



Nashville
Children's
Theatre

CURRICULUM GUIDE

The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show

Created by Jonathan
Rockefeller

Based on the Books by Eric Carle

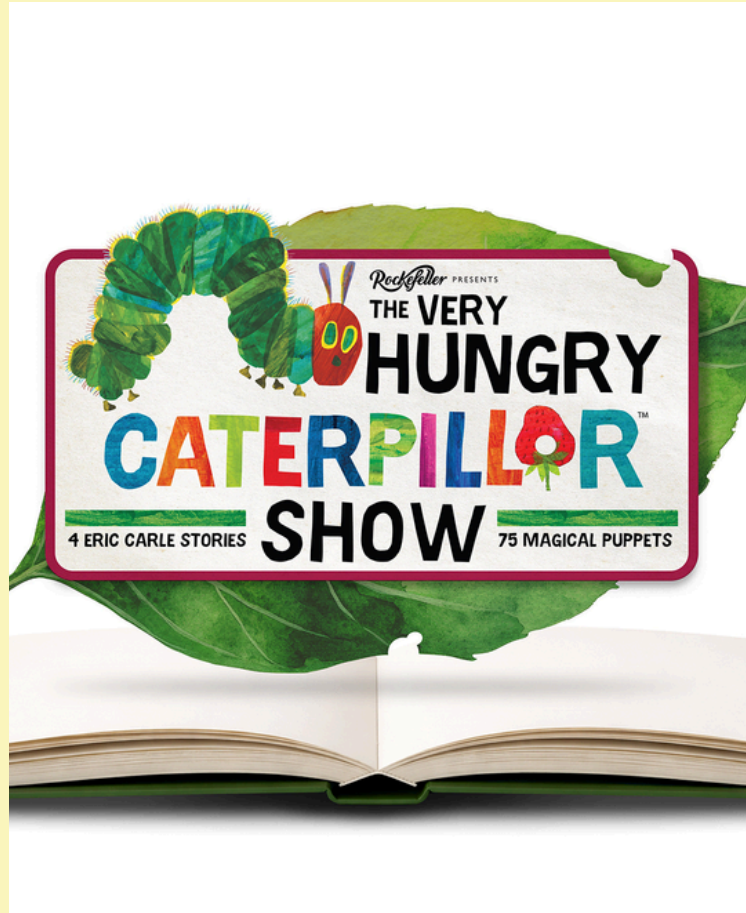
Presented through special
arrangement with Rockefeller
Studios.

November 14th, 2026 -
January 3rd, 2027



Clock icons show
15-minute
increments and
reflect the minimum
time needed. Actual
timing may vary. A
fully shaded clock
means the activity
may include
homework or span
multiple class
sessions.

Recommended for Ages 3 - 8.



In This Guide:

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Look For These!

Subject area icons show what curricular topics each activity addresses.



ELA



THEATRE



SCIENCE



SEL



VISUAL ARTS

Tennessee State Standards for all activities are on page 12.

Visit nashvillechildrenstheatre.org today!

Know Before You Go

The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show invites young audiences to embark on a captivating journey through the pages of four beloved Eric Carle books. As the enchanting tales come to life on stage, children will be immersed in the world of vibrant colors, well known characters, and wonderful storytelling through gorgeous LARGER THAN LIFE puppets.

Created by Jonathan Rockefeller, this production features 75 magical puppets!

Know Before You Go Tips & Info

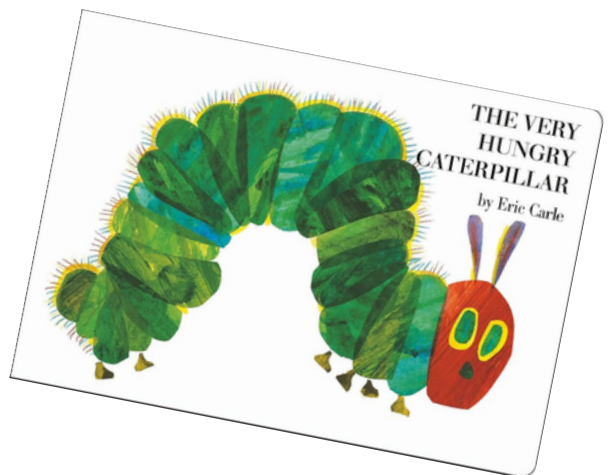
NCT provides guidance to help schools and families prepare students for their theatre experience. Each category is rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating a small amount and 5 indicating a larger presence. These tips are designed to support your planning, but we recognize that every classroom and student is different. We encourage teachers and caregivers to use their own judgment in deciding what best meets the needs of their students. Note: Our Education Staff will continue to update these tips on the NCT website, as aspects of the production may evolve during the rehearsal process.

