

# Collaborative Symmetrical Butterflies

by Debi West

**N**ext in our “eARTh ... it’s got ART” yearlong curriculum is a collaborative masterpiece for the entire school, with each grade contributing to a large installation. Our students turned our main atrium into a “rain forest.”

South America is a great conti-

were learning about symmetry in their math studies, I thought it would be exciting to have these young students work together to create large, symmetrical butterflies to adorn the walls of our rain forest.

On day one we discussed the beauty of the rain forest in the South American country of Brazil—specifically the butterflies found there. Students were excited to see a PowerPoint slide show with an array of butterflies in all shapes and sizes. When the students finished watching the show, they were excited to have some time to talk together at each table to discuss what they wanted their butterflies to look like.

Each table received a large piece of white butcher



Second-graders worked together to create butterflies, which became an important part of the school’s rain forest.



ment to study as it encompasses many traditions and cultures. With time constraints, I was working on something the entire school could benefit from in this unit. When my principal asked me to do something “welcoming” with our atrium, I made up my mind to “build” a student-created rain forest. Let me tell you: It was *beyond* welcoming!

Presented here is the second-grade “Collaborative Symmetrical Butterflies” lesson, which ties in nicely with students’ math skills. As I heard they

paper and was told to fold it in half. Then they selected one student to draw half of the butterfly wings, beginning on the folded side. These were checked by the teacher before students could begin to cut them out. The “oohs” and “ahhs” as we opened them up were too much fun! Every student was completely engaged and excited to be working together.

We discussed color the following day, reiterating our knowledge of the primary colors and speculating what might happen if we mixed the primary colors together. With that, students squirted some primary-color paints onto one side of the

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**SOUTH AMERICA**  
grade level 2

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Second-grade students will ...

- learn about the Brazilian rain forest in South America.
- learn about symmetry.
- learn how to mix primary colors and make secondary colors.
- learn to work collaboratively in a group.
- learn the vocabulary words: symmetry, printing, primary colors, secondary colors, collage, collaboration, shape and unity.

## MATERIALS

- 38" x 48" white butcher paper
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Primary colored paints
- Oil pastels
- Construction-paper scraps
- Butterfly images handout
- Pipe cleaners
- Glue
- Rolled-up colored butcher paper

## RHYTHM-ONG

Butterfly, Butterfly,  
Symmetrical Little Butterfly,  
It’s the same, It’s the same,  
It’s the same on both sides ...  
Symmetrical Little Butterfly!

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## SOUTH AMERICA

The following lesson plans are available at  
[www.artsandactivities.com](http://www.artsandactivities.com)

- Kindergarten:** Grass Blades  
**Grade 1:** Large-Scale Leaves and Foliage ... Thinking BIG!  
**Grade 3:** Collaborative Rain Forest Puzzles  
**Grade 4:** South American Animal Masks  
**Grade 5:** Clay Rattles



Go to [artsandactivities.com](http://artsandactivities.com) and click on this button for the link to additional South American lesson plans.

## EARTH

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large cutout butterfly. Once the paint was where they wanted it, together they closed the butterfly shape in half, lightly pressing down to “print” onto the other side of the wings.

The students were thrilled and discussed their new oranges, greens and purples. They were equally excited to realize *they* were the ones who made these secondary colors!

At the end of the day, they had time to add some creative paper scraps and collage onto the wings symmetrically.

On the final day, students worked together to make bodies, eyes and antennae, adding a bit of blended oil pastel. The creativity and group dynamics during this process were so fulfilling, in that students were having critical discussions as to the whys and the hows of making a large, yet authentic-looking, butterfly, while staying true to their symmetrical color schemes.

They used rolled-up colored butcher paper to create the middle part, or body. They then made their own creative eyes by using colored construction-paper scraps, collaging these together. The more layers, the more depth in the eye. They were also given pipe cleaners to use as the antennae.

The second-graders loved coming to the atrium’s ever-growing rain-forest installation to watch their butterflies become part of this school-wide project!

If time permits, an extension to this lesson is to have students make their own individual butterfly. I can’t tell you how many butterflies I received over the course of this lesson—students were inspired beyond words. Who knew math could be so fun? ■

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*Currently an art teacher at North Gwinnet High School, Debi West wrote her “eARTh: It’s Got ART” curriculum while at Level Creek Elementary (both in Suwanee, Ga.). She’s also a past-president of the GAEA and owns the Crystal Collage Children’s Art Studio.*

### ERRATA

On page 39 in our Oct. 2007 issue, Young Artist Leah Mattingly’s home state was misidentified. It should have read “Ohio.” We apologize for the error and any disappointment or inconvenience it may have caused.