

LEVELED BOOK • K

# The Butterfly Life Cycle

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Written by Torran Anderson

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# The Butterfly Life Cycle



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## Focus Question

What is the life cycle  
of a monarch butterfly?

## Words to Know

butterfly

pupa

life cycle

scales

mate

stages

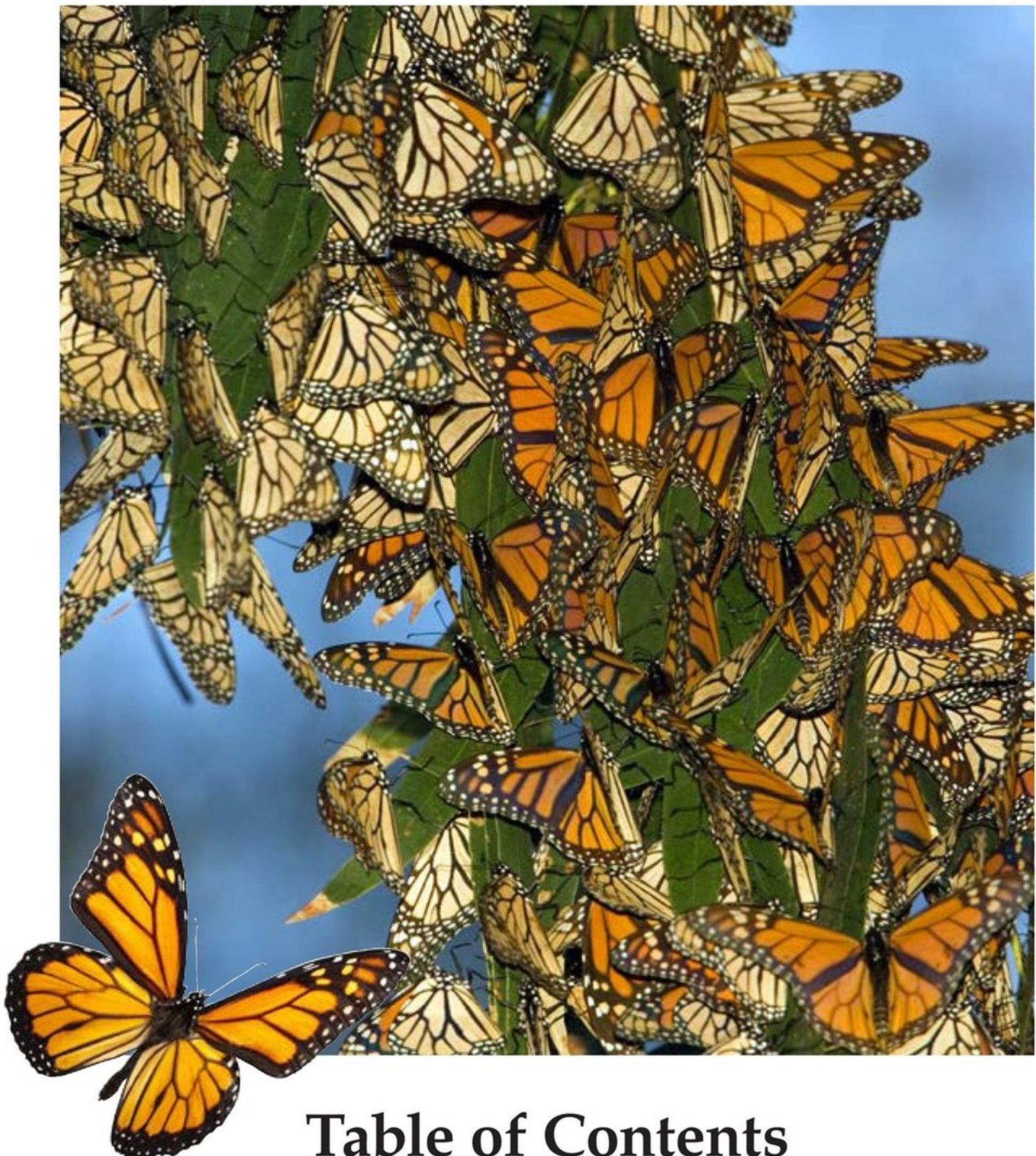
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Level K Leveled Book  
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### Correlation