- **Language: 1 out of 5** - The stories are each told by narrators. There is minimal dialogue between characters.
- **Violence and Scariness: 1 out of 5** - A firefly thinks a cat and dog are arguing because they are barking and hissing. A box of rubber ducks falls into the ocean off of a cargo ship.
- **Sensory Advisories: 3 out of 5** - The stories in this show are told with puppets. There are 75 different puppets being used in the production, so there is a lot of big, bold movement and color changes.
- **Potentially Anxious Moments: 1 out of 5** - A firefly expresses feeling lonely until he finds a pack of his own.
- **Other Things to Know:** This play is based on the works of Eric Carle. The puppets are designed to match his illustrative style, so many characters will be recognizable from the books. The puppets in this show are large and may take more than one actor to move around. You will be able to see the actors controlling the puppets.

First performed in 2015, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show* faithfully brings the world of Eric Carle to the stage. Featuring over 75 magical puppets, this production invites theatre goers of all ages to relive some of their favorite childhood stories in a whole new way.

This curriculum guide connects *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show* to ELA and STEAM learning through interdisciplinary lessons that inspire creativity and critical thinking. Students will engage in activities that help them develop skills across multiple subjects while celebrating the joyful spirit of Eric Carle's stories.

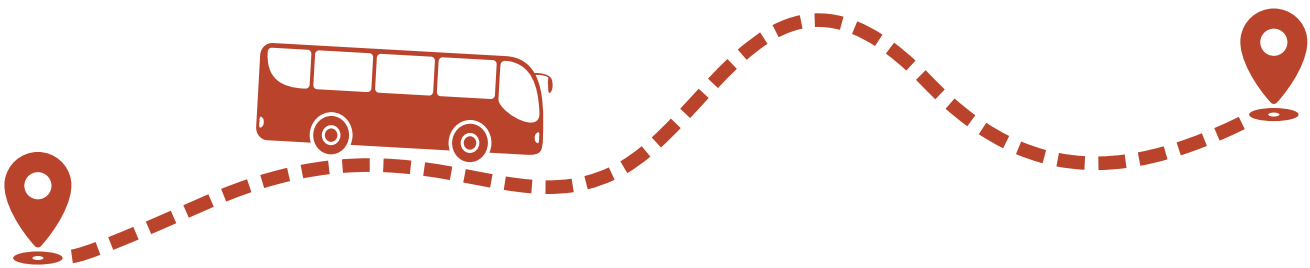
Together, these lessons encourage students to imagine boldly, collaborate, and discover magic in even the tiniest moments.



Know Before You Go

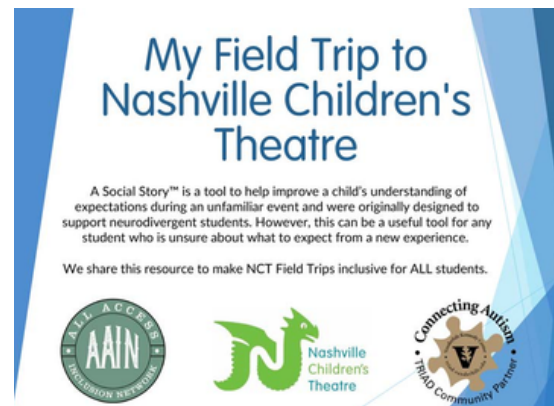
Arriving at the Theatre

- Please arrive 20–30 minutes before your scheduled show time. Allow extra time for traffic. We are unable to delay the start of the performance.
- Check in at the box office. A representative from your school should check in at the box office upon entering the building.
- If arriving by bus: Please remain on the bus until an NCT staff member approaches your driver. They will provide parking instructions and help your group exit and enter the theatre.
- If arriving by car: Use caution when parking and entering, as buses may be unloading. Once your full group has arrived, notify an NCT staff member, and they will escort you to your seating section. If the front lot is full, additional parking is available in the lots beside and behind the building (Howard Office Building Campus) and on the street.



