

EDUCATIONAL APPLICATIONS

the **BLUE**
BUTTERFLY

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Educational Applications Inspired by the Film

“The Blue Butterfly”

by Léa Pool



The Film

The Blue Butterfly is an ode to life, at its most beautiful and terrifying, fragile and powerful, fleeting and eternal, magic and realistic.

The film’s key elements: a ten-year-old boy with a brain tumour, an avid entomologist, an indigenous community with ancestral rites and customs, a tangled and threatening tropical forest abounding with an incredible variety of wildlife, including, the blue butterfly, a mythical creature capable of transporting dreams. Together these elements guide the audience in a quest for healing and a search for the meaning of life. Due to its colour, shape and apparent weightlessness the blue butterfly, is a fascinating creature. In the film, it quickly becomes apparent that the blue butterfly represents much more to the young boy than a simple insect for his collection. It gives him meaning in the universe.



The Film in Primary Cycles

With its themes and messages, the film is easily adaptable to educational purposes in primary cycles. Children’s fascination with animals in general, and insects in particular, is well known. They are delighted by the diversity of these living creatures and their remarkable adaptation to all possible environments. The film presents several different insects that live in the tropical forest, which is also immensely rich with diverse plant life.



Primary school students are also attracted to dreams and magic. *The Blue Butterfly* opens the door to this world. The film also allows a young audience to experience a ten-year-old boy's dreams of capturing a blue butterfly or simply remaining alive.

The film is the inspiration for all of the activities proposed hereafter and those that will surely be suggested by the students after they see it. There are multiple educational applications possible, and the list provided here is far from exhaustive. By their nature, these activities are adaptable. Teachers can combine or adapt specific activities to suit the needs of their classes. Ideally, the film will inspire a greater awareness of the tropical forest insect world and the dream world. Who knows how far the students' imagination will take them!



Themes to Develop

Several themes can be developed that are related to the film, including the tropical forest, childhood diseases, or the survival of indigenous peoples. However, the three themes below have been chosen and are the focus of the remainder of this document:

- 1. the world of insects**
- 2. the myths and lifestyle of Costa Rica's Bribri community**
- 3. the pursuit of a dream**



Following are suggested educational applications to deal with each of these three themes in class. Even though each can be dealt with separately, they are part of a continuum. The first theme, the world of insects, can be included in the subject area of science and technology. Studying this theme involves examining the very beginnings of life on earth and discovering the diversity and the immense adaptive capacity that these creatures possess, and also the inescapable realities of their existence: the ant that transports leaves on its back day in and day out, the caterpillar that constantly eats, and the blue butterfly, with its erratic flight, that is always in search of food.

The second subject, that of the role of the Bribri community in Costa Rica, is primarily a social discussion. It emphasizes the connections between nature and humanity and explores the integration of humans into a natural environment. Beyond the concrete link between the natural environment and its utilization, this theme also permits the examination of the relationship between the collective imagination of a community as inspired by the natural environment (the myth of the blue butterfly that transports dreams or attracts people into the forest to their detriment).

Finally, the theme of dreams is related to personal development. On one hand, some dreams go far beyond the natural world and on the other, some are directly related to the physical world. In the film, different types of dreams are dealt with including, amongst others, those that occur every night, and those that inspire individuals to move ahead in their lives.



These themes are developed using a variety of related subjects: English, Natural Science, Social Sciences and Art. The activities proposed permit the development of transversal competences and subject-related competences. Each suggested activity is associated to a primary cycle but each activity is also easily adaptable to suit other cycles. As well, the extent of each project can be limited to only one activity, or many activities can be used as part of an overall project.



