CATERPILLAR ANATOMY

Monarch caterpillar

(Danaus Plexippus)

"milkweed butterfly"

[card]

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Monarch Caterpillar

spiracles

front filaments

prolegs

mandibles

true legs

head

rear filaments

@jessicalauver

Monarch Caterpillar Anatomy

The monarch butterfly has 4 stages from egg to butterfly. Depending on the climate the process of completing the stages can take place in as little as one month's time! When in the caterpillar stage it is also called *"larva".*

The caterpillar has **front** and **rear filaments** or *"tentacles"* which are often confused with antennae. Not all caterpillars will have these filaments. There are also caterpillars which do have these filaments but they do not show them at all times. These **filaments** allow the caterpillar to feel and sense its surroundings.

On the caterpillar's head you will see two small **antennae** located just outside its **mandible** or its *"jaw"*. The caterpillar has **six eyes** but they can only see light and dark so they rely on their filaments to guide them. In addition to multiple eyes the caterpillar also has multiple legs. To start with, it has three sets of **true legs** also called *"thoracic legs"* because they are located on its **thorax**. These legs have claws for gripping. Travel down the **thorax** and along the **abdomen** and you will find **spiracles** which are *pores* or *"holes"* that the caterpillar breathes through. Along the bottom of the caterpillar you will see another 5 sets of **prolegs** which are great for helping the caterpillar to climb and hang onto leaves!

After hatching from the **egg** on the milkweed leaf this caterpillar will spend 10-14 days as a caterpillar. During this time it will grow and feast on the milkweed leaves (which make this particular caterpillar poisonous to eat) before it starts *"molting"* to the next stage where it will form its **chrysalis** *(pupa stage).*

The *pupa* stage is a fascinating stage as well, but that is a study for another day. The **pupa** or *"chrysalis"* stage will last another 10-14 days at the close of which the **adult monarch butterfly** will emerge!