

THE MANTIS PARABLE

Directed by Josh Staub (USA/ 8"/ 2005)

This film tells the tale of a caterpillar trapped in a collector's jar and in need of help. The animation style includes realistic objects combined with animated characters. Piano music adds a haunting soundtrack to the imprisoned caterpillar, who climbs up a branch, only to fall down, over and over again. The realistic butterflies displayed on the wall demonstrate a frightening fate for the caterpillar's future. After all, caterpillars grow into butterflies. When a praying mantis flies into the room through an open window, the caterpillar asks for help. In this story without words, the mantis turns its back on the caterpillar.

Later, the mantis becomes trapped in the same room, imprisoned a jar that has a lid screwed tightly to the top. The collector's displays, shown again on the wall, threaten a terrible future for the mantis. But when a butterfly enters the room through an open window, the mantis asks for help.

The butterfly helps free the mantis, in spite of the fact that the mantis refused to help the trapped caterpillar. In fact, the helpful butterfly just might be the same caterpillar who would have been able to fly out of the jar after growing into a butterfly. With the help of flying insects, who are able to unscrew the lid, the butterfly is able to save the mantis.

Questions for "FILM TALK!"

- What do you know about insects—and how can you find out more?
- How do you know what happens in this film that has no words?
- What is the setting of the film?
- What do you think the filmmaker is showing about the person whose room this is?
- What do you know about how an animated film is made, and how can you find out more?
- How does the filmmaker use music to add to the story?
- In what ways do the caterpillar and mantis show human characteristics?
- What do you think happens in the end of this film?
- What do you think is the lesson, the message of this parable?

ACTIVITIES AFTER-VIEWING

ACTIVITY 1 *Plot—The Plan of Actions*

Discuss the plot, the sequence of events, with the children. (See the description above.) Ask how they know what happens in this story without words.

One way to identify the sequence of events in a short film is to ask children to recall and draw shots they remember from: the beginning, the middle, and the end of the film. A presentation of their pictures will remind viewers of the many shots in the film, and the order in which they appear. Ask children to use the Activity Sheet to record their ideas – drawing pictures and, for those who can, describing events in words.

What's THAT Word?

- Look for it in the film:**
- butterfly
 - caterpillar
 - mantis
 - parable

THE MANTIS PARABLE

3 SHOTS I REMEMBER FROM THE MANTIS PARABLE

continued on next page

The Beginning



We see the jar in the room.
Dead insects are pinned.

The Middle



The caterpillar asks the mantis
for help. The mantis turns away.

The End



The butterfly returns with flying
insects that free the mantis.

continued from previous page

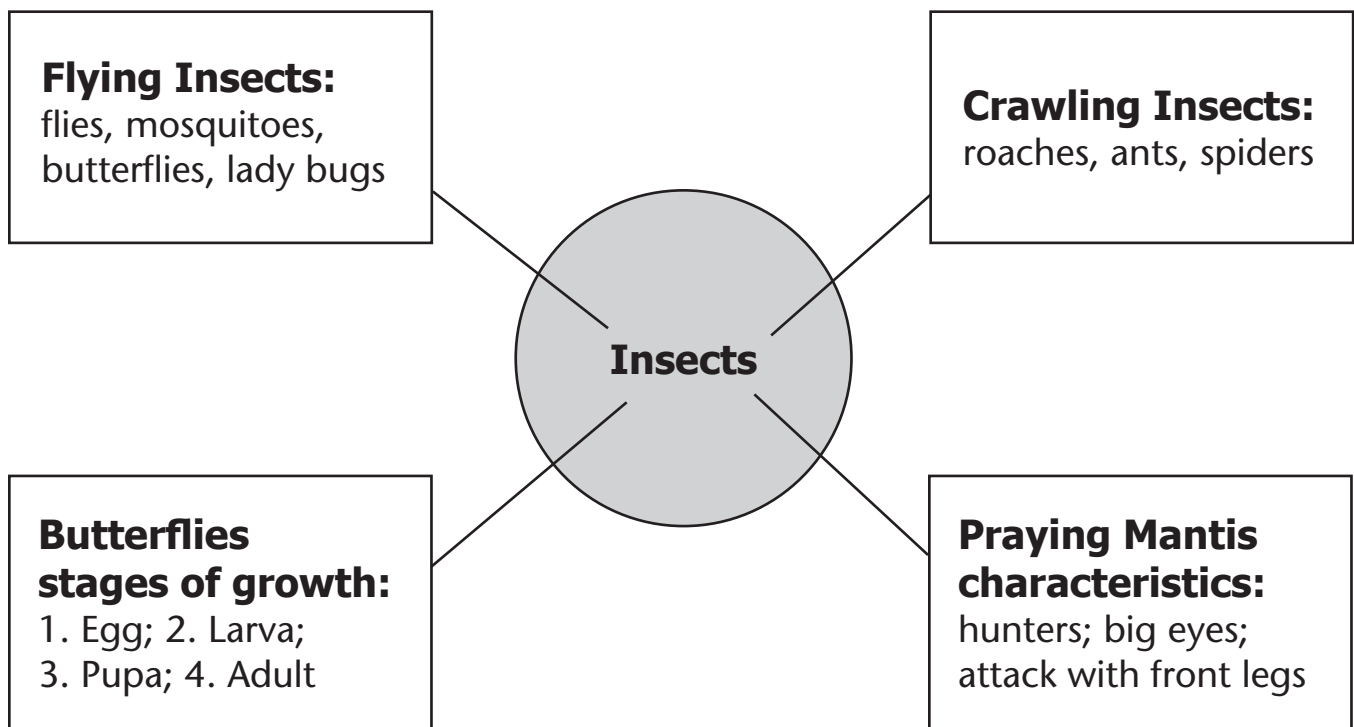
ACTIVITY 2 *Types of Insects*

Discuss insects with the children. What do they know about insects? Insects are members of the class Insecta, the largest and most diverse “class” in the animal kingdom.

