



Overview

This TSM contains information and suggestions for teachers to pick and choose from, depending on the needs of their students and their purpose for using the text. The materials provide multiple opportunities for revisiting the text several times.

Most students will have seen a wētā – a creature that many people find both fascinating and scary. This article invites readers to reconsider the wētā by sharing interesting facts about this unique insect, by studying the adaptations it's made to suit its habitat, and by identifying the things that threaten its survival.

This article:

- provides facts and information about wētā, with a particular focus on cave wētā
- gives students an opportunity to develop their skills in reading the type of informational text they will encounter across the curriculum

- provides an opportunity to make links to similar non-fiction texts in other Level 2 journals
- has photographs, a glossary, labelled diagrams, and captions
- includes non-continuous text, organised with subheadings.

A PDF of the text is available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme

“The Bat That Walks on the Ground” SJ L2 April 2013 | “Nasty Nits” SJ L2 Oct 2013 | “Seals” SJ L2 Nov 2016 | “Bugbix for Breakfast” SJ L2 May 2017 | “The Zoo Debate” SJ L2 May 2017 | “The Striped Invader” SJ L2 May 2019 | “Harwoods Hole” SJ L2 May 2019 | “Ika a Whiro” SJ L2 August 2019 | “Sharks” SJ L3 June 2018 | “The Jungle in My Garden” JJ 52 | “Staying Alive” *The Buzz of Bees*, Connected 2, 2012

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

We have retained the links to the National Standards while a new assessment and reporting system is being developed.

For more information on assessing and reporting in the post-National Standards era, see: <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-and-reporting-guide>

tusked wētā

Each of these types includes many different **species**. For example, there are over fifty species of cave wētā. New species of wētā are still being found.

3

some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text or are easily linked to the students' prior knowledge

More about wētā

Wētā are **nocturnal**, which means they come out at night to feed. They don't have noses – they breathe through holes in the sides of their bodies. Three types of wētā (tree, giant, and tusked) have ears on their front legs!

In autumn, female wētā lay their eggs in the soil. The eggs hatch the next spring.

Why do wētā look like they're wearing tiny suits of armour?

some words and phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar to the students, the meaning of which is supported by the context or clarified by illustrations and/or written explanations

Amazing wētā

Wētā have been around for over 100 million years. Scientists have found fossils that show wētā lived at the same time as the dinosaurs.

Ground wētā

other visual language features that support the ideas and information, for example, text boxes or maps

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In autumn, female wētā lay their eggs in the soil. The eggs hatch the next spring.

Why do wētā look like they're wearing tiny suits of armour? It's because their **skeletons** are on the outside. This hard covering helps to protect them. But the skeleton of a wētā doesn't stretch, so as the young wētā gets bigger, it has to get rid of its skeleton and grow a new one. This is called molting. Wētā moult up to ten

figurative language, such as metaphors, similes, or personification



VOCABULARY

- Some topic words explained in a glossary: “antennae”, “endangered”, “habitat”, “nocturnal”, “predator”, “skeleton”, “species”
- Other unfamiliar topic-specific words and phrases, including “spikes”, “crickets and grasshoppers”, “tusked”, “tuatara”, “stoats”, “ferrets”, “spines”, “burrow”, “threat”, “replaced”, “autumn”, “hatch”, “spring”, “moult”, “damp”, “rotten logs”, “fungi”, “sense vibrations”, “fossils”, “dinosaurs”
- Other unfamiliar words and phrases, including “not much of a defence”, “Despite their name”, “nip”, “scratch”, “suits of armour”
- Words for comparing and contrasting: “smaller than”, “unlike other”, “Instead”