THEME 1: THE INSECT WORLD

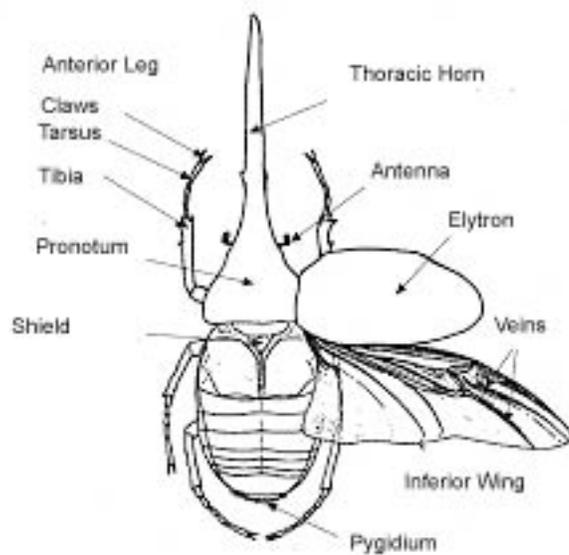


Project 1: Inventing and Making Insects

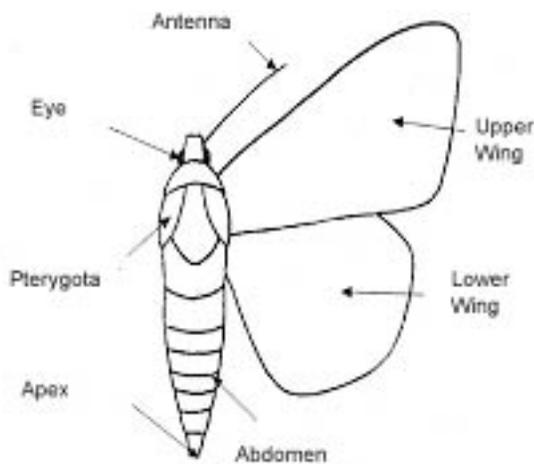
Suggested Levels: 1st and 2nd Cycles

Related Subjects: Art, Natural Science, English

Students are asked to invent an insect. They should begin by sketching out their idea, and then proceed to make a three dimensional model. Inspired by the many shapes and colours of the insects in the film (as presented in Annex 1) as well as the millions of species of insects already discovered, the students will have enough material to be able to create a new species. However, the characteristics of their invention must be carefully considered and reflect those inherent to this class of arthropods: three pairs of legs, a body composed of three segments (head, thorax and abdomen), with a pair of antenna. FIGURE 1 clearly illustrates these three parts.



COLEOPTERAN

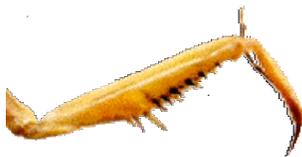


LEPIDOPTERAN

FIGURE 1: PARTS OF THE INSECT



In the first cycle, only these three characteristics need be considered, but for the second cycle, the exercise can be made more complex by asking the students to specify certain anatomical characteristics of their insect. For example, are the legs made for walking, jumping, crawling, digging in the dirt or striding on water, or are they made to trap prey? In each case, the morphology of the leg will vary (see FIGURE 2 below).



For trapping prey



For walking



For jumping



For crawling

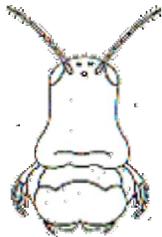


For clinging

FIGURE 2: TYPES OF LEGS

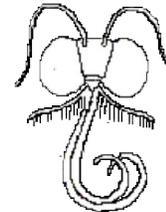


Their mouths are also very different. Some resemble scissors suitable for cutting or slicing, or tubes suitable for sucking or licking, or even a long fine beak to pierce the skin of an animal or plant to suck blood or sap (see FIGURE 3 below).



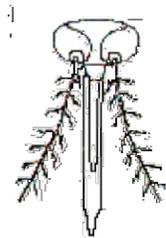
GRINDING TYPE

E.g.: *Crickets* that eat pieces of grass



SUCKING TYPE

E.g.: *Butterflies* that drink nectar.



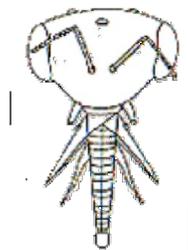
BITING-SUCKING TYPE

E.g.: *Mosquitoes* that bite in order to suck blood.



SUCKING-LICKING TYPE

E.g.: *Flies* that drink juices from fruit.



SUCKING-LICKING TYPE

E.g.: *Bees* that eat nectar.

