



Artist & Composer Study

This session's featured artist is Maria Sibylla Merian. We've included four art selections for your kids and teens to use for picture study. They are:

- *Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium*
- *Spiders Ants and Hummingbird on a Branch of a Guava*
- *From Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium Plate xlvi*
- *Metamorphosis of a Butterfly*

We have no featured composer for this session, but have picked out an assortment of insect-themed classic music (with links to each) to listen to. They are:

- *Flight of the Bumblebee* by Rimsky-Korsakov
- *The Wasps* by Ralph Vaughan Williams
- *Etude no. 2 in F minor, Op. 25 no. 2, "The Bees"* by Frederic Chopin
- No. 142, "From the Diary of a Fly" by Béla Bartók

Artist & Composer Study



Maria Sibylla Merian

April 2, 1647 - January 13, 1717

Maria Sibylla Merian was an incredibly important figure in the fields of naturalism, art, and entomology. Born in Germany during 1647, she developed an interest in the natural world from a young age, raising silkworms and observing their life cycles. When her father passed away a few years after her birth, her mother remarried a still-life painter named Jacob Marrel, who encouraged Maria's artistic talents. Through his guidance, she learned how to draw and paint.

In 1665, she married and later had two children: daughters Johanna and Dorothea. During this time, her fascination with insects only grew. In 1679, she published her first scientific work: a book on the transformation of caterpillars to moths and butterflies. This book included illustrations depicting the insects at various stages of their life cycle, along with the plants they ate.

This work was significant because it challenged a common belief of the time: that insects would spontaneously appear from the mud. Merian's work, and others like it, showed that insects had life cycles of their own and didn't simply appear.

Maria moved to Amsterdam in 1691. There, she made the acquaintance of several important scientists and was able to see their collections of exotic flora and fauna from East and West India. Inspired, she raised money to travel on an expedition of her own by selling 255 of her paintings. On July 10, 1699, she set sail on a journey that would prove to be a highlight of her career, traveling to Suriname, South America accompanied by her daughter Dorothea.

Merian lived in Suriname for two years, observing as much of the local insects, plants, and animals as she could, and documenting them with Dorothea's assistance. Maria's work came at a time when the study of insects was fairly uncommon, and even more unusual was the fact that she was traveling on a self-funded scientific expedition as a woman. Nevertheless, she persisted, defying social norms and creating valuable research in a relatively unknown area of science.

At the end of those two years, an illness forced her to return from her trip. But she continued her work, publishing a book in 1705 on the insects of Suriname that showcased many undiscovered species. This book was considered by many the crowning jewel of her career. She remained actively involved in the work she loved, despite suffering partial paralysis in her later years, until her death in 1717.

Merian's legacy reached new heights after her passing, and her book on Suriname's insects was reprinted and published in multiple languages, gaining traction within the scientific community. Her contributions to the study of insects proved invaluable in helping to understand their life cycles and the plants they depended on for food. The breadth of her impact is demonstrated by the many different species that have been named after her as thanks for her academic work: flowers, spiders, butterflies, bees, moths, and even a lizard and a toad! To this day, Maria Sibylla Merian's work is considered a cornerstone of etymology, ensuring her memory lives on.