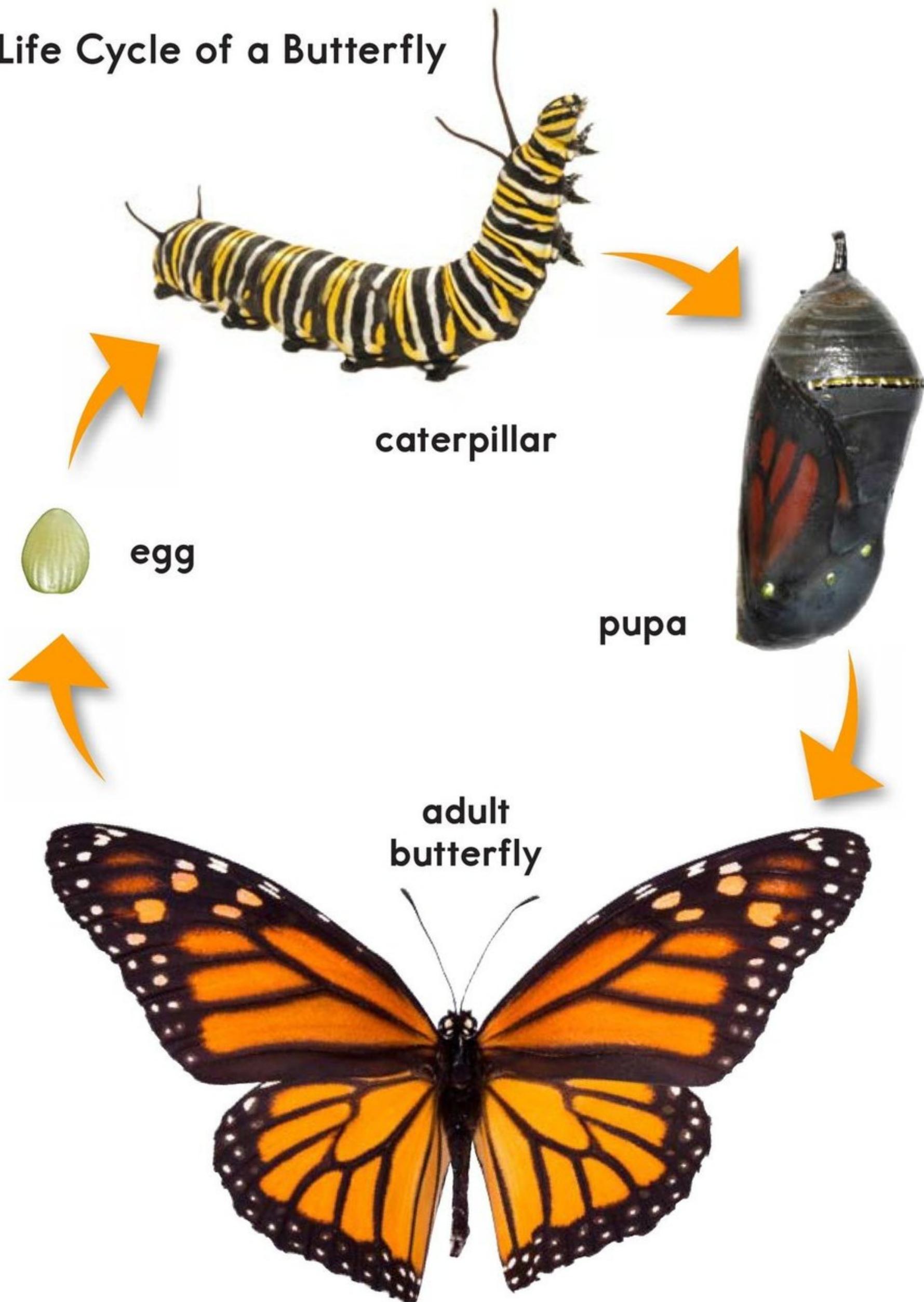
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