

A vibrant child's drawing serves as the background. In the top left, a large yellow sun with a red face and radiating lines. Below it, a yellow figure with brown hair stands on a red base. To the right, a tall tree with a brown trunk and green foliage, featuring two red and black shapes in the leaves and a brown hole in the trunk. The bottom is filled with green grass and several colorful flowers in shades of pink, blue, and yellow.

PLAY + LEARN

*experiences to share with
your children aged 2-5*

This week's theme is based on the enchanting children's book *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. I still remember the day the librarian read this book to us when I was a young child at school. I was mesmerised and I just couldn't wait to get my hands on it and touch all those beautiful colourful fruit with the little holes perfect for my small fingers to poke through, just like the very hungry caterpillar. This book is one of my favourites and my children aged 6 and 2 both love it too.

<http://learn.starclass.com.au>

Sunday – Preparation

1. Read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* with your child at least once every day for the next week. If you don't already own this book it is well worth buying! Look for it in your local library or ask your friends – someone is sure to have a copy!
2. Buy or make some playdough. There are two playdough recipes in the resources section – my children always enjoy having new or freshly prepared playdough.
3. Print out the fruit sheets (see resources section) and colour them in. Alternatively, print the coloured fruit sheets or improvise your own fruit shapes. If you want your pictures to last more than one day then you should glue them onto cardboard (used cereal boxes do the job). Cut a circle shaped hole in each piece of fruit using fine sharp scissors or a hole punch. You will need a pipe cleaner 5-10cm long to be the caterpillar – make sure it fits through the holes easily.
4. When you do your groceries this week, invite your child to choose fruit for a caterpillar's fruit salad. Look for bright colours and fruits they like to eat and a fruit they have never tried before. You need 5 different colours and kinds of fruit. You don't need to get 1 apple, 2 pears, 3 plums etc. You can simply choose the fruits you both like and buy one or two of each.

You will also need:

- » 2 colours of tissue paper. You may need unused tissue paper as wrinkled paper won't produce the same results. The nicest results will come from the tissue paper sold in small squares from art/craft shops.
- » Pipe cleaners
- » Threading beads, cotton reels or buttons for threading. Otherwise, buy a packet of tube shaped pasta. It works just as well.
- » Dress scarves (not winter neck scarves), silk play clothes or old muslin baby wraps for wings.
- » Paint suitable for children (red, blue, yellow and white so you can mix a range of colours)
- » Large sheets of thick white paper that can hold quite a lot of paint (bigger than A4 or US letter size). Printer paper is not strong enough to hold the amount of paint young children like to use without the paper ripping so you may need to buy a pad of thicker paper.

Playdough Caterpillars

Sit with your child and make playdough caterpillars. Roll balls and push them together to make a very hungry caterpillar. Make a long sausage shape and use a paddle pop stick to make caterpillar segments. Talk about what you are doing with your child, and if they do not know, show them how to roll a ball or make a long snake shape.

Can you make a caterpillar in another way? Can you make the longest caterpillar? The widest? The thinnest? Can you make a chrysalis (called a cocoon in the story) for your caterpillar? A butterfly?

Roll balls and pretend they are the fruits in the story. Push a hole through each playdough fruit and push your playdough caterpillar through the fruit like in the story. Resist the temptation to pull out cookie cutters or complicated playdough tools for this activity. It is amazing how engaged and creative young children can be simply with playdough, a simple tool, their hands and minds.

Story Pictures

Set out the coloured pictures of fruits with holes through them and a caterpillar pipe cleaner and invite your child to explore and play. You don't have to 'teach' your child anything. Simply present the materials and leave them to explore (but make sure you listen in – it can be delightful to observe what they do!) You may choose to show them how to push the caterpillar through the holes if they have not tried it by themselves.

My 2 year old arranged, counted and named the fruit pieces as soon as he saw them. He didn't know them all but he loved exploring!

These materials lend themselves to retelling the story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, counting, naming colours and naming fruits. If your child is ready they may do this spontaneously, otherwise you can demonstrate this another day.

Tuesday

Tissue Paper Butterflies

Working together with your child, cut two pieces of coloured tissue paper into 5cm squares and place them one on top of the other. Fold the tissue paper squares in half and cut the unfolded edge to make butterfly wings. Open the paper out to reveal a whole butterfly. Fold the pipe cleaner in half and place the tissue paper wings in the middle so that the pipe cleaner becomes the butterfly body. Twist the pipe cleaner at the top of the tissue paper to hold the wings together, making the butterfly body and antennae.

Extra step: find a short stick, loop a string around the pipe cleaner body and tie it with a knot. Wrap the other end of the string loop around the stick so the butterfly hangs from the stick. Now your child can make their butterfly fly!

