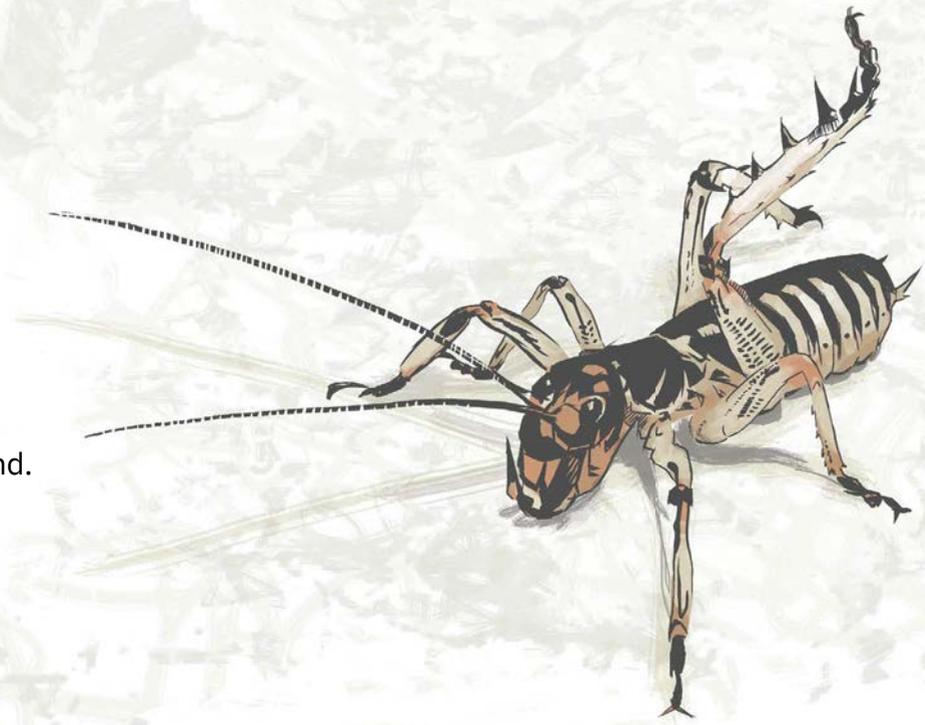


Ika a Whiro

Under a moonless sky,
two armoured warriors
creep from tree burrows,
long antennae sensing
a challenger nearby.
Punga, they were once called
– spirit of ugliness.
Tonight these wētā papatu.
tsch-tsch-tsch-tsch-tsch

Sharp jaws flare.
They pēpeke,
flicking spiny hind legs.
They bite, they lunge.
One wētā grips the other.
He throws his opponent to the ground.
The defeated warrior crawls away.
tsch-tsch-tsch-tsch-tsch



Like a battle long ago –
Whiro fought Tāne with an insect army.
Tāne won, bringing wētā to Earth
to dwell in his forests.
Wētā hides under dead foliage.
Wētā hides in blackest caves.
He hides in cracks on mountain tops
and tunnels in the ground.
But at night, the ancient soldier emerges
ready for putakari once more.
tsch-tsch-tsch-tsch-tsch

Kelly Joseph

ika a Whiro:
experienced warrior,
war veteran

papatu: clash

pēpeke: draw up
the legs

punga: traditional
Māori name for wētā

putakari: battle

Tāne: God of the forests

Whiro: God of the
underworld

Ika a Whiro

by Kelly Joseph

The Ministry of Education and Lift Education would like to thank Larry Field whose article “The Acoustic World of the Tree Weta” in *New Zealand Geographic*, Issue 021, Jan–March 1994 provided inspiration for “Ika a Whiro”.

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SCHOOL JOURNAL

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Reading year level	Year 4
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