

Lesson Plan 1: The Life Cycle of Monarch Butterflies

Objective: Students will learn about the life cycle of monarch butterflies and explore how each stage is essential to their survival.

Grade Level: 1st-5th Grade

STEM Focus: Biology, Life Science

Materials:

- Monarch butterfly life cycle coloring page with Lake Eufaula SP logo shield on it. Printable page located at Nature Center or digital file that can be shared with teachers.
- Butterfly House Field notes page: - Printable page for students or visitors to take “field notes” Printable page located at Nature Center or digital file that can be shared with teachers.
- Live monarchs / butterflies in various stages (eggs, caterpillars, chrysalises, adults)
- Magnifying glasses for close observation

1. Introduction:

- Greet students and introduce the butterfly greenhouse and the Monarch Observation Station.
- Briefly explain the importance of monarchs in nature (pollination, migration, ect.) “Monarch butterflies are very important for nature because they help pollinate flowers. When they fly from one flower to another, they carry pollen on their bodies, which helps plants grow and produce seeds. Monarchs are also famous for their long migration. Every year, they travel thousands of miles from the United States and Canada all the way to Mexico to stay warm and reproduce during the winter! This journey is one of the longest migrations of any insect! Their migration is important because it helps balance the ecosystems they pass through and shows how animals and plants are connected along long distances. “
- Ask students: “Who knows what a butterfly goes through to grow up? What do you think happens before it flies?”

2. Overview of Monarch Butterfly Life Cycle:

- Direct students to the butterfly life cycle graphic panel
- Egg- Explain how monarchs start their life as tiny eggs laid on milkweed leaves by female Monarchs.
- Larva (Caterpillar) – Discuss how the egg hatches into a caterpillar, which eats milkweeds to grow.
- Pupa (Chrysalis) – Talk about how the caterpillar forms a chrysalis, going through metamorphosis.
- Adult Butterfly – Describe how the butterfly emerges and prepares to fly and lay eggs.
- Interactive Q&A: Ask students to guess which stage of the cycle they think is the most exciting or important and why.

3. Butterfly Observation:

- Students observe real monarchs in various stages using magnifying glasses.
- Identify eggs, caterpillars, chrysalises, and adult butterflies in greenhouse.
- Encourage students to record observations on their field notes page like a biologist would do. Example “I saw a caterpillar eating a leaf” or “The chrysalis was green and hanging from a branch”