Social Story

NCT creates a Social Story™ for all shows, camps, classes, and field trips. A Social Story is a tool to help someone prepare for an unfamiliar event and was originally designed to support people who are neurodivergent. However, this can be a useful tool for anyone who is unsure about what to expect from a new experience. We are sharing these resources to make NCT shows inclusive for ALL patrons. You can find the Social Story and read about other inclusive practices at: <https://nashvillechildrenstheatre.org/edi-policies/>.



Sensory Room

NCT has a space in the back of the theatre dedicated to providing a safe, comfortable place for students and adults alike to self-regulate. In the room, you can view the performance, control the sound, and access sensory-friendly tools.



Theatre Etiquette

Share the following definition and info with your students. The Social Story™ described on page 2 is also a great tool!

etiquette: the customary code of behavior in society or among members of a particular profession or group.

It takes many, many people and lots and lots of work to create a show on stage. Some are crew working behind the scenes and some are the actors who perform on stage right in front of you. They are all working to put on the best performance possible for you and everyone else in the audience.

Unlike watching television or a movie, the performers and the crew can see and hear the audience members. That's why it's the audience's job to watch and listen carefully to the action onstage, and to show their support by laughing and clapping at the right moments. The audience helps the performers and crew to concentrate on doing their job when we practice the rules of theatre etiquette.

Dos and Don'ts:

- **Do** listen to the people giving instructions when you arrive. These staff members are part of the show, too, and they will help you know where to go and what to do.
- **Do** laugh if the show is funny, and clap after songs and at the end of the show. When you react to what's happening onstage, you show the performers that you appreciate their hard work.
- **Don't** talk during the performance. Whispering is still talking, so make sure you are only speaking in an emergency.
- **Don't** eat, drink, or chew gum in the theatre. It can make a mess that's hard to clean up, and also distract other people trying to watch the show.
- **Do** stay in your seat for the entire show, and keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself. Standing up will block someone else's view, and it's no fun to have your seat kicked by the person behind you!
- **Don't** use cell phones or other electronics during the show. This one is for the grown ups! You may think you're just checking it for a moment, but those glowing screens are a major distraction for everyone. Trust us... we can all see your screens



Theatre Etiquette Worksheet

Hand out the worksheet on page 10. As a class, go through the different event locations listed on the worksheet and discuss each event. What can you do there? What can't you do there? Why? Fill out the worksheet using A (Always), S (Sometimes), and N (Never). Ask students why they think we behave differently at these different places.

Adapted from The Louisville Orchestra



Bravo! 🎉

Pre & Post Show Activities

Books make for great theatre! Many playwrights, lyricists, composers, and screenwriters transform some of our favorite stories into wonderful plays, musicals, or movies. When adapting a story, however, often changes are made to plot, characters, etc. Sometimes these changes are made to accommodate timing (the length of the play) and the many elements that are involved in bringing a book to life (such as set, costumes, cast, etc.).

Definitions to share with your students

- **Adaptation** - something that is changed so it can be presented in another form. This show is adapted from the books by Eric Carle
- **Playwright** - a person who writes plays
- **Author** - a person who writes something such as a book or an article
- **Lyricist** - a person who writes the words of a song
- **Composer** - a person who writes music



Pre-Show Discussion

Read one or more Eric Carle's books with your students. Recommended titles connected to *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show* include *The Very Lonely Firefly*, *The Very Busy Spider*, and, of course, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

- Why do you think Eric Carle writes about animals and nature so often?
- What do you notice about Eric Carle's illustrations?
- Why do you think the creators of the show decided to use puppets to create the animal characters?
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show* combines many different stories into one big production. Why do you think the writers chose to do that?
- What might be fun - or tricky - about bringing Eric Carle's world to life on stage?