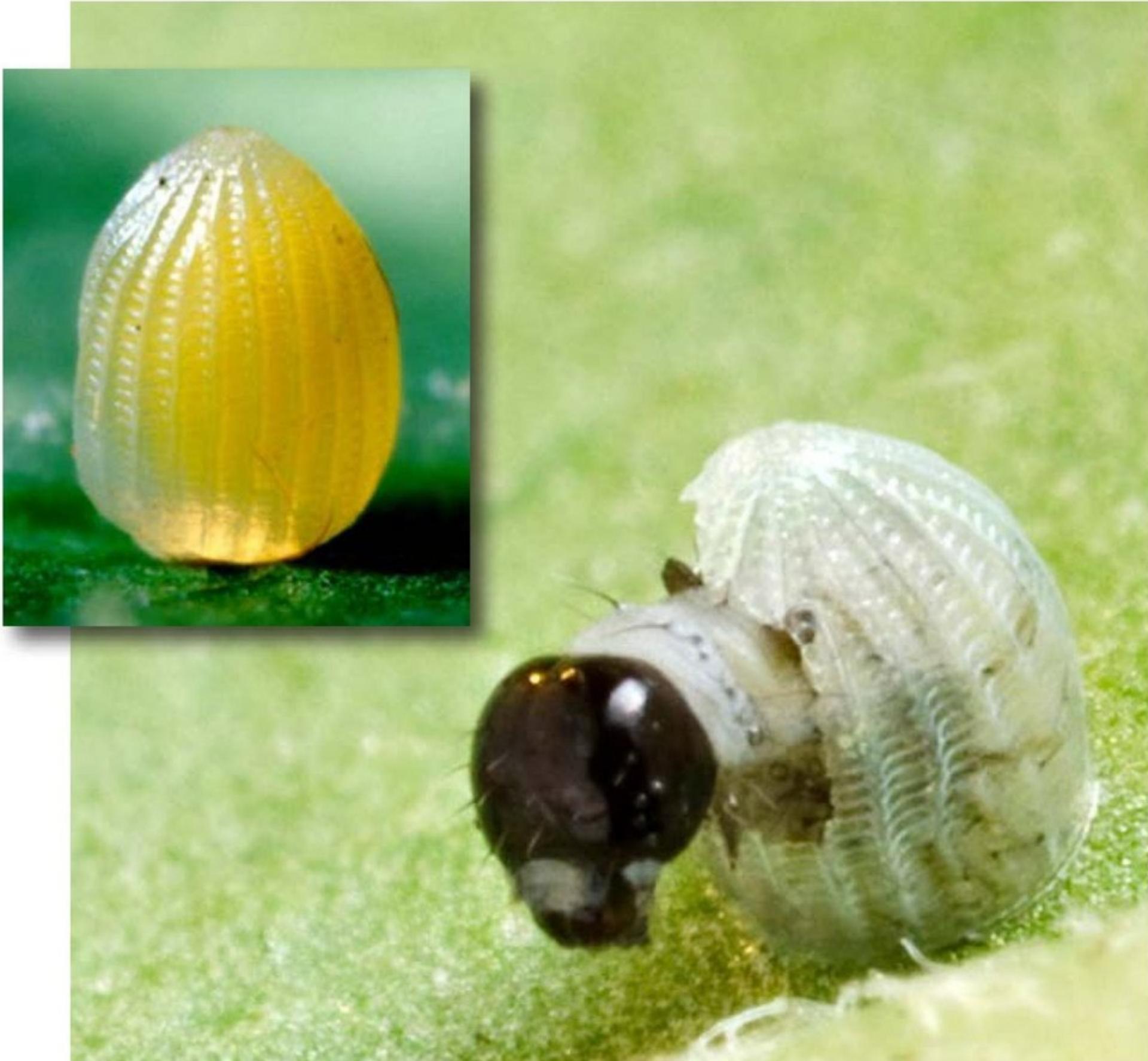
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## Life Cycle of a Butterfly