4. Coloring and Hands on Activity:

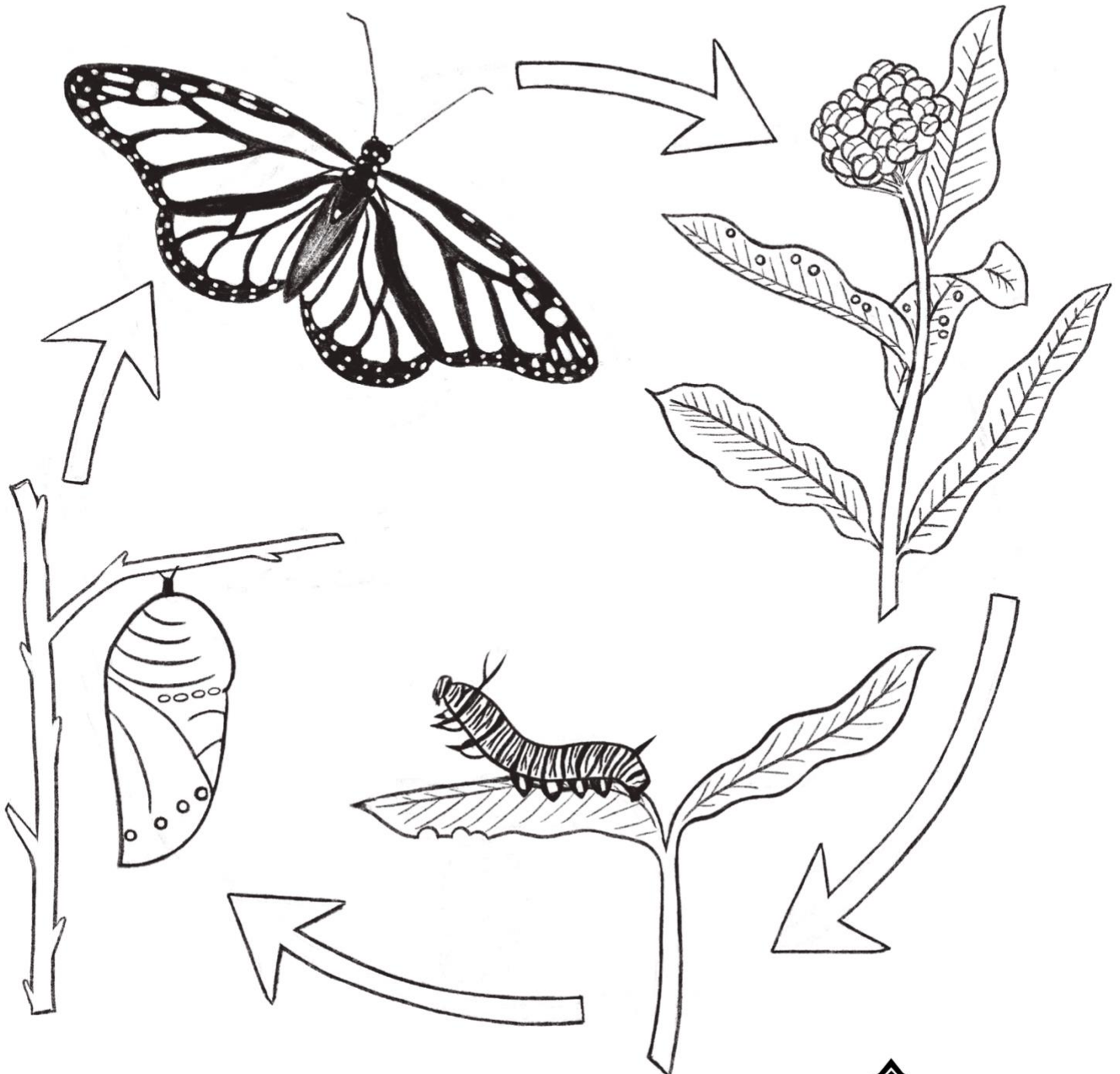
- Hand out the butterfly life cycle page and explain how each stage can be colored in differently
- As students color, go around and ask questions related to the stages of the butterfly life cycle.
- Encourage students to draw or write down any additional observations in the field notes page. Ex: Patterns noticed on wings, how the caterpillars body looks, egg shapes, ect.

