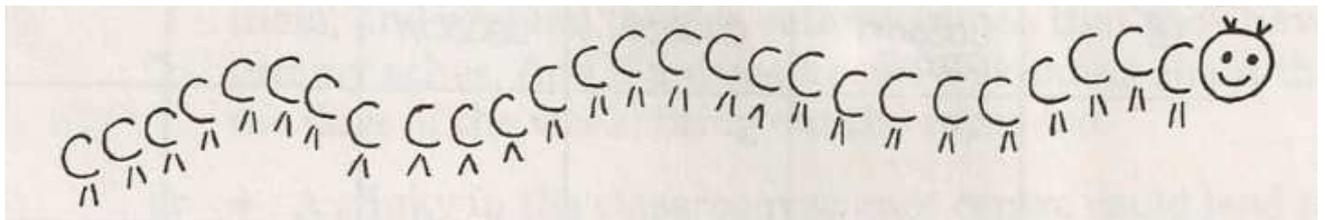
She threw the newspaper on the porch.

Then print the following on the board, reading each word (except the blanks, of course) as you print it.

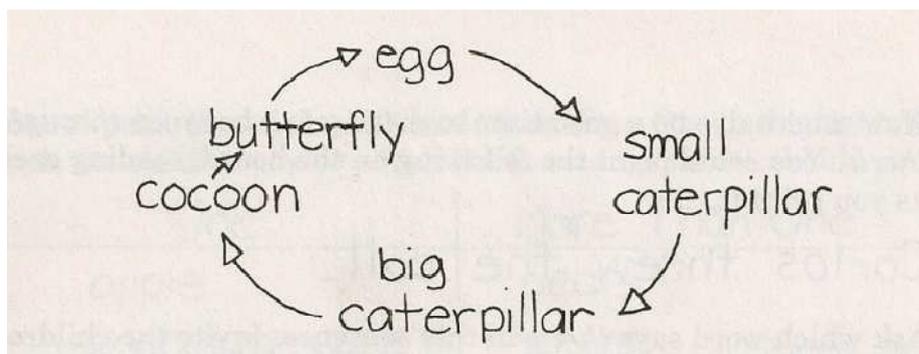
Frank _____ the ball _____ the window.

Ask the children which *threw* / *through* would make sense in each blank. If interest in this distinction seems high, you could give more examples of the use of each word; if not, simply point out the difference and leave it at that for now.

- Ask the children to name the days of the week as they appear in the story. Print these on the board as they are mentioned, saying each word as you print it. Read the list together. Count the words in the list. Ask the children how many days there are in the week. You might also want to print the standard abbreviation for each day to the right of the full word. Take a few minutes to look at these abbreviations as they appear on some calendars you've brought to class.
- Somehow it seems only fitting that there are many words starting with C in a caterpillar story. You could invite the children to return to the text to find as many of these as they can, printing them on the board as they are found. Read the completed list together. Then you might want to ask the children to break up the list into two new lists based on how the beginning of each word sounds, with *Caterpillar* heading one list and *Chocolate* heading the other. A fun finale to an activity like this would be making caterpillars only out of the letter C.



- And since *chart* is a C word, why not make another chart with the children? Make this one circular, printing on chart paper each stage in the caterpillar's development as the children name it.