## The Life Cycle

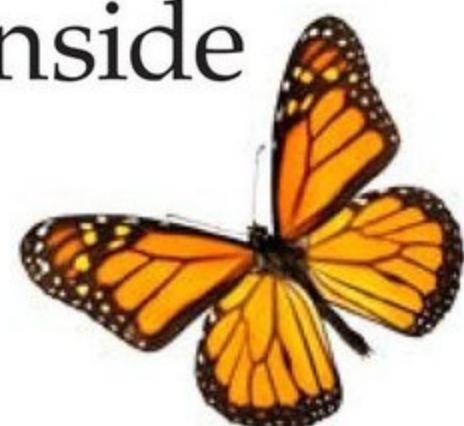
A monarch **butterfly** has four **stages** in its **life cycle**. They are egg, caterpillar, pupa, and adult.



A young caterpillar hatches from its egg. A female monarch butterfly usually lays only one egg on a leaf.

## Egg

A female monarch butterfly lays an egg on the bottom of a leaf. She might lay several hundred eggs in her lifetime. The eggs are oval shaped. A caterpillar grows inside the tiny egg. The egg hatches in three to twelve days.

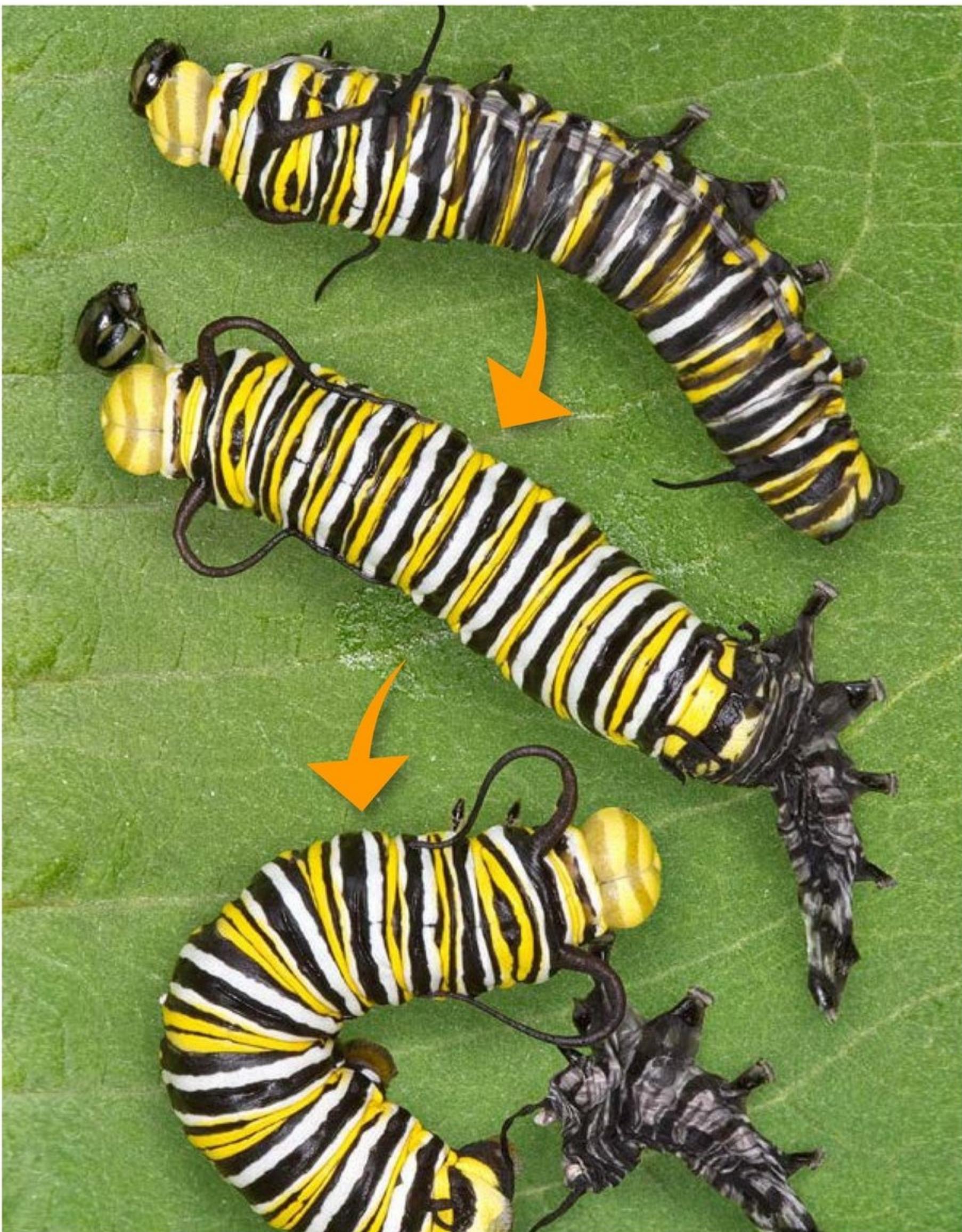




The young caterpillar eats its own shell. If there are two eggs on a leaf, the caterpillar will eat the other egg first!

The hungry caterpillar eats all the time. It needs a lot of food to grow. First, the caterpillar eats its own eggshell. Then, the caterpillar eats the leaf it is on.





The caterpillar puts down sticky silk. The silk keeps the old skin in place while the caterpillar wiggles out of it.

The caterpillar grows quickly, but its skin does not grow. The caterpillar's old skin splits and peels away. The caterpillar will shed the old skin many times in this stage.