5. Conclusion & Wrap-up:

- Review the key points of the life cycle and ask students to share one new thing they learned.

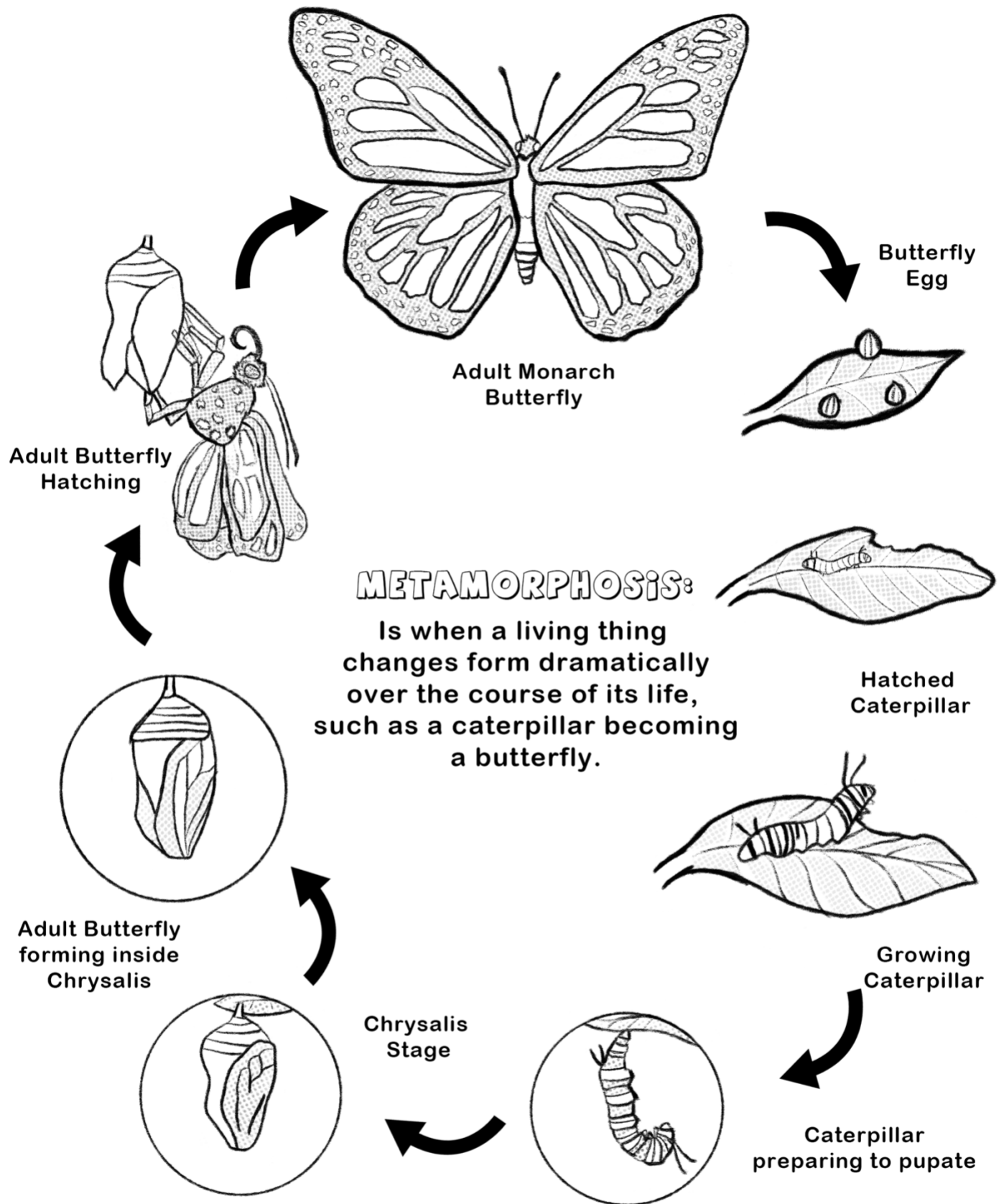
- Final Activity: Have each student share one stage of the monarchs life cycle that they found most interesting and why.
- Encourage students to keep their coloring page and field guide as a reminder of the monarchs they observed at Lake Eufaula State Park

