



ΣΤΑΥΡΑΚΑΚΗ ΜΑΛΑΜΑΤΕΝΙΑ

**Storytelling and drama activities with  
young EFL learners in Greek primary  
education**

Πανελλαδική Διαδικτυακή Δι-ημερίδα  
**Η διδασκαλία της Αγγλικής στην  
Πρώιμη Παιδική Ηλικία**  
28-29 Μαΐου 2021



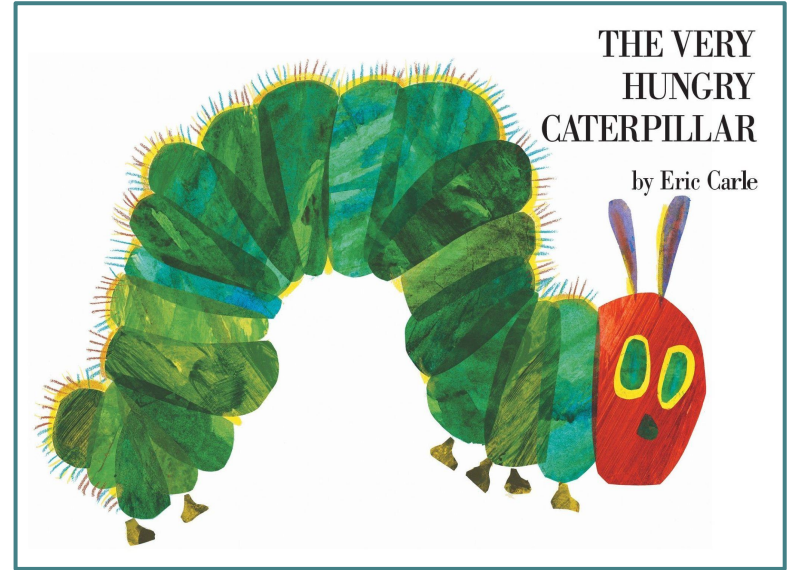
# Introduction

**First grade students are like newly hatched caterpillars...  
They are hungry for stories and drama.**

- The teaching activities have been based on Eric Carle's book 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'
- They are consistent with the guidelines included in the PEAP curriculum (Teaching English to Young Learners)
- The current teaching proposal was awarded the first prize for best teaching practices at the one-day seminar organised by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Greek Ministry of Education on April 29 2014

# The storyline of the selected book

The Very Hungry Caterpillar is a story about a small caterpillar who emerges from an egg and begins eating everything in sight, such as **fruit, sweets, and “junk” food. After six days**, it gets a stomach ache. On the **seventh day**, the caterpillar eats a “nice leaf” and feels much better. It builds a **cocoon** around itself and is finally transformed into a beautiful **butterfly**.



# Characteristics of young learners

**First grade students love to**

**P**articipate in diverse, multisensory

**L**earner-centred

**A**musing activities carefully designed for

**Y**oung children

# Objectives of the lesson

## Pedagogical:

- **to promote** positive attitude to English language and culture and also group/pairwork
- **to develop** thinking and social skills
- **to explore** the life-cycle of a butterfly
- **to discuss** healthy and unhealthy eating habits

## Linguistic:

- **to revise** vocabulary items and L2 structures
- **to introduce** new vocabulary items and structures
- **to develop** active listening and speaking skills

**Achieved through storytelling and drama**

# Pre-storytelling activities

## Main objectives

- to lower learners' anxiety
- to activate learners' content schemata
- to arouse their interest in the topic
- to prepare learners linguistically (pre-teach or revise vocabulary)
- to prepare learners physically

# Pre-storytelling activities

**Step 1:** TPR (Total Physical Response) routine chant to signal storytime

## **The words of the chant**

We're going to dance our fingers up

And dance our fingers down

We'll dance them side to side

Let's dance them all around

And we'll dance them on our shoulders

And we'll dance them on our heads

And we'll dance them on our tummies

And we'll put them all to bed! Shh!