After the Show: Theatre Review Worksheet



Once your class has attended NCT's production, ask your students to reflect on the performance using one of the grade-appropriate Theatre Review worksheets at the end of this guide. Once students have completed their reviews, use the prompts from the worksheet to lead a class discussion.

- Optional: ask students to write letters (or draw pictures) to the actors and artists here at NCT! We LOVE getting mail and reading your questions, favorite parts of the show, and more! Letters can be sent to: Nashville Children's Theatre, 25 Middleton St., Nashville, TN 37210 or emailed to: info@nashvillechildrenstheatre.org



Bonus Discussion

The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show is part of Nashville Children's Theatre's 2026-27 season, themed "From Page to Stage." A season is a group of scheduled productions connected by a central idea or theme. Ask your students: Why do people turn books into plays and musicals? How can actors help bring a story to life? Why do you think NCT chose "From Page to Stage" as their theme this year?



ELA Connections

A Day in the Life of a Student Journal



The very hungry caterpillar is, in fact very hungry! And the caterpillar has a very specific routine to make sure it gets all the energy it needs. In this lesson, students will explore and reflect on their daily school routines through a creative journal inspired by *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Using sequencing words, drawings, and simple sentences, students will create a “Day in the Life of a Student” journal that shows the events of their school day from beginning to end. This activity encourages literacy development, storytelling, self-expression, and an understanding of chronological order in a fun and engaging way.

Materials:

- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
- Construction paper or journal pages
- Crayons, markers, pencils
- Stapler or binder rings
- Sentence starters (optional)
- Caterpillar or Nature stickers and decorating supplies (optional)

Part 1: Engage - Read and Discuss

Begin by reading or summarizing *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle with the class. Then, discuss the following questions:

- What happened first?
- What did the caterpillar do each day
- How did the story show sequence and change?
- What do you do during your school day?
- What happens first when you arrive at school?
- What do you do after lunch?
- What is your favorite part of the day?

Introduce the idea that students will create their own “day in the life” journal just like the caterpillar’s journey.

Part 2: Prepare - What are Sequencing Words?

Take a few minutes to list, explain, and practice using sequencing words: first, next, then, after that, finally, etc. Model an example and consider displaying a timeline of a school day.

Part 3: Writing - A Day in the Life of a Student

Students create one page for each part of their school day. Consider providing an example of a timeline: arriving at school, morning meeting, reading or math time, lunch/recess, centers, packing up, going home, etc. Each page should include a drawing and a sentence or dedicated caption using sequence words. Consider providing sentence starters.

Optional Extensions: Have students get up and move by acting out each page in their journal. Consider having the students take the assignment home to create “A Day in the Life on the Weekend;” if you choose to do this extension, be mindful that home lives are different for each student. If you suspect students are experiencing challenging circumstances that they may not feel comfortable sharing, do not do this activity - you know your students best!



STEAM Connections

Caterpillar Life Cycles



Change can be scary, but it can also be something beautiful! In this lesson inspired by Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, students will explore the life cycle of a butterfly and learn about metamorphosis through literature, discussion, sequencing activities, and hands-on art. Students will identify and describe the stages of a butterfly's life cycle and understand how living things grow and change over time.

Materials:

- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
- Butterfly life cycle chart or images
- Paper plates or construction paper
- Crayons, markers, pencils
- Glue
- Scissors
- Sequencing Cards
- Science Journal or Worksheet
- Cotton balls, pasta, or craft supplies (optional)

Part 1: Engage - Where Do Butterflies Come From?

Begin by reading or summarizing *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Then, discuss the following questions with the class:

- What happened to the caterpillar?
- How did the caterpillar change throughout the story?
- What did the caterpillar become at the end?

Take a few minutes to explain that butterflies go through a process called metamorphosis, which means a complete change.