Visit this blog for some inspiration:

<http://goo.gl/bpx3P>

Making and Following Lines

Print out several copies of the caterpillar tracing sheet (one sheet for you and several for your child). If your child is able to do tracing on their own then this will become a focused independent activity. You can expect to show them how to do it and then they may like to do this by themselves. If your child is younger or not ready for this kind of activity, they may enjoy making lines and marks in the paper alongside you. You can add features to turn the wavy lines and letter Cs into caterpillars.



Threading Caterpillars

Make 'caterpillars' by threading beads, buttons, cotton reels or tube shaped pasta onto some string. There are so many options for playing with threading and the story. You may thread 1 red bead for Monday, two green beads for Tuesday, three blue beads for Wednesday and so on as you retell the story. You may thread two or three colour patterns, make a very long caterpillar, or thread different colours to represent favourite foods.

An alternative activity is to create 'wings' with your child using whatever materials or scarves you can find. Simply hold each end of the scarf in your hands, put hair elastics around your wrists and pull the ends of the scarf through the elastics to hold them on. The beauty of this experience is in the simplicity so don't spend too long creating perfect wings! A child can repeat the transformation and become a butterfly without needing commercial dress-ups or complicated materials.

Where is the Caterpillar?

Set up a scene with some pieces of bark, leaves or other material you have collected from the garden and hide a playdough caterpillar in amongst these on your child's play table or a tray. Invite them to find the caterpillar. They may want to repeat this game again and again but you may move them into playing with the playdough independently.



Thursday

Caterpillar Fruit Salad

Prepare a fruit salad or plate of fruit to share with your child and invite your child to watch and help. Using an apple corer, knife or chop stick, cut or push a hole through each piece of fruit. Retell the very hungry caterpillar as you prepare the fruit. You don't have to stick to the fruit in Eric Carle's story for this. See the resources section for a simple retelling of the story that you may wish to use.

Observing and Connecting With Nature

Take your fruit platter into your garden or local park and share a picnic. Notice any insects like butterflies. Your child may like to spot as many as they can. You may take a garden walk together and look for caterpillars, beetles and bugs. This is an opportunity to talk about how it is fine to look at animals but it is best to leave them and their homes alone.



Paint a Butterfly

You may remember this activity from when you were a child. Help your child to fold a large and heavy white piece of paper in half and open it out again. Spoon blobs of coloured paints along the foldline. Fold the paper in half again and, using fingers, gently smooth and push the paint away from the centre to make butterfly wing shapes. Open the paper out and peg it up to dry. If your child is sensitive to textures or having 'mess' on their fingers, this is an activity that lets them get a feel for the texture of paint without actually touching it at all.

If your child doesn't make butterflies from their blobs remember to just go with what they are making. This kind of activity doesn't have to be heavily structured – it is an exploration. Enjoy what happens to the paint and the colours, enjoy the feeling of the paint squishing under the paper and share this with your child. If the paper rips encourage your child to smooth the paper even more gently next time and use a little less paint. You could also make a print from their torn piece of paper by pressing a clean sheet over the top and pulling it straight off.

Story Pictures

Give your child the coloured pictures of fruit and the pipe cleaner caterpillar to play with again. You might leave them to play and see what they do. Or you might like to count the fruit together, name the colours and the fruit. Ask your child if the caterpillar is very hungry today and if he might like to eat some fruit – begin to retell the story together.



Extras

Eric Carle Collage

I couldn't have activities inspired by *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* without including an Eric Carle collage. A collage is made by simply gluing pieces of paper and other materials onto a background to create a picture or design. Results may not be quite in the same league as Eric Carle's work but it can be a lot of fun anyway for people of any age.

You can use any materials you have at hand: coloured pieces of paper from magazines, pictures, old wrapping paper or coloured paper from a craft store. You may paint your own paper in bright colours, let it dry, and then use this for a collage. You may cut the paper with scissors or show your child how to rip the paper into pieces. Sometimes I have presented my children with pre-cut bowls of paper in different colours to give them the opportunity of exploring collage without needing to find and prepare their materials first.

Don't be surprised if your child wants to put glue on top of everything and doesn't get the idea that it goes under the paper or other materials you collect – in collage with young children anything goes! Repeated opportunities and modelling will help them understand how it works.

You may also like to use 'contact' or clear plastic sticky book covering instead of a piece of paper for your background. Peel the backing off your contact slowly and tape it down. Now your child can place their collage pieces straight onto the contact – no need for glue. If they use tissue paper you will have a stained glass effect if you hold the collage up to a window. It's also okay to use stickers instead, especially if you don't want the mess of glue.

