Charlie, the Caterpillar (by Dom DeLuise)

A Model for Using Storytelling in the Academic Curriculum
Prepared for group tandem telling by Flora Joy

Five to ten tellers may perform this story as indicated, or they may create their own telling arrangement. The lines of the tellers are marked in a color which highlights their roles. Lines which have this color should be spoken by ALL PERFORMERS. Lines marked with this color are COMPLETELY OMITTED. The manner of story delivery will preclude the need for these words.

Introductions: (The following is only one suggested wording for introductions. Please do not read or memorize it. It simply offers new tellers a sample introductory wording which has been used by selected storytellers in the past. Modify as desired. Please use the teller’s real name for every question mark. Use actual first and last names, and do not use their story character names as part of this introduction.) Good evening. We are the Caterpillar Storytellers! Please make welcome Caterpillar Storyteller Jane Doe (insert real name of reader/performer), Caterpillar Storyteller [ ? ], and (continue until all of the readers/performers have been introduced. Add any additional information you wish about any of the group performers.)

(Slight pause)

Mind-set: (Note that this provided wording for a mind-set is only an example. Please do not memorize it, but put it in your own words.) When you first started to school, you likely found a “very best friend.” Likely that very best friend changed from one year to the next, or at least it changed often. Perhaps you sometimes wanted to be best friends with someone because he or she seemed rich. Maybe that person had a shiny new car, or lived in a big new house, or had something else we envied. What reasons to select your best friends now. Before you answer that, perhaps you should hear the story “Charlie, the Caterpillar,” by Dom LeLuise.

(The last sentence of the mind-set should have a downward vocal inflection, followed by a three to five-second pause. The first performer should begin slowly, clearly, and loud enough for all to hear. All parts should be delivered with great expression.)

Story: One day, one bright and sunny day, Charlie the caterpillar was born.

The world looked very, very big to Charlie... because he was very, very small... because he was just born.

Charlie soon found out how delicious green things tasted. As he was nibbling on a blade of grass, he could hear the wind whistling and the birds singing. He smiled. He was glad to be alive.

Charlie decided to set out and see the world, so he looked to the left, and he looked to the right, and then he went straight ahead.

Soon, Charlie saw two monkeys.

“Hi!” said Charlie. “What are you doing?”

“We’re playing cards,” they said.


“No, you can’t,” said the monkeys.

“Why not?” asked Charlie.

“Because you’re an ugly caterpillar.”

Now giddadda here!”

Charlie, for the very first time in his young life, felt bad. He sighed, and would have shrugged his shoulders if he had any. He looked to the left, and he looked to the right, and then he went straight ahead.

Pretty soon he saw two rabbits, hopping around.

“Hi!” said Charlie. “What are you doing?”

“We’re playing tennis,” they said.


“No, you can’t,” said the rabbits.

“Why not?” asked Charlie.

“Because you’re an ugly caterpillar, and we don’t play with ugly caterpillars.

Now giddadda here!”

Now, for the second time in his young life, Charlie felt bad, very bad. His feelings were hurt.

“What is ugly?” wondered Charlie. He didn’t feel ugly.

He looked to the left, and he looked to the right, and then he went straight ahead.

Just then, Charlie saw two mice playing miniature golf. (These mice were so small, they had to play miniature golf.)

“Hi!” said Charlie. “What are you doing?”

“We’re playing golf,” they said.


“No, you can’t,” said the mice.

“Why not?” asked Charlie.

“Because you’re an ugly caterpillar, and we really don’t play with ugly caterpillars.

Now giddadda here!”

Charlie, for the third time in his now not-so-young life, felt very, very bad. In fact, Charlie started to feel ugly.

No one wanted to play with him. So Charlie looked to the left, and he looked to the right, and then he started to cry.

Charlie wanted to be alone. He climbed up a tree, and snuggled up to a small branch. He felt a little cold, so he went like this, and he went like
that, and he went like this, and he went like that, and before he knew it, he had spun himself a warm and wonderful cocoon.

Charlie was very sad about that "ugly" business.

"Why can’t I have a friend?" he wondered.

Charlie was so tired from making the cocoon, that he decided to take a nap.

All of a sudden, snow began to fall and to cover everything with white. Winter had come, but Charlie was nice and warm in his comfortable cocoon.

Charlie dreamed that he had a best friend, and that they laughed and had fun together.

After a while, the grass began to grow, the flowers began to bloom, and the birds began to have a party in the sky. Spring had come and, somehow, Charlie knew it was time to wake up.

He yawned and stretched and then—oh my goodness—POP! POP!

Charlie looked to the left, and he looked to the right, and oh!—he had wings! Beautiful wings! Butterfly wings! Charlie had become a beautiful butterfly!

Charlie fluttered his wings, and guess what? He flew up, up and up! He laughed as he soared past the birds having a party in the sky. Charlie was flying high when he came upon the monkeys who were still playing cards.

"Oh, please come and play with us," begged the monkeys.

"Why?" asked Charlie.

"Because you're a beautiful butterfly," they answered.

"No thanks," said Charlie, smiling.

"I gotta giddadda here!"

He zoomed up and away. The monkeys jumped back, looking miserable.

"Serves them right," thought Charlie.

He did a couple of loop-the-loops, and then he came across the rabbits as their tennis game.

"Oh, please," said the rabbits. "Won't you come and play with us?"

"Why?" asked Charlie.

"Because you’re a beautiful butterfly," they answered.

"Not on your life," said Charlie.

"I gotta giddadda here!"

Then off he flew, leaving the rabbits looking very downhearted.

"Serves them right," thought Charlie.

He circled around for a while, and then he saw the mice playing miniature golf.

"Please, pretty please," pleaded the mice. "Do come and play with us!"

"Why?" asked Charlie.

"Because you’re really such a beautiful butterfly," they answered.

"Sorry, not today," said Charlie. "I really have better things to do.

"I gotta giddadda here!"

Then off he soared, leaving the mice looking pitiful.

"Serves them right," thought Charlie.

They all wanted to be his friend because he was now a beautiful butterfly. They didn't know that he was Charlie, the ugly caterpillar.

"If they want to be my friends just because of my beautiful wings, they can't be real friends," thought Charlie as he flitted in the spring sunshine.

Just then, Charlie heard someone crying.

It was Katie the Caterpillar. Charlie came closer.

"Why are you crying?" he asked.

"Because no one will play with me. No one wants to be my friend," cried Katie, "because I'm an ugly caterpillar."

"I'll play with you," said Charlie, with a wink and a smile. "I'll be your friend."

"You will?" said Katie the Caterpillar.

"Whoopie!"

Then Charlie took Katie aside and told her all about becoming a butterfly.

From that day on, Charlie and Katie played cards and tennis and even miniature golf together. They laughed and had a good time, just like in Charlie's dream. Katie was happy, and Charlie was very happy. He had finally found a friend... a real friend... a best friend.

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