# Pre-storytelling activities

**Step 2:** the class mascot, a hand puppet called Joe the kangaroo, 'comes' in with a mini butterfly net and 'sings' a popular 1777 English folk song using miming



## The lyrics of the song

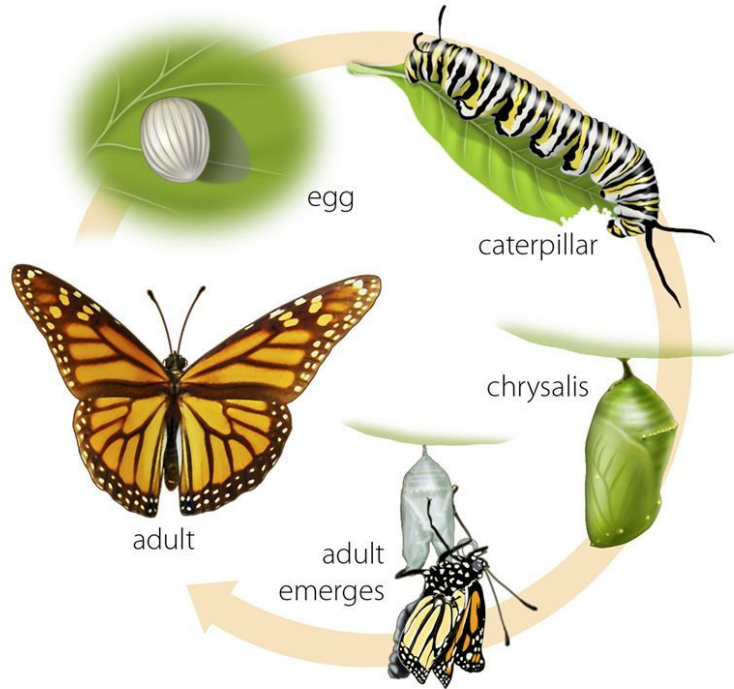
A-hunting we will go,  
A-hunting we will go  
We'll catch a fox and put him in a box  
And never let him go

**Note:** The highlighted words have been changed to: We'll catch a little butterfly and then we'll let it go



# Pre-storytelling activities

**Step 3:** discussion in L1 about the metamorphosis of a butterfly (reference to Greek word)



# Pre-storytelling activities

**Step 4:** young learners play the 'Happy tooth-Sad tooth' game and also make a craft (personalisation of knowledge is involved)



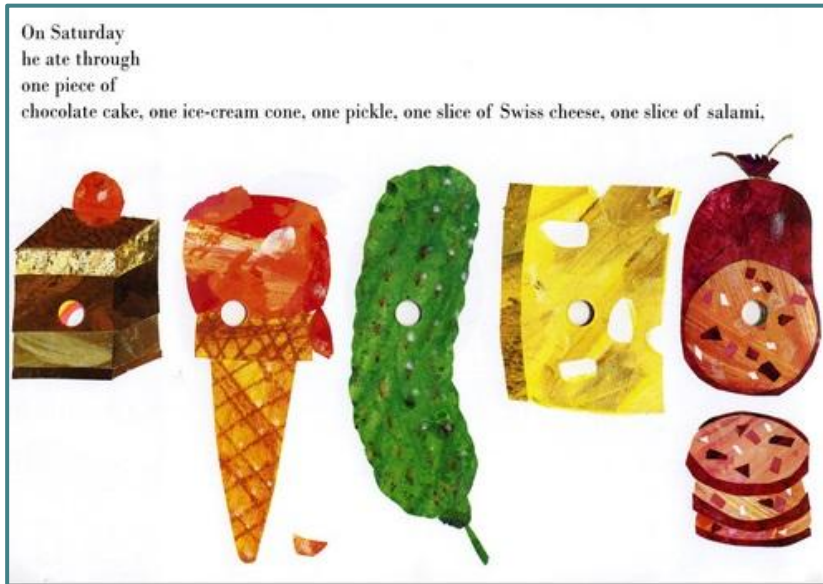
# While-storytelling activities

## Main objectives

- to develop learners' listening skills
- to promote L2 oral production (development of speaking skills)
- to involve learners in reconstruction of the story
- to encourage group interaction
- to “open a window to the world” for them

# While-storytelling activities

**Step 1:** the teacher reads the story using the authentic story book by Eric Carle pointing to pictures, using gestures and miming while actively engaging learners



He started to look for some food.

