

Monarch Butterfly Migration  
**NewsDepth** October 23, 2008  
Classroom Activities and Resources  
Online Lesson Plans



**Overview:**

Birds aren't the only ones headed south for the winter. Monarch butterflies are known for an incredible mass migration that sends millions of them to California, Mexico and Florida each winter. The North American monarchs are the only butterflies that make such a massive journey. They must begin their journeys right now ahead of the cold weather so they can survive to return once again in the spring. Today's classroom activities and lessons will focus on the life cycle and profile of the monarch butterflies and "why's and how's" of their most fascinating migration treks.

**Grade Levels:** 3-4

**Subject Matter:** Science and Language Arts

**As a result of activities, all students will develop understanding of:**

- The characteristics of organisms
- Life cycles of organisms
- Organisms and environments



**Classroom Activities:**

**1. Activity #1** Short Discussion about Monarch Butterflies (15 to possibly 30 minutes)

- How many of you have seen monarch butterflies this past summer in your yard or while you are at play? Do you do anything in your yard to attract butterflies? What? Do any of you have butterfly feeders at home? Tell us about them.
- What makes a monarch butterfly different from other butterflies? Let's look at some information about them:  
<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/bugs/monarch-butterfly.html?nav=FEATURES> This is the National Geographic Kids Site which offers a printable factsheet and a short video clip about monarch butterflies.
- Have you seen any monarchs in the past couple of weeks? They are already heading south just like the birds.
- Let's explore where they go and why:  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/alienempire/voyagers.html> This PBS website offers a simple explanation of monarch migration accompanied by a video.

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/index.html> A Monarch Butterfly tracking site that offers additional information on the fall migration, the wintering in Mexico, live maps, and migration sightings.

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/images/graphics/monarch/sl/cycle/A01.html> a short slide show illustrating the migration process.

2. **Activity #2** Writing activity: My Migration Trip (1 class period or an overnight assignment)

- Assign students to write a short story about a migrating butterfly. Handout #1. This can be done as a classroom writing activity or an interactive family at home activity. If this is an interactive activity at home, perhaps a sibling or a parent can help by providing another illustration or some suggestions for what the butterfly might see along the way.

3. **Activity #3** Writing activity: Have students draw a picture of a Monarch Butterfly and write a diamante describing their butterfly. (30 – 40 minutes)

- Explain what a diamante is and give them some examples.

References for this activity:

<http://cuip.net/~adarice/cwsite/poems/diamonte.htm> A website describing the diamante and giving examples for your students.

<http://www.monarchwatch.org/gallery/photo/ad1.htm> A gallery of pictures to help provide writing ideas.

4. **Activity #4** A Monarch Butterfly Cyberhunt (15-30 minutes depending on computer speed and student skills)

- This Cyberhunt is entitled “Migrating Monarchs” and asks questions about monarchs and their migrating habits and provides the websites to help the students answer the questions.
- Students can be assigned partners or work in small groups.

4. **Activity #5** Discovering the life cycle of the Monarch (30 minutes)

- Since the students are discovering why and how monarch butterflies migrate, they may like to discover more about the life cycle of the beautiful butterflies.
- The following website offers, pictures, a slide show or actual video footage of the emerging monarch and follows it through the life cycle. Students can be asked to observe and ask questions as they view the pictures

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/monarch/ChrysalisEcloseClip1.html> A Monarch Butterfly is Born

[http://www.kidzone.ws/animals/monarch\\_butterfly.htm](http://www.kidzone.ws/animals/monarch_butterfly.htm) Kidzone’s graphically enhanced description of the life cycle of the monarch butterfly. (source for the picture in this lesson)

### **Additional Resources:**

<http://www.glorious-butterfly.com/elementary-lesson-plans.html> Elementary lesson plans about monarch butterflies.

<http://cte.jhu.edu/techacademy/fellows/Mass/webquest/ymindex.html> A class WebQuest about monarch butterflies.

<http://www.zoomwhales.com/subjects/butterfly/species/Monarch.shtml> A plethora of lessons, activities, handouts, and additional resources.

<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/monarch/indexCurrent.html> An extensive site offering monarch butterfly lessons and classroom activities.

<http://www.monarchlab.umn.edu/teacherresources/TipsforTeachers.htm> Monarchs in the classroom.

## **My Migration Trip**

Make believe you are a migrating monarch. Your trip begins in your own back yard. You soar as high as 10,000 feet for 6-8 hours a day. You are heading towards Mexico. Some days you travel 100 miles. It will take about 600 miles to reach your destination. What might you see along the way? Write a story about your journey. Give your tale a title and you can even give your butterfly a name.





## Diamante Butterfly Poem

### BUTTERFLY

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(subject)

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(two adjectives describing the subject)

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(three words ending in "ing" telling about the subject)

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(four words, the first two describe the subject the last two describe its opposite)

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(three words ending in "ing" telling about the opposite)

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(two adjectives describing the opposite)

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(opposite)