

The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show

Flynn Student Matinee Series Study Guide



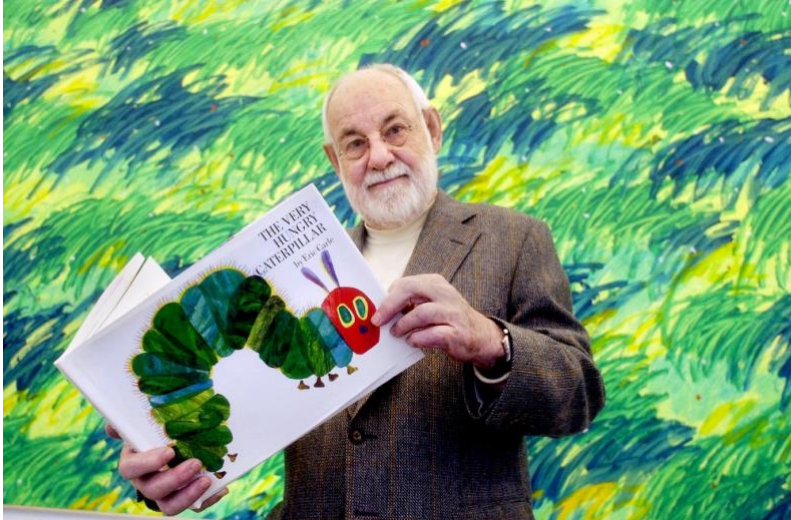
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About the Show

This delightful, puppet-filled show is a stage adaptation of the work of beloved children's book author Eric Carle. His book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* was the inspiration for the show, but it is just one of several Eric Carle stories you'll get to experience in the performance. The others are *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do You See?*; *The Very Lonely Firefly*; and *10 Little Rubber Ducks*. Have you read all of them?



Author and illustrator Eric Carle

The Very Hungry Caterpillar was published in 1969, and went on to sell over 33 million copies translated into more than 50 languages! Eric Carle's distinctive illustrations are made using hand-painted papers, which he cuts and layers to create bright collage images. His stories are usually about his love for nature, and always include some exciting knowledge for children to learn about the world.

Rockefeller came up with the idea to create a stage version of Eric Carle's beloved stories. He also created a stage version of the Paddington stories, called "Paddington Gets in a Jam"! *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* was the first book he remembers reading as a child, and, as Rockefeller says, "Great stories told well at the right age instill a love of reading for life." The show has been performing for ten years, touring to audiences across the world – over 3 million children in 20 countries have gotten to see this show!

The show has 75 different puppets, each with their own abilities! For example, some bird puppets in the show can flap their wings or open and close their beaks. In coming to the show, Rockefeller hopes that audiences will discover "a love of theater and a love of books."



Jonathan Rockefeller, creator of the stage show, with a familiar puppet

A Trip to the Theater

Have you ever been to the theater before? If you have, what did you see? What was it like in the theater? What do you think are some of the ways an audience should behave while they're in the theater? Whether you've been to the theater before or not, there are some important things to

keep in mind during your visit, so that you and everyone around you can have the best possible time.

A lot of us have televisions in our homes, but what makes the theater different is that live performers are acting out the story right in front of you! This means that every performance is unique, even if you're seeing the same show multiple times... because the audience is different every time. So you, as the audience, are SUCH an important part of the experience!



The Flynn Theater, where you'll get to watch the show!

When you get to the theater, you'll be asked to sit in a seat (it might even be a fancy, cushioned seat!). You might get so excited that you'll want to get out of your seat, but that will be distracting for the performers and the other audience members.

Since the story you're going to see will be performed by real live people right in front of you, it's also important that you listen and do your best not to talk during the show. Not only will this help you follow along better with the story, it will also be kind to the other people watching the show, because it's hard to pay attention when other people in the audience are being loud!

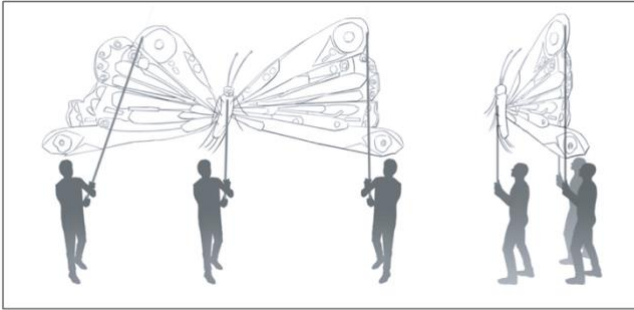
At some points in the show, you might be invited to participate! This might mean shouting out answers to questions the performers ask, or maybe even coming onstage and helping out. But remember, you should only do these things if the performers ask you to do them. And finally, when the show is over, make sure you let the performers know you loved what you saw by giving them a nice loud round of applause!



