



## **Chance and the Butterfly**

Maggie de Vries

Interest level: ages 8-11

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136 pages

AR Quiz # 54263

**Consider the following question as you read *Chance and the Butterfly*:**

What happens when you always expect the worst?

### **Story**

Every time Chance turns around, he gets in trouble. In school, he can't sit still. Reading is hard and math is harder, but anything to do with science fascinates him. When his class starts raising butterflies from caterpillars, Chance is hooked. School is suddenly fun again, but his decision to take his caterpillar home could lead to tragedy...or to friendship and healing.

### **Author**

**Maggie de Vries** is the author of seven books for children, including the picturebooks *Tale of a Great White Fish: A Sturgeon Story* and *Fraser Bear*, and the sequel to this story, *Somebody's Girl*. She lives in Vancouver on the banks of the Fraser River, and in recent years has grown increasingly fascinated by the fish that swim in the river and the birds that fly above it. Maggie also teaches creative writing at UBC and UNBC, travels regularly to lead writing workshops with children and teachers, and occasionally edits children's books.

## Connecting to the Curriculum

### *Language Arts*

- Focus:** *vocabulary*

Have students create a lexicon using some or all of the following words from *Chance and the Butterfly*: *unison, taunting, stern, burst, anticipation, jubilation, hubbub, clones, disgrace, linger, beckoned, consequence, coaxing, reverie, in vain, transfixed, intricacy, chaos*. Students can add to the lexicon as they come across unfamiliar words.
- Focus:** *descriptive writing*

Chapter 13 starts with the following descriptive sentence: “Chance slammed his door and spun around, fists clenched.” That sentence leaves no doubt in our minds as to how Chance is feeling! Have students skim through the book and select three or four more examples of descriptive writing. Record these on paper and share students’ findings with the class. Ask students to come up with several of their own descriptive sentences that use this technique of showing instead of telling.
- Focus:** *poetry*

Chance loves watching the kites as they fly in the wind. Ask students: have you ever seen a kite fly—or flown one yourself? Challenge students to create a haiku or concrete poem about flying a kite. For tips on how to create haiku and concrete poems, go to [www.schools.pinellas.k12.fl.us/educators/tec/tondreault/kinds.html](http://www.schools.pinellas.k12.fl.us/educators/tec/tondreault/kinds.html).
- Focus:** *creative writing; predicting and inferring*

Have students write an epilogue for *Chance and the Butterfly*. In their epilogue, students should address changes in the relationship between Chance and Mark, and between Chance and his foster parents. Does Chance stay with this family? Does Chance work hard to get along with people at school? Does he ever get some help in learning how to read? How has his experience with the butterfly changed him?

### *Science*

- Focus:** *retelling; sky science*

Chance has posters on his wall depicting the solar system and the constellations. With your students, explore the constellations and the myths behind them at [www.wartgames.com/themes/science/constellations.html](http://www.wartgames.com/themes/science/constellations.html). Have your students select a constellation myth and practice retelling it. Then, have students create a small poster of their chosen constellations. Invite each student show his or her poster and retell the myth to the class.
- Focus:** *presenting information; life science*

On the whiteboard, model for students the life cycle of a butterfly. Online and in print, have students research the life cycle of an animal or plant that interests them. Have students draw a poster or create a PowerPoint presentation representing the life cycle of their organism and share this with the class.

**Health/Personal Planning**

- **Focus:** *interpersonal skills*

Chance has a hard time maintaining eye contact, especially when he's upset. Why is this so hard for him? Engage students in a discussion about what prosocial behavior looks like...and what antisocial behavior looks like. Invite students to pair up and role-play conversations. Have one student demonstrate antisocial behavior, such as turning the body away, crossing the arms and refusing to meet the other person's eyes. Then flip-flop the task and have them engage in a conversation where both parties demonstrate prosocial behavior. Discuss: what kind of behavior gets us further along in relating to other people?

- **Focus:** *demonstrating respect*

Chance punches Ralph and tears up Martha's storyboard when he becomes frustrated that his butterfly hasn't yet begun transforming. Have students write a letter or email to Chance suggesting how he might try handling his emotions more appropriately. Share these as a group.

- **Focus:** *healthy eating*

Ask: does your mouth water when you read about what Angie serves up for dinner? Describe how her meals—however disorganized—help to form a balanced diet for her family. Invite students to draw or create a 3-D depiction of a healthy meal that they might eat at home. Students' creations should be labeled with brief explanations of the food items and how they reflect the recommended daily allowances. Start here: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php).

- **Focus:** *building positive relationships*

With a partner, have students discuss and create a list of the qualities they expect a good friend to have and the characteristics they look for in friendships. Review and discuss. Explain to students that they are at an age when their friendships and group dynamics are changing. Emphasize that their behavior—just like Chance's—affects others. Engage students in a conversation about whether the characteristics they look for in friendships are applicable to a variety of types of interpersonal relationships.

