

Caterpillar and Butterfly

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Synopsis

There was once a caterpillar who lived all alone. Everything around Caterpillar seemed large and strange, and she felt frightened of the world.

One by one, her friends asked her to come and play, but Caterpillar was afraid of what might happen, and hid under her leaf instead. She began to wish everyone would leave her alone, so she formed a chrysalis.

In a prison of her own making, Caterpillar soon started to miss her friends. But she found the strength to overcome the fears that had crippled her ... and Caterpillar became Butterfly!

Themes

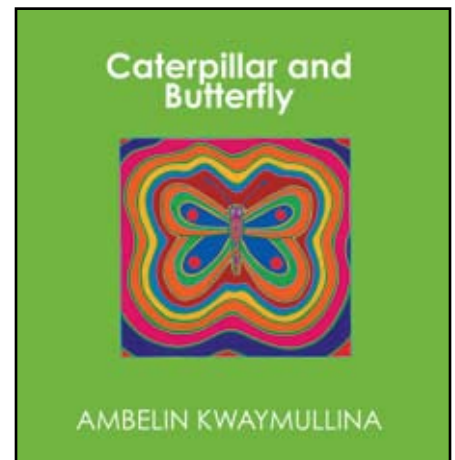
Conquering your fear of falling and learning how to fly are metaphors made physical in this story of a caterpillar who becomes a butterfly, which explores the idea of fear and how to respond positively to being scared. *Caterpillar and Butterfly* also examines friendship and loneliness, and promotes passing on a positive message to others.

Writing Style

Caterpillar and Butterfly is written in the tradition of Aboriginal teaching stories. Its simple, lyrical, fable-like language reinforces the underlying message of the book. The vibrant illustrations are painted using gouache.

Author / Illustrator Motivation

Aboriginal culture contains many stories of animals that teach us lessons about how to live in the world. The inspiration for *Caterpillar and Butterfly* came when I was staring out the window one day and saw a butterfly fluttering around my garden. I began to wonder, what lessons might butterflies, with their amazing powers of transformation, have to teach humans? The more I thought about it, the more I realised that butterflies might tell us how to reach our full potential, and that idea became the story of *Caterpillar and Butterfly*.



Author / Illustrator Background

Ambelin Kwaymullina is an Indigenous writer and artist. She comes from the Bailgu and Njamal peoples of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Her mother is acclaimed Indigenous writer and artist, Sally Morgan.

Editorial Comment

Caterpillar and Butterfly is an inspiring and uplifting picture book for younger readers from the author and illustrator of the critically-acclaimed *Crow and the Waterhole* and *The Two-hearted Numbat*.

Study Notes

1. After reading, think about the story of *Caterpillar and Butterfly*.
 - Think of an alternative title for the book. Write your own blurb (synopsis).
 - In groups, act out the story.
 - Substitute the caterpillar for another animal. Does it change the meaning of the book?
2. The illustrations are very brightly coloured, and made up of simple shapes without black outlines.
 - Paint a picture using similar techniques. It could be your own version of a scene from the book, or your own original painting.
 - Investigate how these illustrations are different or the same to traditional Indigenous painting.
 - Discuss the importance of the illustrations to the story. Would the story work just as well with different illustrations?
3. Caterpillars and butterflies are insects, and there are many things to learn about them.
 - Research the different varieties of butterflies. How many different kinds can you find out about? How do they look different?
 - Choose one of the butterflies in the picture on pages 29-30 to research in further detail. They are, from right to left:
 - Yellow spotted blue
 - Cairns birdwing
 - Wattle blue
 - Monarch/Wanderer
 - Common grass blue
 - Ulysses
 - Draw a butterfly (from the list above, or a different one). Label these parts: antennae, body (three sections), wings, tongue, eyes, legs. Colour a pattern on the butterfly's wings.
 - Why do butterflies sometimes have certain marks on their wings? How do they eat?
 - Discover the life cycle of butterflies (from caterpillar to butterfly) and write about it.
 - Write a poem or song about the caterpillar who becomes a butterfly.

- Have you ever found a caterpillar or a butterfly in the garden? Write a story about this experience, or if you haven't, imagine what it would be like to find one and write a story.
 - Go on an excursion to a zoo, wildlife park or butterfly enclosure. If you visit a zoo or wildlife park, try to find the other animals that are mentioned in the book.
 - Name some insects that live in your local area. Research issues affecting local insect life – reduced habitat, water and food resources, feral species.
4. Caterpillar is frightened of many things, but in the end she learns to live to her full potential.
- What kinds of things are you scared of? When have you felt scared in the past?
 - Do you think Caterpillar's reasons for not going with her friends were good reasons? Why or why not? Did it help when she hid in her chrysalis?
 - How do you overcome your fears? Have you ever avoided something because you were scared? What happened?
 - Write a story about you (or somebody else) overcoming their fear.
 - Why did Caterpillar leave her chrysalis? What did she do differently when she changed into Butterfly?
 - Do you think it would be better to hide away and be safe from harm, or to go outside and see the world?
 - Make a list of things you'd like to do or see. Are you scared of doing any of these things? Why or why not?
5. Caterpillar is never alone; even when she wants to be, her friends are still there when she emerges from her chrysalis. When she becomes Butterfly she also finds that there are lots of other butterflies in the world.
- Do you ever feel lonely? Is there a difference between 'lonely' and 'alone'?
 - Who do you miss when they are not around? Write a letter to someone (a friend or family member) who you haven't seen in a long time.
 - What kinds of activities do you like to do with your friends or family? Write about these.
 - What are some qualities that make a good friend? You can think about being a good friend yourself, and how your friends are good to you.
6. Locate the Pilbara on a map of Australia. Find out more about the Bailgu and Njamal people and/or the Indigenous people from your area. Invite a spokesperson from the local Indigenous community to speak to the class.
7. Write to the author of your favourite book, or of this book (if to Ambelin Kwaymullina, send the letter c/o Fremantle Press) describing what you did and didn't like.