



W H A L E C L A S S

Circle Time Guide

Everything you need, one page per day.

Week 25 · Spring & the Life Cycle of Animals

29 March – 2 April 2027 · 13 minutes a day · ages 2.5–6, English learners

春分 has just passed (21 March) — 春分立蛋 stands on the shelf all week · 清明 Monday 5 April, school closed ·
back Tuesday, a four-day week

WEEK OVERVIEW



Print · laminate · ring-bind · hold this all week

Spring wakes everything up, and **nothing arrives finished**. An egg becomes a chick, a caterpillar becomes a butterfly — and then it goes round again. The whole week is one circle, and on Friday they walk it with their feet. Every script here is word-for-word the same as the teachers' page.

FIVE WORDS THEY'LL OWN BY FRIDAY

spring egg chick caterpillar butterfly

Littles (2.5–3) — one word + a gesture is a win: “Egg!” (two hands make a ball), “Cheep!” (a pecking beak with finger and thumb), “Fly!” (arms wide, flap slowly).

Bigs (4–6) — sentence frames: “It is spring.” · “This is an egg.” · “The caterpillar becomes a butterfly.” · “I am growing too.”

Never ask a little for a sentence. They will get there by watching the bigs.

THE 13-MINUTE FLOW, EVERY DAY

- 2 MIN** Magic Box hook — chant, shake, sniff, dramatic peek, the day's real object.
- 4 MIN** Teach — the day's stage, held up so everyone can see it. Get it wrong once on purpose.
- 3 MIN** Song — chorus → today's new verse → chorus.
- 3 MIN** Game — one named game, tied to the day's word.
- 1 MIN** Close — whisper → normal → SHOUT.

IN THE MAGIC BOX, DAY BY DAY

Mon a branch with real buds or blossom, cut that morning · **Tue** a real egg sitting in a little nest · **Wed** a fluffy chick and the cracked eggshell it came out of · **Thu** a caterpillar and a leaf full of nibbled holes · **Fri** a chrysalis (a stocking) with a paper butterfly to pull out of it, plus the life-cycle ring cards and every prop from the week.

THE WEEK'S CLOSE

Everyone: “Egg... chick... BUTTERFLY! Wake up, SPRING!” (*ball hands · pecking beak · flapping wings · both arms thrown up on the shout*)

THEME SHELF · FOUR TRAYS

- 1** • Butterfly life-cycle ring cards — egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, butterfly, laid out in a **circle**, never a line. *Control:* numbers 1–4 on the backs. (From Friday's chrysalis.)
- 2** • Chick life-cycle tray — egg → cracking egg → chick → hen on an outline mat, with Wednesday's real shell. *Control:* the printed outlines. (From Tuesday and Wednesday.)
- 3** • Mother and baby matching — ten pairs, plus our 12 sorting cards under the 宝宝 / 长大了 signs. *Control:* a matching symbol on the back of each pair.
- 4** • Tweezer the eggs into the nests — five small eggs, five hollows, one pair of tweezers. *Control:* five and five — the tray tells you when you are finished. (Practical life, fine motor.)

CHINESE ANGLE

One 汉字 card a day beside the branch: 春 · 蛋 · 长 · 虫 · 蝶. 春分立蛋 — a raw egg stands on its end on the shelf all week for anyone who wants a go. 孟浩然's 《春晓》 is said over Monday's game and in full on Friday: 春眠不觉晓, 处处闻啼鸟。夜来风雨声, 花落知多少。 Friday announces 清明 (Monday 5 April): 清明去扫墓, 也去踏青 — school is closed and we are back on Tuesday.

FRIDAY'S DARK PHONICS SOUND

qu — the pair that never separates: **q** never goes anywhere without **u**, and together they say *kw*: quick, quack, queen, quilt. “The quick queen quacks!” The week carries it: the duckling on the sorting cards **quacks**, and a caterpillar is anything but **quick**.

MONDAY · DAY 1

Wake Up, Spring!