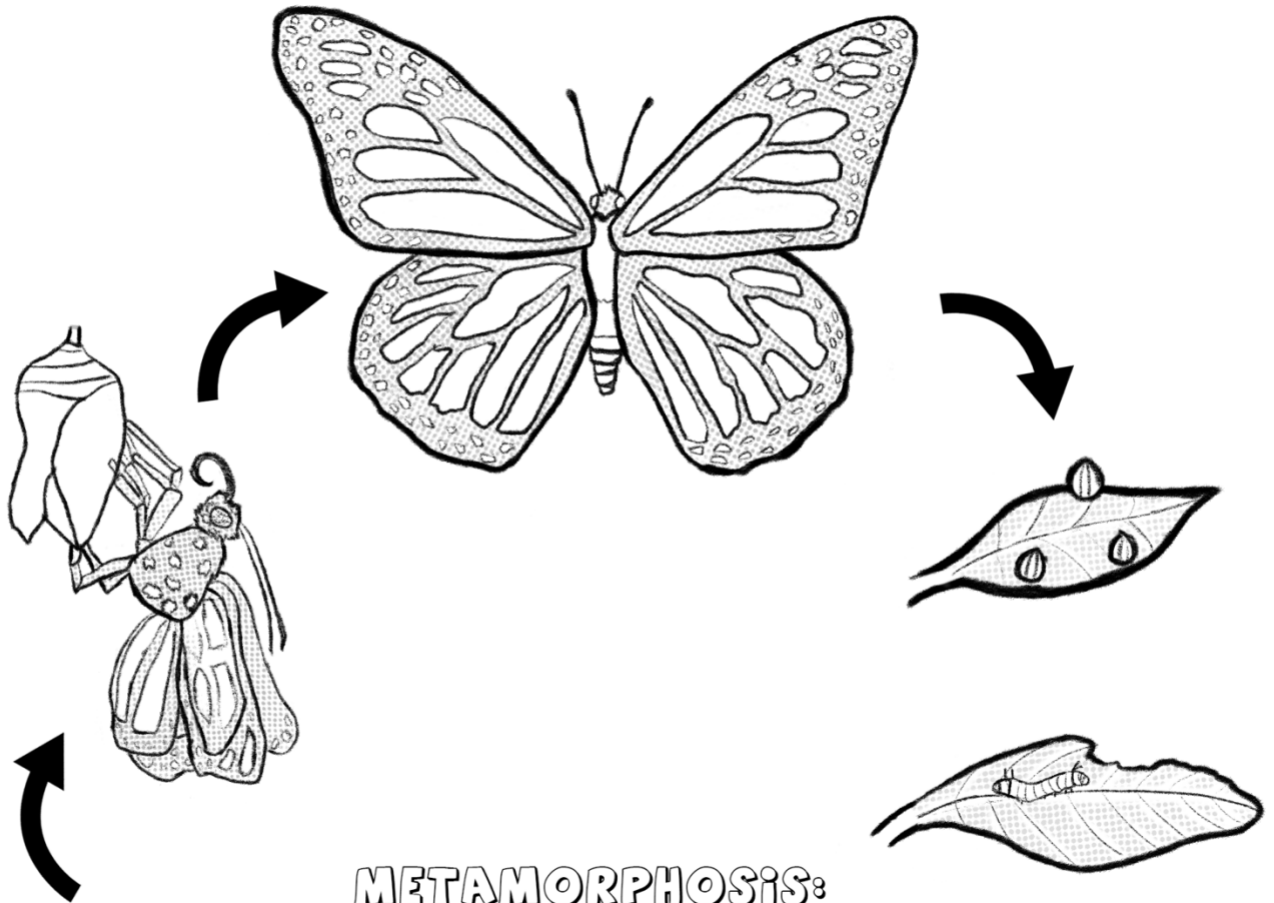
THE LIFE CYCLE OF A MONARCH BUTTERFLY



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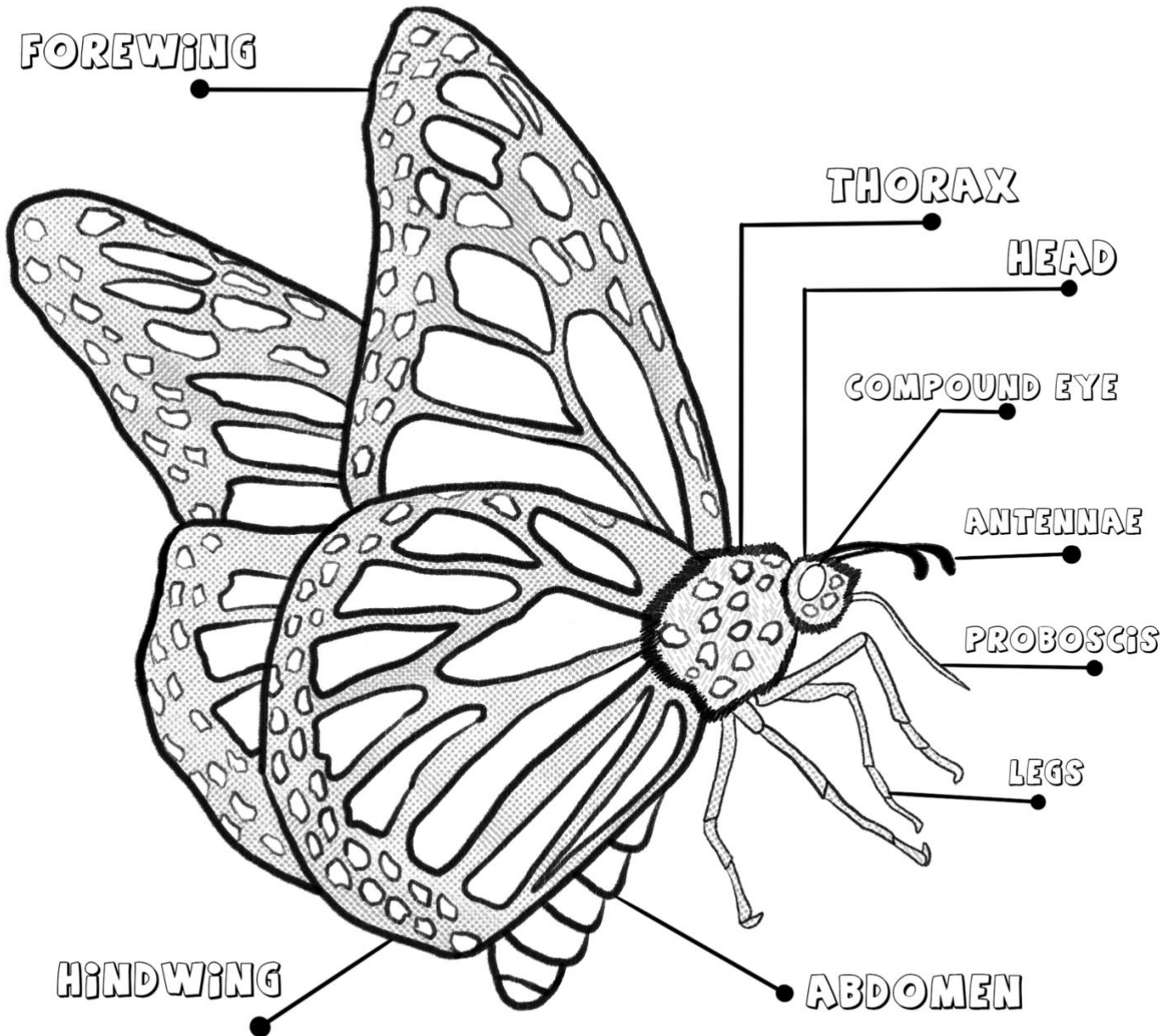
