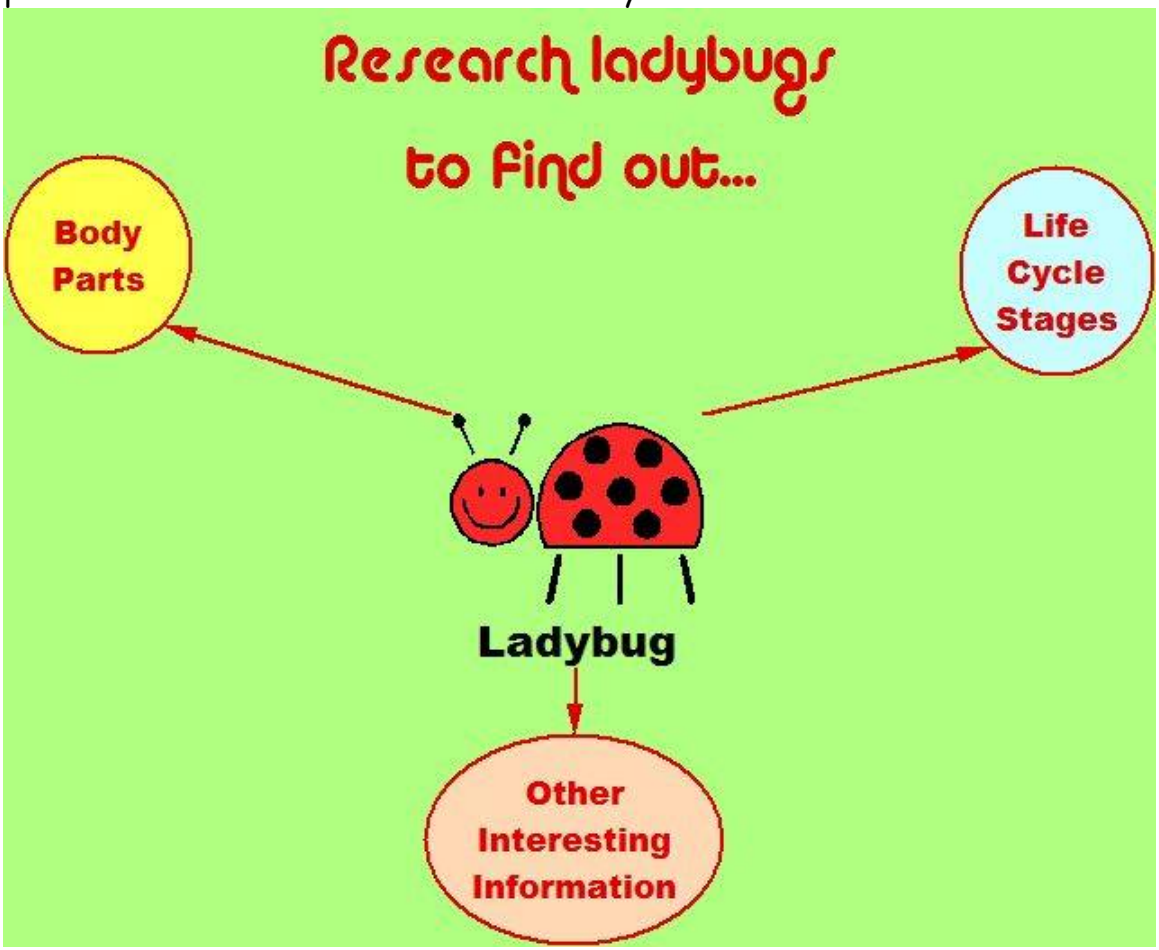
Our spring science unit is on life cycles so this project fit in beautifully. I introduced the ladybug unit by showing a PowerPoint presentation on our interactive whiteboard. In the presentation I told the children what they needed to learn:



Next I told them how they could do the research:

The next part was to show them how they could show the class what they learned:

On each of these last two screens the children could click on a word and it would take them to a picture showing what they could do. To get back to the main screen they just had to click on the ladybug. The pictures on the second screen were compliments of Susan's previous projects on sharks and butterflies.

The children enjoyed the presentation and were anxious to get started the next day. I was pleasantly surprised on how well the children stayed focused on the project throughout the whole process. They tended to work in groups even though they were doing their own work. It was fun to see them singing a song and then talking about cool facts they learned and jotting them down or listen to a book on tape and then stop it to write down some interesting tidbit.

After three days of research I revisited the presentation ideas by showing that part of the PowerPoint presentation again on the classroom computer. The children that were ready began asking for materials. This was the only slightly chaotic part of the process as children lined up asking for huge sheets of paper for posters or balls of Model Magic to make models. However, once the materials were distributed the room was once again full of eager workers.

As children finished their projects they would do their presentation. Most of the class did posters. Many made models to go along with their posters. Two children that finished first asked if they could do a second project and they put together a puppet show using models from Model Magic as well as Beanie Babies. Another group did a puppet show as well using the same type of props. They were the final groups to present but what a treat they were!

I went to http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics/sciences/ and made a rubric to grade their projects. I used the General Rubric Generator so I could write my own categories and descriptors.

The day we started this project Ladybug Land arrived, from Insect Lore, talk about perfect timing! So during the whole process the children have been able to watch the larva eat, shed their skin and grow. Next they attached themselves to the dome and turned into pupa and finally emerged as yellow ladybugs which later turned an orangish-red color. The same day our ladybugs arrived our mealworm larva arrived as well. Each child has a container on his/her desk containing mealworms. We've been busy comparing and contrasting the two insects as well as making connections to the monarch caterpillars we watched changed into butterflies last fall.

This was a very worthwhile project enjoyed both by the students and myself.