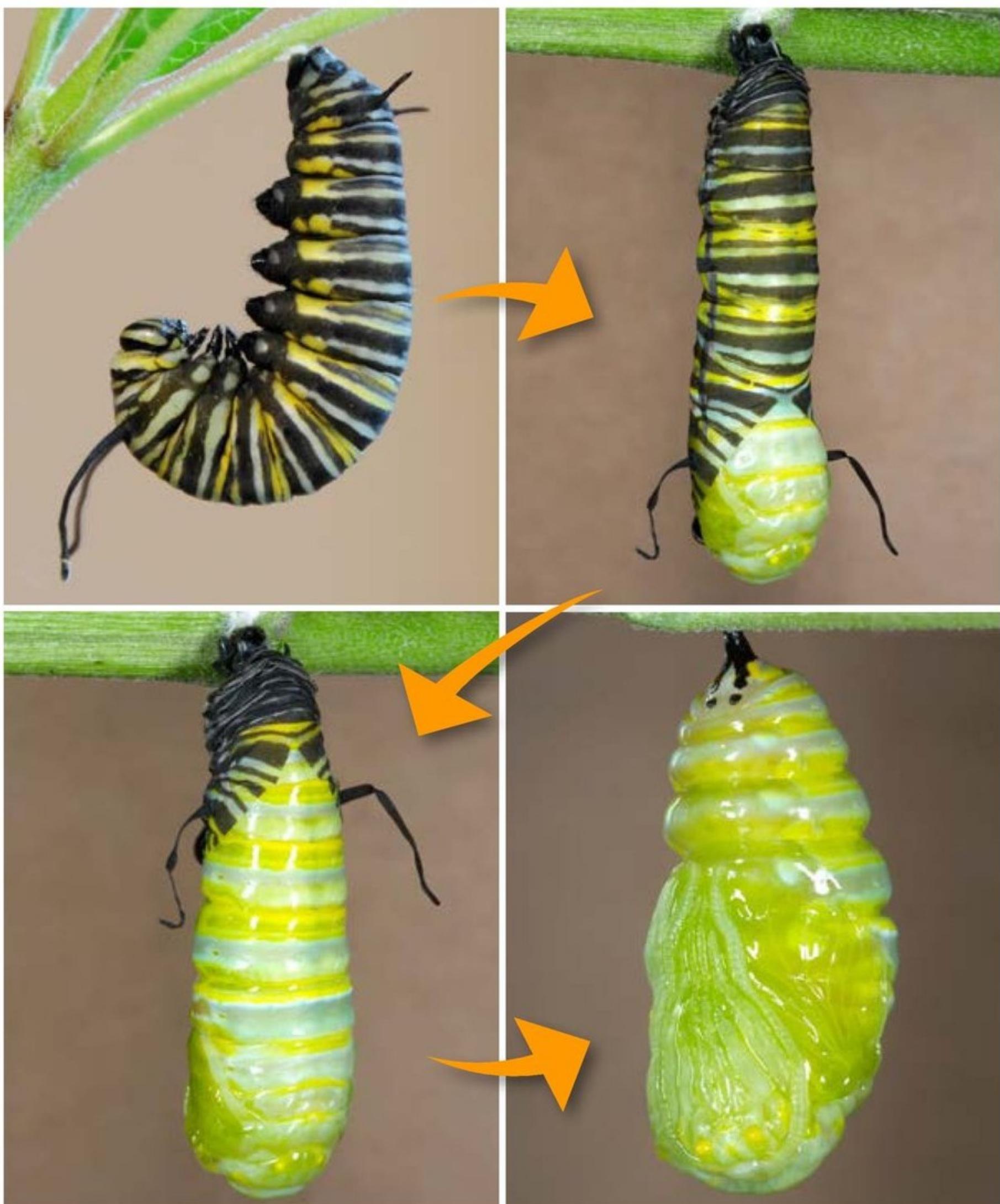


### Do You Know?

Monarch caterpillars only eat the leaves of the milkweed plant.

The caterpillar's bright black and yellow colors warn animals that they will get sick if they eat it.

New skin is under the old skin.  
It is soft at first but soon hardens.  
The caterpillar sheds its skin four to six times and eats the old skin each time. The caterpillar grows for two to four weeks.



The caterpillar's skin splits down its back like a zipper!

## Pupa

When the caterpillar is grown, it hangs from a branch to prepare for the next stage. It sheds its skin one last time. The new skin is bright green and looks like a leaf.