Today's words: **spring**

Grab: a **branch with real buds or blossom**, cut that morning — it has to be a real one; a jar of water to stand it in where every child can reach it; one **raw egg** for 春分立蛋; the 春 card; the picture cards from print pack page 11.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box will not quite shut — something is sticking out of one end. Hold it up. Whole class chants:

Everyone: “What’s in the box? What’s in the box?”

Shake it — a dry little rattle of twigs. Now lift the lid a crack and **sniff**, loudly, with your eyes shut. Sniff again. Let your face go amazed.

Teacher: “Something in here was **asleep** all winter... and it has just **WOKEN UP**.” (*draw the branch out slowly, buds first, and hold it up against the window*)

The branch goes right round the circle and every child touches one bud with one finger. Then everybody curls up small and stretches up tall: **“Spring!”**

4 MIN TEACH · SPRING

Everybody curls up on the floor as small as they can. We wake up twice — slow, then quick:

The seed is **asleep**, (*curled up tight, head right down*)

The tree is **asleep**, (*still curled, completely still*)

The sun comes **up**... (*rise slowly onto your knees, hands opening*)

and everybody **WAKES!** (*stand and stretch as tall as you can go*)

Then the branch itself, standing in its jar. **Count the buds together**, touching each one as you go. Now say the plain true thing, slowly: nothing on this branch is **finished**. Every bud is on its way to being a leaf, and we are going to watch it happen all week.

Littles curl and stretch and say **“Spring!”** Bigs take the frame: **“It is spring.” “The buds are growing.”**

Teacher fails: stand the branch in the jar **upside down**, blossom under the water, roots-end waving in the air. Step back and admire it. Hold it. Wait.

Chinese moment: lay the 春 card at the foot of the jar and say 春天来了! once, all together. Leave the card there; the row grows by one card a day. Then 春分立蛋 — stand the raw egg on its end on the shelf and leave it standing there all week.

3 MIN GAME · WAKE UP, SPRING!

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” Everybody chooses one thing to be — a seed, a bear, a bulb, a sleeping bug — and curls up on the floor, completely still. One child is **the sun**, with a yellow scarf.

Teacher: “The sun is coming round... **shhh**... and whoever the sun touches — **WAKES UP!**” (*the sun walks the circle and taps one head at a time*)

The tapped child uncurls, stretches, and says what they are: **“I’m a flower!” “I’m a bear!”** Littles just stretch and say **“Wake up!”** — a full win. Then that child becomes the sun and the game goes on.

Chinese moment: this game is the poem. Say 孟浩然’s 《春晓》 over the top of it, quietly, while the sun walks: 春眠不觉晓，处处闻啼鸟。 Waking up in spring and hearing birds everywhere — that is exactly what is happening on your carpet.

1 MIN CLOSE

Standing round the branch, curled small and ready to grow. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: “Egg... chick... **BUTTERFLY!** Wake up, **SPRING!**” (*ball hands · pecking beak · flapping wings · both arms thrown up on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *Mouse’s First Spring* (Lauren Thompson) — one small animal finding one new thing on every page. Let them guess what is under each flap of grass before you turn it.

3 MIN · Today’s song moment — chorus → Monday’s verse → chorus, standing round the branch.

“The buds pop open, the birds all sing, / Wake up, wake up — it’s spring, spring, spring!” (*fingers popping open, then a beak; stretch taller on each “spring”*)

TUESDAY · DAY 2

An Egg in the Nest

Today's words: **egg** (*spring comes back every day*)

Grab: a **real egg** sitting in a little nest of straw, in the Magic Box; a second egg, **hard-boiled**, for handling; a feely bag with four or five hidden things for the game; the 蛋 card; yesterday's branch and the standing 春分 egg on the shelf.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is heavier on one side, and it must be carried **flat**, in two hands. Chant it first:

Everyone: "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Teacher: "Today we do **NOT** shake the box." (*carry it round the whole circle, held flat, so every child can look in from above*)

Lift the little nest out with both hands and hold it very still. Then, in a whisper: (*one finger touching the shell*)

Teacher: "It's smooth... it's cold... and there is something **alive** inside it."