**Connecting to the Text**

- **Focus:** *sensory detail; word choice*

In the first three paragraphs of the opening chapter, the author paints a vivid picture of Chance. Have students rewrite these paragraphs using themselves or a family member as the subject. (They will need to change the dialogue and events, of course, to reflect their own lives.) Their challenge is to choose descriptive words that show the nature of their character.

- **Focus:** *visualizing*

In chapter 3, we see Chance's room in great detail. Invite students to draw a picture of Chance's desk, or his room, rereading the passage as the need arises to help them design their picture.

- **Focus:** *questioning to deepen thinking*  
Asking good questions is an important part of learning about a topic. Have students anonymously write down five questions that they would ask Chance...if they had the chance. Record these questions in a projectable Word document, on the whiteboard or on chart paper. Go through each question with students. Discuss what makes certain questions more effective than others. As a class, select the top five most effective questions. Now that students have a clearer idea of what makes a good question, invite them to create five of their own for the author of *Chance and the Butterfly*.
- **Focus:** *plot development*  
Have students create a timeline of the story to show the major events in the book. Discuss literary elements such as conflict, climax and resolutions. On the timeline, students should note the main conflicts and their resolutions, as well as the climax of the story.
- **Focus:** *character web*  
Have students create a character web for one of the main characters. Webs should include personality traits, actions that support those personality traits, beliefs and physical characteristics. Add to this web as the story unfolds.

### Connecting to the Students

#### *Discussion questions*

**Focus:** *constructing, monitoring and confirming meaning*

1. At his previous schools, Chance missed out on being able to see the chicken eggs hatch, or the ducklings being taken to a nearby farm. This time, he's determined to "see it through." Why is it so important for Chance to witness the transition from caterpillar to butterfly?
2. When Ms. Samson hands the butterfly larvae out, Chance has already been sent back to his desk. He can only watch as the other children put little blobs of food into their containers. How does Chance feel about being excluded from this key activity? How does he feel when Ms. Samson brings him his own caterpillar?
3. Chance is dying to care for Matilda himself. Why does he so badly need something to be his?
4. At the end of chapter 6, Chance decides to take the caterpillar for himself. What advice would you like to give Chance at this point in the story?
5. When Mark is unkind to Chance, bumping into him and saying mean things, Chance says he just makes himself "go hard inside." What happens to a person if they do this over and over?
6. When Mark and Ms. Samson start talking about the caterpillars, Chance is angry. Why doesn't he want Mark to be "sticking his nose" into the classroom project?
7. Chance and Mark are forced to solve the problem of Matilda together. Explain in your own words how this changes their relationship.

*Text-to-self connections*

1. Chance has a tough time sitting still and listening, especially if he's listening to something he already knows about. Once his body starts to wriggle, Chance has a hard time stopping himself. Does this ever happen to you? How do you manage to sit still and pay attention in school?
2. In chapter 3, we learn a bit about how Chance came to this foster home. As Chance thinks about baby Louise, he reflects that he knows what it's like to be abandoned. Have you ever felt abandoned? Why does this hurt so much?
3. At first, Mark doesn't want anything to do with Chance. He tells Chance if he wanted a brother, he'd have had a "real" brother. As you see it, how would it feel to share your parents with someone you didn't like? Would it be any easier if it was someone you did like? And if it weren't for the kids who have to share their parents...who would foster the children with no families?
4. Believing he'll be able to take care of Matilda better than the class, Chance decides to take the caterpillar home in chapter 7—but this is against the rules. Is it okay to break the rules if you're helping someone else? Explain.
5. Have you ever studied a subject in school that excited you as much as the butterflies excite Chance? What other kinds of things do you wish you could learn about in school?
6. In chapter 19, Ken tells Chance that he forgives him for causing the kite to fall. How does it feel when someone forgives you? Why is forgiving others important?

*Text-to-text connections*

1. Chance has a hard time reading. Have you encountered other characters who struggle in school? Write about one such character. What did he or she have trouble learning?
2. Chance lives with a foster family. What other book or movie characters do you know who lived in foster homes? Do you know of any characters who were orphans? Adopted?
3. Raising a caterpillar turns out to be a big responsibility. What happens when we take on a responsibility we're not quite ready for? Is there another story you know of where the main character gets in over his or her head, imagining they can tackle a challenge that's maybe a bit too big for them?