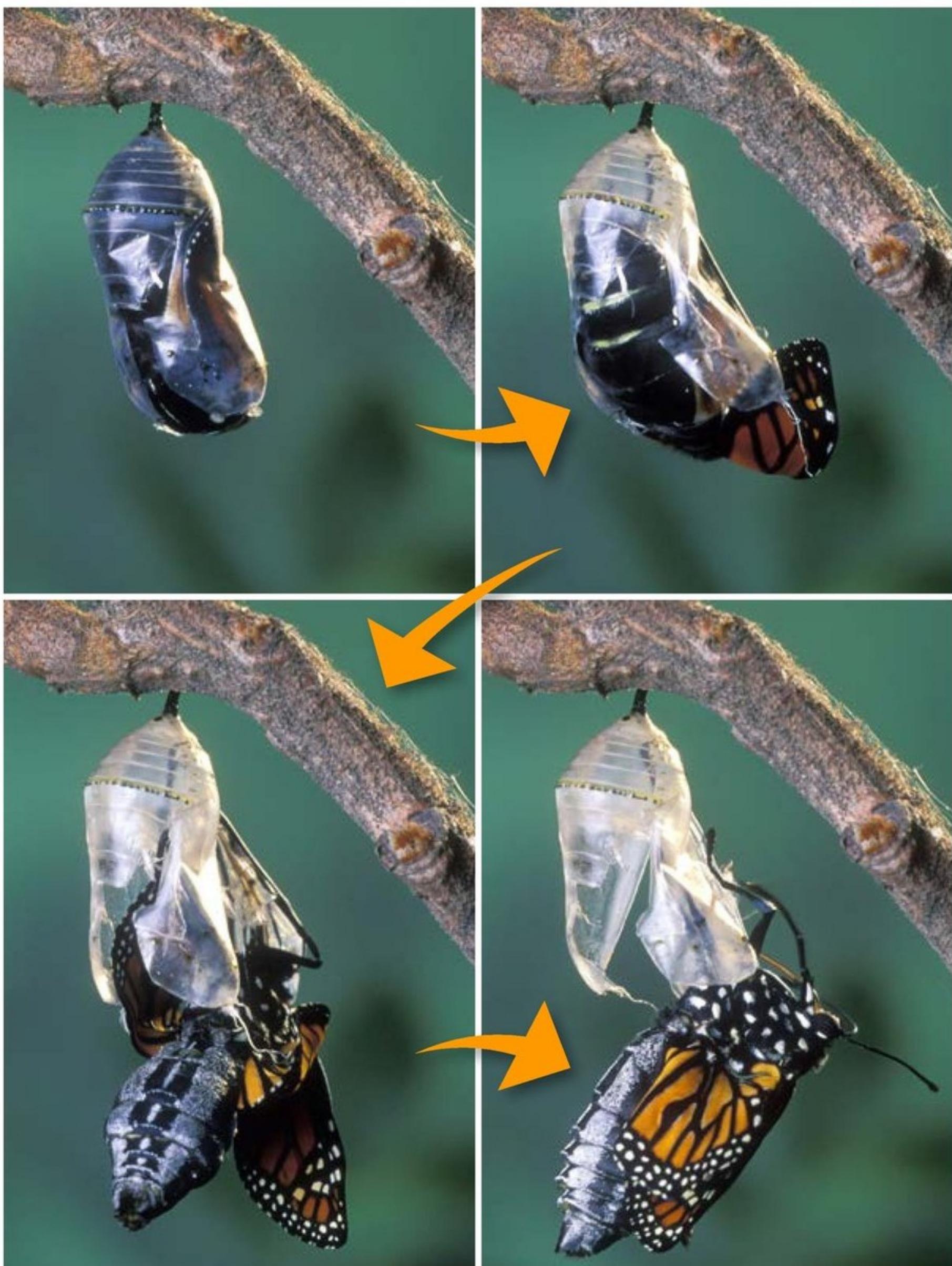




The green color helps the caterpillar hide from other animals.

This green skin hardens around the caterpillar. It will protect it from other animals as it changes inside.

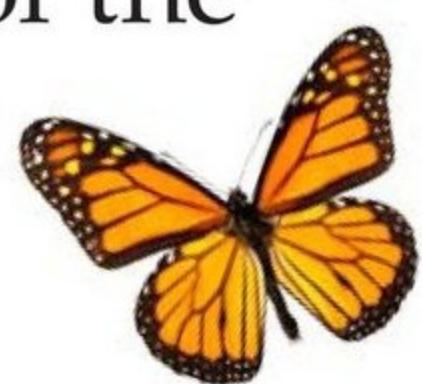
The caterpillar becomes a pupa. It will stay inside its shell for one to two weeks. During this time, big changes happen to its body.



The butterfly breathes in air to make its body bigger. Then, the shell splits so the butterfly can climb out.