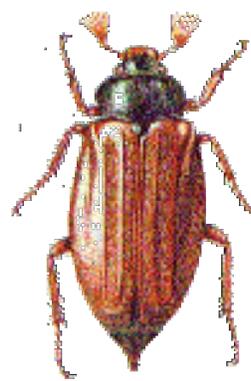
FIGURE 3: TYPES OF MOUTHPARTS



As well, the students could also specify the type of wings that they have invented. Do the wings have scales like a butterflies', or wings like shields, like those of a ladybug (see FIGURE 4 below).



The *Gauzy Butterfly*, a butterfly with very fine wings.



The *June Bug*, a coleopteran with brown elytrons (wing covers).

FIGURE 4: TYPES OF WINGS

To complete this project, the students could also be asked to write a description of their insect that will be more or less detailed, depending on the degree of precision demanded. The insect will have to be named and added to its species, type and family (see Fig. 5).

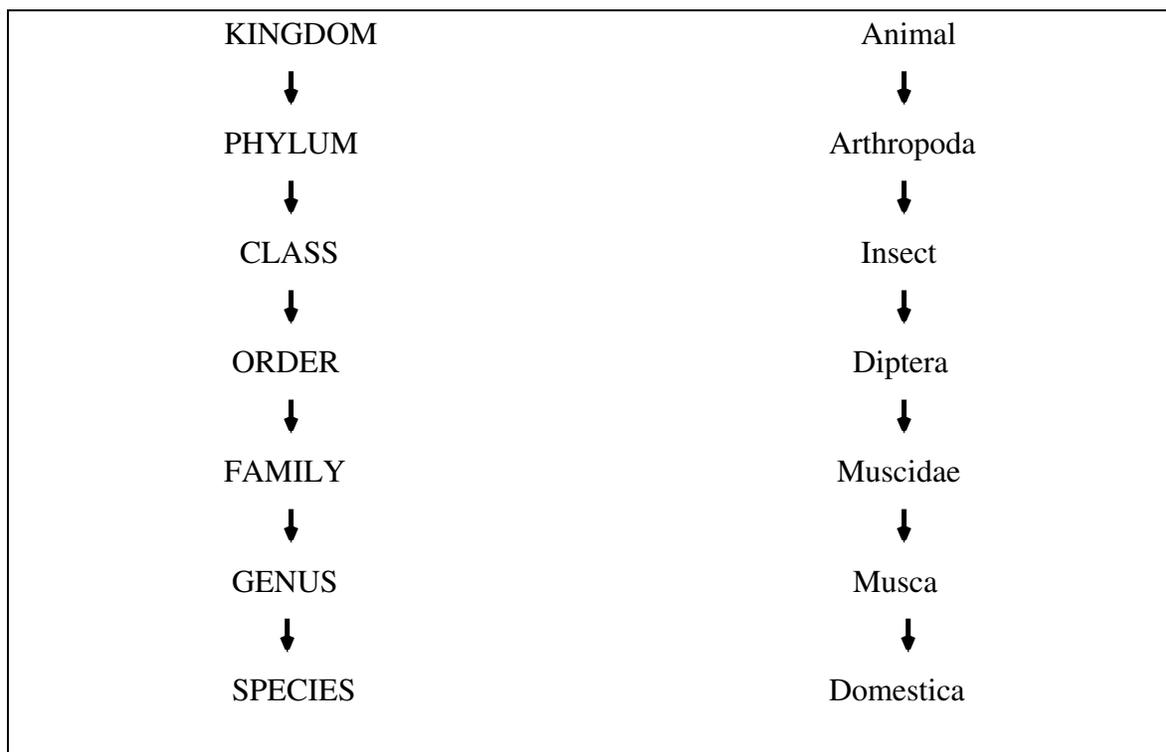


FIGURE 5: TAXONOMIC CLASSIFICATION (*example: the domestic housefly*)

Note: Taxonomy is the science dealing with the description, identification, naming and classification of all forms of life on earth.