*Text-to-world connections*

1. Chance's teacher is always reminding the students to raise their hands instead of calling out their ideas. As you see it, why do teachers always want you to put your hand up before speaking? Is this a good thing?
2. At the end of chapter 5, after Chance and Mark have their first disagreement, Chance reflects that he learned long ago never to tell on the "real" kid. How is this similar to the way groups of friends work? Are there some people you feel you just can't tell on?
3. When Chance brings Matilda home, he lies to Angie about what he's doing in his room. We know he's wrong to lock the door...but we can't help rooting for him not to get caught. Why do we sometimes have such mixed-up feelings about what's right and what's wrong? Explain.
4. Mark and Chance are forced to work together to solve the problem of a sick caterpillar. This, in turn, brings them closer and makes them work as a team. Think of a situation in the wider world where people or groups who have differing opinions have to pull together and work as a team in order to get things done.

**Author's Note**

Dear readers,

I used to be a substitute teacher in elementary schools and once I was invited to spend a week in a classroom where they were raising butterflies. By the end of the week, I had an idea for a book!

And it wasn't because of the butterflies as much as it was because of the boy. His name was not Chance. He was not Chance. I don't know who he was, really, because I never found out anything about his life away from school. But in my classroom, that week, I think that he was the unhappiest child that I had ever met. He could not sit still. He hurt other children. He was sent to the principal's office almost every recess and lunch. Once or twice, he ended up right on top of the desks, in a rage. He struggled with the schoolwork.

But he loved the butterflies. When I arrived on Monday morning, the caterpillars had all formed into chrysalides and the teacher had attached them to the butterfly bush, a small tree under netting on a big round table in the corner of the classroom. Every time I turned around, all week long, I would find the boy there (I'll call him Chance) watching those chrysalids.

By Friday, all of the butterflies had emerged and we were supposed to release them, but when I tried to give one to Chance, he kept his hands behind his back and refused to look at me. When we started off down to the field, he disappeared and I had to go in search of him. I found him by the door of the school, crying and crying because he did not want to release the butterflies. I took him by the hand and led him to the field. But we did not release all the butterflies that morning. One was still back in the classroom, too new, her wings too wet and crinkly to fly.

That afternoon, she was ready. I called Chance over and asked him if now he would like to release a butterfly. He nodded his head. I stood in the doorway of the classroom

and watched him step out into the sunlight, lift the container up to the sky and let the small creature go free. Chance came back into the school, alight with joy. And there, I decided, was a book.

I went back the next year to see the rest of the butterfly-raising process, to take pictures and notes. And I began to write. The boy in my class turned into Chance, a troubled foster child, just arrived in a new family where the older boy hates him. By the end of the story, better relationships have formed and Chance is ready to consider his new place a home.

I am thrilled now to see the book out in a new edition. The boy who inspired my story must be through high school by now, and I have not been an elementary school teacher for many years, though I still visit schools regularly. The other day, I was in a middle school, and a boy put up his hand.

“My name is Chance,” he said. I had never met a boy named Chance before!

I hope that you enjoy meeting the Chance in my story.

Sincerely,  
Maggie de Vries

## Resources

### Books

#### Fiction

- Bunting, Eve. *Butterfly House*  
 Byars, Betsy. *The Pinballs*  
 Carle, Eric. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*  
 Coville, Bruce. *The Prince of Butterflies*  
 Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Bud, Not Buddy*  
 Gilman, Jan Levinson. *Murphy's Three Homes: A Story for Children in Foster Care*  
 Lubar, David. *Hidden Talents*  
 Paterson, Katherine. *The Great Gilly Hopkins*  
 Rockwell, Anne. *Becoming Butterflies*  
 Wilson, Jacqueline. *The Story of Tracy Beaker*

#### Nonfiction

- Boring, Mel. *Caterpillars, Bugs and Butterflies*  
 Davis, Diane. *Something is Wrong at My House*  
 Heiligman, Deborah. *From Caterpillar to Butterfly*  
 Morgan, Sally. *The Illustrated World Encyclopedia of Butterflies and Moths: A Natural History and Identification Guide*  
 Nelson, Julie. *Families Change: A Book for Children Experiencing Termination of Parental Rights*  
 Rosenblatt, Lynn M. *Monarch Magic!*  
 Seamans, Sally. *The Care and Keeping of Friends*  
 Wilgocki, Jennifer. *Maybe Days: A Book for Children in Foster Care*

*Online*

How to Write Haiku

[www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Haiku-Poem](http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Haiku-Poem)

Concrete Poems for Kids

[www.short-story-time.com/kids-concrete-poems.html](http://www.short-story-time.com/kids-concrete-poems.html)

The Children's Butterfly Site

[www.kidsbutterfly.org/life-cycle](http://www.kidsbutterfly.org/life-cycle)

Time Lapse of Butterfly Life Cycle

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAUSKxWMIh0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAUSKxWMIh0)

Foster Families for Kids

[http://kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/home\\_family/foster\\_families.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/home_family/foster_families.html)

Friendship Website for Kids

[www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetailsKids.aspx?p=335&np=286&id=1636](http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetailsKids.aspx?p=335&np=286&id=1636)