

Coffee filter butterfly bouquet.



Bountiful Butterflies

Paige V. Baggett and Rebecca M. Giles

The lifecycle of a butterfly is a popular springtime theme in early childhood classrooms, providing the perfect venue for combining science and the visual arts. The key to promoting higher-level thinking, problem solving, and increased facility with oral language for young learners includes thoughtful questioning and responding.

Three classic activities for student production of beautiful winged insects will facilitate learning and result in aesthetically pleasing products. Through these activities, young children experiment with a variety of media, develop fine-motor skills, and experience the art elements of color, shape, form, and texture, as well as the principle of symmetry. Reading both

fiction and nonfiction children's literature related to butterflies will enhance the experience as you and your students flutter into butterfly world.

Coffee Filter Butterflies

The concept of mixing colors can be further explored with this activ-

ity. In preparation, mix twelve drops of tempera paint with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water in small plastic cups or baby food jars and place a plastic eyedropper in each. Food coloring may also be used, especially if you want to use the coffee filters as receptacles for edible treats! Allow children to create organic shapes and mix primary colors by dropping colored water onto a coffee filter. You may need to help children get used to the "squeeze and release" motions required with an eye dropper by first providing practice in a tub of water. Once dry, gather the coffee filter in the middle and wrap with a pipe cleaner to create the butterfly's body (thorax and abdomen) and antenna. A "butterfly bouquet" may be created to use as a table centerpiece.



Jay concentrates on filling the dropper.

Questions: Explain how you get the colored water into the eyedropper. How do you release it on the coffee filter? What happens to the colored water when it gets on the coffee filter? Describe the colors. Describe the shapes. What did you do first, next, last? What does the design look like to you?

Through these activities, young children experiment with a variety of media, develop fine-motor skills; and experience the art elements of color, shape, form, and texture.

Once the paper has been adorned with various drops of paint, instruct children to close the paper and refold it along the crease, rubbing their hand over the paper to spread the paint contained between



Mirror-Image Butterflies

By examining photographs and realistic pictures of butterflies and discussing the concept of symmetry. Fold white pieces of drawing paper in half either vertically or horizontally, and allow children to open the paper and squeeze small amounts of red, blue, and yellow tempera paint near the center line. (Only primary colors are used to facilitate students' discovery of mixing these colors to create secondary colors).

the two sides. Children then open the paper to reveal their symmetrical or mirror-image design. These designs may be cut and adhered to a straw or craft stick to represent a butterfly and facilitate movement and dramatic play activities.

Questions: What other tools could you use to drop the paint on the paper? What happens when two or three colors "mix" together?

Describe the colors. Describe the shapes. Does the shape look like anything else? Describe the spaces with color. What did you do first, next, last?

Baggie Butterflies

This activity provides a constructive use for the many small paper scraps that tend to accumulate over time in any art area. Provide each



child with a resealable plastic sandwich bag, pipe cleaner, and access to assorted sizes and colors of paper scraps (construction paper, tissue paper, etc...) with which to fill their bags. Children can choose colors randomly or purposefully.

Prior to the activity, scraps can be sorted by color or left assorted. You may also discuss with children which colors are warm, cool, primary, or secondary. After sealing the bag, children gather it in the middle to create the wings and wrap the pipe cleaner around the center using the ends to form antenna.

Questions: What colors did you choose to fill your bag and why? How do the paper scraps feel? How does your bag feel as you fill it? Describe the colors. Describe the form your bag takes as you fill it. What did you do first, next, last? What does the form look like?

Display

Finished products may be suspended from the ceiling using clear fishing line to produce a wonderful flying effect or attached to straws, pipe cleaners, or craft sticks for students to stick in a Styrofoam base and use in dramatic movement exercises. Have students sponge paint a sky with clouds and maybe even a garden of flowers on mural paper to give your butterflies a back-



Baggie Butterfly

ground for flying. Enjoy with your students the new season and new life as these products are discussed, created, and admired. The examples were produced by three-year-olds, but the activities are certainly appropriate for all primary-age children. 🦋

Paige V. Baggett and Rebecca M. Giles are, respectively, instructor and associate professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama. pbaggett@usouthal.edu, rgiles@usouthal.edu

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students will use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories.

WEB LINKS

www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/schools/beal/curriculum/butterfly/butterflies.html
www.mesc.usgs.gov/resources/education/butterfly/bfly_intro.asp
[www.thebutterflysite.com./](http://www.thebutterflysite.com/)
www.nature-gifts.com/live-butterfly-kits.html

Resources

Bunting, Eve. *Butterfly House*. New York: Scholastic, 1999.
 Canizares, Susan. *Butterfly*. New York: Scholastic, 1998.
 Cassie, Brian and Jerry Pallota. *The Butterfly Alphabet Book*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 1995.
 Gibbons, Gail. *Monarch Butterfly*. New York: Holiday House, 1989.
 Hariton, Anca. *Butterfly Story*. Dutton Books, 1995.
 Howe, James. *I Wish I Were a Butterfly*. San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1987.
 Legg, Stewart. *From Caterpillar to Butterfly*. London: Franklin Watts, 1997.
 Le Tord, Bijou. *A Blue Butterfly: A Story About Claude Monet*. New York: Double Day Book for Young Readers, 1995.
 Ryder, Joanne. *Where Butterflies Grow*. New York: Ruffin Books, 1996.
 Sandved, Kjell B. *The Butterfly Alphabet*. New York: Scholastic, 1996.



Jay fills the baggie with red.