



# Summer Birds: The Butterflies of Maria Merian

*Margarita Engle*

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In the Middle Ages, people believed that insects were evil, born from mud in a process called spontaneous generation. Maria Merian was only a child, but she disagreed. She watched carefully as caterpillars spun themselves cocoons, which opened to reveal summer birds, or butterflies and moths. Maria studied the whole life cycle of the summer birds, and documented what she learned in vibrant paintings.

This is the story of one young girl who took the time to observe and learn, and in so doing disproved a theory that went all the way back to ancient Greece.

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