

# Resource 13

## *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

### Reading Guide

A little caterpillar is hungry! Each day he chooses different things to eat until he has a tummy ache! At the end of the story, something very magical happens to this hungry little creature.



*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle

#### Theme Link(s):

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These can best be utilized AFTER reading the story with your child.

**Nutrition** – All creatures from insects to humans need food to live and grow. Children can relate to the quest for food, and to eating too much! They can also compare the type of foods they eat to the ones the caterpillar chose.

\*If the child’s teacher will allow it, you might plan ahead and bring a nutritious snack to share, choosing one of the fruits eaten by the hungry caterpillar in the story. If this is allowed, keep the snack hidden until the end of the story, and offer the snack just before getting into the discussion of the story, which comes at the end of the session.

**Change** – Life is full of changes. For the hungry caterpillar, a dramatic change happens from egg, to caterpillar, to butterfly. Children can explore the mystery and magic of metamorphosis in many ways.

#### Purposes

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- Listens to stories read aloud.
- Demonstrates increasing levels of engagement.
- Responds to repetition and pattern and is eventually able to fill in words “... but he was still hungry,” which are repeated throughout the story.
- Demonstrates awareness of numbers and counting, (one, two, three...).
- Develops awareness of days of the week.
- Shows steady increase in number of words in listening vocabulary.
- Develops understanding of main events.

#### Read the Story

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Help children to identify setting and characters, as well as to track story events.

#### Suggested Vocabulary

Use these words during story time and throughout the day:

- **tiny**  
*something that is very small*
- **caterpillar**  
*looks like a small fuzzy worm with lots of legs*
- **cocoon**  
*a small house that a caterpillar makes to sleep and grow in*
- **hungry**  
*wanting or needing food*

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- **nibble**  
*to take small bites or eat something bit by bit*
- **butterfly**  
*a flying insect with brightly colored wings*

### Extending the Book

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- For children who are ready for the challenge, have them help you read the title of the book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Use your finger to underline the title, letter by letter and sound it out if necessary.
- Repeat multi-syllabic words (caterpillar, strawberries, watermelon) slowly and carefully, helping children to learn to say them.

### A Model for Reading

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Use the following to help you plan your book reading:

- “*The title of this book is The Very Hungry Caterpillar. The author of this book is Eric Carle.*”
- “*What’s this on the front cover of the book?*” (Point to the caterpillar – child responds)
- “*Yes, this is the very hungry caterpillar.*” Ask the child what he knows about caterpillars.
- “*At the beginning of the story you will see that the caterpillar isn’t even a caterpillar yet. He’s just an egg. Once he hatches and becomes a caterpillar, he’s very hungry and has to search for food. Let’s read to find out what he eats, and what happens to him.*”

#### (Read page one)

- Have the child find the moon and point to it. Have them do the same with the egg. Talk about how the egg is tiny, and discuss what the word tiny means. Ask the child if they were ever tiny

#### (Read page two)

- Have the child find the sun. Have them find the caterpillar. Have them make the “popping” sound with you to imitate the sound of the caterpillar coming out of the egg. Perhaps you might show them how to make a popping sound using their pointer finger and the corner of their mouth.

#### (Read page three and four)

- Have the child find the apple and put their finger in the hole. Ask them how the hole got there. (the caterpillar ate through the apple.) Ask if they like apples. Do they like sweet red ones, like this, or sour green ones, or both?

#### (Read page five)

- Have the child find the pears and put their finger in the hole. Ask if they have ever had pears and if they like them. Have the child count the pears. (two)

#### (Read page six)

- Read: “*On Wednesday he ate through three plums and*” (PAUSE)... allow the child to fill in the words “...but he still wasn’t hungry” if able. If he/she does not, say “*but guess what!?*” Fill in the words: “*...but he was still hungry*” as necessary. Have the child find the plums and put their finger in the hole. Have the child count the plums. (three).

#### (Read page seven)

- Try to get the child to say the words: “...but he was still hungry” on all successive pages. Have the child count the strawberries. (four) Ask the child if they know what day is coming next, after Thursday. (Friday)

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### (Read page eight)

- Before reading the page, ask the child if they can identify what the caterpillar ate on Friday? (oranges) Have them count the oranges first, perhaps by inserting their finger. Encourage them to count out loud (“one, two...”) Then read the page to confirm that the caterpillar did eat five oranges. Dramatize the fact that the caterpillar STILL wasn’t full by saying to the child *“Guess what!? He was STILL (roll your eyes as you say this) HUNGRY!”*

### (Read page nine)

- Have the child point to each successive food as you name it: cake, ice cream cone...slice of watermelon. After reading *“That night he had a stomachache!”* ask the child, *“Have YOU ever eaten so much food that you had a stomachache? What did you do?”* (allow child to respond and then say, *“Let’s see what the caterpillar did next.”*)

### (Read page ten)

- On Sunday the caterpillar eats one nice green leaf. Ask the child: *“Was the leaf like medicine that made the caterpillar feel better? Or was it just that he ate less on this day, and that’s why he felt better?”* You might tell the child that some animals eat grass or leaves when their stomachs are upset.

### (Read page eleven)

- After reading the page, ask the child if the caterpillar looks bigger and fatter to them.

### (Read page twelve)

- Talk to the child about the meaning of cocoon, if you haven’t already. Point out how different the caterpillar looks on page eleven compared to being in the cocoon on page twelve. Explain that the caterpillar is going to take a nap in the cocoon for two weeks and after reading the words *“Then he nibbled a hole in the cocoon and pushed his way out...”* ask the child if they know what is going to happen. If they don’t, tell them *“You won’t believe it but...”* and turn the page

### (Read page thirteen)

- *“He was a beautiful butterfly!”* Ask the child how the caterpillar has changed. Ask if they were surprised that a butterfly could come out of a cocoon like that. Can they see the caterpillar in the body of the butterfly? What still looks the same? What is different now? [Perhaps the child will identify the middle of the butterfly (thorax and abdomen) as resembling the shape of the caterpillar’s body, or see that both have antennae.]

## Prompt Discussion with Questions

- *“I brought you a snack today. It’s one of the fruits that the hungry caterpillar ate in the story. Can you guess which one it is?”* Allow child to look back in the book if necessary to refresh memory. Once fruit is identified, pass it out to be shared.
- Talk about the diet of the hungry caterpillar. Have the child recall as many of the foods that he ate as possible: apples, oranges, plums, pears, oranges, chocolate cake, ice cream, pickle, Swiss cheese, salami, lollipop, cherry pie, sausage, cupcake, and watermelon. Ask the child if he thinks caterpillars really eat these things. (If there is time to discuss, caterpillars mostly eat leaves, and are often considered pests because they eat so much of farmers’ crops. They really are very hungry!)
- *“Do you have caterpillars in your garden or yard at home?”* (child responds)
- *“Did you know that butterflies were once caterpillars?”* (child responds)
- *“Do you see butterflies where you live?”* (child responds)
- Relate the story to the child’s life. *“The caterpillar changed a lot in the story. How have you changed since you were little?”*
- *“Would it be fun to be a beautiful butterfly?”*

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### Reinforce Reading

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Ask the child to discuss with you the themes covered in the text (restated here, for your use).

**Nutrition** – All creatures from insects to humans need food to live and grow. Children can relate to the quest for food, and to eating too much! They can also compare the type of foods they eat to the ones the caterpillar chose.

**Change** – Life is full of changes. For the hungry caterpillar, a dramatic change happens from egg, to caterpillar, to butterfly. Children can explore the mystery and magic of metamorphosis in many ways.