Caterpillar and Butterfly Movement and Imagination

You can pretend to flutter about, land on a flower and sip the sweet nectar (this is even better if you have some graceful flying music). Pretend to be a caterpillar and inch your way along the floor. Curl up into a ball and pretend you are inside a safe warm chrysalis (cocoon) then when you are ready, stretch, unfurl your wings and emerge as a beautiful butterfly. After a few repeats, you may turn this into a silly imaginative game where you hide and curl up as small as you can and then emerge as something unexpected like a crocodile or a horse. Ask your child to guess what you are and invite them to try it too.

Cooked Play Dough

- » 2 cups water
- » 2 cups plain flour
- » 1 cup salt
- » 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- » 1½ tablespoons cream of tartar

Combine all ingredients together in a saucepan. Stir over a low heat until the mixture is smooth. It will thicken and start to look like playdough. It gets quite thick and hard to stir. I find it is better to overcook it a little otherwise it can be quite gooey and stick to fingers and surfaces. You may like to add flour to the dough to change the texture. Allow it to cool before playing.

You can add food colouring/dye when the mixture is smooth and still cooking, or you can wait till the dough is cooked, divide it into two or three balls and make several different colours by kneading the colouring in.

No-Cook Play Dough

- » 1½ cups boiling water
- » 2 cups plain flour
- » 1 cup salt
- » 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- » 2 tablespoons cream of tartar

Stir together in a large bowl until the dough comes together. Children may help knead the dough once it has cooled down enough for them to touch it.

Links

The Very Hungry Caterpillar Youtube animation:

<http://youtu.be/HpISHA8Fs4w>

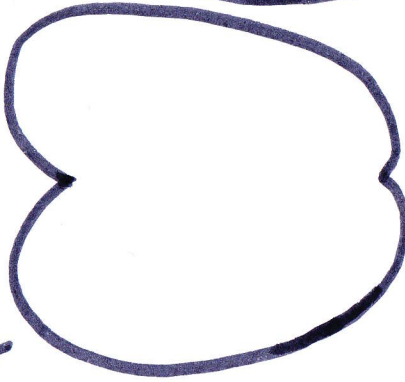
My Own Very Hungry Caterpillar Coloring Book:

<http://amzn.com/0399242074>

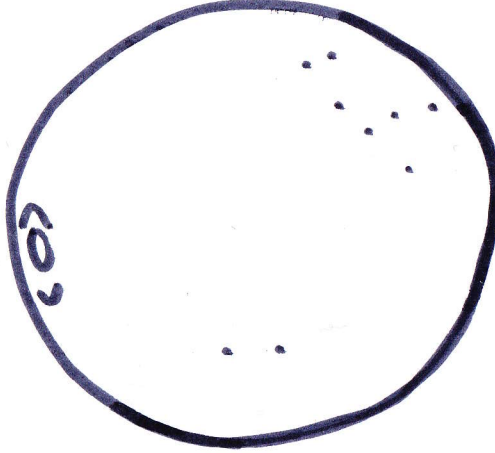
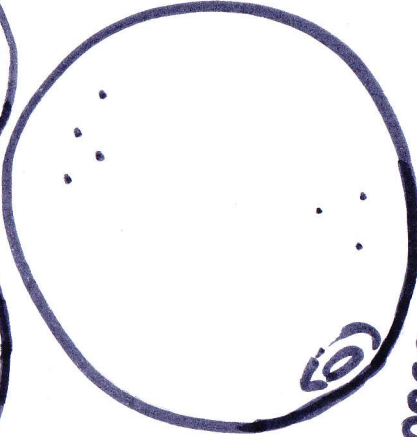
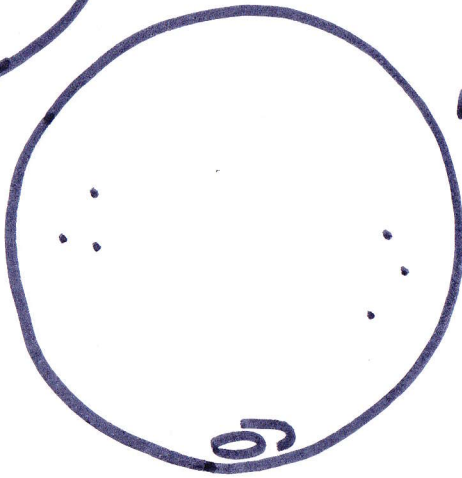
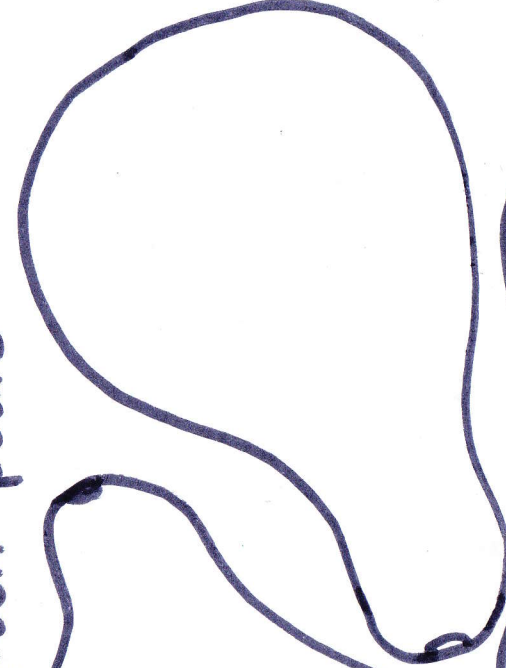
MamaMoontime:

