

How Butterflies Grow

Genre: Nonfiction **Reading Level:** 490L

Butterflies go through an amazing transformation during their lives. This	10
process is called metamorphosis, and it has four distinct stages that can	22
take anywhere from a few weeks to several months.	31
The first stage begins when a female butterfly lays tiny eggs on a leaf.	46
She carefully chooses plants that will provide food for her babies. Each	58
egg is smaller than a pinhead, but it contains everything needed to start a	72
new life.	74
In the second stage, a caterpillar hatches from the egg. The	85
caterpillar's main job is to eat. It munches on leaves constantly, growing	97
bigger and bigger. As it grows, the caterpillar sheds its skin several times	110
because the old skin becomes too tight.	117
The third stage is perhaps the most mysterious. The caterpillar forms a	130
hard shell called a chrysalis around its body. Inside this protective	142
covering, the caterpillar's body completely reorganizes itself. Wings, legs,	151
and antennae develop during this resting period.	158
Finally, in the fourth stage, an adult butterfly emerges from the	170
chrysalis. At first, its wings are wet and crumpled. The butterfly must pump	183
fluid into its wings and wait for them to dry before it can fly away and	199
begin the cycle again.	203

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are the four stages of a butterfly's life cycle?
2. Why does a caterpillar shed its skin several times?
3. What happens inside the chrysalis during the third stage?
4. Why can't a butterfly fly immediately after emerging from the chrysalis?