



Read-Aloud The Monarchs

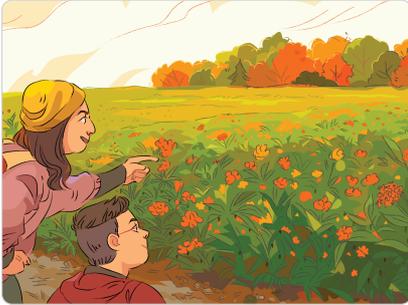
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The air is chilly. The leaves are turning. The days are growing short. It's autumn where Jacob lives in Winnipeg, Canada. And that means the monarch butterflies will soon begin their migration.

With his sister, Jacob hikes up the trail to where the milkweed grows.

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“Look how many there are,” his sister whispers, pointing to a field of bright green cocoons. “There must be hundreds, thousands, maybe even millions!”

 **Ask:** *What do you notice? What do you wonder?*”

4



That's a promising sign. Milkweed is the only plant their caterpillars eat and it's disappearing due to pesticides used in farming. The loss of the plant has caused a drop in their number over the years.

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Today is Jacob's lucky day. One of the chrysalises has already split. Out comes the first monarch of the season.

Jacob watches it, as it sits in the morning sun, unfolding its fiery wings. After a few hours, it will stretch out its wings and take flight.

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For such a tiny creature, the monarch butterfly travels a long way South. Every year, hundreds of thousands of them travel about 2,500 miles from Canada, through the United States, down to Mexico where the warm climate makes it easier to survive.

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Seventeen-hundred kilometers south of where Jacob lives, Miriam spots the butterflies, too. The new wildflowers her dad planted are attracting them. The butterflies settle after their journey to refresh themselves on some nectar.

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“Look at them; they’re huge!” Miriam says. “And there are more than there were last year.”

But the monarchs’ stop is a short one. They still have many kilometers left to travel before winter comes. After a few days, the monarchs take to the skies again, following the warm weather south.

Ask: “What do you notice? What do you wonder?”

9



By November, after seven months of flying, the first monarchs arrive at their final stop, roughly 4,000 kilometers south of where they emerged from their chrysalises.

Quique and his mother hang the nectar feeders they built together.

“Las mariposas viajaron una gran distancia. Se merecen un descanso,” his mother says. *The butterflies traveled a great distance. They deserve a rest.*

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Soon thousands of monarchs gather in the Oyamel fir tree forests. They gather on the trunks and branches, dazzling all who see them.

Ask: “What do you notice? What do you wonder?”

11



Finally, their long journey is at an end. Jacob, Miriam, and Quique compare notes with others that have tracked the butterfly's trip. Together they can see how many monarchs started the long migration and how many made it all the way to Mexico.

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By working together, researchers and citizen scientists are protecting the monarchs. Next year, they will better understand where to place butterfly feeders and which areas to protect. And the monarch population should get stronger and stronger.