What part of the caterpillar's journey do you think this is?

Meet the Puppets

All the puppets in this show were built by The Rock Shop, Rockefeller Productions' puppet construction studio. The 75 puppets you'll see were constructed from many different materials including foam, plastic, and fabric. And, in an hourlong show, you're going to see a new puppet just about every 50 seconds. You won't want to look away for a second!



Three people are needed to operate the giant butterfly puppet

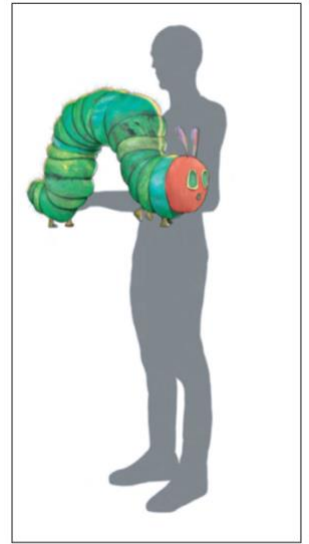
Some of the puppets are large, some are small. The butterfly puppet has a wingspan of 12 feet and requires three puppeteers to operate!

When building a puppet for the show, the first step is drawing out a concept illustration. It was very important to the team that they make the puppets look as close as possible to the

illustrations from the books. This was challenging, because in the books the puppets are only seen from one angle. So the team had to figure out what each character would look like from the front, back, and sides – perspectives that aren't seen in the original books.

Building this show required a big team of artists coming together, including composers, set designer, lighting designer, puppet builders, and puppeteers who operate the puppets during the performance.

To build the Brown Bear puppet, the first step was to make a clay sculpture of the head. The clay model was then covered in tissue paper, which the designers used to figure out where they would place the seams when they finally made the finished version of the puppet.

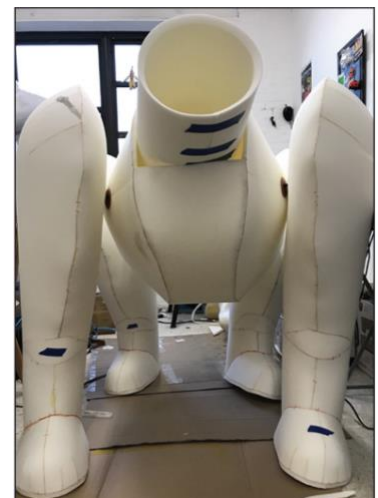


A concept drawing illustrating the size of the caterpillar puppet



The clay sculpture of Brown Bear's head

Then, they began constructing the body, which was made of a special kind of foam glued together with a shoe adhesive. It was then coated in Plasti Dip, which is a liquid form of plastic, and then painted with acrylic paint...



An in-process look at Brown Bear's body



...All of that comes together to make the final version of the Brown Bear puppet! And wait, what's that book the puppeteer in front is holding? Do you recognize it?



Here comes the baby caterpillar puppet!

Animal Inspirations

There is so much to learn about animals, bugs, and nature from the stories you'll see in the show. Let's take a look at some of the cool animal science behind the stories!

Brown Bears & Color

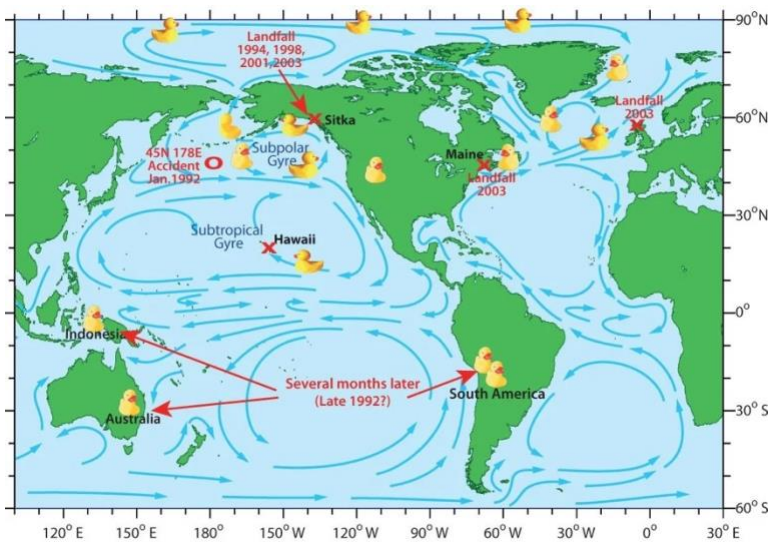
In this story, we hear from many different animals about what they see around them in the world. Their answers are full of colors – a red bird, a yellow duck... a blue horse?!

