

Science Skills

Monarch Observation



Introduction

What can we notice about a monarch specimen by writing and drawing?

Recommended Age

Elementary

Time Needed

15 minutes

Materials

Paper, pencil, crayons, monarch image

Field Connections

Scientists start every investigation by making careful observations. Whether studying dinosaurs or ancient Egypt, the first step to gather information is taking a close look at specimens and artifacts.

Learning Objective

What will we learn and do to practice science skills?

Learners will make observations through writing and drawing to experience what real scientists do as they gather information and begin an investigation.

Activity

Engage – Wow! This is cool!

- Observe the butterfly image. Notice what you see. Do you see colors? Body parts? Patterns?
- Do parts of the animal look familiar to you?
- Where have you seen similar creatures before?

Explore – What can I find out?

- Fold a piece of paper in half (like a hamburger).
- In the top half, write down as many words as you can to describe what you see. Adjectives tell us about color, size and shape.
- When you're finished, use your pencil or crayons to draw what you see on the bottom half of the paper.
- Look closely and only draw what is REALLY there.
- Take as long as you need to complete your monarch illustration.
- When you're finished drawing, go back to the top of the page and reread your list of adjectives.
- What words would you add now that you have completed your drawing?

Activate – How can I show what I've learned?

- What did it feel like to write a description of the monarch?
- What did it feel like to draw the monarch?
- Did you observe more about the monarch when you wrote about it or when you drew it?

- Which experience did you enjoy more? Why?
- Share the science! Ask someone at home what they know about monarchs. Share something you noticed about monarchs during this activity.

Adaptations

How can we simplify this activity?

- Provide a word bank for learners who need vocabulary support. Include words such as pattern, spots, color, short, long, wings, antenna and legs.
- Have learners observe and draw a portion of the monarch rather than the entire animal.

How can we make this activity more challenging?

- Ask learners to make inferences based on their observations. These might include thinking about food, shelter, predators, migration and reproduction.

How can we dive deeper?

- Visit our blog [Monarch Butterflies 101](#).
- Check out our field guide: [Creating Monarch Habitat in your Midwestern Garden](#).