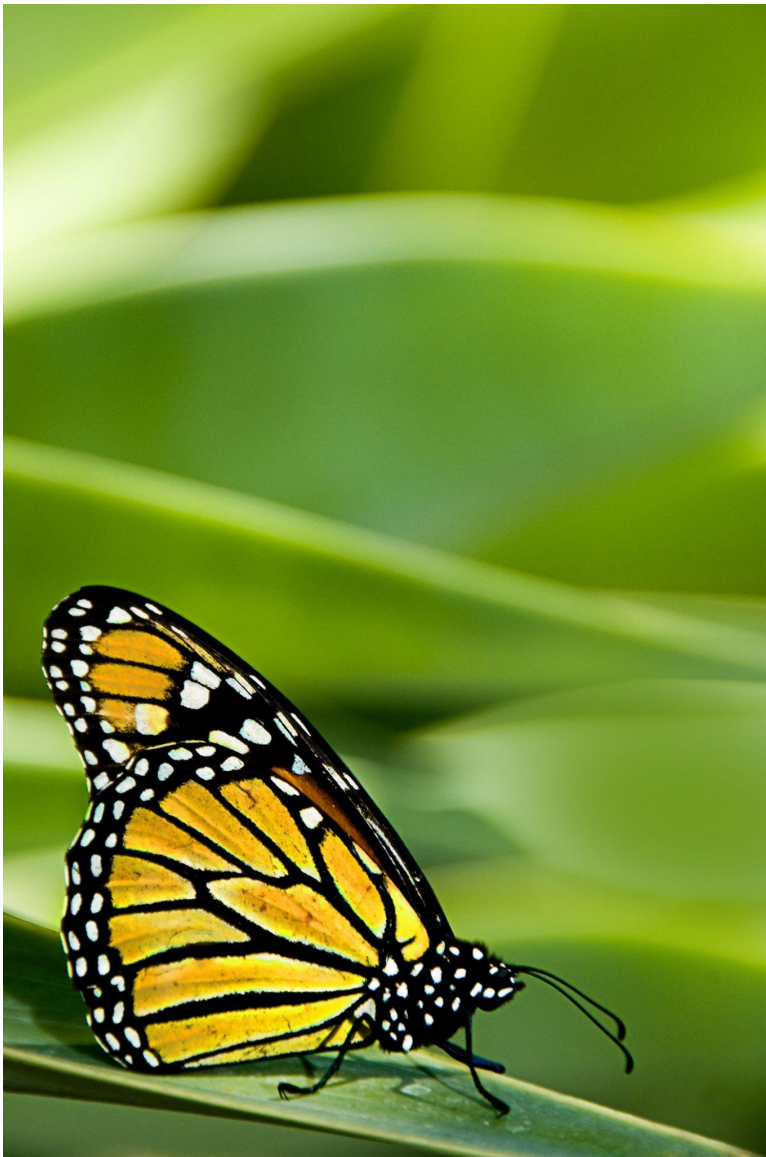


Art + Science: GRADES 3–6

Monarch Butterfly Migration



INTRODUCTION:

The natural world has been a source of inspiration for artists since the beginning of time. Artists source inspiration from the forms, textures, and patterns found in nature. They even use natural materials to create paint and construct artworks. It's no surprise, then, that many contemporary artists are concerned with climate change and humankind's effect on our planet.

This lesson plan explores how one artist has responded to climate change by studying the migration patterns of monarch butterflies.

Using Visual Thinking Strategies, research questions, writing prompts, and our own creativity, we will explore how one idea was transformed into a work of art!

CASE STUDY: DIANA THATER

Untitled (Butterfly video wall #1)

To start learning about this piece, [watch a short video of a similar work](#) here.

Diana Thater, *Untitled (Butterfly video wall #1)*, 2008. 6 monitors, DVD player, synchronizer, lighting element and orange gel. SBMA, Museum purchase, the Suzette Morton Davidson Art Acquisition Endowment Fund. © Diana Thater.



ABOUT THE ARTWORK:

Diana Thater (United States, b. 1962) has said about her art: “I create sculpture with images of nature in space.” She often uses the video monitor as both a way to project images and as a sculptural object.

For this project, Thater was invited by three curators in Mexico City to make an artwork that would draw attention to the threats of the monarch butterfly’s winter home in Michoacán, Mexico. After researching and filming the butterfly’s migration patterns and threat to its environment, Thater created a configuration of six video screens on a gallery floor that play constantly moving images of majestic monarch butterflies after their annual migration to Mexico from the United States. The monitor's placement reflects the position of the butterflies upon Thater's arrival in Mexico—thriving on the forest floor because of the increasing lack of forest foliage where they normally take refuge. This video raises questions about the threat to the migration of monarch butterflies and their natural habitats.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What do you see? Where is your eye drawn to? What do you wonder about?

How does the artwork make you feel? What mood does it give off?

What kind of story does the artwork tell?

How is the artist addressing climate change in this piece?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS: MONARCH BUTTERFLY MIGRATION

- Research the migration patterns of the monarch butterfly. Where do they begin? Where do they end? How long does the migration take? (Tip! [The Monarch Joint Venture website](#) is a great resource to learn more.)
- What is the life cycle of a monarch butterfly? Draw a sketch of the stages.
- What are some of the environmental factors that are negatively contributing to their loss of habitat? What steps could be made to improve this?
- For Santa Barbara County-based students: Research some of the butterfly groves in the region. Where are they? When is the best time to visit?

WRITING PROMPT: HAIKU

- A haiku is a poem consisting of only three lines and is made up of a five-seven-five syllable structure, totaling seventeen syllables. Punctuation and capitalization are up to the poet, and need not follow rigid rules used in structuring sentences.
- Haikus often feature an image, or a pair of images, meant to depict the essence of a specific moment in time, like a snapshot.
- Write an haiku dedicated to the monarch butterfly. It could be about the color of the butterfly, how the butterfly makes you feel, or even what it might symbolize.

ART ACTIVITY: DRAWING CLOSE-UP

- Diana Thater chose to film the butterflies she observed in Mexico close-up, capturing detailed images of their wings fluttering in space.
- Using a sheet of paper, draw a butterfly wing up close. Focus on the lines, patterns, and colors that you see. You may choose to use oil pastels, paint, or even collaged paper.
- You can also use the attached sheet to color your butterfly wing and then write your haiku alongside it!