Two hands make a ball: **"Egg!"**

4 MIN TEACH · EGG

The hard-boiled egg goes round the circle, one child at a time, held in **two hands**, in complete silence. Nobody speaks until it comes back to you. Then, twice, with the actions:

Little white **egg**, (*two hands make a round ball*)

Round and **warm**, (*rock the ball gently, side to side*)

Sleeping, sleeping... (*both hands to your cheek, eyes shut*)

until you are **BORN!** (*open both hands wide, fingers spread*)

Now ask it and take every answer: **what is inside an egg?** A dinosaur, a snake, a cake — take them all seriously. Then tell them: a **chick**. Tomorrow. And say the true part too: the egg on our shelf came from the shop and will never hatch; the ones that do hatch sit warm under a hen for **three whole weeks**. Three weeks is a very long time, and that is why waiting belongs in this week.

Littles make the ball hands and say **"Egg!"** Bigs owe you the frame: **"This is an egg."** **"The chick is inside the egg."**

Teacher fails: announce that *you* will keep the egg warm, and start lowering yourself onto it to sit on it. Keep going. They will stop you.

Chinese moment: the 蛋 card joins 春 — 鸡蛋. Then everybody gets one turn at 春分立蛋: stand the raw egg on its own end on the shelf. It really does work if the hands are patient, and patient hands are the whole lesson today.

3 MIN GAME · WHAT'S IN THE EGG?

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" The feely bag holds four or five things they have already met: a bud, a feather, a stone, the eggshell, a little chick. **No looking.**

Teacher: "Hand in... feel it... **tell us what it is** — and *then* pull it out." (*the whole circle waits; nobody shouts the answer*)

Naming it before seeing it is the work. Littles get a hint and one word: **"Egg!"** Bigs give a sentence before they pull: **"I think it is an egg."** Then out it comes and everybody sees whether they were right.

Put the same thing back in twice, on purpose. A child who feels the egg a second time and names it instantly, without stopping to think, has just shown you the word is theirs.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody's hands cupped round an imaginary egg. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: "Egg... chick... BUTTERFLY! Wake up, SPRING!" (*ball hands · pecking beak · flapping wings · both arms thrown up on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *An Egg Is Quiet* (Dianna Aston) — every kind of egg there is, on one enormous spread. Let them find the smallest one and the biggest one.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Tuesday's verse → chorus, sung quietly, rocking the nest.

"In the nest there is an egg, / Round and warm — and not one leg!" (*cup both hands into a nest; rock it, then shrug*)

WEDNESDAY · DAY 3

Crack! A Chick

Today's words: **chick** (*spring · egg come back*)

Grab: a **fluffy chick** and the **cracked eggshell** it came out of — both halves — in the Magic Box; one real feather; the 长 card; a clear space to run the circle game in.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

While the class chants, tap the underside of the box quietly with one fingernail — *tap... tap... tap* — and look as if you have no idea where it is coming from.

Everyone: “What’s in the box? What’s in the box?”

Teacher: “Something in here is trying to get **OUT**.” (*peek in, gasp, and lift out the two halves of the cracked shell, one in each hand*)

Hold the two empty halves apart and look inside them, puzzled — where has it gone? Then reach back in and bring out the **chick**. Pecking beak with finger and thumb: **“Cheep! Chick!”**

4 MIN TEACH · CHICK

Everybody **is** an egg — curled up on the floor, hands over your head. We hatch twice, slow then fast:

Tap, tap, tap — a little **crack**, (*three knuckle taps on the floor*)

Tap, tap, tap — the shell goes **CRACK!** (*one hard clap, all together*)

Out comes a chick, all **fluffy** and small, (*uncurl very slowly, blinking*)

Cheep, cheep, cheep — that’s all! (*pecking beak, finger and thumb*)

Then hold the chick and the shell up **together** and put the story in order out loud, pointing: first the **egg**... then the **crack**... then the **chick**... and one day, a big **hen**, who lays an egg. Draw the circle in the air with one finger as you say it. It goes round.