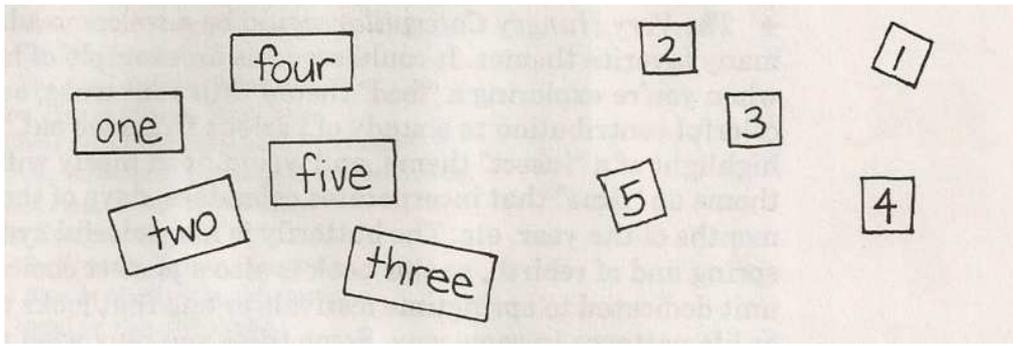
Independent Practice

- Make available both the big and small copies of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* so the children can read them independently and to each other whenever they want to do so.
- Make available a taped version of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* with which the children can read along at their leisure.
- The children may be so taken with the appearance of the book that they want to work together in small groups to reproduce it as their own big book, holes and all.

- Several might want to work on the production of a puppet play based on the story. Cookie Monster's approach to dining might very well serve as a model for the puppet caterpillar's actions. A simple sock puppet, suitably decorated, would make an ideal hungry caterpillar with a most impressive mouth.
- You could suggest that some children pretend they are the hungry caterpillar and that they write a diary in which the caterpillar records each day's events.
- Several youngsters might welcome the challenge to produce an illustrated book with the title, *The Hungry Caterpillar's Weight Gain Diet*.
- Others might like to lay out an illustrated calendar that covers a month in the life of the very hungry caterpillar.

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.	Sat.
Hatch from egg.	Eat 🍏	Eat 🍐🍐	Eat 🍓🍓🍓			
Eat 🍌	Build Cocoon 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷	In cocoon	In cocoon			
					Eat hole in the cocoon	A Butterfly!

- You could suggest the children make a calendar on which they draw the main foods they eat each day for a week or two.
- Depending on the time of year and the availability of eggs, caterpillars, cocoons or pupas, you might want to arrange to have some specimens brought to class where the children can watch the various stages of insect development first-hand.
- Make available in the classroom a variety of books on insects generally and on butterflies in particular. Encourage research and reporting on what the children learn about butterflies - their life cycles, what they eat, where they live, their predators, their methods of camouflage, their importance to plants, etc.
- A trip to a butterfly display at a local nature museum might fit in well with activities you have planned related to this book.
- You might prefer to arrange a field trip to a conservation area for the specific purpose of exploring insects and their life cycles.
- Either one of these outings could lead to a further exploration of the differences between moths and butterflies, or to a further exploration of caterpillar-like worms, centipedes, millipedes, etc.
- Invite the children to match cards on which you have printed the numerals mentioned in the story with cards on which you've printed the equivalent number symbols.



- The children will also love working on a mural filled with leaves, branches and flowers on which they have stuck cut-outs of eggs, fuzzy caterpillars and beautiful butterflies.
- They could also spread out around the gym or school yard to fly like butterflies, creepy-crawl or slink along like caterpillars, crawl through whatever tunnel or obstacle course you might set up for them, and pretend they've eaten so much that they have terrible tummy aches. And if anyone knows a skipping chant that involves the days of the week, bring out the ropes too.
- A slinky in the classroom science centre could lead to some interesting explorations of caterpillar-like motion.
- Sampling what the caterpillar ate and learning more about these foods would obviously extend the children's experiences and would enrich their oral language development too.
- Beautiful butterflies flying high or flitting from flower to flower might also serve as inspirations for poems; so might thoughts about what it would be like to be a caterpillar waiting in its cocoon.
- The number of things the caterpillar ate provide many opportunities for counting, addition and subtraction. As well as questions you devise for the children, you could also cut out pictures of all the foods mentioned and encourage the children to use these with each other to make up questions of their own which can be verified by using the cut-outs. They could also make up number sentences to match the questions they ask each other.
- You could print the singular and plural of several of the food items on small cards, and make these available for independent matching activities.
- Paper tissue butterflies and egg carton or origami caterpillars should certainly be on the agenda for art activities while spending time with this book. Combinations of plasticine and pipe cleaners can also produce some very creative creepy crawlers.

