

Deepening Understanding

YR4 Narrative Text

On Butterflies Wings by Laura Curtis



“Mamma! I think they’re nearly ready!” Maria smiled as she stood at the kitchen sink, gazing out at the lush, plump olives on the trees and the Tuscan mountains rising gently out of fields of hazy green. Maria had left the sink, drying her hands on a faded old tea towel - a priceless memory of her own childhood, and had walked over to the net.

“Si. I think you’re right. Well, we’d better go to the market. They love oranges you know.”

Yes, it would not be long now.

It had been a birthday gift. The little net with the sleeping cocoon. She could still remember the grin of delight that had lit up her daughter’s face. Her Nonna had sent it all the way from England, from a little butterfly park that they had once all visited. Maria felt her body tighten and her breath catch in her throat. The pain still cut deep after all these months. She still remembered the joy on Sofia’s face as she stood as still as a statue whilst a butterfly had landed on her shoulder.

Beaming, they had all watched as the tiny creature had gently flapped its wings open and closed, its delicate antennae twitching in the warm, tropical atmosphere of the butterfly house. Its wings had glimmered with an iridescent blue and green, beautiful in the soft glow of sunshine streaming through the glass overhead. And then it was gone, fluttering off to enjoy a feeding on a slice of orange. Sofia looked over at the photograph on the sideboard. Maria's and her Nonna's smiles radiated out of the image and they all knew how lucky they had been to snap that photo...the little butterfly was forever held with its wings aloft, perfectly poised ready to take flight. A second later and it had gone. And they had waited all these months to finally use the net and see if they could bring the gift of flight to another tiny but oh so important little creature.

The excitement had started when the caterpillars had arrived. Sofia jumped up and down, her eyes sparkling as Maria had teasingly eased off the lid of the little plastic cup. Sofia had peered inside and gasped as she saw five tiny blobs wriggling around happily. Together they had removed the cylindrical butterfly home from the box and let the soft net cascade down gently, Maria holding the fabric with a gentle sigh. It was ready. They had crossed the kitchen and had hung the butterfly home upon a little hook. They had decided that a little sunny spot next to the window but in the shade of an olive tree would be the perfect place for the caterpillars to grow.

Each day, for the next ten days, Sofia had studied the caterpillars intently, recording every detail in her precious book as the caterpillars had grown. "Mamma, I can't believe it. Look how big they are today!" Even Maria had to admit the transformation had been huge. Munching upon the food provided, they seemed to have expanded ten times their original size. As they had developed, they had simultaneously spun an ethereal cloak of silk thread about themselves. They were beautiful little things to look at.



It seemed to happen all of a sudden. One day they were wriggling around on plump tummies, the next they were hanging upside down. "Wow, Mamma, look! The cocoons are getting harder!" Both Maria and Sofia had peered into the net and squinted their eyes to get a closer look.

"Yes, I think you're right. They're also called chrysalides you know baby..." Sofia had elbowed her Mamma, gazing up with feigned annoyance. She didn't like to be called by her toddler nickname anymore. Then there was quiet as they had both looked into each other's eyes and smiled before turning back to the cocoons hanging so peacefully.

"The magic has started to happen hasn't it Mamma?" Sofia said quietly, hugging her Mamma tighter.

"A few more days, baby, a few more days..."

A week later, the moment had arrived. They had almost missed it, having gone to fetch some oranges for when the butterflies were born. As usual, Sofia had dashed over to the net but this time, instead of chatting madly with anticipation, she had stopped in silence. Then whispered, "Mamma. It's time. Do you think we should help them?" Should we cut open the cocoons for them? Sofia watched her Mamma deep in thought. Her reply gave her a lesson she would never forget.

"If you cut a cocoon when the butterfly is trying to get out of its cocoon, it actually dies. The way it develops is through the struggle of breaking free. The struggle forces blood into the wings so then they can flutter. We can't protect it. It needs the struggle to be able to fly. Look. Their fighting spirit will help them." And so they watched in wonder as one by one, the little butterflies squeezed and fought their way out.

Maria watched as the final, smallest cocoon began to split open. As the beautiful butterfly unfurled itself, growing stronger and stronger with each beat of its wings, she gazed over at the photo of her Mamma and smiled. Finally, after all these months, she was free.