Little peck and say **“Chick!”** Bigs owe you a sentence: **“The chick comes out of the egg.” “The chick is growing.”**

Teacher fails: try to post the chick back into the shell and press the two halves together round it. “In you go. Back you go.” Keep trying. Wait for the uproar.

Chinese moment: the 长 card joins 春 · 蛋 — 长大, to grow up. Say it about the chick, and then say it about them, pointing at one child at a time: 你也在长大。

3 MIN GAME · CHICK, CHICK, CHEEP

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” Duck-duck-duck, played entirely in cheeps. Everybody sits in a circle; one child walks round the outside tapping heads.

Teacher: “Chick... chick... chick... **CHEEP!**” (*on “cheep” the tapped child jumps up and they both run the circle back to the empty space*)

Little walks it rather than runs it, and a grown-up walks with them. Nobody is out and nobody stands in a middle; the child left standing simply becomes the next one to tap.

Say **chick** five or six times before you say **cheep**. The waiting is what makes them listen, and listening to one word inside a string of another word is the exact skill they need for English.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody crouched in a shell, pecking beaks ready. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: “Egg... chick... **BUTTERFLY!** Wake up, **SPRING!**” (*ball hands · pecking beak · flapping wings · both arms thrown up on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? From *Egg to Chicken* — real photographs, in order, of the whole three weeks. Lay the pages against our own shell and chick on the mat as you go.

3 MIN · Today’s song moment — chorus → Wednesday’s verse → chorus — the pecking beak held for one beat.

“Crack! Crack! Out comes a chick, / Cheep, cheep, cheep — peck, peck, peck!” (*two hard claps, then uncurl; three cheeps up, three pecks down*)

THURSDAY • DAY 4

The Hungry Caterpillar

Today's words: **caterpillar** (*spring · egg · chick come back*)

Grab: a **caterpillar** (a real one in a jar with air holes, or a knitted one) and a **leaf full of nibbled holes** in the Magic Box; a long line of paper leaves laid down the corridor **before** the children come in; the chrysalis (a stocking) kept hidden for tomorrow; the 虫 card.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Today the box is small and light, and when you tip it something inside slides very slowly from one end to the other. Chant, then tip it — slowly.

Everyone: “What’s in the box? What’s in the box?”

Teacher: “We are **not** going to shake this one either — it’s **alive**.” (*lift out the nibbled leaf first and hold it up against the window so the holes shine through*)

Count the holes together, out loud, pointing at each one. Then bring out the caterpillar itself and hold it in two hands, low, so everybody has to be quiet to see it. One wriggling finger: “**Caterpillar!**”

4 MIN TEACH • CATERPILLAR

One finger wriggles up the other arm while you say it, twice, and the second time the whole circle wriggles with you:

A little green **caterpillar**, (*one finger wriggling slowly up your arm*)

Munch, munch, **MUNCH!** (*big chewing jaws made with both hands*)

Leaves for breakfast, (*pick a leaf out of the air and eat it*)

and leaves for **lunch!** (*and another, bigger, messier*)

Then the story, told with your hands: he eats, and eats, and gets **bigger...** and bigger... and then one day he **stops** eating, and hangs himself up, and goes to sleep inside a little bag called a **chrysalis**. Hold up the stocking — but **do not open it**. “Tomorrow.” Put it on the shelf where everyone can see it and leave it there, unopened, all day.

Littles wriggle a finger and say “**Caterpillar!**” Bigs owe you the big frame of the week: “**The caterpillar becomes a butterfly.**” “**He is very hungry.**”

Teacher fails: insist, confidently and repeatedly, that the caterpillar is going to grow up into a **chick**. “Cheep cheep!” Nod wisely. Do it again. Let them shout you down — and make them tell you what it *really* turns into.

