

The Early Years Count Literacy Connection



The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Written and illustrated
by Eric Carle

Preschool edition

Overview of Book

One of the most common, yet intriguing mysteries of nature is told in the story of the tiny caterpillar as it turns into a beautiful butterfly. Incorporating both days of the week and counting, Eric Carle's masterpiece tells the story in a way small children understand.

Genre: Realistic fiction

Vocabulary

Books are a rich source of words new to children. Here are some words from *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* to introduce in your classroom:

days of the week words
number words (one to five)
cocoon
metamorphosis

Each time you read the book, choose 2 or 3 words to highlight.

Use age-appropriate definitions and/or the illustrations to help children gain an understanding of each word's meaning.

Connecting with the HighScope Curriculum

COR Advantage 1.5

Physical Development
and Health
Item K (*Personal care &
healthy behavior*)

Mathematics
Item S (*Number & counting*)

Science and Technology
Item BB (*Observing &
classifying*)
Item CC (*Experimenting,
predicting, drawing
conclusions*)
Item DD (*Natural & physical
world*)

Reading Tips

Read this book with a tone of wonder and amazement. Have the children help count all the food items the caterpillar eats. Ask questions like, "Have you tried all these foods?" and "Have you ever eaten so much that you got a tummy ache like the little caterpillar?" Before turning to the last page, ask the children to predict what happens next. Turn the page and let the children say or yell out, "A butterfly!" Ask the group, "What happened inside that cocoon?" Be ready to write down everyone's comments to use later in other activities.

Three readings are recommended to familiarize children with the story. Each reading provides an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary words, pose open-ended questions, and engage children in activities that make the story "come alive."

Throughout the Routine

Refer to the book throughout the day and use new vocabulary words in meaningful ways. Active engagement with the story helps the content come alive.

At **Transition Time** have the children choose to move as a caterpillar or a butterfly.

Provide hole punchers, crayons, scissors and colored paper at **Small Group** for children to draw their favorite foods and then to punch a hole to pretend the little caterpillar ate through it.

Act out the story at **Large Group** time. Ask children to lead in their interpretation of the caterpillar's life and follow along.

Around the Room

Highlight the book's content and build on the children's excitement in a variety of locations.

Gather photos of real caterpillars and butterflies in various stages to place in the **Book** and **House Areas**. Label them and encourage the children to compare.

Have different types of books in the **Book Area** about the butterfly life cycle (informational as well as story/picture books).

Have magnifying glasses in the **Toy Area**. Encourage children to examine caterpillars (real or pictures) closely.

Open-ended Questions

Enhance active engagement and early critical thinking skills by asking open-ended questions. These questions encourage children to explain why or how things happen, make predictions, or brainstorm possibilities rather than give one "right" answer.

Here are some questions you might ask for *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*:

How did the egg get on the leaf?

What is similar about most of the foods caterpillar eats?

What will the butterfly do now?

I wonder why eating the leaf made the caterpillar's tummy ache go away?

For more information on how to use books and stories with children to enhance your curriculum, contact
The Family Connection:

website—
www.famconn.org

Facebook—
@famconnsjc

phone—
574-237-9740

@ Home

Since many children in our county will have this book at home, use it to further the home-school connection. In your daily contact—in person or by text, email or other notes home—encourage families to share *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* with their children. Here's a sample message to send:

The children have been excited to see how the caterpillar in *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* changes. The caterpillar eats a lot of healthy foods, which we have also been talking about. As you and your child read the story, talk about how eating healthy foods helps children grow up strong. Notice all the changes between the caterpillar and the butterfly and compare to that of a child and an adult. What's the same? What is different? Look at the foods the caterpillar eats and talk about your favorites. Ask, "Which food was the caterpillar's favorite? Why do you think that?" When the weather's warm, see if you and your child can spot a caterpillar. Ask your child to tell you its story.