Part 2: Discover - Butterfly Life Cycles

Take some time to introduce and explain the four stages of the butterfly life cycle:

- Egg
- Caterpillar (larva)
- Chrysalis (pupa)
- Butterfly (adult)

Use a chart, pictures, or drawings to explain each stage. Place the stages in a circular format to show the sequence. Discuss the following questions with the class:

- Which stage eats the most?
- Which stage changes inside a chrysalis?
- Which stage lays eggs?

Part 3: Application - Sequencing Practice

Provide students with picture cards of the butterfly life cycle. Students can work independently or in pairs to put the stages in order and retell the life cycle using sequencing words: first, next, then, finally, etc. Once students have solidified the life cycle, have them create a model using paper plates or construction paper divided into four sections. Each section should include a picture, label, and description sentence.

Part 4: Reflection

Once students have created their models, take a few minutes to discuss the following:

- Why is metamorphosis important?
- How do living things change as they grow?

Optional Extensions: have students practice their speaking and listening skills by presenting their model to a partner, the class, or other community members. For more advanced students, compare and contrast the fiction and nonfiction elements from *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* story.

STEAM Connections

Crunch, Munch, Grow! How Food Gives Us Energy



In this lesson inspired by *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, students will explore how food helps living things grow, move, and stay healthy. By examining foods the caterpillar eats, students will learn how nutritious foods provide energy for our bodies.

Important: Consider talking with your students' grown-ups before teaching this lesson; nutrition, food, and eating habits can be emotional topics for some students, so make adjustments and exceptions as needed, and monitor student conversations during and after the lesson.

Materials:

- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
- Food Picture Cards or Toy Foods
- Chart Paper or White Board
- Paper Plates
- Crayons, Scissors, Glue
- Healthy vs. Sometimes Foods Sorting Sheet
- Real Foods for Observation and/or Snacking (optional)

Part 1: Engage - Food, Glorious Food!

Begin by reading or summarizing *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Then, discuss the following questions with the class:

- Which foods help the caterpillar grow?
- Which foods are treats?
- How did the caterpillar feel after eating too much?

Discuss how food gives our body energy to learn, play, run, think, and grow.

Part 2: Explore & Discover - How Does Food Fuel Us?

Explain to the class that our bodies use food like fuel. Using chart paper or a white board, create a visual that compares how cars need gas and our bodies need nutritious food. Then, introduce and create a visual for food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, dairy. Discuss the difference between healthy and nutritious foods and “sometimes” foods like ice cream. Create a visual that shows how nutritious food fuels us: we eat the food → our body absorbs it like fuel → we have energy.

Part 3: Analyze - What are Healthy Choices vs. Sometimes Choices?

Have students practice identifying healthy choices versus sometimes choices - foods that are nutritious and foods that are for fun. Show cards with images and/or names of food items that students sort into “Healthy Everyday Foods” or “Sometimes Treat Foods” (ex. apple → healthy, cake → sometimes).

Next, give each student a paper plate and provide images or toys of different food items. Have students practice building a balanced plate. Provide them with a framework for guidance: fruits & veggies, protein, grain, drink, sometimes food. Then, have students label their foods and explain their choices (ex. This food gives me energy because...).

Part 4: Reflect - What Did We Learn?

After students have had time to practice and ask questions, discuss the following questions with the class:

- What foods help us grow?
- Why do our bodies need energy?
- What healthy snack do you enjoy?
- What is one healthy food you can eat to give you energy?

Consider having a conversation about how we are not perfect, so our choices do not need to be perfect every time.

Optional Extensions: Consider having your school nutrition staff get involved with the lesson as guest speakers or to provide a menu or real food items to work with. Consider pairing with a gardening activity in Science Class.

IT'S SHOWTIME! - Theatre Etiquette Activity

INSTRUCTIONS: Look at the different events listed across the first row in the table below. For each event, write an A for ALWAYS, S for SOMETIMES, or N for NEVER with the listed behavior expectations. Note the different behavior expectations there are for different events we attend.