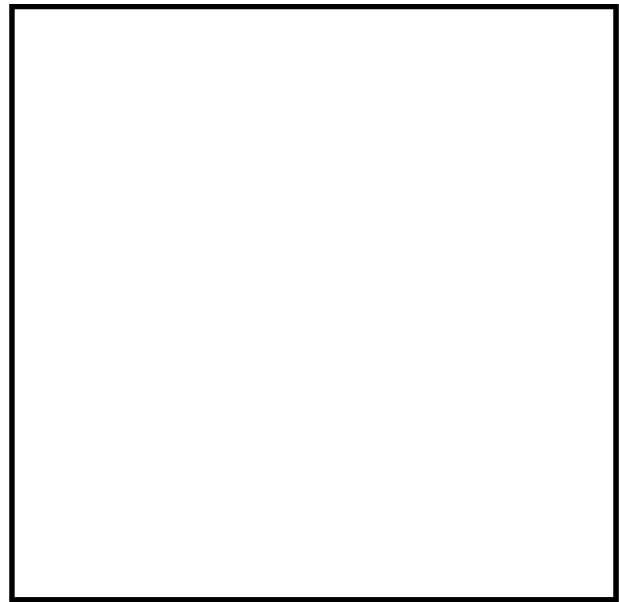
Artist Study

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Artist Fun Facts: _____



Art Mediums Used: _____

Famous Artworks: _____

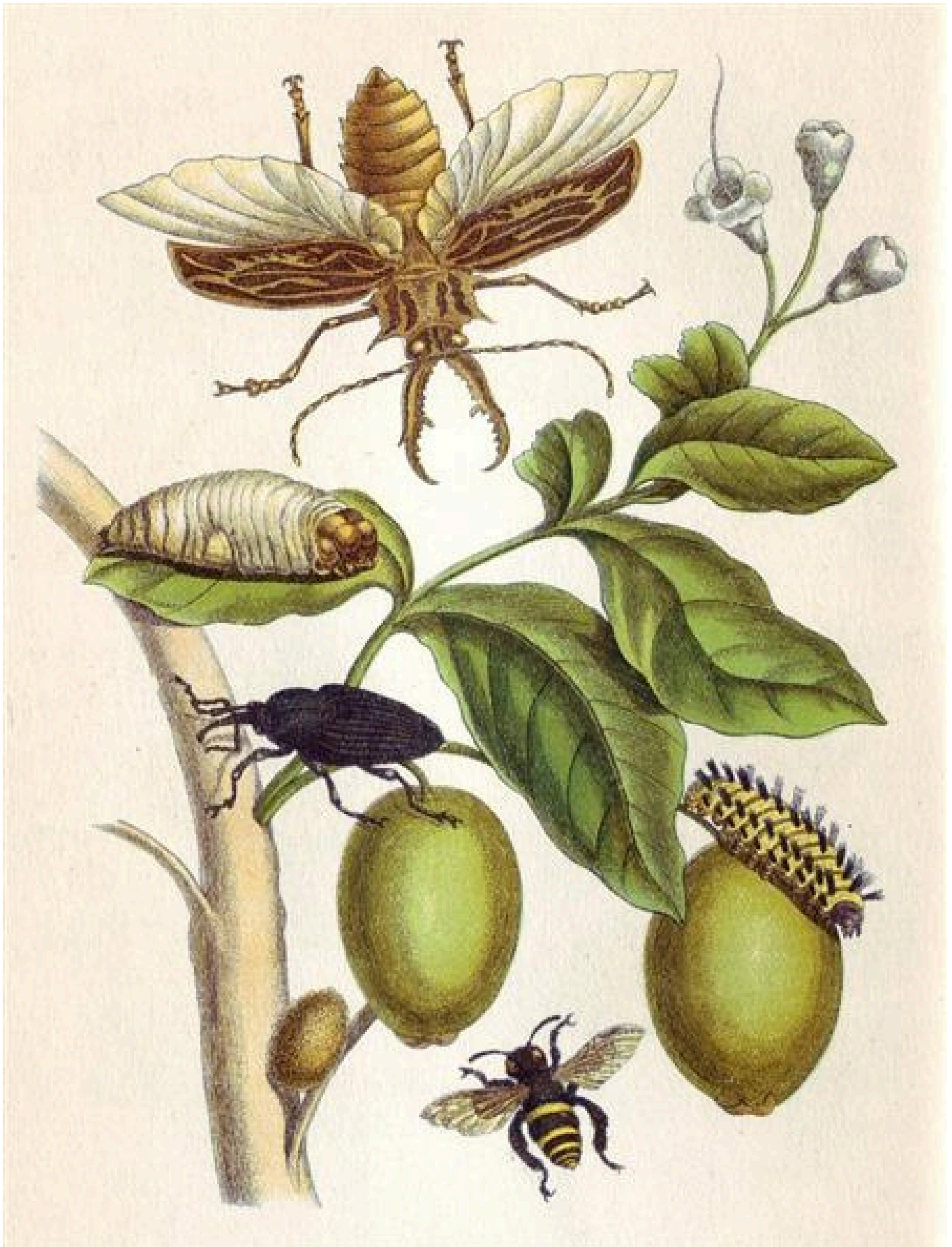
Further Study:



Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium, 1705



Spiders Ants and Hummingbird on a Branch of a Guava, 1705



From Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensium Plate xlviij,, 1705



Metamorphosis of a Butterfly, 1705

Picture Study

Title: _____

Date Created: _____

Art Mediums Used: _____

Further Study: _____

Use the box to draw a picture inspired by this artwork.

