

SIMPLE SCIENCE

Luna Moth Life Cycle

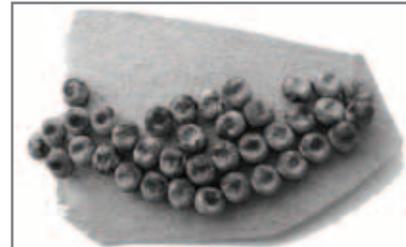


There are four stages in the life cycle of the luna moth.

Can you name the four stages? Do you know how many weeks are in each stage?

Eggs (12-14 days)

Adult female moths lay up to 200 eggs in small groups on the leaves of walnut trees. These eggs are as small as the head of a pin. Ten days later, small caterpillars eat their way out of the eggs.



Larva (3½-4 weeks)

The newborn caterpillar eats constantly—several leaves every day—and grows quickly. Soon the caterpillar's skin is so tight it starts to split. The caterpillar wriggles out of its old skin, having formed a fresh, new skin underneath.

Cocoon and Pupa (2-3 weeks)

At 2½ inches long, the caterpillar is now fully grown. It stops eating and looks for a safe place to make a cocoon. Making sticky thread from a hole near its mouth, the caterpillar begins winding the thread round and round its body. The caterpillar pulls a leaf around the cocoon, securing it with the sticky thread.

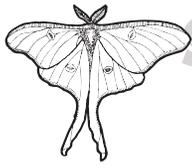


One week later, while the caterpillar is still encased in the cocoon, the caterpillar's skin splits open. What's inside? A pupa, with a moth growing inside. In three weeks the moth is ready to come out. The moth pushes from inside until the skin of the pupa splits. Next, the moth makes a special juice and softens the cocoon so it can push its way out!



Moth (1 week)

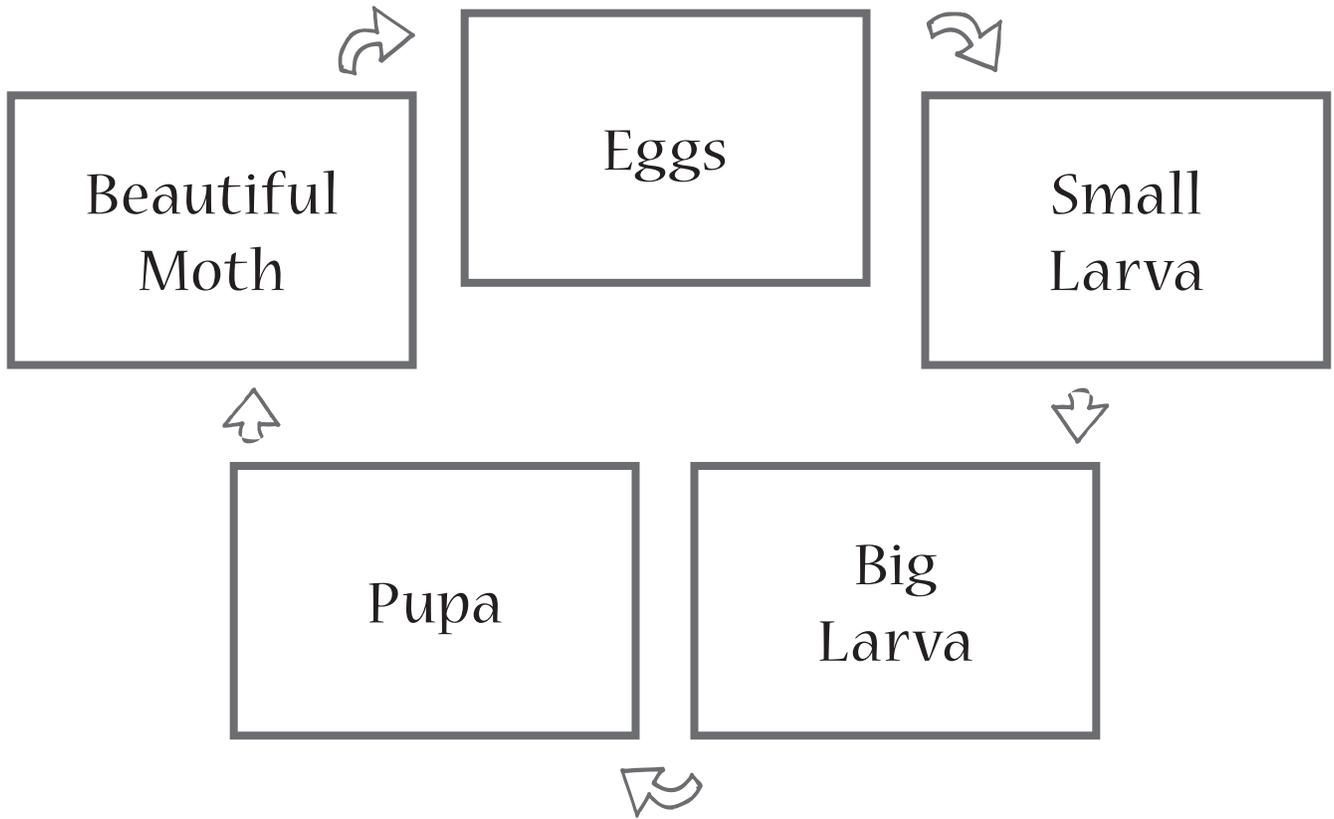
At first, the luna moth's wings are soft and crumpled. In 20 minutes, the wings are full size, and almost dry. But wait, the moth can't fly yet! Once the moth's wings are dry, it opens them and then rests until nighttime. Once it gets dark, the moth will fly away to find a mate. Luna moths only live for about 1 week.



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Name _____



Cut out these pictures. Then paste or tape them onto the life cycle chart. Be sure to match each picture to the correct life cycle stage, in order from egg to moth!

