

# Activity Ideas Growing and Celebrating with *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

## ABC Literacy and Creative Play

Ask children if they can guess which of their favorite books is having a special day. Give clues, such as “the book is about an insect,” or “the main character in this book eats many foods and gets a tummy ache.” Then read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* with students, and tell them they will be having a party to celebrate **Very Hungry Caterpillar Day** on March 20<sup>th</sup>.



## Art/Creativity

Help children create stick puppets to stage their own re-telling of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Use the book and the program poster to help students identify characters and objects they will need to create the puppet show. Children may draw, paint, or even use Eric Carle's collage method of different colored tissue papers layered and glued on top of one another to create the story characters or objects. Tape their characters or objects to craft sticks or straws. Have students use their puppets to re-tell the story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* as part of reading or circle time. To extend the activity, help children develop a new story for the caterpillar, creating new puppets to represent its new adventures.

## 123 Math

Use *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* to practice pattern and size concepts. Prepare washable ink or develop custom colors from tempera in swirls to mimic Eric Carle-inspired art. Collect a variety of different-sized circular materials such as shaped pasta, circular disks, pom-poms, sponges cut into small circles, etc. Then distribute sheets of paper with a circle drawn on the right to be used for the caterpillar's face. Next, have children dab the circular objects into the ink and/or paint and press the object onto the paper to create a color and/or design pattern of caterpillar segments. Encourage children to play with size by making increasingly larger or smaller numbers of segments in their designs.

Use “butterfly” pasta (farfalle pasta) for counting inspiration! First, have students decorate uncooked butterfly pasta using markers or paint. Then use the pasta butterflies in your math center for practicing one-to-one correspondence and simple addition and subtraction problems. To extend the activity, have students place the uncooked pastas in bins for sensory play; provide cups and spoons to measure, pour, and stir.



## Science/Nature

Ask children if they think a real caterpillar eats the same food as a real butterfly. Show children butterfly field guides and other nature books to help them determine that butterflies and caterpillars do not eat the same foods due to their different mouth structures. In addition, remind children that both caterpillars and butterflies are very particular about their food sources. Then plant a butterfly garden in pots or in the ground. Decide whether you want to attract the caterpillar or the butterfly and plant accordingly. Consult local gardening guides for additional information on plant selection. Children may engage in many types of observation activities as the plants grow.

Take children on a nature hike in search of caterpillars, butterflies, and other insects which feature so prominently in Eric Carle's books. You can take photos of what you see, and let children view them back in the classroom. For each insect spotted, carefully collect a natural item that was found nearby, such as a leaf, a blade of grass, a rock, etc., and make a classroom nature diorama. Help children identify their finds by having a variety of field guides for children to look through as they try to match your photos to those in the guides.



## Construction/ Manipulatives Play

Challenge children to see who can build the longest Hungry Caterpillar. Provide them with round, buildable materials such as large bottle tops, cylinder blocks, clay that they can shape into circles, etc. Then have children use rulers to measure and compare lengths. Have them name and draw pictures of their constructed caterpillars and create stories about what their caterpillars like to eat, their friends, adventures, etc. Post students' stories and drawings in the classroom, along with photos of their constructions to share with parents at the party.



## Health and Nutrition

Ask children to share what lessons they think *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* can teach about healthy eating. Help children determine that the caterpillar shows us that eating colorful fruits and leafy greens are healthy habits. In addition, the caterpillar shows us that we should limit foods like cake and ice cream as “sometimes” foods, and that we shouldn't overeat.



## Critical Thinking Skills/Visual Thinking Strategies

As you read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* to students, stop at the part of the story where “the sun came up and – pop! – out of the egg came a tiny and very hungry caterpillar.” Ask children to step inside the caterpillar's antennae and answer questions such as, “What is the caterpillar thinking? How is it feeling? What other things might it do before it goes searching for food?” Pause again to ask the same questions at the parts where the caterpillar becomes big and fat, where he is inside his cocoon, and, finally, when the caterpillar becomes a butterfly. Post student responses on chart paper for parents to read during the birthday party celebration.



## Parental Involvement

Send a note home to parents asking them to have their children wear clothing of one or two specific colors on a specific day. Help children practice categorization skills for clothing according to colors or type.

Suggest that parents take photos at the **Very Hungry Caterpillar Day** party and display them in the classroom around the poster or at home.



**Hungry Caterpillar Play School** is a fun, playful app designed to help young children master key early learning goals, defined in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. It features a curriculum tailored for 2-6 year olds, using the latest classroom-proven techniques.

On Monday explore the alphabet. On Tuesday learn to count. Discover shapes and colors on Wednesday. Sing a song on Thursday. Read a book and create your very own works of art on Friday!

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