

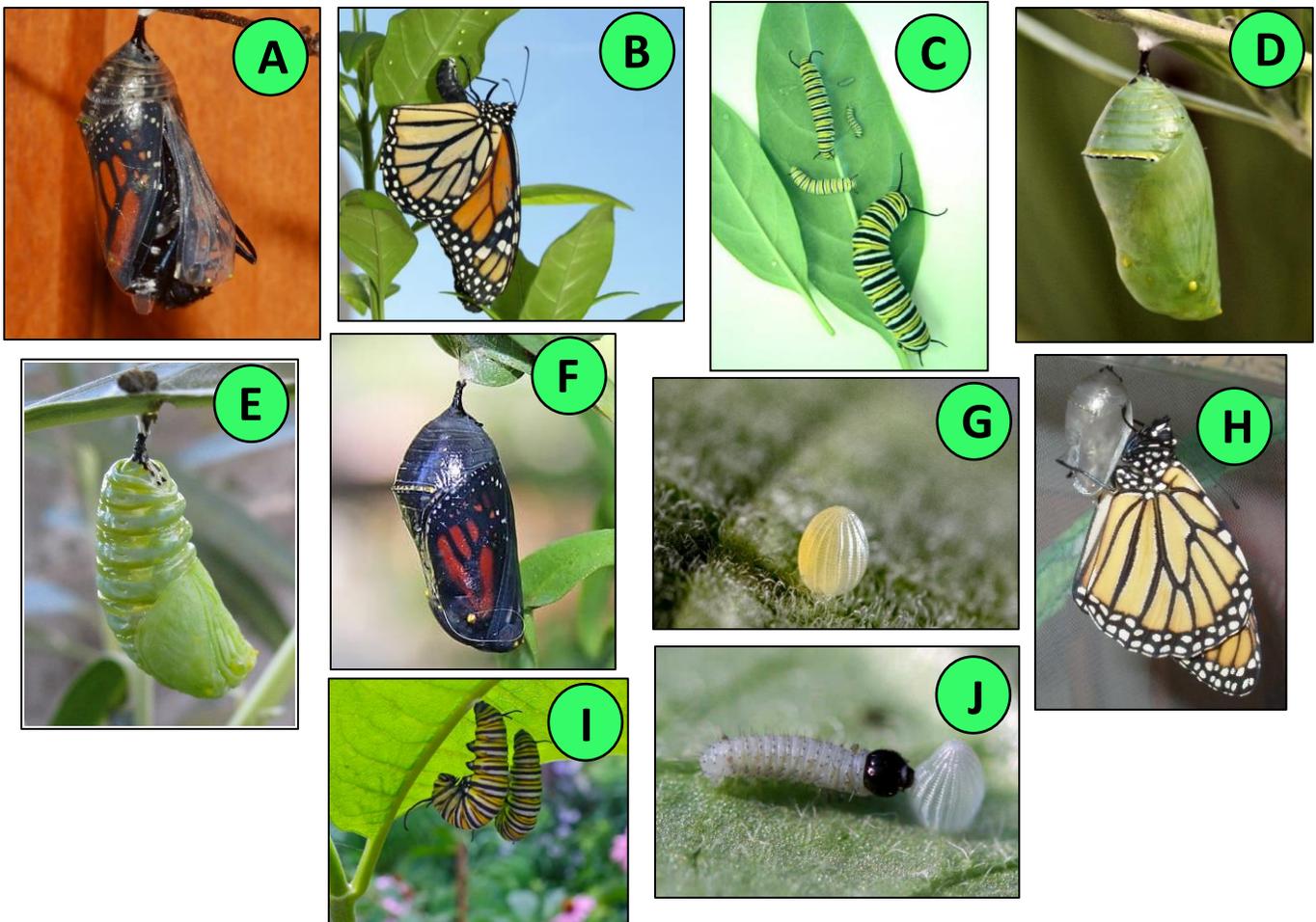
Virtual Monarch and Meadow Month Lesson: Monarch Butterfly Life Cycle

In this lesson, participants will learn how to differentiate the stages of a monarch butterfly's life cycle.

Butterflies are the symbol of new beginnings because of their incredible metamorphosis from a worm-like caterpillar to a flying adult, but there is so much more to their life cycle than that one change! 4-5 days after a female monarch lays her egg on the bottom of a milkweed plant leaf, a caterpillar about the size of a poppy seed hatches and immediately starts life by eating its egg's shell. It then spends the next 2 weeks of its life doing nothing but eating milkweed and growing increasingly larger by shedding its skin 5 times (called *instars*). Once in its final instar stage, the caterpillar searches for a spot beneath an overhang - usually below a milkweed leaf, but a fence post or even the siding of your house will do! – and it attaches it's rear end to the surface with a button of silk similar to that of a spider and then hangs upside down from the silk in a 'J' shape. Over the next few hours it sheds its final skin to reveal a bright green chrysalis beneath! This then hardens and the caterpillar spends another 12-16 days metamorphosing inside this chrysalis. Finally, the green chrysalis becomes transparent, revealing the adult butterfly's colors, and it emerges! After hanging from its empty chrysalis for a few hours and letting its wings dry and fill with fluid from inside its body, the butterfly is ready to fly away and find some flowers to snack on.

Watch this video [incredible time lapse of a caterpillar metamorphosing](#) and put the images of the monarch butterfly's life cycle in the correct order! Flip this page upside down for the answer key.

1. ____ 2. ____ 3. ____ 4. ____ 5. ____ 6. ____ 7. ____ 8. ____ 9. ____ 10. ____



1. B 2. G 3. J 4. C 5. I 6. E 7. D 8. F 9. A 10. H

1. An adult laying eggs



2. An egg



3. A hatched egg – 1st instar caterpillar



4. Growing caterpillars – instars 1 through 5



5. In 'J' – preparing for metamorphosis



6. Freshly formed chrysalis



7. Hardened chrysalis



8. Almost ready to emerge as a butterfly



9. Finally emerging



10. Emerged and ready to eat