<http://goo.gl/mW3nd>

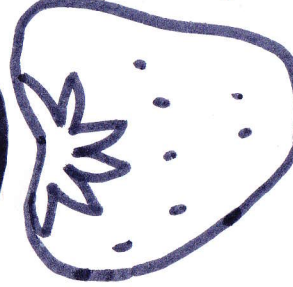
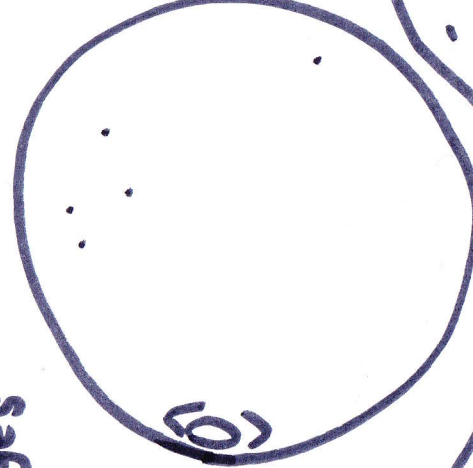
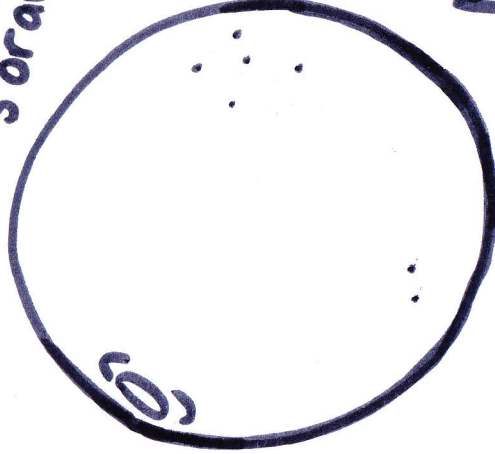
1 red apple



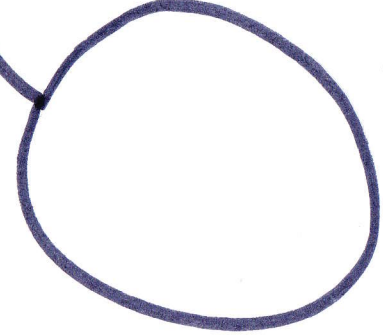
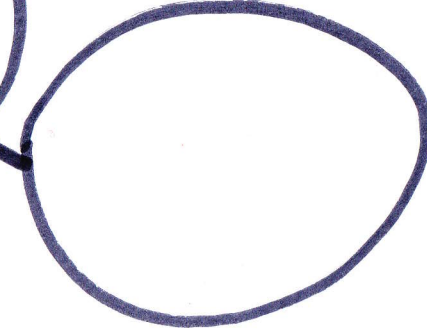
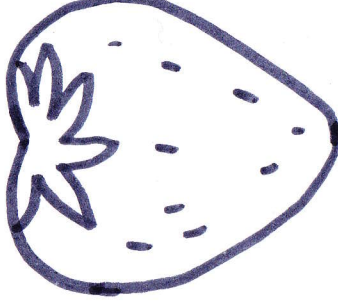
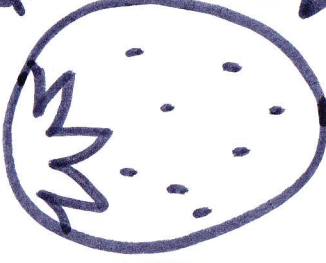
2 green pears