Possible supporting strategies

- Identify words or phrases that may be unfamiliar and discuss their meaning with the students.
- Remind the students of strategies that are particularly useful on a first reading, such as rereading to look for clues, making connections with their prior knowledge, and/or reading on to see if the meaning becomes clearer.
- Direct students to the glossary at the end of the article.
- Have the students scan the illustrations to help activate their prior knowledge.
- Use topic words in picture–word matching activities or have the students illustrate the meaning of the words. They could use the words to label diagrams of a wētā or other creatures mentioned in the text.
- clarify the difference between “species” and “types”
- Ask the students to compare items and rank them in relation to some quality, such as size. Check they are using appropriate vocabulary to compare (for example, small, smaller, smallest) and that they can provide superlatives (smallest). Identify common patterns in the way comparisons are formed. Create lists of these.
- *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.
- See also [ESOL Online, Vocabulary](#), for examples of other strategies to support students with vocabulary.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Some familiarity with insects and with wētā in particular
- Some understanding that we haven't discovered every creature and plant – not even in the New Zealand bush
- Some familiarity with the concept of moulting
- Some understanding of the concept of being able to “hear” by sensing vibrations rather than hearing them through the ears
- Some knowledge of dinosaurs and a sense of the timeframe this implies – that wētā have been around for 100 million years
- Some familiarity with the features of informational texts and how to navigate them
- Some knowledge of how to read a diagram

Possible supporting strategies

- Support the students to discuss what they know about wētā.
- Discuss the idea that new species of wētā are still being found. *Does this surprise you? What would you expect?*
- Support students to make connections between ideas in the text and their own observations of wētā. You may be able to bring a wētā to class or take the students to see one in nearby bush.
- Brainstorm other creatures that moult, for example, snakes, crabs, geckos, spiders, grasshoppers, and cicadas. Watch video clips of animals moulting and discuss why they need to do this.
- Discuss the ways that wētā can be protected. *What do you know about how other creatures are protected? How might these ideas help wētā?*
- Have the students experiment with “hearing” vibrations by putting their hands lightly on a drum (or something similar) and having a partner tap it with a drumstick. *Can you sense the vibrations as well as hear them when your partner hits the drum? What other times have you felt sound vibrations?*
- Have the students think, pair, and share what they know about dinosaurs. You could tell them that humans appeared only about 100,000 years ago. If this is interesting to them, you might also like to show this online video clip that helps [visualise the Earth's entire history](#).

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- The features of an informational text, including subheadings, a glossary, photographs, a labelled diagram, and captions
- Mostly written in the third person, but occasional uses of the second person, for example, “You might find one in the garden or in a piece of old wood”
- The use of a simile within a rhetorical question to describe the appearance of a wētā and draw attention to its structure: “Why do wētā look like they're wearing tiny suits of armour?”
- A labelled diagram
- A bulleted list

Possible supporting strategies

- Before reading, prompt the students to recall what features they are likely to find. *What features will we find in an informational text?*
- Prompt the students to recall any other informational texts about animals and to predict what sort of information they will encounter.
- Have them ask questions they think the text might answer.
- Have the students scan the text with a partner to identify the features of an informational text and discuss what their purpose might be. *What sort of information do you get from the photographs? Why is there a diagram?*
- Discuss why the author of an informational text might sometimes talk directly to the reader.



Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

SCIENCE

Level 2 – Living World: Recognise that living things are suited to their particular habitat.

Possible first reading purpose

- Find out about the characteristics and behaviours of wētā.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- Find out why wētā are special
- Identify the features of the text that support understanding
- Identify some interesting facts about wētā.

Possible writing purposes

- Write a description of a wētā or another native insect
- Compare a wētā with another insect, identifying similarities and differences
- Describe a time you saw a wētā, including how you felt, what you did, and how other people responded.



Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

Science Level 2 – Living World: Recognise that living things are suited to their particular habitat.

First reading

- Share the purpose for reading.
- Preview the text with the students and discuss the purposes of the diagrams and headings, reminding them how to use these features.
- Read the first paragraph aloud and invite a response. Have the students discuss with a partner how they feel about wētā and why. Tell them to jot their thoughts down to refer to later.
- Ask the students to read on but pause after “Why do wētā look like they’re wearing tiny suits of armour?” Have them share their wonderings with their partner, then read on to check those wonderings against the text.
- Have the students continue reading the text on their own, supporting them where necessary.
- When they finish reading, have the students discuss with a partner what they have found out about wētā and what they still want to know.