Here’s some information about the two insects featured in the film:

Butterflies are insects that fly. Like many insects, butterflies have: 6 jointed legs, 2 antennae, compound eyes, an exoskeleton and 3 body parts: the head, the thorax (the chest), and the abdomen (the tail end). The Praying Mantis is a hunter, using its front legs to attack its prey—they are known to attack butterflies!

Help children understand different types of insects by asking them to identify insects they know. They can use the Activity Sheet to record their ideas on a Web.



.....

FIND OUT MORE!

Investigate with research

- The animation process
- Insects, especially butterflies, caterpillars, and the praying mantis

RELATED VIDEOS

Bugs Don't Bug Us!

A Caterpillar's Wish

Creepy Critters: Professor Iris

National Geographic Kids: Creepy Creatures

Your Name _____

Draw pictures from the film in order.

1. From the BEGINNING of the Film:



2. From the MIDDLE of the Film:



3. From the END of the Film:



Write words to explain the pictures you have drawn in order.

1. From the BEGINNING of the Film:

2. From the MIDDLE of the Film:

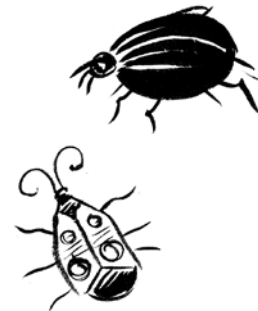
3. From the END of the Film:

Your Name _____

Write (or Draw) a Web of Ideas about this Main Idea: INSECTS
Explain parts of the main idea by writing or drawing in the 4 boxes.

1. Flying Insects

2. Crawling Insects



3. About Butterflies

3. About the Praying Mantis



Dear Family Members,

Today, your child attended the “Best of the Fest Film Festival”! While the films are great, you should know that the program was put together by experts in child development. We’re sending you a film description so you can talk about the film with your child. It is important to help children understand film and media. The most important person who will help them to understand the messages of media are parents and guardians. We’re including an activity sheet so you can continue film activities with your child. Adapt the activities for your child. All they need is a pencil and paper. *Enjoy!*

ACTIVITY 1

Ask your child to tell you about the film, *The Mantis Parable*

- What did they like best about the film?
- Why do they think the film was picked to be in the film festival?

ACTIVITY 2

Read the description of the story, below, to your child.

As you read, ask your child to explain how the different parts of the story looked in the film.

THE MANTIS PARABLE

Directed by Josh Staub (USA/ 8”/ 2005)

This film tells the tale of a caterpillar trapped in a collector’s jar and in need of help. The animation style includes realistic objects combined with animated characters. Piano music adds a haunting soundtrack to the imprisoned caterpillar, who climbs up a branch, only to fall down, over and over again. The realistic butterflies displayed on the wall demonstrate a frightening fate for the caterpillar’s future. After all, caterpillars grow into butterflies. When a praying mantis flies into the room through an open window, the caterpillar asks for help. In this story without words, the mantis turns its back on the caterpillar.

Later, the mantis becomes trapped in the same room, imprisoned a jar that has a lid screwed tightly to the top. The collector’s displays, shown again on the wall, threaten a terrible future for the mantis. But when a butterfly enters the room through an open window, the mantis asks for help.

The butterfly helps free the mantis, in spite of the fact that the mantis refused to help the trapped caterpillar. In fact, the helpful butterfly just might be the same caterpillar who would have been able to fly out of the jar after growing into a butterfly. With the help of flying insects, who are able to unscrew the lid, the butterfly is able to save the mantis.

ACTIVITY 3

After reading the film story description, be sure to ask your child the more important questions about the film.

- Why do they think it was made? and
- How do they think the filmmaker made it?

Here are some sample questions to ask:

- WHY do you think the filmmaker made this film?
 - What IDEAS was the filmmaker trying to SHOW?
 - Do you think the filmmaker had a MESSAGE or LESSON or THEME?
- HOW did the filmmaker show his ideas?
 - HOW did he use VISUAL PICTURES and SOUND to tell the story?

ACTIVITY *Films about insects*

Discuss insects and their different characteristics – some crawl, some fly, some are in the air, on the ground or in the water. Ask your child to imagine their own story about an insect. Ask them to draw and describe an action from the beginning, the middle and the end of their story. Here are some examples:

- A spider who weaves (He weaves cloth — not a web!)
- A fly who is a pilot (She flies airplanes!)

A film about a caterpillar who sells shoes – (He has so many feet!)



*Caterpillars had no shoes!
So they stubbed their toes!*



*Juan began selling shoes –
3 pairs for the price of one!*



*He also sold training
wheels for insects!___*



My Film About an Insect: _____

In the beginning:

In the middle:

In the end:
