

PRIMARILY FOR US*

Grades K-3

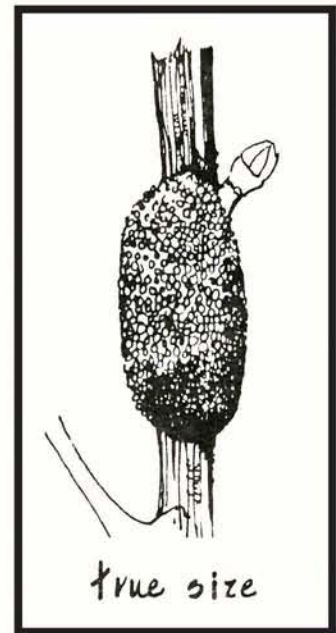
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TENT CATERPILLARS

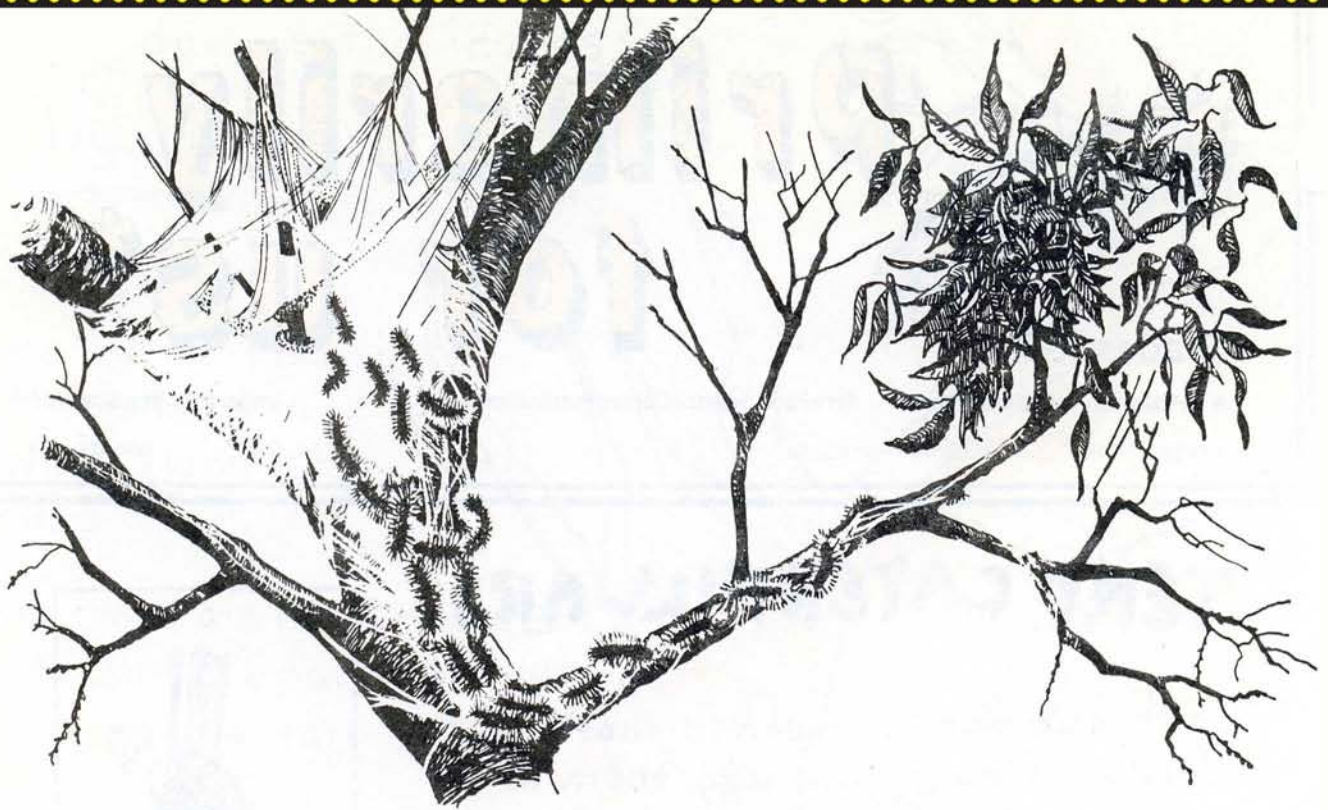
Last summer a mother moth laid hundreds of eggs. She laid them in an egg case around a tree branch. The egg case turned dark brown, hard, and shiny. Fall rain and winter snow did not hurt the eggs.



Now spring is here. Flowers are blooming and trees have new green leaves.

