

## Hands-On Science: Growing Butterflies in the Classroom

On 5<sup>th</sup> June, 35 baby Painted Lady caterpillars arrived at the school. Pupils learnt that this species of butterfly migrates from Africa to Europe in the spring, and descendants will return to Africa in the autumn once it gets too cold in the UK. This is one of the most abundant species in the UK and can be found on a staggering 6 continents!

During the day, pupils prepared small pots of food and carefully moved their selected caterpillars into the individual growing pots. More importantly, pupils had to make big decisions about what they were going to name their caterpillars. This ranged from some relatively everyday names like Tillie and Millie, to Bruce Wayne and Jimmy Neutron! Pupils measured the caterpillars so that they could follow their growth. On day 1, they were a tiny 5mm! On Friday, pupils were eager to see if their caterpillars had grown, which they had, already reaching 7mm. Following a warm weekend, the caterpillars had grown to 14mm, which astonished some of the pupils.

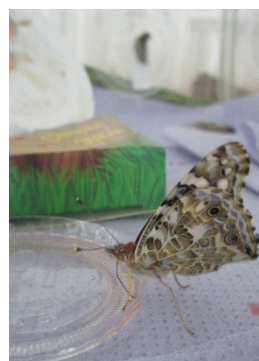


Pupils were keen to check on the progress of the caterpillars each day, and were amazed by the growth rate. We talked about the book “The Hungry Caterpillar” by Eric Carle and wondered whether our caterpillars would have preferred all the tasty foods mentioned in the book!

Pupils observed how the caterpillars produced a silk that they would normally use to keep themselves attached to leaves. Finally, pupils waited for the tell-tale sign that the caterpillars were ready to chrysalise by hanging from the pot lids in a ‘J’ shape. Just 15 days after arriving, the caterpillars had reached an impressive 50mm long and were forming chrysalises, wriggling out of their exoskeleton one final time. An incredible transformation involving the caterpillar tissues being broken down and rearranged to form completely different cells, tissues and organs of the butterfly. Pupils were wowed by the gold spots on the outside of the chrysalises and how they wiggled when they felt

the warmth of the sun.

On 25<sup>th</sup> June, the butterflies began to emerge from the chrysalises. Two pupils were fortunate to witness this incredible process taking place during their lesson! We prepared some ‘nectar’ for them to give them the fuel they needed to leave the butterfly pavilion.



As we said goodbye to our current Y11 cohort at a BBQ on 27<sup>th</sup> June, it was a perfectly timed symbolic release of the butterflies, as both they and the Y11s go on to the next part of their life journeys! Good luck to you all!