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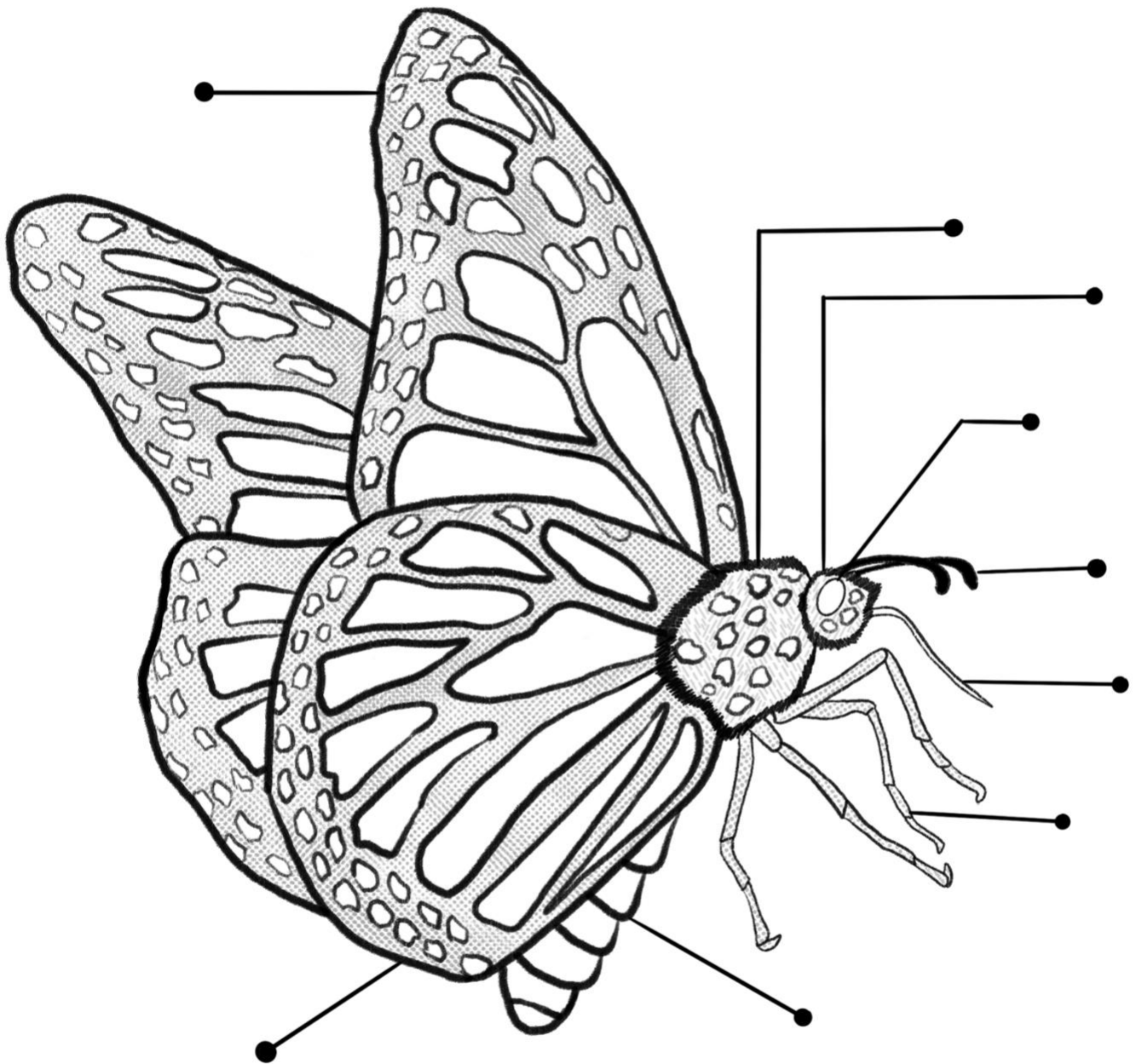
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ANATOMY OF A BUTTERFLY