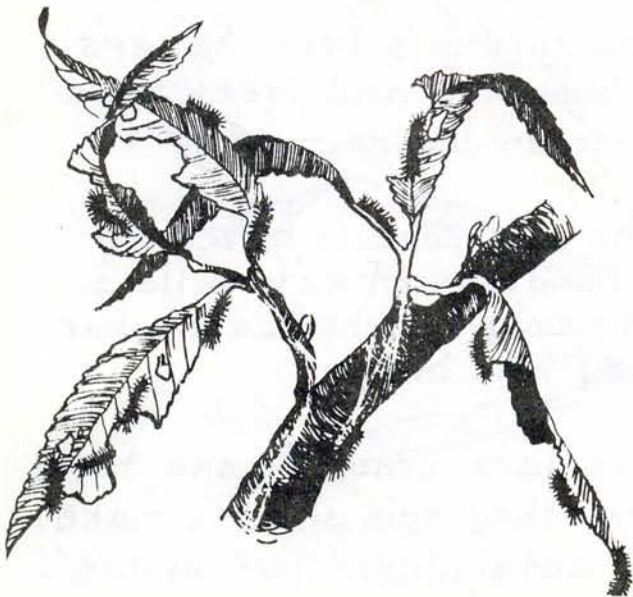
The egg case is hatching out hundreds of caterpillars. Each newly hatched caterpillar is only this big .

All the caterpillars crawl to one fork in the tree. Here they spin silk to make a home. All the caterpillars live inside this silken tent.



April is the perfect time to look for tent caterpillars. It is easy to see the soft, white tent in the fork of a tree. Look closely and you might see the caterpillars inside. You will most likely see them out on branches. Each caterpillar spends its time in search of leaves to eat.

The leaves of wild cherry are their favorite food. Caterpillars from just one tent can eat all the leaves from a cherry tree!



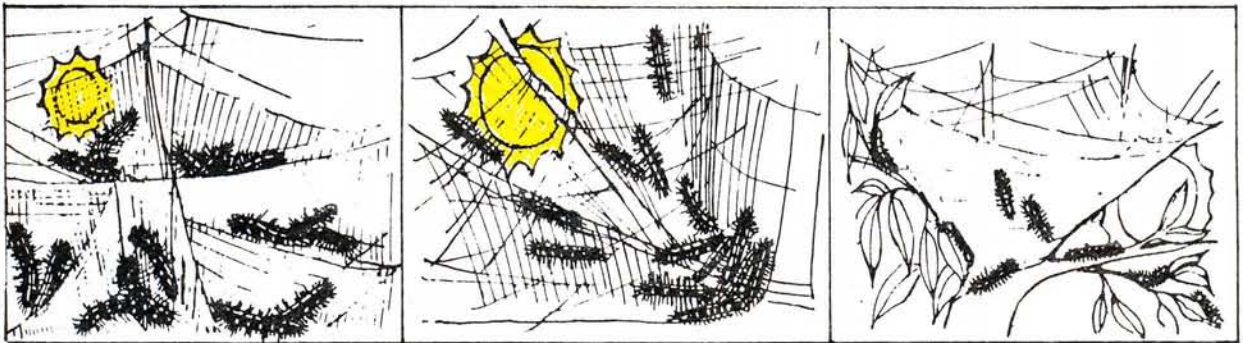
When a tent caterpillar leaves the tent, it lays down a silk trail. It follows the trail home later.

During the day a cherry tree becomes covered with silk trails.

The tent is really a wonderful home. It has silken layers like rooms. Air inside the tent is warmed by the sun during the day. At night the tent stays warm





Early in the morning the caterpillars leave their tent to feed. They rush back if it starts to rain or if the wind begins to blow. Sometimes the April sun is too hot for the caterpillars. They stay deep inside the tent layers where it is still cool.

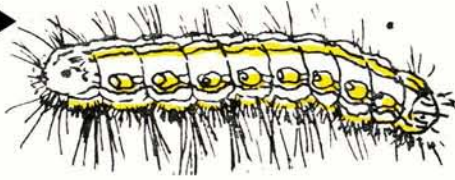


The caterpillars grow bigger from all the leaves they eat. They must make their tent bigger, too.

The tent caterpillars might even move to a new tree fork to build a big tent.

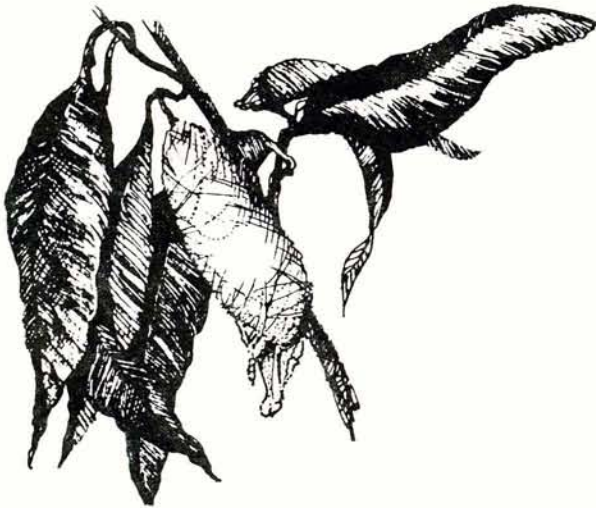


For six weeks the caterpillars will live on the tree and eat the leaves. Each one will grow from  to 



In May the caterpillars will be ready to change into moths. Each one will quit eating and crawl down the tree. It will crawl away from the other caterpillars. Each will find a safe place and spin a cocoon of white silk.

Inside the cocoon a caterpillar will change into an adult (moth). The moth will then fly away.



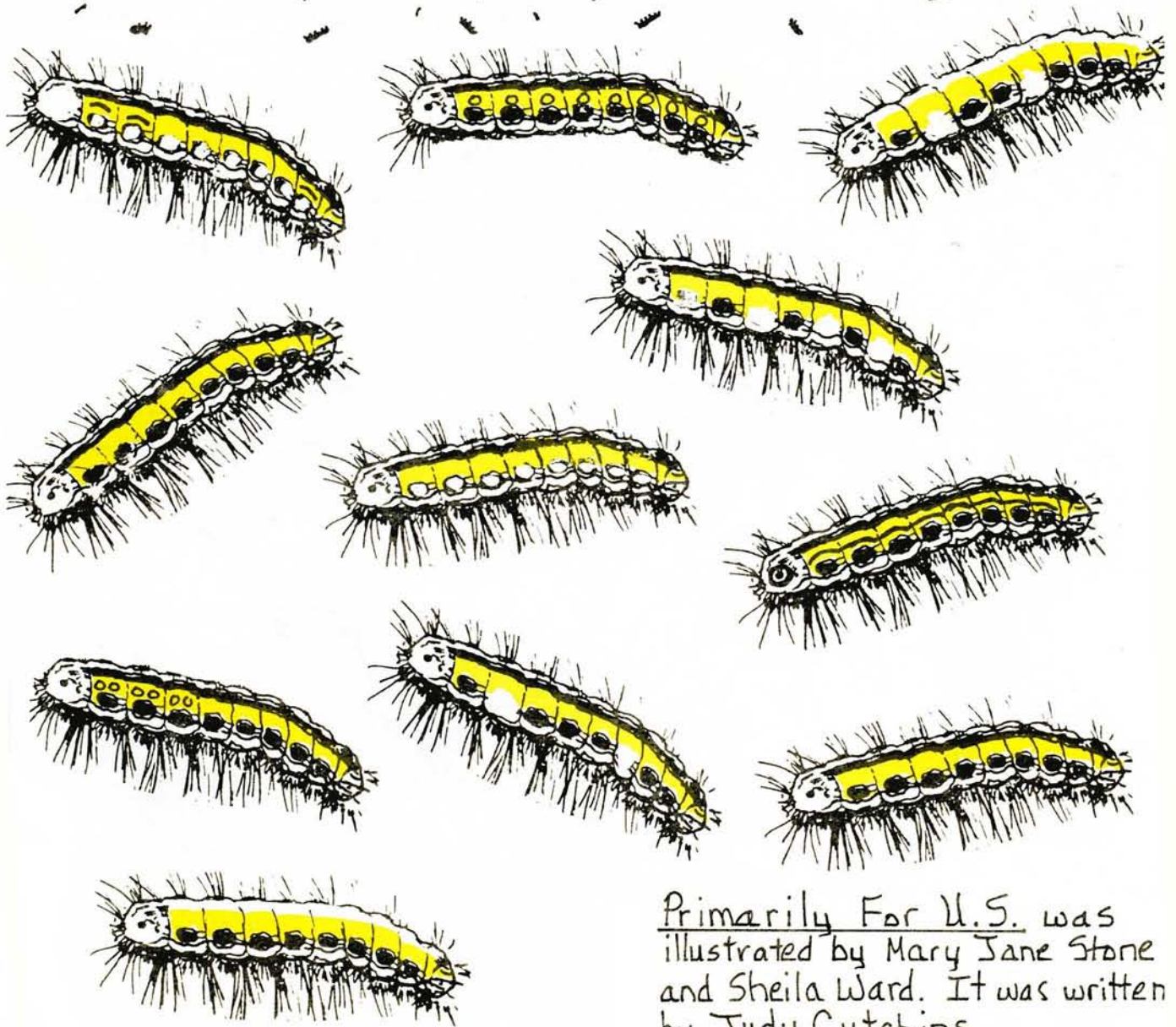
Moths do not eat leaves. They feed on the sweet nectar in the summer flower.