If the students require more scaffolding

- Create a KWL chart on which the students can record what they already know about wētā, what they want to know, and later, what they have learnt. Complete the first two columns as a group.
- Have the students read and discuss each section in pairs, adding to the third column of the chart each time they finish a section. Monitor their conversations and provide support where necessary.

What do you Know about wētā?	What do you Want to know about wētā?	What did you Learn about wētā?

- Discuss the features of a diagram and the information that can be conveyed in a photograph. Have the students take turns to talk through the diagrams and photographs with their partners, adding any additional information to their charts.

Subsequent readings How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose.

Where possible, have the students work in pairs to discuss the questions and prompts in this section.

The teacher

Discuss the way the information is organised in the text – in a bulleted list, in sections and paragraphs with subheadings, and visually through photographs and the diagram. Explain how we can use bulleted lists with stems to summarise information about various topics. Model this, for example, by creating a bulleted list of threats to wētā. You could take this further, separating the list into threats to wētā before humans came and threats that came after humans arrived. Discuss the topics that are covered in this article, then ask the students to work in pairs to record key information about wētā in bulleted lists.

The teacher

Prompt the students to share and compare what they learnt about wētā that was surprising or interesting. (If they did the KWL activity, they will be able to use their charts to support this discussion.) Model how one discovery can lead to new questions.

- *It says that there are five types of wētā, and then that there are over fifty species of cave wētā. So, there are different types and then there are also different species. I wonder how many species there are of the other types of wētā?*
- *Take another look at the section headed “Why are wētā endangered?” What was the big idea there? What did it make you wonder?*

The teacher

Have the students reread the final paragraph. Referring to their initial notes, have them discuss how they feel about wētā now.

- *Think about how you felt about wētā before you began reading this article. How do you feel about them now? Has anything changed?*
- *What would you now say to someone who said they didn’t like or felt scared of wētā?*
- *Which parts in the text made you change your opinion?*
- *Is this how the writer wanted you to feel? What is your evidence for that?*

You could provide sentence frames to help English language learners share their opinions, for example, *I thought that wētā were ... but now I believe ... because ...*

The students:

- examine how the information is organised and how the written and visual texts provide different kinds of information
- reread the text and use the text features to identify the main ideas for each topic
- identify the most important facts and information about wētā and use bullet points to summarise these main ideas or key facts.

The students:

- make connections between the text and their prior knowledge to identify what they found surprising or interesting and to explain why
- discuss their response to the text and what it made them think about, using the text to back up their responses.

The students:

- think critically about their preconceptions about wētā and consider how they have been challenged
- identify how the author has affected their opinion
- justify their inferences about the writer’s purpose with evidence from the text.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You have identified the main points and summarised them in a list. I saw you going between the text and the diagram to do that. Using a combination of features was a good strategy.*

METACOGNITION

- *What helped you to read this text? Were some features more helpful than others?*
- *What were you thinking about while you read this text?*
- *What other topics would you like to read about?*



Reading standard: by the end of year 4



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 2 – Ideas: Select, form, and express ideas on a range of topics.

Science Level 2 – Living World: Recognise that living things are suited to their particular habitat.

