Life Cycle Art and Literature Projects

**Objective**

Students will write, draw and create art to capture their observations of monarchs or other insects.

**Background**

The following five activities extend students’ observation skills through art and writing. The projects focus on metamorphosis and the life cycle. In each activity, students make illustrations, booklets or poems based on their observations of monarchs.

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**Monarch Prints**

**Materials**

- A piece of corrugated cardboard or Styrofoam meat tray for each student
- Student glue or puff paints
- Tempera paints or soy ink
- Paper for prints

**Procedure**

1. Have students carefully draw a monarch (larva, pupa, or adult) on a rigid surface, then trace the lines with glue, being careful to make narrow lines. Let the glue dry. If your glue or puff paint is too runny, you can use glued yarn to create your printing template.

2. Use the glue drawings as blocks for printing, applying tempera paint or soy ink to the surface. Do several prints first on newspaper to blot excess. Then print on paper.

3. Once dry, this print can be enhanced with pastels, to pick up the subtle color differences and shimmer of the monarchs.

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**Key Concepts:**

- Models based on observations
- Written and artistic communication of observations

**Skills:**

- Observation
- Drawing
- Creative writing
- Language arts

**Materials:**

- See individual project

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Create a Flip Book

Materials
- *Flip Book Templates* copied onto cover stock or heavier paper for each student (student handout page)
- 2 or 3 blank template pages also on cover stock for each student (student handout page)
- Crayons or colored pencils
- Stapler
- Photos of monarchs in various stages, or living monarchs

Procedure
1. Follow the directions carefully. This book will not work if only the template is used.
2. Have students cut out the rectangles on the template pages, both drawings and blanks.
3. Organize the cards by inserting at least two blanks between each stage and at the end. Students may insert extra blank cards between any of the stages they wish.
4. Number the cards in order, beginning with the picture of the egg and ending with the adult monarch. They may be numbered in a corner of the card or on the back.
5. Draw pictures that go between the stages already drawn. If desired, provide pictures for students to look at as they make these drawings. Make sizes and positions that work logically between the pictures provided. You will notice that the egg stages are not to scale, relative to the larvae drawings. If this bothers you, have students make their own egg drawings. Remind students to draw in light pencil to ease erasing.
6. Once satisfied with the figure on a card, the student should outline it in black ink.
7. Color all of the pictures.
8. Staple drawings in order along the left side. Flip pages in rapid sequence and watch the monarch cycle from start to finish!

Optical Illusions

Materials
- Large student drawings of monarch larvae and adults, or drawings provided (student handout pages)
- Rulers
- Scissors
- Paper cutter
- One piece of construction paper for each student, measuring 9”x24” (1/2 of 18”x24” piece cut landscape)

Procedure
1. Have students either draw their own versions of a monarch larva and adult on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, or use the drawings provided. Color the drawings, using observation skills to capture details. If students use their own drawings, they should each be about the same size.
2. Using a ruler, students should draw a line every inch on the back side of each drawing, dividing the picture into eleven one inch strips.
3. On the back of the larva page, number these strips 11-1 from left to right. Do the same on the back of the adult sheet, this time labeling each strip K-A from left to right. Make sure the picture on the other side is still turned so the top of the monarch/larva is the top of the page.
4. Cut each strip using a paper cutter, keeping them in numerical and alphabetical order, respectively.

5. Paste the strips side by side, starting with the monarch A, and alternating with the larva #1, across the piece of 9”x24” construction paper. Continue this pattern: A, 1, B, 2, C, 3, D...; or 1, A, 2, B, 3, C, 4, D...

6. When students are finished, they should trim away the excess construction paper around the strips. Then they should make a fold between each strip, forming an “accordion”. As they look at this finished product from one side, they’ll see the image of a larva. From the other, they’ll see the image of the adult monarch, and metamorphosis will occur before their eyes!

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### Monarch Poetry

**Procedure**

1. Write a poem or a play about the monarch life cycle. An acrostic uses the word monarch to create a poem. Two examples from third graders appear below:

   **Magical moments**       **Monarchs can fly to the moon**
   **Of life**               **Only eat milkweed**
   **Not just the circle of life but** **Nature is their life**
   **A new generation in the** **At last they fly south**
   **Race of insect-kind**   **Reaching Mexico**
   **Coming into the world** **Can they make it back? No!**
   **Happy open hands greeting them into the world.** **However, they sleep in the mountain**
   **Someday their children will come back.**

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### Create an Alphabet Book

This is a great activity to use in collaboration between intermediate and primary students.

**Procedure**

1. Choose words that are related to monarchs, insects in general, or Lepidoptera for each letter of the alphabet. The Vocabulary list in the back may be helpful. Use a variety of parts of speech, incorporating verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs. You may want to assign each student a portion of the letters, so that you end with a class book, or have each student make an entire book.

2. Write pages using the following format: A is for abdomen, the monarch’s stomach. B is for butterfly weed, where monarchs sometimes nectar. C is for chewing, which larvae do on milkweed plants...

3. Illustrate each page. If older students create these books alone, they may wish to share them with younger students.
Flip Book Templates
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For Optical Illusions Activity
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