## Adult Butterfly

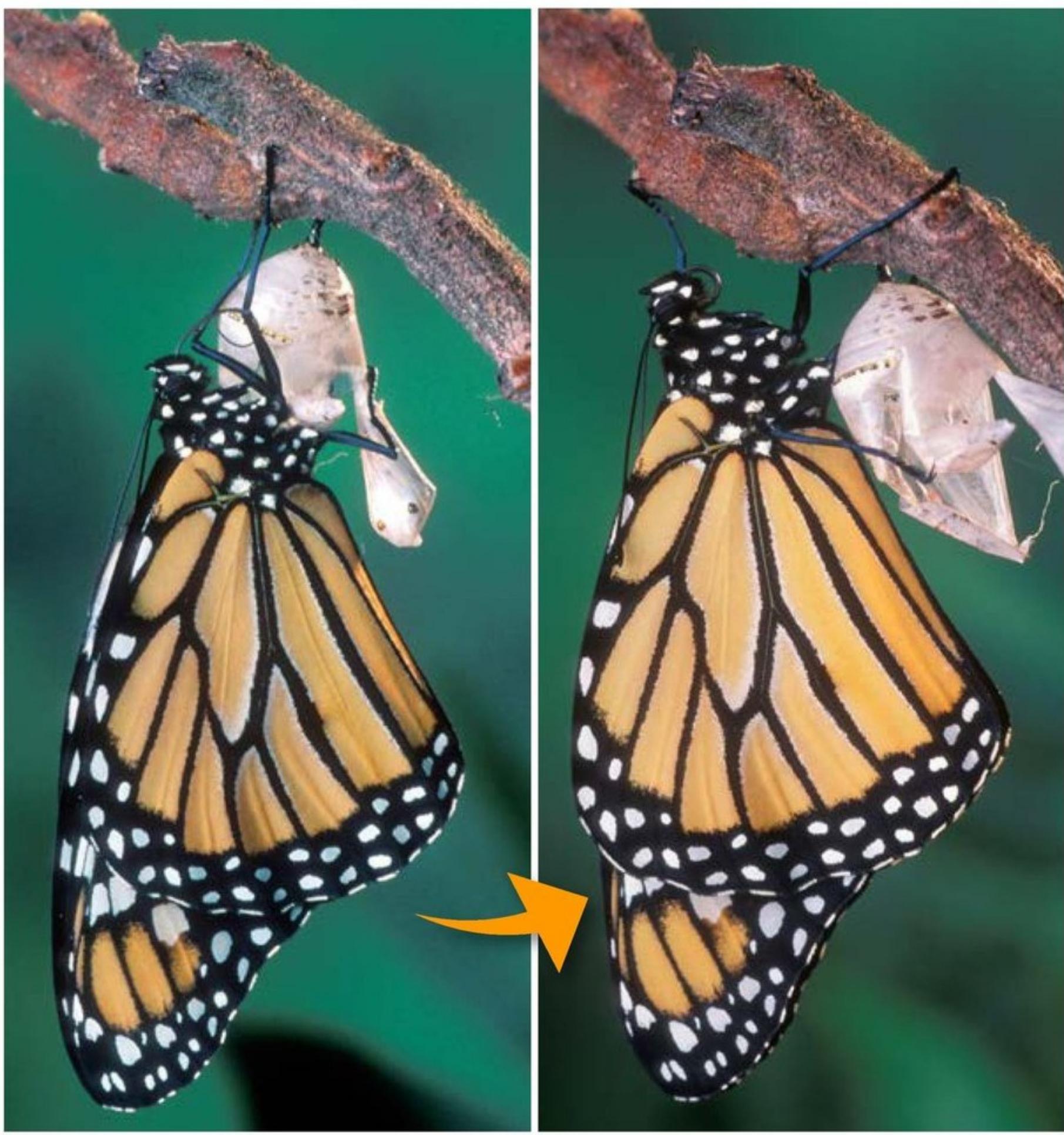
An adult butterfly comes out of the shell. Its wet wings are folded against its body.