Chinese moment: the 虫 card joins 春 · 蛋 · 长 — 毛毛虫. Say it with the wriggling finger, slowly, and let them say it back three times, getting faster each time.

3 MIN GAME • CATERPILLAR CRAWL

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” The whole class becomes **one** caterpillar: everybody on hands and knees in a single line, each child’s hands on the ankles of the child in front, and a line of paper leaves laid down the corridor.

Teacher: “Crawl... and when we reach a leaf — **MUNCH!**” (*the whole line stops, everybody chews, and the leaf is scrunched up and left behind*)

Crawl, munch, crawl, munch, all the way down the corridor. Littles at the front where they can see; a grown-up at the back so nobody is left behind. Count the leaves you have eaten when you get there.

Go **slowly**. A fast line falls over and turns into a heap. Slow crawling with twenty children joined together is one of the best things they will do all term, and they will ask for it again tomorrow.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody down low, one finger wriggling. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: “Egg... chick... BUTTERFLY! Wake up, SPRING!” (*ball hands · pecking beak · flapping wings · both arms thrown up on the shout*)

Before home time: chalk or tape the **four life-cycle stations** on the floor for tomorrow, in a **circle**, not a line — egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, butterfly — and lay one ring card at each. Tomorrow the class walks it, and walks it again.

Got 3 spare minutes? *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Eric Carle) — and let them poke a finger through every hole on the way past.

3 MIN • Today’s song moment — chorus → Thursday’s verse → chorus — the one verse with the Am in it.

“A hungry caterpillar — munch, munch, munch, / Leaves for breakfast, leaves for lunch!” (*chewing jaws, three big bites; eat one leaf, then another*)

FRIDAY · DAY 5

Butterfly! + Big Review

Today's words: **butterfly** — and **spring** · **egg** · **chick** · **caterpillar**, the whole week

Grab: the **chrysalis** (a stocking) with a paper **butterfly** folded up inside it; the **life-cycle ring cards**; every prop from the week packed into the box; the four floor stations from yesterday; the awards (print pack page 17); the 蝶 card. **Monday is 清明** and school is closed — back on **Tuesday**.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

The box comes out bulging and will not quite shut.

Teacher: “Today the box is FULL — it's got our whole WEEK inside it!”

Pull each thing out and hold it up in complete silence. They will supply the word before you can.

The budding branch → “**Spring!**” The egg → “**Egg!**” The chick → “**Chick!**” The nibbled leaf → “**Caterpillar!**”

Last of all, one soft grey thing at the bottom: the **chrysalis**. Hold it up. Nobody knows. Then reach in and draw the butterfly out of it, **slowly**, wings first, and open them. “**BUTTERFLY!**”

4 MIN TEACH · BUTTERFLY, THEN THE WHOLE WEEK

Everybody stands. We do the whole life cycle with our bodies, twice — slow, then fast:

An **egg** on a leaf, (*two hands make a tiny ball*)

A **caterpillar** — munch! (*one wriggling finger, then chewing jaws*)

Fast **asleep** in a little bag, (*curl up small, hands over your head, completely still*)

Then **open wide** — and FLY! (*burst open, arms wide, and fly slowly round the circle*)

Then the four ring cards, laid out on the floor in a **circle**, not a line. Walk it with one child while everybody names the stations out loud — egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, butterfly — and then keep walking, straight past the butterfly and back to the egg. It **does not stop**.

Then the question that ends the week, asked quietly, to each child: *and what are you turning into?*

Littles do the four gestures and shout the words. Bigs owe you a whole sentence each: “**The caterpillar becomes a butterfly.**” “**It is spring.**” “**I am growing too.**”

Teacher fails: lay the four cards out in a straight **line**, stop firmly at the butterfly, dust off your hands and say “The end.” Wait for somebody to bend it round into a circle for you.