Project 2: Creating a Cartoon Strip

Suggested Levels: 2nd and 3rd cycles

Related Subjects: English, Natural Science, Arts



The cartoon strip would feature insect characters. They could even be those created in the first project. If this was the case, then an exchange project between two cycles could be envisioned: students from the first cycle could create the insects and those from the second or third cycle could use them to create the cartoon strip.

If the insects must be created as part of this project, the students must learn insect anatomy. They must also know something about how insects live in their natural environment in order to create their story. This project therefore requires more precise knowledge about insects. Some suggested “insect characters” are attached in Annex 1. They can be used as inspiration for the cartoon strip.



THEME 2: THE BRIBRI COMMUNITY OF COSTA RICA

Costa Rica is a small Central American country, bordered by Nicaragua to the north, Panama to the south, the Caribbean Sea to the east, and the Pacific Ocean to the west (see Figure 6). It has 4 million inhabitants, of which only around 1% (35,000 people approximately) are Amerindian; the Bribri are but one of these Amerindian communities. Today, the Bribri are trying their best to conserve their language and customs. There are only around 6,000 people who still speak Bribri in Costa Rica. The Bribri community lives primarily in Amerindian reserves on the coast and agriculture is their primary source of revenue. The film portrays scenes from everyday life in a Bribri village close to the tropical forest.



FIGURE 6: MAP OF COSTA RICA



Project 1: Necklace Making

Suggested Level: 1st cycle

Related Subjects: Arts, Social Science, English

As with many indigenous cultures, the Bribri's art reflects its community's beliefs. In order to make their art, the Bribris use materials from the natural world, which is often organic in nature. In the pre-Columbian era, the Amerindians from Costa Rica used jade and gold to make their jewellery. In the film, Yana makes a necklace using insects and offers it to Pete to protect him and give him strength in the tropical forest.



As part of this project, the students are to imitate Yana and make a necklace using organic materials that the students have found themselves, or plastic materials that can be purchased. The point of the activity is not only to create the necklace, but also to give it a meaning. This should guide the students in their choice of colours, materials and design. The students will then be asked to present their necklace to the class and explain its significance.



Project 2: Mask Making

Suggested Levels: 2nd and 3rd cycles

Related Subjects: Art, Social Science

Based on the Bribri's beliefs, the students will be asked to create a mask that a Shaman could wear. The Shaman is symbolic of the Amerindian communities in Costa Rica. In earlier times, they held most of the power, whether religious, political or military. The Shaman was also the only being who could communicate with the "other" world and therefore inspired respect and fear. Even today, the Shaman remains a very important figure in the community as a spiritual and political leader. In the film, the village Shaman tells the legend of the blue butterfly and also plays the role of healer when he tries to calm the boy's fever.



The mask that the students will make must reflect this concept of the all-powerful Shaman. Some examples of masks are supplied in FIGURE 7. In general these masks are frightening, with protruding bones, large round eyes and pointed teeth. They can also be compared to the jaguar, considered the king of the animals by the Amerindian populations of South America.



FIGURE 7: EXAMPLES OF MASKS



Project 3: Constructing a Model Bribri Village

Suggested Level: 3rd Cycle

Related Subjects: Art, Social Sciences

This is a collective project that would involve the entire class contributing to the construction of a miniature Bribri village. To begin, the students should share their observations about the scenes of village life shown in the film, such as the way dwellings are built on posts, the communal building, the interior of a house. In FIGURE 8 some examples of houses taken directly from the film *The Blue Butterfly* are supplied.

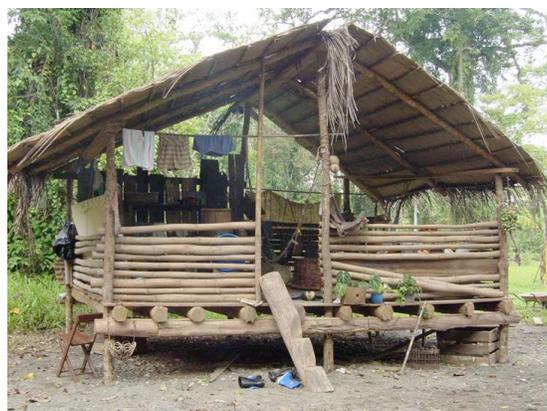


FIGURE 8: PHOTOS OF THE VILLAGE



The students should easily be able to see the differences between how they live and how the Bribri community lives. The style of the houses and the organization of the village are totally different, as are the proximity of the tropical forest and the very close ties that the population has with the natural environment. The film transports the students to a completely unique world, one that is important to appreciate.



