

Butterfly Community Virtual Art Project

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Butterfly facts, colour info and templates

Butterfly facts to initiate creativity

Butterflies are insects, probably evolving from moths, that were found as early as 56 million years ago. Images of butterflies were first found in ancient Egypt 3500 years ago. Their name may have resulted because they were seen flying around during the butter making seasons of spring and summer.

Butterflies have four stages of life. Starting as an egg, changing into a caterpillar, pupating in a chrysalis and then emerging from the chrysalis as a butterfly. This process may occur several times a year or once every few years in colder climates. Each butterfly can live anywhere from a week to a year. They have a small head with large compound eyes, a thorax consisting of the moving parts including 3 segments with two legs each (the first two are short so the butterfly actually walks using the back four legs) and lastly the abdomen, which houses the gut and reproductive organs.

Butterflies feed primarily on nectar and water. They also like the salt of human sweat and eating rotting fruit. They travel to hilltops seeking mates using their antennae to sense the air for wind and scents.

Butterflies have predators like wasps and flies. They use camouflage, mimicry and aposematism to evade predators. Some butterflies eat crops and feed on trees in their larval stage, some pollinate plants, some eat harmful insects like ants, some are friends of ants and talk to them using the beating of their wings. Some butterflies mimic others who don't taste as good. Some butterflies have spots that look like a false head. The Oak Leaf butterfly looks like an oak leaf or even a stick. Butterflies have a bumpy flight pattern so they can't be easily caught and they can also change colours.

Some species migrate using the sun because they can only fly when their body temperature is over 27 degrees Celsius. It takes generations of butterflies to fly thousands of miles to overwinter in warmer climates. The British Painted Lady butterfly flies 9,000 miles from Tropical Africa to the Arctic Circle. The Monarch butterfly travels from New York to Mexico.

Butterflies have different meanings in different cultures. In Mexico, butterflies were thought to be reincarnated dead soldiers. In Japan, they represent a person's soul. The ancient Greeks' word for butterfly means soul or mind. In many cultures butterflies represent rebirth, perhaps because they change from a caterpillar to a butterfly.

Using Watercolour paint

Watercolours come in tubes, containers or cakes of dry colour.

Mixing water into the dry or semi dry paint activates the paint.

Using a tray as a palette, add as much water as needed with a wet brush to get the desired effect. The more water, the lighter the colour.

Using a drier brush creates lovely textures.

Reminders:

- rinse the brush after using a colour before going into the next colour. This will prevent colours from mixing unintentionally.
- to add more water or more paint at different stages to create a greater range of colours
- leave a space between wet patches of colour or allow the colour to dry before painting next to it with a different colour. This will help to keep the colours from migrating into each other. Blow dryers are useful to speed up the drying process.

Colour mixing

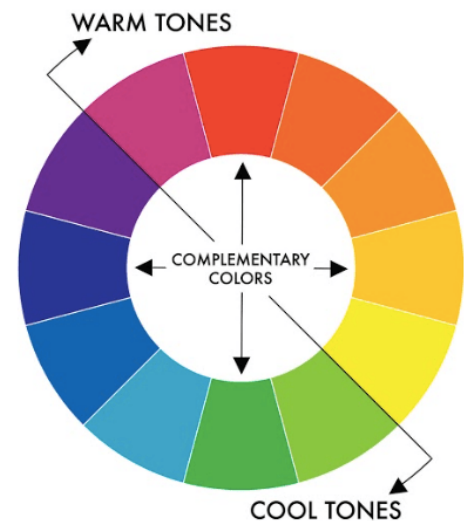
There are three primary colours (**red, yellow & blue**) You can make any colour except white which comes from the paper colour by mixing the primaries.

Secondary colours are **orange** (made from red and yellow), **green** (made from yellow and blue) and **purple** (made from blue and red). You can make brown and black from mixing all the primaries together.

You can mix the colours on a tray, on the paper, or you can layer the colours, being sure to dry completely between layers.

To mix watercolour pigments on the paper, put a puddle of colour, for example, yellow, on the paper, then while it is still wet add a touch of blue with the brush. The blue and yellow pigments mix together to create green. Alternatively, you can paint a shape yellow, let it dry then paint over the shape with blue to get a green. If the values (lightness and darkness) of the two colours are similar, you will get a green that is not too yellow or not too blue. It is a magical process to watch and creates wonderful luminosity.

Since mixing many colours together can make the colour muddy and brown, recommend that students use analogous colours (colours beside each other on the colour wheel such as red and purple) when placing two colours beside each other while the paint is wet. Once it dries they can add more colours. Alternately a space of dry paper can be left between the wet colours.



Another way to use watercolours is to paint wet in wet. Wet your watercolour paper with just water by applying water with a clean brush, then apply colour. The pigment magically travels across the page following the shape you have drawn in water.

By putting complimentary (opposite) colours side by side, you can see how the colour vibrates on the paper. Complimentary colours sit directly across from each other on the colour wheel (for example blue and orange). It is important to not let these colours blend while wet or you will create mud.

Mood can be created by choosing all cool or warm colours.

Patterns and textures

Textures can be created with dry brush techniques (using a brush that has paint but little water).

Drawing with tools such as coloured pencils and felt pens, as well as adding other materials such as collage papers, can create textures and patterns over dry watercolour.

Use photographs of different butterflies as inspiration.

Put "eyes" on the wings, recreate camouflage patterns or create your own idea of a butterfly.

Creative Prompts

Where do you want to start?

What colour do you want to start with?

Do you want to draw a pattern lightly with pencil and then add colour?

Use photographs as inspiration versus copying exactly what you see.

Realistic or conceptual?

What do butterflies mean to you and what would that look like?