					
BEHAVIOR	SPORTS GAME	RELIGIOUS SERVICE	LIVE THEATRE PERFORMANCE	ROCK CONCERT	MOVIE THEATER
 CHEER					
 CLAP POLITELY					
 TALKING TO OTHERS					
 EATING					
 STANDING & WALKING					

Adapted from: <http://www.louisvilleorchestra.org/wp-content/uploads/audience-etiquette-activity.pdf> , <http://www.musical-theater-kids.com/theater-etiquette.html>, <https://www.firststage.org/media/dwoc34e0/snowy-day-eg-2019-20.pdf>

Name: _ _ _ _ _



★ My Theatre Review ★

I saw _ _ _ _ _ at Nashville Children's
(name of show)

Theatre on _ _ _ _ _ , _ _ _ _ _
(date of show)

My favorite part was...

**Write or draw your responses in the boxes below.*

The play made me feel...

I learned...

Name: _ _ _ _ _



Theatre Review

Show title: _____ Date of show: _____

Playwright(s): _____ Director: _____

1. What was the play about? What was its message?

2. Who was your favorite character/actor? Why?

3. What did you think of the visual aspects (costumes, set, lighting, etc.)?

4. How did the play make you feel? Why?

5. Why should people see this play?

Additional comments:

Use the back or separate sheet of paper if needed.

Writing a Theatre Review

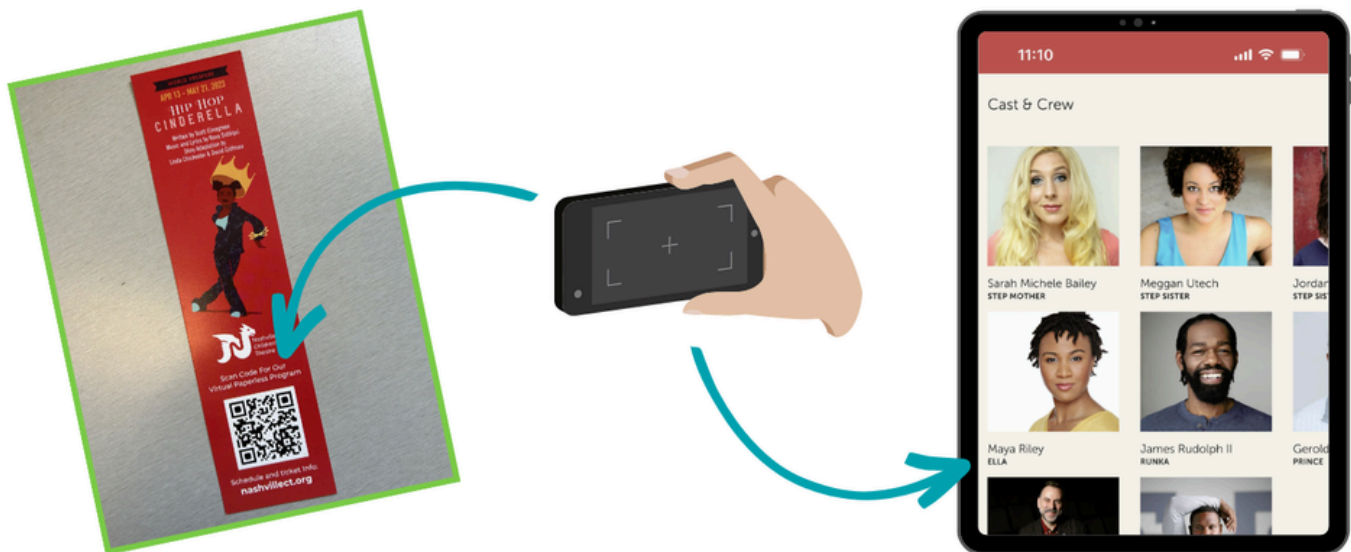


A "review" of a performance is a carefully-crafted piece of writing typically featured in the news of an individual's opinions about a show being performed in the community. Most theatre reviewers or "critics" are well-versed in theatre. From the review, readers should get a sense of what the play is about in addition to the reviewer's personal judgments of the play's many aspects including, but not limited to, the acting and design.

After seeing a production at Nashville Children's Theatre, write your own review of the performance. Follow the structure below to help craft your critique.