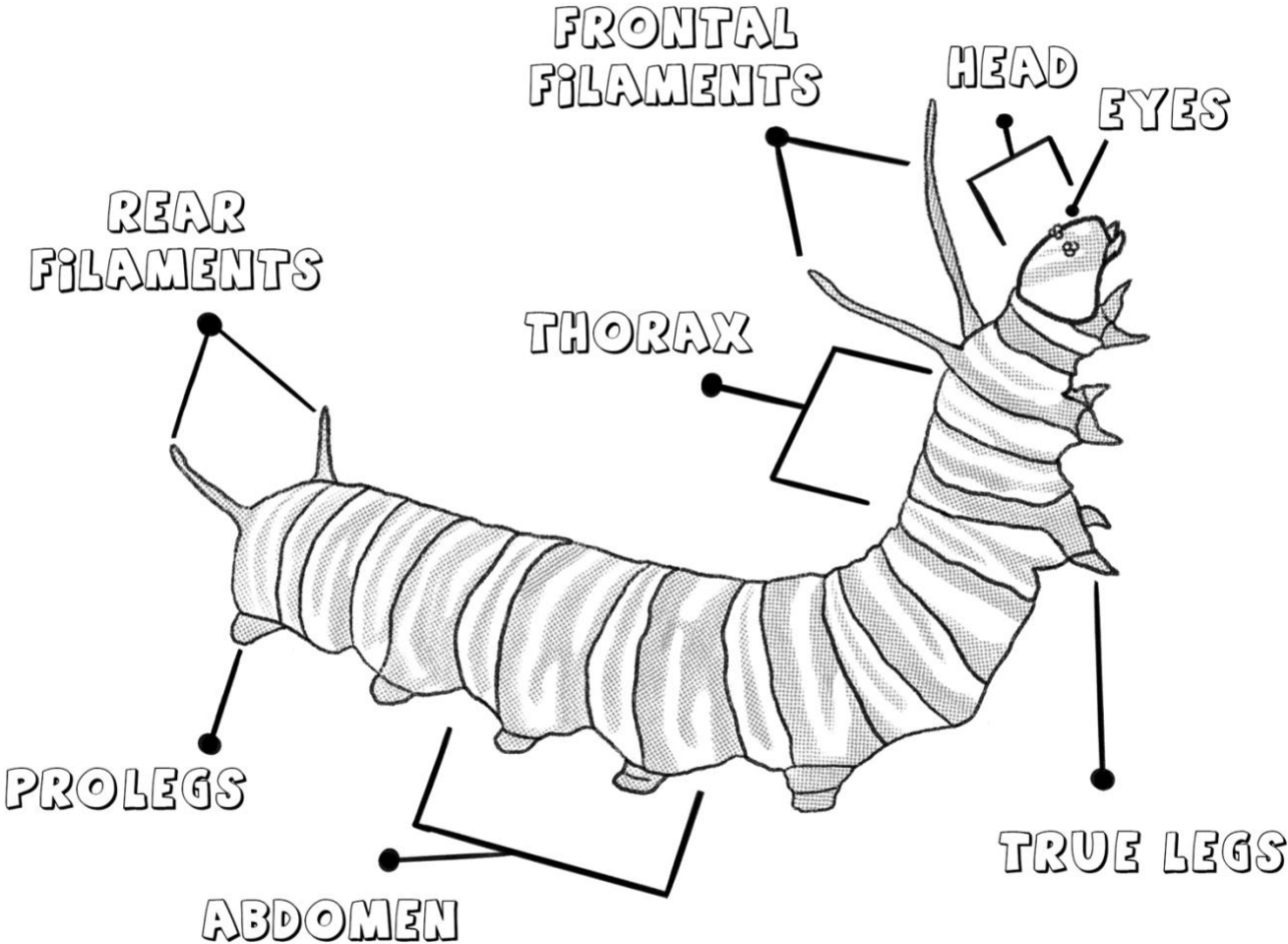
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