

Let's talk about Houdini, The Amazing Caterpillar

By Janet Pedersen

This is the story of a caterpillar, named Houdini. And like the famous magician of the same name, Houdini the caterpillar makes his own magic. Houdini, the amazing caterpillar, captivates the audience (a classroom of children) with his magical transformation into a butterfly.



You will notice when you watch the video of Kathy signing the story that she does not sign every word in the book. Rather she tells the story in ASL in an engaging way so that children will be more interested. Research shows that telling a story in ASL is more interesting for a deaf child. And if the child enjoys the shared reading experience, she is more likely to want to keep doing it. With successive readings the child will gradually make reference to the English print and the variations in ASL and build their literacy skills. This is just what research with Deaf adults and their children in the Le Clerc Centre's Shared Reading Project tells us, "**Deaf readers expect the child to become literate.**" First and foremost, is to build an enjoyable shared reading experience with the expectation that literacy will follow.

Let's Be Together

Handshape Story

There are 5 basic features of each sign in ASL: handshape, location, movement, palm orientation and non-manual signals. If you change just one of these elements of the same sign, it changes the meaning. Here is a little game you can play with your child that focuses on handshape. Pick a handshape, whatever you like, let's take the 5 – claw handshape.



Now take turns with your child trying to think of all the signs you can with that handshape (the other elements of the sign will be different, but the handshape should be the same). Bear, lion, tree, farm... are signs with the same 5 – claw handshape. Can you think of any others. This is one way to make a rhyme in ASL. Maybe you can think of enough signs so that it makes a story!

Let's Play with Rhymes

Some ASL poetry involves taking on the role of a character. In this poem, you set the stage by showing the caterpillar inch across your arm then find a place to form its chrysalis. Then you take on the role of the caterpillar hanging from the branch.

Hold out a bent arm in front of you. This is the branch for the caterpillar to crawl on.

Caterpillar, caterpillar, caterpillar (*wiggle index finger on top of arm from wrist to elbow*)



Hanging from a branch (*move index finger under elbow then show chrysalis shape*)



You now become the caterpillar hanging from the branch ready to form your chrysalis.

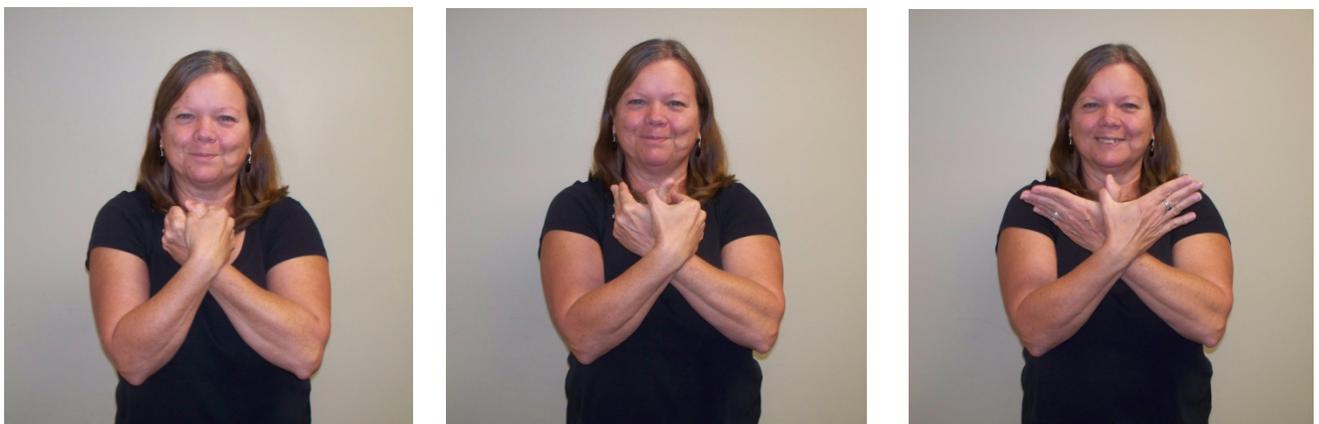
Wrapped in your chrysalis *(walk around in a circle wrap arms around self)*



Wake up butterfly *(shake body as if coming out of chrysalis)*



Fly, fly, butterfly. *(flap hands as if butterfly flying)*



Learning and Language

You will notice in this video storytelling that Kathy frequently uses 'classifiers' to represent the caterpillar and the children looking at it. She uses the 1 – handshape to represent the caterpillar and the 4 – handshape to represent the children's eyes looking at the caterpillar.

CL – 1



CL – 4



Classifiers are common handshapes that over time have come to represent different 'classes' or categories of things. They are used to provide more information about the thing you are talking about such as its movement, type, shape, size, or location. For example, Kathy uses CL – 4 to represent the 'movement' of the children's eyes toward the caterpillar in its cage or away from it to the other pets in the room.

Can you think of other ways you have seen these handshapes used as classifiers?

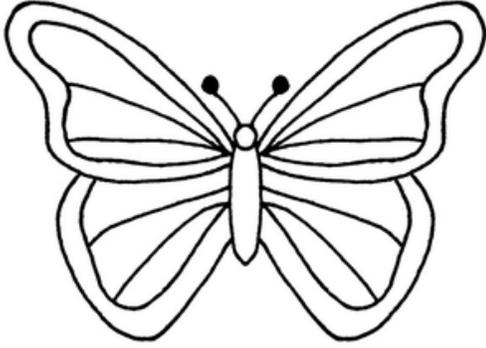
Let's Create

Life Cycle of a Butterfly Match

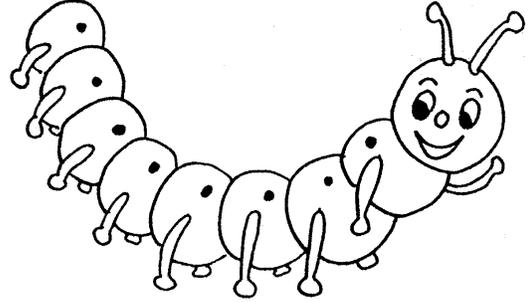
On the following pages you have the pictures and the ASL signs for the stages of a butterfly's life cycle. Have your child color the pictures and cut out both the pictures and the ASL signs. Now you can play a game with your child by trying to match the ASL sign with the picture. For younger children, you can leave the pictures face up. For older children, you can turn them over and try to make a match two at a time. Once you have all the pictures matched, ask your child to put them in order of what comes first, second,...



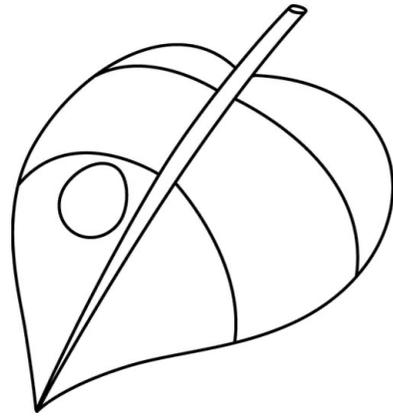
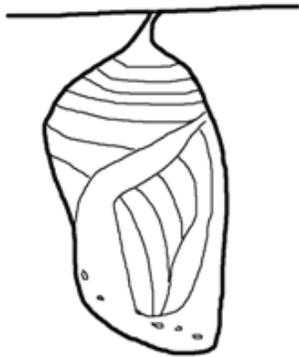
Life Cycle of a Butterfly



Butterfly



Caterpillar



Egg

Chrysalis

Life Cycle of a Butterfly in ASL



Butterfly



Caterpillar



Chrysalis



Egg