Chinese moment: the 蝶 card completes the row — 春 · 蛋 · 长 · 虫 · 蝶, the whole week on the mat, and 蝴蝶 is the one they will keep. Say 《春晓》 all the way through, once, while they lie on their backs: 春眠不觉晓, 处处闻啼鸟。夜来风雨声, 花落知多少。 Then tell them about 清明 on Monday: 清明去扫墓, 也去踏青 — families go out to the countryside in the spring. School is closed on Monday; we come back on **Tuesday**.

3 MIN GAME · WALK THE LIFE CYCLE

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” Four stations on the floor in a ring, one ring card at each: **egg** (curl up tiny) · **caterpillar** (crawl and munch) · **chrysalis** (freeze, arms wrapped round yourself) · **butterfly** (fly).

Teacher: “Egg... caterpillar... chrysalis... **BUTTERFLY!** — and round we go **again**.” (*everybody does the action of the station they are standing on, then moves round one*)

Go round three or four times, faster each time, until the whole class is doing it without being told. Littles simply follow the child in front and copy; that is exactly how they learn it.

Never stop at the butterfly. The moment they carry on round to the egg on their own, without you saying it, the big idea of the week has landed — and that is the assessment, no worksheet required.

1 MIN CLOSE + AWARDS

Every child gets a “You are a STAR!” award to take home with the long-weekend news. Then, standing in the ring, all four gestures:

Everyone: “Egg... chick... **BUTTERFLY!** Wake up, **SPRING!**” (*ball hands · pecking beak · flapping wings · both arms thrown up on the shout, and everybody flies away*)

Say the dates at the door. Monday is 清明 and school is closed; we are back on **Tuesday** and it is a short week. Send the branch home with whoever wants it — by Monday its buds will be leaves.

Got 3 spare minutes? *Waiting for Wings* (Lois Ehlert) or 《春天来了》 — and then lie on the floor with the lights off and be a chrysalis for one whole quiet minute before home time.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — Friday's verse, then the **WHOLE** song, top to bottom, walking the four stations.

“Fast asleep, then open wide — / A butterfly! Fly, fly, fly!” (*curled up tight, then burst open; arms wide, flapping slowly*)

SONGBOOK

★ “Wake Up, It's Spring!”

C (0003) **F** (2010) **G7** (0212) **Am** (2000) · Strum: Down · Down · Down-Up (“wake — up — wake-up”)

Gentle at the start of each verse and a little bigger every line, like something opening. **Am** is the one new shape this week and it is the easiest of the four — **one finger**, second fret of the G string — and it appears exactly twice: at the end of the chorus's third line and at the start of Thursday's caterpillar verse. C is one finger, F is two, G7 is three, Am is one; learn them in that order. Chant the song without the uke first; add the chords once they know the actions.

CHORUS — EVERY SINGLE DAY

C Wake up, wake up — it's **F** spring to **C** day! (*curl small, then stretch tall*)

F Everybody's **C** growing in the **G7** warm, warm **C** day! (*both hands rising apart*)

C An egg, a **F** chick, a caterpillar **Am** too, (*ball hands · pecking beak · one wriggling finger*)

F A butter **C** fly — and **G7** so are **C** you! (*flap and fly, then point at one child*)

MONDAY · SPRING

C The buds pop open, the birds all sing,

G7 Wake up, wake up — **C** it's spring, spring, spring!

TUESDAY · EGG

C In the nest there is an egg,

G7 Round and warm — **C** and not one leg!

WEDNESDAY · CHICK

C Crack! Crack! Out comes a chick,

G7 Cheep, cheep, cheep — **C** peck, peck, peck!

THURSDAY · CATERPILLAR

Am A hungry caterpillar — munch, munch, munch,

G7 Leaves for breakfast, **C** leaves for lunch!

FRIDAY · BUTTERFLY

C Fast asleep, then open wide —

G7 A butterfly! **C** Fly, fly, fly!

Each day: chorus → today's verse → chorus. Friday: sing the whole thing top to bottom while the class walks the four life-cycle stations, round and round — that run-through is the review of the week. If your fingers get stuck, put the uke down, give one child the nibbled leaf to hold up and do the finger-play instead; the actions carry the meaning either way.