Before long female moths lay eggs. They make egg cases just as their mother moths did the summer before. Next spring there will be more caterpillars!

WATCH OUT! Tent caterpillars are all around when they go out in search of places to make cocoons.

? Which two big caterpillars below are just alike?



Primarily For U.S. was illustrated by Mary Jane Stone and Sheila Ward. It was written by Judy Cutchins.

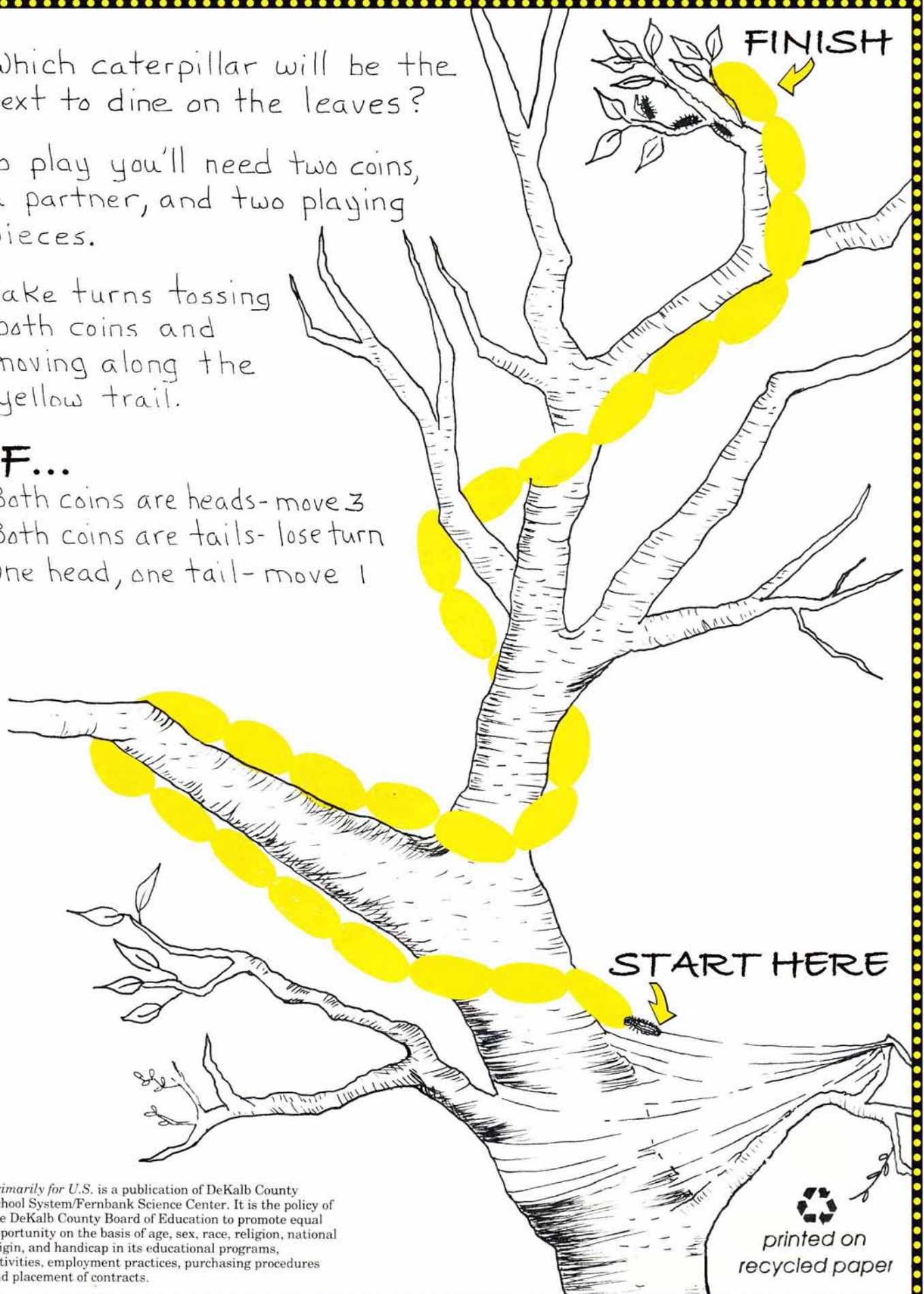
Which caterpillar will be the next to dine on the leaves?

To play you'll need two coins, a partner, and two playing pieces.

Take turns tossing both coins and moving along the yellow trail.

IF...

Both coins are heads- move 3
Both coins are tails- lose turn
One head, one tail- move 1



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