# While-storytelling activities

**Step 2:** during a second reading the caterpillar ‘crawls’ to students, who ‘feed’ it with mini food visuals (use of new and old vocabulary items by students)



# While-storytelling activities

**Step 3:** learners watch a YouTube video of the writer reading the board book



# Post-storytelling activities

## Main objectives

- to elicit reconstruction of the story
- to reinforce meaning through creativity and multisensory activities
- to create group solidarity by encouraging group interaction
- to further consolidate learning
- to provide further practice in speaking and listening skills

# Post-storytelling activities

**Step 1:** young learners watch the video of the song 'Fly, fly fly the butterfly' and subsequently learn the song and dance to it (TPR method, repetition)

## The lyrics of the song

Fly, fly, fly the butterfly

In the meadow it's flying high

In the garden it's flying low

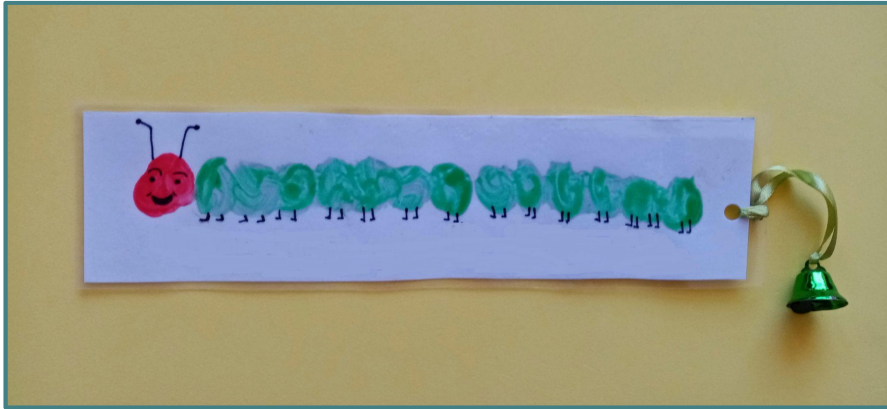
Fly, fly, fly the butterfly





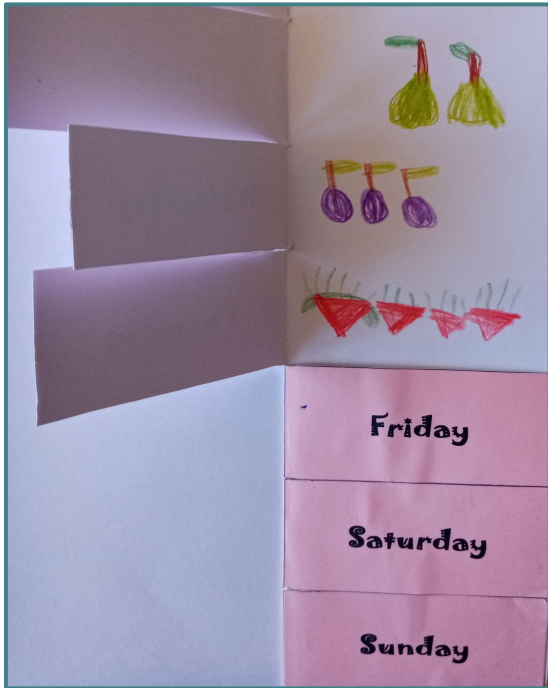
# Post-storytelling activities

**Step 2a:** students create caterpillar bookmarks and mini food visuals which they use to reconstruct the story



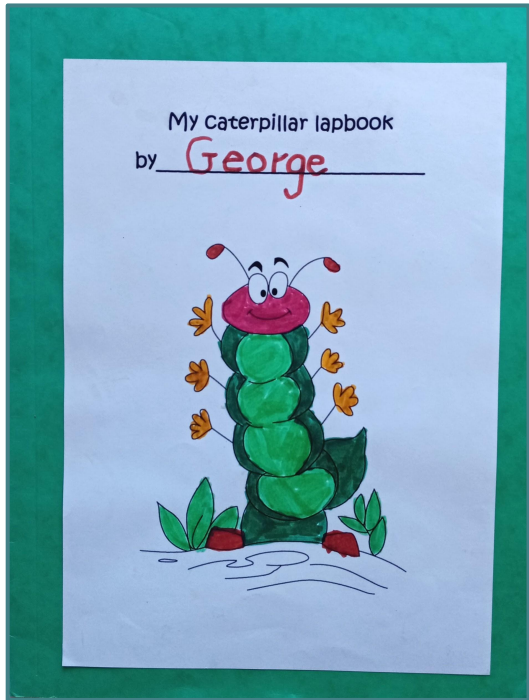
# Post-storytelling activities

**Step 2b:** learners make a craft of the caterpillar's weekly diet and the butterfly life cycle



# Post-storytelling activities

**Step 2c:** all crafts are arranged in students' personal caterpillar lapbooks



# Post-storytelling activities

**Step 3:** young learners watch the video of the song 'The Caterpillar Song'

A caterpillar crawled  
to the top of a tree.  
"I think I'll take a nap,"  
said he.



## The lyrics of the Caterpillar Song

A caterpillar crawled to the top of the tree  
"I think I'll take a nap," said he.  
Under a leaf he began to creep  
He spun a chrysalis and went to sleep.

Spring came along, shook him and said:  
Wake up, wake up, you sleepy head"  
Out of the leaf he spread his wings to fly,  
Look at me! Look at me! I'm a butterfly!

# Drama activities

Learners set up their own restaurant called 'Bonjour'



**Waiter:** Do you like pizza?

**Customer:** Yes, I do.

**Waiter:** Here you are!

**Customer:** Thank you!

# The play ‘The Butterfly Hunters’

## The language

- revision of language (PEAP learning material, A Grade)
- no new language input, no new songs or chants

