



Name: _____

Monarch Butterfly Life Cycle

The life cycle of a monarch butterfly is a fascinating transformation called metamorphosis. It has four distinct stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult.

It begins when a female butterfly lays a tiny, whitish egg, no bigger than a pinhead, on the underside of a milkweed leaf. She chooses this plant because it is the only food her babies will eat. After about four days, a tiny black, white, and yellow-striped caterpillar chews its way out of the egg. This is the larva stage. The caterpillar's main job is to eat! It feasts on milkweed leaves, growing so quickly that it outgrows its skin and molts several times.

After two weeks of eating, the full-grown caterpillar finds a safe spot. It spins a silky mat and hangs upside down in a 'J' shape. It then forms a beautiful jade-green chrysalis around its body, dotted with tiny gold specks like jewelry. This is the pupa stage. From the outside, it looks like nothing is happening, but inside, a miracle is taking place. The caterpillar's body is completely changing, transforming into a butterfly.

About 10-14 days later, the chrysalis becomes clear, revealing the orange and black wings inside. It finally splits open, and a brand new adult butterfly emerges. Its wings are crumpled and wet. The butterfly pumps fluid from its body into its wings, stretching them out until they are full, dry, and strong enough to fly. Soon, it will flutter away to sip nectar from flowers and begin the cycle all over again.



Eggs, larva, pupa, and butterfly

1. What is the special name for a butterfly's transformation?
 - a) Migration
 - b) Metamorphosis
 - c) Multiplication
2. Why does the female monarch lay her eggs on a milkweed plant?
 - a) It provides shade for the eggs.
 - b) It is the only food the caterpillars will eat.
 - c) The chrysalis attaches to it.