- **First Paragraph:** Exciting opening/introduction
- **Second Paragraph:** Brief summary of the plot of the show
- **Third Paragraph:** Your opinions on the acting
- **Fourth Paragraph:** Your opinions on the visual/design aspects of the show (costumes, set, lighting, props, etc.)
- **Fifth Paragraph:** Final reactions/conclusion

Make sure to mention show specifics such as listing the director, actors, and designers by name. Reference the show's Virtual Paperless Program, the program listing the show's details, for names. (The QR code is on the bookmark you should have received after the show.) In addition, the more descriptive you are with your opinions, the stronger the critique will be.



TN Academic Standards Grades K-8

Page 4

Pre-Show Discussion

ELA: SL.CC.1, RL.RRTC.10

Theatre: 2-5.T.R1.A

Page 5

A Day in the Life of a Student Journal

ELA: K.FL.SC.6, K.CC.RI.3, K.W.TTP.3, 1.W.TTP.3,
1.SL.CC.1, 1.RL.KID.3, 2.W.TTP.3, 2.SL.CC.1,
2.RL.KID.3

Pages 6-7

Caterpillar Life Cycles

Science: K.LS1.1, K.LS1.2, 1.LS1.1, 1.LS1.2, 2.LS1.3,
2.LS4.1

ELA: K.W.TTP.2, K.SL.CC.1, 1.W.TTP.2, 1.RI.KID.3,
2.W.TTP.2, 2.SL.PKI.4

Crunch, Munch, Grow! How Food Gives Us Energy

Science: K.LS1.1, K.ETS2.1, 1.LS1.1, 1.LS1.2,
2.LS2.1, 2.ETS1.2

Health: K.NPA.1, K.NPA.2, 1.NPA.1, 1.NPA.2,
2.NPA.1, 2.NPA.2

Pages 8-11

After the Show

Theatre: 1/6/8.TR2.A, 4-5.T.R1.A, 6/8.T.R2.C, 6-
8.T.R3.A, 3/6-8.T.R3.B

ELA: 2-4.RL.KID.2, 1.RL.KID.3, 1-2.W.RBPK.8,
W.PDW.4, W.RW.10

Visual Arts: VA.Cr1.B

SEL: 1A.1, 1C.1

Just seeing the performance? See the standards below.

Theatre: T.R1.A, T.R2.A

ELA: SL.CC.2, 4.RL.IK1.7; 3.RL.IK1.9; K-1.FL.PA.2;
K-1.FL.VA.7; RL.RRTC.10 [if book(s) are read]

SEL: 1A; 3A; 3-8.3B.2; K-5.4B.3; 6-8.4B.1-2; K-
2.5A.1; 3-5.5A.3; 6-8.FA.4; K-2.5B.2

Music: GM.R3.A

Dance: 4.D.R1.A; K-4.D.R2.A

Note: The academic standards listed reflect potential connections students may make simply by attending the performance. These are not exhaustive. Depending on how teachers prepare for or reflect on the experience with their students, additional standards may be addressed—or some listed here may not apply to every classroom.



Info for Teachers

\$15 Educator Preview for The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show November 13, 2026

Reception/Workshop: 5:30

Dress Rehearsal: 6:30

Enjoy light refreshments as you are introduced to activities you can use in your classroom. To reserve a spot visit nashvillechildrenstheatre.org or contact Maddie (email below).

Event qualifies as PD.

Childcare provided upon request.

Questions regarding field trips? Contact Justin at jgunn@nashvillechildrenstheatre.org.

Seeing an NCT performance, as well as the activities in this guide, help students build the 4 C's of 21st Century Learning: Communication, Creativity, Collaboration, and Critical Thinking!

To schedule a workshop with one of NCT's Teaching Artists, contact Maddie at mmahood@nashvillechildrenstheatre.org.

Nashville Children's Theatre creates artistic experiences for everyone.

Theatre can change the world, one audience at a time. Our performances help kids process real-world situations and build a foundation of empathy for their relationships and actions, now and in the future. And that means a better, kinder world for everyone.

NCT is proud to acknowledge the government agencies, foundations, and business partners that provide leadership support:



Ellen Lawson Foundation