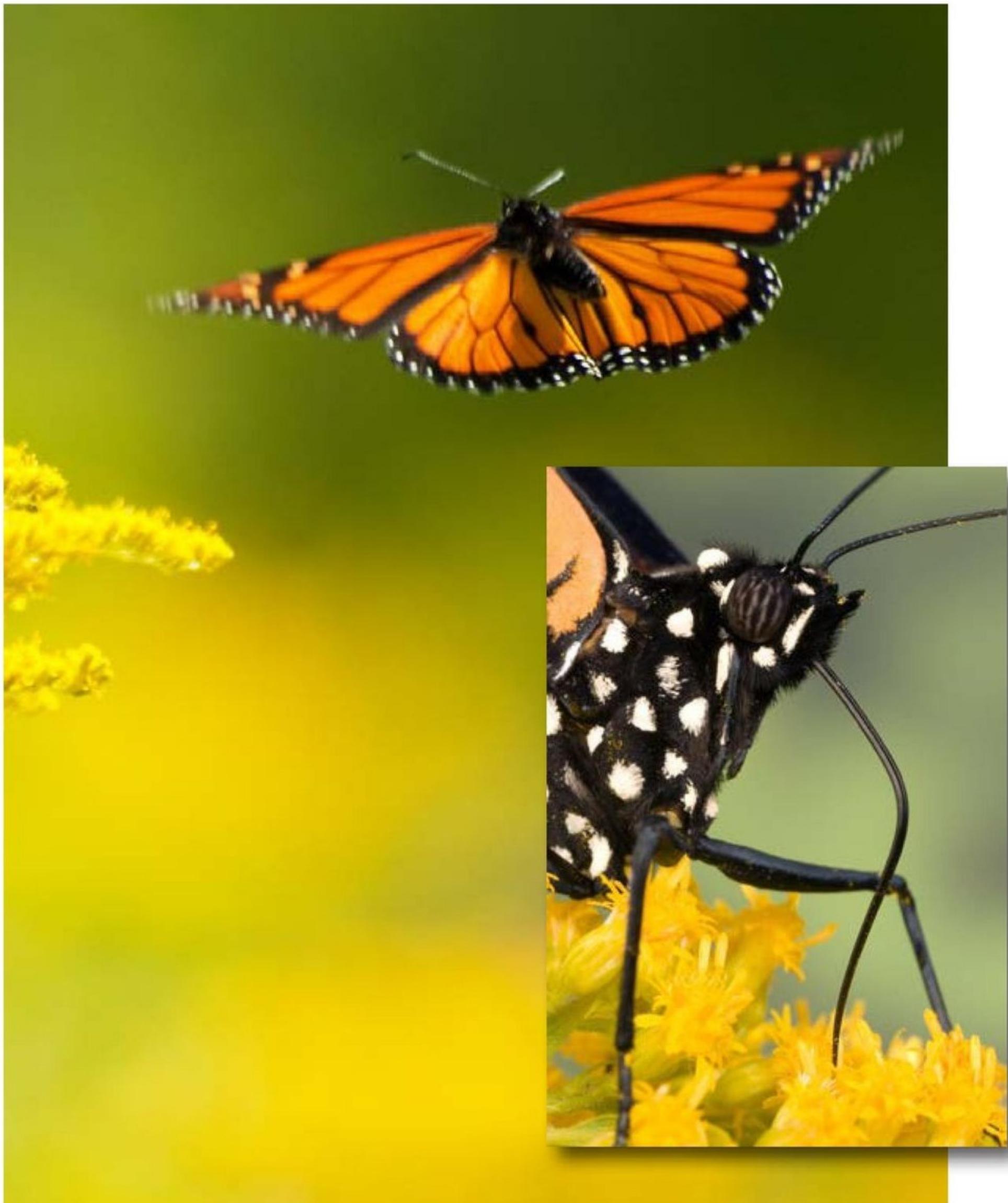
While the butterfly hangs, it pushes blood into its wings.

The new butterfly rests. The butterfly must hang upside down, or it will not be able to fly. Blood pumping into the wings causes them to unfold and spread out.



Most monarch butterfly wings are about 4 inches (10 cm) from tip to tip.

The butterfly hangs for several hours. The sun and air dry its delicate wings. A butterfly has two pairs of wings. They are covered in **scales**. The wings in the front often have a different pattern from the pair in the back. The colors on the wings are usually similar to each other.



Monarch butterflies drink nectar, a sweet liquid made by plants, with a long tongue shaped like a tube.

Once the butterfly is able to fly, it flies off to eat. Unlike a caterpillar, a butterfly does not eat leaves. Instead, it sips sweet liquid from flowers. It also searches for a **mate**.



A female monarch butterfly may lay 400 to 500 eggs in her lifetime!

Adult butterflies do not grow. They save their energy for flying and laying eggs. Females are bigger than males.

A monarch butterfly may only live for two to six weeks. After she finds a mate, the female monarch lays her eggs. The butterfly life cycle starts all over again.

## Glossary

**butterfly** (n.) an insect with four wings that are bright in color (p. 4)

**life cycle** (n.) the stages of change that a living thing goes through during its life (p. 4)

**mate** (n.) the partner of an animal with which it produces young (p. 14)

**pupa** (n.) a young insect in the stage between a larva and an adult (p. 4)

**scales** (n.) thin, flat plates that cover the outside of some animals (p. 13)

**stages** (n.) periods of time in the growth of something, such as insects (p. 4)

# The Butterfly Life Cycle

A Reading A-Z Level K Leveled Book  
Word Count: 425

## Connections

### Writing and Art

Draw a diagram of the butterfly life cycle. Write about each stage and what happens in between the stages.

### Science

Pick two stages of the butterfly life cycle. Compare and contrast them with a partner.



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