## The plot

Groups of butterfly hunters arrive in a forest looking for butterflies. However, they only find newly hatched and very hungry caterpillars. They come back in a few weeks when the caterpillars have turned into butterflies. Will they be able to catch the cute, playful insects?

## The ‘award ceremony’

Caterpillar lapbooks are given to first grade students after the performance

# Conclusion

**S**timulate students' imagination and increase their attention span

**T**each learners a variety of skills

**O**pen a window to the world

**R**einforce group solidarity

**I**deally combined with **drama** activities

**E**nhance motivation and confidence in a

**S**tress free atmosphere **in the EFL classroom**

# Contact information



[teniastavrakaki@gmail.com](mailto:teniastavrakaki@gmail.com)



<https://blogs.sch.gr/teniastavrakaki/>



# References

Brewster, J., Ellis, G., & Girard, D. (2012). *The primary English teacher's guide*. Penguin English.

Carle, E. (2001). *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Board Book*. Puffin Books.

Celce-Murcia, M. (Ed.). (2001). *Language teaching approaches: Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. US: Heinle & Heinle.

Ellis, G., & Brewster, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Tell it again! the new storytelling handbook for primary teachers*. Penguin English.

Peap Teaching-Learning Materials, A Grade. Available at <http://rcel.enl.uoa.gr/peap/> (Accessed on 21/5/2021 )

Shin J.K. (2006) Ten Helpful Ideas for Teaching English to Young Learners. Number 2 Teaching Forum (Retrieved on 21/5/2021)

Tomlinson, C. A., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating differentiated instruction & understanding by design: Connecting content and kids*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

A-hunting we will go. Available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A-Hunting\\_We\\_Will\\_Go](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A-Hunting_We_Will_Go) (Accessed on 21/5/2021 )

Dance your fingers up. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clobiGT8V2A> (Accessed on 21/5/2021 )

Eric Carle reads [The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#). Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkYmvxPOAJI> (Accessed on 21/5/2021 )

Fly fly the butterfly. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jflZseWtmyI> (Accessed on 21/5/2021 )

The caterpillar song. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfX7tS5jdI8> (Accessed on 21/5/2021 )

Thank you!