Scientists have studied how animals experience color, and whether or not it's similar to how we humans experience colors. No surprise, the answer lies in our eyeballs! Two of the parts that make up our eyes are called rods and cones. Rods deal with light, while cones deal with our understanding of color. Human eyes

have three cones, which means we can generally see a wide spectrum of colors. Most animals, including bears, have two cones – this means they don't see as many colors as we do, but they do still see some colors. Some reptiles, fish, birds, and insects have four cones, meaning they can see even more colors than we can. A tiny animal called a mantis shrimp has 12 cones in its eyes! Along with the kinds of colors animals can see, the color of their skin, fur, or feathers is important, too. Often their color allows them to blend in with their surroundings, so that predators can't spot them as easily. Animals also use color to make themselves more attractive to a potential mate – it's usually the males that are more colorful than the females.



A real life brown bear!



A map showing the journey of the 1992 rubber ducks around the world

Rubber Ducks & Water Currents

In this story, we follow the adventures of a bunch of rubber ducks who fall into the ocean. This story actually came from a real occurrence in 1992. A cargo ship was sailing in the Pacific Ocean when a container of toys, including 29,000 rubber ducks, fell overboard and the toys started floating in the Ocean. Scientists realized this could be an opportunity to learn more about how water moves around the Earth, especially when they learned that the little ducks were washing up on beaches very far away from where they fell off the boat. The scientists created mathematical formulas using the coordinates of where the toys originated and where they ended up in

order to understand how they moved through the water's currents. Adding weather reports and wind patterns to the equation, they could even predict where more of the toys would be found. One little duck went all the way around Alaska and Canada to end up in Scotland!

Fireflies & Light

In this story we follow a firefly lighting its way through the night sky. Scientists have learned that one of the reasons fireflies give off light is so they can find each other.

Entomologists – scientists who study insects – have spent a lot of time studying fireflies (also called lightning bugs). They're actually not a fly at all, but a kind of beetle with two chemicals in their abdomen that give off a glow called bioluminescence. They use different flashing patterns to communicate with each other.

Scientists also study why it is that insects are so attracted to light. It turns out that night-flying insects use the light of the moon to navigate from place to place. So light sources like porch lights and flashlights actually confuse the bugs and make them get lost.



Look at how brightly this firefly glows!



The life stages of a monarch butterfly. Can you spot the chrysalis?

Caterpillars & Metamorphosis

Like our favorite hungry caterpillar, all caterpillars go through a fascinating process called **metamorphosis**, the word for their transformation into a butterfly. Caterpillars eat a LOT, and sometimes this can cause problems for farmers who don't want caterpillars to eat their way through their crops! They eat many times their body weight in food because they need to store up a lot of energy for their transformation. Once they've eaten and grown into their full size, a caterpillar will hang upside down from a tree branch. It starts to shed its skin down to the hard shell called a chrysalis, which becomes even harder and acts as a protective casing during the transformation. Inside the chrysalis, it takes a long hibernating nap as it dissolves and then rebuilds itself into the butterfly it will become.

This can take anywhere from a week to over a year – but for most butterflies it takes about two

weeks. Other creatures also go through a metamorphosis, like ladybugs, grasshoppers, and dragonflies. But none are quite as incredible and transformative as a caterpillar into a butterfly!

Reflection Questions:

Here are some example questions to prompt deeper engagement from your students, both before and after the show:

Before the Show:

- Have you ever been to a theater before? What are some ways an audience is expected to behave in a theater that are different from how you behave in other places you go for entertainment, like a movie theater?
- When you think about puppets, what do you think of? How do you think puppets can be used to tell stories?
- From the book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, what did you learn about caterpillars?

After the Show:

- How did the show make you feel? Was there a specific moment when it caused an emotional reaction in you? How did it do that? What did the show make you think about?
- If you were to write a review of the show, what would you say? What stood out to you? Would you recommend it to other people? Why?
- There were so many puppets in this show! Which were your favorites? Which surprised you?
- If you could make a puppet of an animal or critter that wasn't in this show, which would you pick? How big would the puppet be, and what would it look like?

Resources

- [About the Very Hungry Caterpillar Show](#)
- [Where Imagination Grows – The Very Hungry Caterpillar and Jonathan Rockefeller](#)
- [The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art](#)
- [The Butterfly Life Cycle \(National Geographic Kids\)](#)
- [How Do We See Color? \(SciShow Kids\)](#)
- [Science Channel Video: When Thousands of Rubber Ducks were Accidentally Dumped into the Ocean](#)
- [Website: The Rockshop – Puppets & Props](#)