

Title of event

The BIG hungry caterpillar; Life cycles under a lens.

Audience

Reception classes at Little Ealing Primary School, 3 classes of 30 children in total.

Date

Though initially I planned to run this workshop in March 2021, it was not until mid-June that circumstances allowed for the safe dissemination of this activity.

Description of event

This workshop was designed to stimulate and engage very young children in scientific investigation through hands on participation and fun dialogue.

Live caterpillars were brought to the workshop in see through containers. I introduced the purpose of a microscope to the children. Then a microscope camera was used to show a magnified image of the caterpillars on an iPad screen. Whilst moving around the room and ensuring every child saw the magnified image clearly on the screen I discuss the physical appearance of the caterpillars, introducing the concept of camouflage. Each child was then able to operate a handheld microscope to look at a model of an insect. With the teachers and classroom assistants I moved through the class ensuring each child was able to fully engage with the workshop.

Future

Following these exploratory workshops run in 2021, I aim to expand in 2022 to include several more nurseries/reception classes in the borough of Southwark, thereby i) directly engaging the wider community local to my new research institute at KCL, and ii) engaging harder to access communities.

Covid-19 Considerations

These workshops were initially due to take place in March 2021. However due to the covid restrictions at that time, the workshops were unable to run until June. The following precautions were taken- I did not recruit another volunteer to help with the public engagement event so as to limit the possibility of exposure. I took a lateral flow test the morning of the workshop. I wore a facemask at all times. The children were maintained in their class bubbles, so the workshop was run 3 times in succession to accommodate all the classes. All equipment was appropriately sanitized between uses.

What were the aims of the activity?

The overall aim of this project was to introduce young children to biological concepts (life cycle, metamorphosis, camouflage) and a scientific tool used to study them (the microscope) in a fun and positive way. An associated aim was to expose the children to the concept of a scientist, and to present a diverse representation of a scientist who is a woman and a mother.

1. **Show** I showed the children caterpillars at magnification, using a microscope camera and handheld microscopes.
2. **Tell** We spoke about caterpillars life cycle, using appropriate visuals, and spoke about how clear the magnification made the body parts of the caterpillars.

3. **Discuss** I ensured an ongoing dialogue with the children, encouraging them to express themselves.

Objectives of the activity

The objective of this engagement workshop for young children was to create a positive relationship with scientific concepts in an enabling environment-to inspire a passion for science through play.

To achieve this, the workshops were highly interactive and hands on, with excellent engagement from the children.

Impact

Throughout the event children were encouraged to ask questions, and showed a high level of engagement with the event.

Sample questions and observations made during the workshop by the children, from the insightful-

“How does the caterpillar turn into the butterfly inside the chrysalis?”

“What do they eat?”

Through the ridiculous-

“What is that stuff in the cup with the caterpillars?” (Answer-caterpillar poo. Comedy gold for 5 year olds).

All the way to the sublime-

“It’s my birthday on Saturday and I’m getting a guinea pig”

Feedback from the year head-

“Hi Emma,

Thank you so much for the lovely workshops. The children really enjoyed them - the microscopes were amazing. “

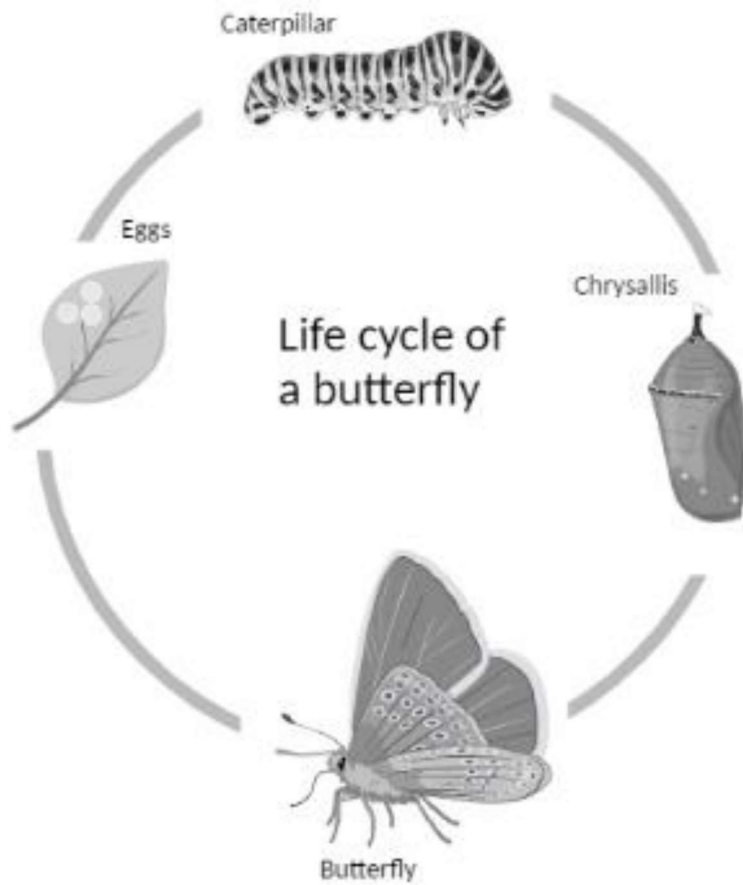
Photos











Draw a scientist