

The Miracle of a Butterfly

Betty Lowery

Paul Lowery

Dorrance Publishing

(34pp)

978-1-63661-396-3

The instructive picture book The Miracle of a Butterfly is direct in illustrating the life cycle of a butterfly.

Betty Lowery and Paul Lowery's *The Miracle of a Butterfly* is a picture book about the beauty and life cycle of the butterfly.

A happy butterfly details its metamorphosis, from its time as a caterpillar into its chrysalis and its emergence as a butterfly. It describes the characteristics of each stage of its development: it notes the threat of predators while climbing a tree to make its chrysalis; it mentions that it tastes flowers with its feet to know where to lay its eggs.

The story is told via fanciful rhymes:

*In a few days, my egg hatched,
And my life was on its way!
I was a handsome caterpillar
I ate leaves and grew all day!*

However, some of its rhyming words, including "see" and "me," are repeated too often. And though the book is short, its ABCB pattern still makes it somewhat monotonous.

Preferencing information over tension, the narrative is also straightforward and plain. The butterfly faces no real challenges as it progresses through its life cycle, including when it's getting up the tree and avoiding predators. The stages of its life are treated as rote; facts are delivered and pronouncements about the butterfly's beauty are thrown in, but there's no real sense of awe.

In the illustrations, the butterfly's black-and-yellow-striped wings carry a hint of blue iridescence, evoking the beauty of real monarch butterflies. However, the book's backgrounds and secondary characters are rendered in an overly simple way, with weak shading and textures. The images are often dimensionless and oversaturated, and the use of many similar colors has a numbing effect. Green plants appear against a blue sky; the images remain much the same from one page to the next. When the sky changes to a pinkish-orange sunset, it is a welcome but momentary shift.

Further, other creatures are rendered in startling ways, including a predatory bird and a companionable bee with foolish expressions. And not all of the illustrations complement the text itself: on one page, the caterpillar declares, "I was very hard to see!" and mentions being camouflaged among the leaves; the adjoining illustration shows the caterpillar without the benefit of camouflage.

Though it is short on surprises, the instructive picture book *The Miracle of a Butterfly* does an able job of illustrating the life cycle of a butterfly.

ALEENA ORTIZ (June 1, 2023)

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