

The Moth – By Isabel Thomas

This is the story of light and dark.
Of change and adaptation,
Of survival and hope.

It starts with a little moth.

Look! What's that moving in the moonlight?
A shiny cocoon wiggles and jiggles.
Something is waking up from a long winter's sleep.

Six little legs uncurl.
Two tiny antennae unfurl.
And four salt and pepper wings stretch and quiver in the breeze.
Watch out! Hungry predators are nearby.

Quick, fly away!

The peppered moth joins its sisters, brothers and cousins. Most have speckled, freckled wings.

But sometimes a peppered moth is born with wings as dark as charcoal.

The moths flitter and flutter...Skitter and swoop.....and loop the loop all night long.

They look for food and try not to get eaten themselves.

Watch out for bats!

As the sun rises, night-time creatures must find a safe place to rest. Peppered moths doze on lichen-covered branches.

Be silent! Be still!

Someone else is looking for food now.
Who is disguised? Who will survive?

Oh no! Charcoal black wings are easy to spot on the pale branches.

These dark coloured moths will be a feast for hungry chicks!

The speckled, freckled moths are masters of disguise. Their salt and pepper wings keep them safe from hungry eyes.
The very next night they lay eggs of their own. The new moths will have salt and pepper wings too, just like their parents.

Every year, the same thing happens.
Hundreds of tiny eggs hatch. The moths with the best camouflage survive long enough to have children, and pass on their salt and pepper wings.
This is why most peppered moths were speckled and freckled.

Until the world began to change.

People built factories and burned coal to power magnificent machines.

They made steam trains to take things here and there and everywhere.

Chimneys filled the air with smoke and soot.

Pollution stained the clouds and blackened the branches where the peppered moths rest.

A bird is hunting for a snack.

Now that their world is darker, which moths are disguised? Which moths will survive?

The darkest moths are the masters of disguise. Their charcoal-coloured wings keep them safe from hungry eyes.

They now live long enough to lay eggs of their own. And pass on their wing colour to their...

Children and grandchildren

... and great grandchildren.

After fifty years, there are just as many peppered moths as there have ever been. But most are charcoal-coloured now. And speckled, freckled moths are rare.

They have adapted to changes in their world.

Next time you scramble through a forest, ramble near a hedgerow or run around a garden...
Be silent. Be still.

Look closely at the trees. You might spot a moth with wings as dark as charcoal. Or a moth with speckled, freckled wings.

Because their story didn't end when the world was a darker place.

People decided to clean up the air. They burned less coal and found new ways to power machines.

Year by year by year cities grew greener. The air all around became cleaner.
And the trees shed their sooty bark.

The speckled, freckled moths are camouflaged once more!
And live long enough to pass on their salt and pepper wings to their children.

Today both types of moths find places to survive.

They are still telling their story...

Of light and dark. Of change and adaptation, of survival...
and hope.