5 oranges

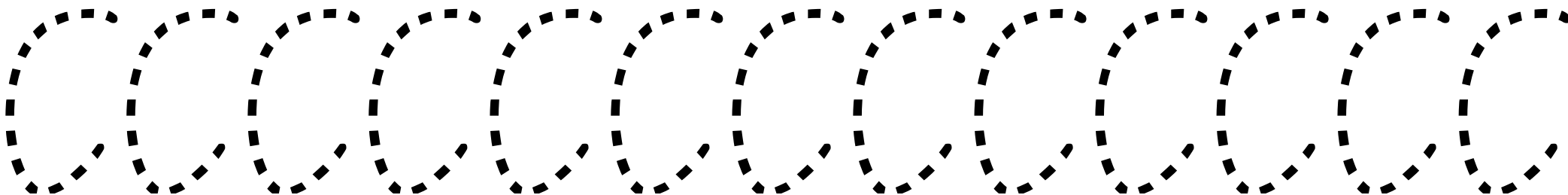
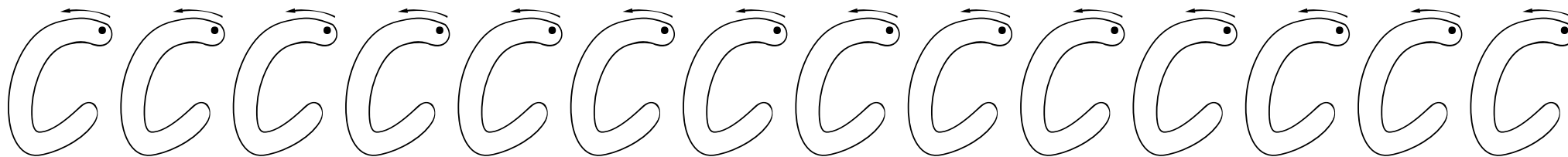
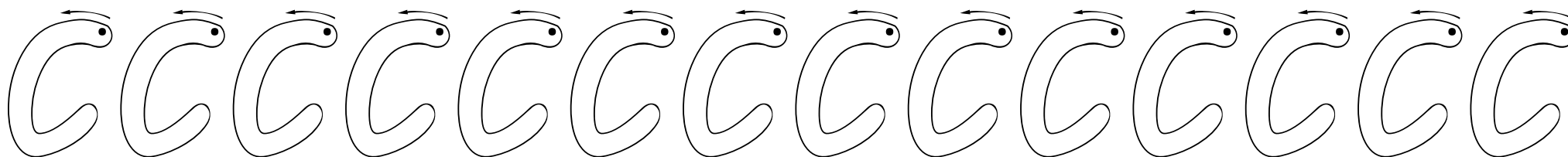
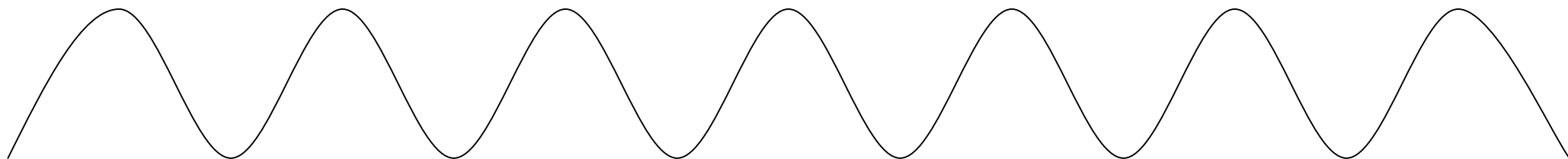
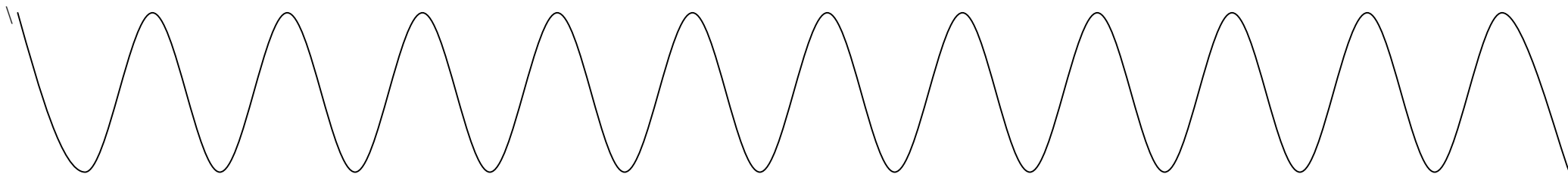


4 red strawberries



3 purple plums





PLAY + LEARN

*join our mailing list or
follow us on twitter to
receive more weekly
activity sheets*

visit our website

<http://learn.starclass.com.au>