Themes

- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* would be a welcome addition to many favorite themes. It could serve as an example of how not to eat when you're exploring a "food" theme with your class, or make a colorful contribution to a study of various fruits we eat. It would be a highlight of a "insect" theme, and would fit in nicely with your theme on "time" that incorporates calendars, days of the week, months of the year, etc. The butterfly is a wonderful symbol of spring and of rebirth, so this book is also a perfect choice for any unit dedicated to springtime festivals or one that looks at life cycles or life patterns in some way. Some titles you may wish to explore with the students include *Animals Born Alive and Well*, *Bunches and Bunches of Bunnies*, *The Carrot Seed*, *Chickens Aren't The Only Ones*, *A House Is A House For Me*, *In The Forest*, and *The New Baby Calf*.

REMEMBER! No matter what you do with **The Very Hungry Caterpillar**, stay with the text only as long as the children remain interested. The primary criterion for the selection and continued use of any book should always be the children's enjoyment.

Evaluation

- Observe the children as they respond to *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, paying particular attention to changes in their interest, attention and enjoyment. Make anecdotal notes as you watch them participating in the group and working independently on book-related activities.
- Collect samples of their responses to the story - their pictures, stories, poems, diaries and other results of their independent activities. Date each sample for evidence of growth in, for example, their understanding of singular and plural nouns, the meaning and use of *through*, the order of the days of the week, and their ability to relate personal experiences to the story.
- Have the children mark in their reading records any books they read in connection with *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, especially other stories about insects, life cycles or growing up.
- Arrange a conference time to talk with each child about *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and their responses to it. As you talk about a picture, story, caterpillar, calendar, etc. they've made, notice what personal experience they've brought to the story.

Resources

Classroom Materials

Andersen, Hans Christian. *The Ugly Duckling*. Scholastic.

Becker, John. *Seven Little Rabbits*. Scholastic.

Brown, Margaret Wise. *Where Have You Been?* Scholastic.

Chase, Edith Newlin. *The New Baby Cal*. Scholastic.

Cleveland, David. *The April Rabbits*. Scholastic.

Dubanevich, Arlene. *Pigs in Hiding*. Scholastic.

Heller, Ruth. *Chickens Aren't The Only Ones*. Scholastic.

Hoberman, Mary Ann. *A House Is A House For Me*. Scholastic.

Kalin, Robert. *Jump, Frog, Jump*. Scholastic.

Kent, Jack. *The Fat Cat*. Scholastic.

Littledale, Freya. *The Sleeping Beauty*. Scholastic.

Lobel, Arnold. *Tui! Rose In My Garden*. Scholastic.

Lobel, Arnold. *A Treeful Of Pigs*. Scholastic.

McGovern, Ann. *Stone Soup*. Scholastic.

McPhail, David. *Pig Grows Up*. Scholastic.

Mathews, Louise. *Bunches and Bunches of Bunnies*. Scholastic.

Selsam, Millicent E. *Bachyard Insects*. Scholastic.

Selsam, Millicent E. *Where Do They Go?* Scholastic.

Wadsworth, Olive A. *Over In The Meadow*. Scholastic.

Professional Books

Barrett, Frank. *A Teacher's Guide to Shared Reading*. Scholastic, 1982.

Baskwill, Jane and Paulette Whitman. *Whole Language Sourcebook*. Scholastic, 1986.

Goodman, Ken. *What's Whole in Whole Language?* Scholastic, 1986.

Holdaway, Don. *The Foundations of Literacy*. Ashton Scholastic, 1978.

Johnson, Terry and Daphne Louis. *Literacy Through Literature*. Scholastic, 1987. (Available from Heinemann in the United States.)

Lynch, Priscilla. *Using Big Books and Predictable Books*. Scholastic, 1986. Van Manen, Max. *The Tone of Teaching*. Scholastic, 1986.