Text excerpts from “Wētā”	Examples of text characteristics	Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)
<p>Page 2</p> <p>(Wētā) are big and covered in spikes, they hide in dark places, and they can sometimes jump.</p> <p>Page 5</p> <p>Why do wētā look like they’re wearing tiny suits of armour? It’s because their skeletons are on the outside.</p>	<p>DESCRIPTIONS</p> <p><i>Descriptive writing is used to describe a person, place, or thing in such a way that a picture is formed in the reader’s mind. Capturing an event or experience through descriptive writing involves paying close attention to the details and using all of your five senses. Good descriptive writing also includes well-chosen adjectives, nouns, and verbs that give life to the picture you are creating. Note that non-fiction descriptive writing generally uses the present tense.</i></p>	<p>Explain the purpose of descriptive writing and the value of incorporating vivid sensory details that appeal to all of the reader’s senses. List the five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) and discuss which of them we learnt about in relationship to wētā. Go on to discuss other features that make this an effective piece of descriptive writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">How has the writer helped us to understand what wētā look like? What did we learn about the sounds they make? What other senses did the writer appeal to in her description of wētā? Which did she not appeal to and why?What other techniques did the writer use to get us interested in wētā and help us form a picture of what they are like? Can you find examples? Were you satisfied with the detail and accuracy in the writer’s description? Was there anything else you would like to have known?What tense has the writer used to describe wētā? Has the author included facts or opinions? <p>Have the students use what they have learnt to write descriptions of a wētā or another native insect.</p>
<p>Page 6</p> <p>Cave wētā are smaller than other wētā. They have long, thin legs that are good for jumping ... Their antennae are also very long. They use them to feel around and find food. Cave wētā like to eat fruit, leaves, fungi, and dead insects.</p>	<p>COMPARE AND CONTRAST</p> <p><i>Comparing something new with other things the reader already knows helps create understanding. Comparisons work especially well for descriptions of things we can see, smell, hear, touch, taste, or feel.</i></p>	<p>Explain the use of comparing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">If your purpose is to help readers identify things that are similar (like two types of the same insect), you need to show readers what is the same and what is different about them.Reread the section in the article on cave wētā. What words has the writer used to compare cave wētā with other kinds of wētā? <p>Tell the students to compare wētā with another insect. (Check out the Science Learning Hub for resources to support this activity.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Plan before you write by using a diagram to help identify the similarities and differences: a Venn diagram is one way to do this.Once you’ve made a diagram, start by writing a sentence for each detail: “Weta have spikes on their back legs, but ants don’t.” <p>English language learners may need support to write descriptions in timeless present tense and to use relating verbs, for example, “is”, “are”, “has”, “have”. An interactive cloze task can help students to notice how these words are used. Design the cloze by deleting all the relating verbs. The students then fill in the gaps with the correct verbs.</p> <p>An explicit grammar lesson may help some English language learners to understand how to form comparatives. Follow up with a few short exercises before they begin writing by themselves.</p>

Page 2

Many people are scared of wētā ... You might find one in the garden or in a piece of old wood. There could be one hiding in your letterbox – or even in your shoe!

PERSONAL RECOUNTS

In a personal recount, writers retell an event or experience that happened to them. Recounts are told in the past tense and in chronological order. Typically, a recount has three parts: background information, events in chronological order, and personal opinion. The purpose of a recount is to inform or entertain the reader, so the writer selects details that are the most interesting. Personal recounts often include features such as dialogue and descriptive language.

METACOGNITION

- *We took time to plan our writing before we began. How did talking about the writing and preparing some notes help you to write?*
- *How did using bullets to record your ideas help you when you were planning your recount?*

Read the extract aloud to the students as a starter. Tell them that you want them to describe a time when they saw or found a wētā.

- *How did you feel?*
- *What did you do?*
- *How did other people respond?*

Point out that the students will already have made connections and shared personal stories as they read the article.

Discuss the three parts of a typical recount and have the students record them as headings. They can use these headings to take notes as preparation for writing their recounts. Suggest that they try writing a bulleted list of their ideas under each heading. You may need to model this first.

Have the students discuss with a partner whether they want to make their recounts informative, entertaining, or both. Encourage them to make links to other recounts they have read or the stories their friends have told in the course of this reading. Record their ideas so they can refer to them as they write.

- *What helped you to follow the recount? (for example, connecting words, details told in sequence)*
- *What made it interesting? (for example, an exciting beginning, a satisfying conclusion, humour, vivid language)*

Support the students to write their recounts, then have them share them with each other.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You've added a phrase to give some extra detail about the ant's legs in your description. This helps me to imagine how it moves.*



Writing standard: by the end of year 4



The Literacy Learning Progressions