**ACTIVITY: Insect mihi**

**Activity idea**

In this activity, students write a formal introduction for an insect species of their choice, including information about the insect’s relationship to other animals and also the land. This is designed to help them think about how the Linnaean classification system works.

By the end of this activity, students should be able to:

* discuss how simple classification works and why it’s useful
* carry out research to find out more about an insect
* present their mihi to the rest of the class.

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Student instructions: [Write an insect mihi](#write)

**Introduction/background**

When people from some cultures introduce themselves, they relate who they are to other people in their family and also to the land where they live. Traditionally, Māori use this type of greeting – called a mihi – which describes their place within their whakapapa. The person starts with their name and then describes their family tree, grandparents and important links. This is followed by placing themselves in the context of the land where they live, the main waterway (stream, lake or river) and the highest hill or mountain that are important to them and their whānau.

When scientists classify insects, they also give them names that show who the insects are related to and how closely. Your insect mihi will introduce it in terms of its family and where it can be found in the landscape.

**What you need**

* Copies of the student instructions: [Write an insect mihi](#write)
* An insect or a picture of one for each student
* Access to information about insects (books, posters, internet etc.)

**What to do**

1. Hand out copies of the student instructions: [Write an insect mihi](#write) and discuss.
2. Make sure all students have an insect or a picture and ask them to research and write a mihi for their insect.
3. Have students display or recite their completed insect mihi and discuss.

**Write an insect mihi**

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***What to do***

1. Choose an insect. You could use an insect you have found in your garden or school grounds or you could use a picture of an insect. If you use a live insect, remember that the insect should be collected in a container that allows it to breathe but not escape. You will need to return your insect to the place that you found it after using it for your study.
2. Do some research on your insect. Start with the ‘What is this bug?’ web resource ([www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biosystematics/invertebrates/invertid/](http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biosystematics/invertebrates/invertid/)). Once you have identified your insect, write down its full name (the long one in Latin). This will help you find out more about your insect.
3. Using books and internet resources, see if you can track back through the family of the insect. You need to see if you can name its species, genus, family, order, class, phylum and kingdom. (Hint: Wikipedia has some useful links to help you do this – try typing the species name in the search box – <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page>.)

Here is an example for a cicada:

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Arthopoda

Class: Insecta

Order: Hemiptera

Suborder: Auchenorrhyncha

Infraorder: Cicadomorpha

Superfamily: Cicadoidea

Family: Cicadidae

1. Describe the land where the insect comes from. Think about where you found the insect. Where does it live? Does it live on trees? Underground? What features are nearby? Lakes? Streams? Mountains? List as many features as you can think of.
2. Write a mihi (introduction) for your insect. Here is an example of an insect mihi for a cicada found on a tree in an Auckland garden:.

I am a cicada. My full name is *Amphipsalta zelandica*. I am related to all the Cicadidae in the world. I can trace my lineage back through Cicadoidea, Cicadomorpha, Auchenorrhyncha and Hempitera to Insecta. This means that I am an insect and that I am related to all the other insects. Going back further, I am also a part of the Arthropoda phylum, which means I have jointed feet and I am related to other animals like spiders and crabs. I am also related to all the animals that roam the Earth, but only very distantly. I was found in my back garden in Auckland on a pōhutukawa tree. My home is in the area of the stream that they call Lucas Creek. My land is that of the North Shore. My mountain is Rangitoto and my home is Aotearoa.