

LESSON PLAN | BEGINNING LEVEL

Grades: Lower elementary (K–2), upper elementary (3–5)
 Subjects: Science and visual arts
 Time required: 2–3 class periods

Lesson Overview

Students observe live **insects** and examine insects depicted in a seventeenth-century drawing. They identify the three characteristics of an adult insect: a three-part body (**head**, **thorax**, and **abdomen**), six legs, and **antennae**. They collect and draw live insects, incorporating a variety of **shapes** and **lines**.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Use observation and prior knowledge to describe characteristics shared by all insects.
- Describe and identify insects in a seventeenth-century drawing.
- Draw an insect from close observation, using a variety of shapes and lines.

Materials

- Reproduction of *Butterfly, Caterpillar, Moth, Insects, and Currants* (p. 7)
- Information about the featured work of art and Questions for Teaching (pp. 20–21)
- Clear containers with lids with small pinholes poked in the top
- Paper, pencils, and colored pencils
- Art activity: “Drawing Insects with Organic Shapes and Lines,” www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/tips_tools/downloads/drawing_insects.pdf

Lesson Steps

1. Display *Butterfly, Caterpillar, Moth, Insects, and Currants* by Jan van Kessel or hand out reproductions. Tell students to look closely at the drawing and share their initial observations. Then ask students the following:
 - What do you see in this drawing?
 - What types of lines do you see?
 - What types of shapes?
 - Where do you see similar lines or shapes?
 - Which objects or insects are similar to each other?
2. Inform students that before **photography**, scientists had to rely on drawings of natural **specimens** to study insects, and artists were often called upon to make these drawings. **Entomological** still-life painting became an important **genre** in Europe. Tell students to use their prior knowledge to identify the different insects they see in the drawing. Chart the names of the different insects that can be seen in the drawing.
3. Ask students for a definition of an insect and chart the responses. Select from this list the three universal characteristics of an adult insect: a three-part body (head, thorax, and abdomen), six legs, and antennae.
4. Return to the drawing and ask, “Which of these bugs do not have the three characteristics of adult insects?” Focus on the caterpillar and ask students what they know about caterpillars. Chart responses. Explain that caterpillars are larvae for butterflies and moths. Have students identify which of the insects were once caterpillars (moth and butterfly). Explain that some insects have wings that cover their bodies (such as the fly and ladybug), but that they have the same three parts to their bodies as the other insects.
5. Have students collect insects from the schoolyard in clear containers and cover them with lids that have been poked with pinholes. Hand out paper and art supplies. Have students draw their insects, making sure to identify the three characteristics outlined above. Remind students of the lines and shapes they found when discussing the drawing by Jan van Kessel (e.g., ovals for the head and thorax, thin lines for the legs). Encourage students to draw their insects using a variety of lines and shapes. You may wish to view the art activity “Drawing Insects with Organic Shapes and Lines” on the Getty website.
6. Release the insects back to the area in which they were found.