THEME 3: DREAMS

Three types of dreams are featured in the film: dreams that occur during sleep (twice the boy dreams while sleeping), the dream of achieving something (capturing a blue butterfly) and the Bribri community's dream of survival. These three types of dreams are a good starting point for a project suited to each cycle.

1st Cycle: Dreams That Occur During Sleep

Children at this level will certainly be able to describe a dream that they have had. They can use images to represent what they actually remember and can use their imagination to enrich their memories. They then can use their drawings to describe their dream to the other students in the class.

2nd Cycle: Life Dreams

At this age, children have more control over their lives and can easily imagine what they want to become and what they would like to accomplish. Drawings can be used to represent what the students want to communicate, which can also be accompanied by a written composition.



3rd Cycle: Collective Dreams

In order to be able to imagine the dream of a group, the students must be able to think of somebody else beside themselves, thus this activity is more appropriate for the 3rd cycle. Using a written composition, an oral presentation or a sketch, the students, working together, must describe a dream that could motivate them as a group. This dream, in order to be achieved, must require the participation of each member of the group. The themes can be found in the student's lives and environments, or can come from different societies, such as that of the Bribri.

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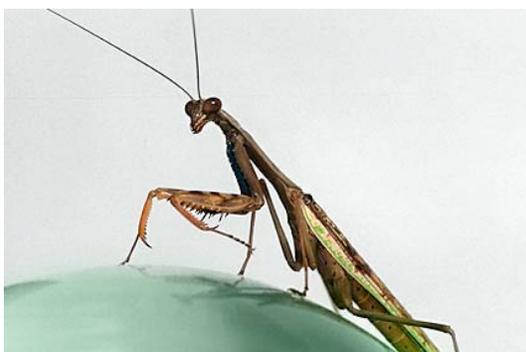


ANNEX 1: DIFFERENT INSECT SPECIES FEATURED IN THE FILM



“Part of the Coleoptera order, I can surprise people with my color, my extravagant shape and my strength.”

- *Scarab*



“Part of the Mantidae order, people think I am bizarre because I have the habit of eating anything near me, even my friends.”

- *Preying Mantis*



“Part of the Hymenoptera order, I can be found all over the Earth. We alone weigh more than all of the mammals on Earth put together, including humans!”

- *Ant*



“Part of the Odonata order, I am a master of flight. My talent has inspired aeronautics and helicopter flight.”

- *Dragon Fly*



“Part of the Homoptera order, all the people of Central and South America are terrified of me, even though I don’t bite!”

- *Fulgora portelankne*



“Part of the Lepidoptera order, I inspire artists with my unique beauty. In fact, I inspired the film

The Blue Butterfly !”

- *Blue Morpho*



“Part of the Coleoptera order, I transport pseudo-scorpions under my wings. This is an amazing form of animal cooperation, since each of us benefits from the other!”

- *Arlequin de Cayenne*



“Part of the Lepidoptera order, I dazzle nature lovers with my grace and beauty. There are 160,000 species of us on Earth.”

- *Voilier papillonidal*



“Part of the Coleoptera order, I am very well built, and incredibly strong! I can lift 900 times my own weight! Maybe I should enter the Olympics!”

- *Elephant Beetle*



“I am also another wonderful representative of the Coleoptera order. Children are often fascinated by my size and beauty!”

- *Rhinoceros Beetle*



“My incredibly long antennae allow me to see, feel and find my way. But I also use them for lots of other things!”

- *Grasshopper*



“I am a Walking Stick, and I look like a twig, which fools a lot of predators. My long legs allow me to hang from branches where I can remain motionless for hours.

I am a champion of survival!”

- *Walking Stick*