



A Educator's Guide for

THE GREAT WETA ROBBERY

illustrated by Soda Design
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About the authors:

A.J. Ponder first picked up a pen when the dinosaurs still roamed the Earth. If she has one true regret, it's not getting to the beach as often as she'd like — and crashing into Santa's spaceship that one time.



Peter Friend has sold fiction to numerous magazines and anthologies around the world. In real life, he's a computer analyst, but hopes to one day become a full-time living art treasure. His latest publication is *Deadline Delivery*, an interactive adventure book set in a future flooded city, available in ebook or print format from Amazon.



Pre-Reading Discussion Questions:

- Tell everything you know about the weta. Describe your experiences with the insect.
- Observe the illustration on the cover of the book. Discuss what the electric-looking colored highlighting the insects suggest.
- Consider the title, **THE GREAT WETA ROBBERY**. Predict why weta would be targetted as stolen objects.
- Read the blurb printed on the back cover. Imagine what a mega-weta might be. What sort of 'dark secret' do you think might present itself in the story? Predict what this story is going to be about.

Post-Reading Discussion Questions:

“They’re genetically engineered,” said Vincent proudly. “They’re designed to kill possums, rats, weasels and other pests. I call them mega-weta” (pg. 8).

- The DNA of the weta at the Krell Research Center were altered to modify a species of insects to perform specific tasks. Explore the importance of keeping this research top secret.
- Describe the character traits needed for a person to hold a job at the Krell Research Center. Which trait do you feel is the most important and why?

“Okay, I cut the power to kill the alarm system,” said Greg. “Now watch yourselves, morons. This weta are worth half a million dollars each, but only in good condition. This isn’t like nicking stuff from the bottle store” (pg. 14).

- Describe your reaction to Greg’s leadership role in the theft ring. Were you surprised? How so?
- Identify clues suggesting that Greg’s prior interests regarding the weta were more than scientific. Tell how the authors foreshadowed Greg’s sinister side.

Then I heard screaming. As I’d hoped, the weta had jumped out of their cages and were now clambering everywhere inside the four-wheel drive (pg. 18).

- Examine the remarkable bravery the protagonist exhibited when rescuing the mega-weta from the thieves.
- Review earlier chapters in the story. Locate a scene in which the authors identified the get-away car early in the plot.
- Explain how important the car is to Greg. How do you know?

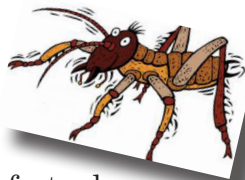
Fluffy was still in Greg’s four-wheel drive. She was happily ripping up the leather upholstery, trying to get to the packet of chocolate biscuits under the front seat (pg. 23).

- Review Greg’s behavior on page 4. Determine how his action in the opening scene connects with Fluffy’s pursuit for chocolate in the quote above.
- *Irony* is a literary technique used to mock or to create a humorous tone. Explain how Fluffy’s action in the quote above serves to establish a sense of irony in the closing scene.

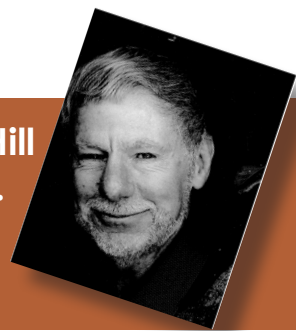
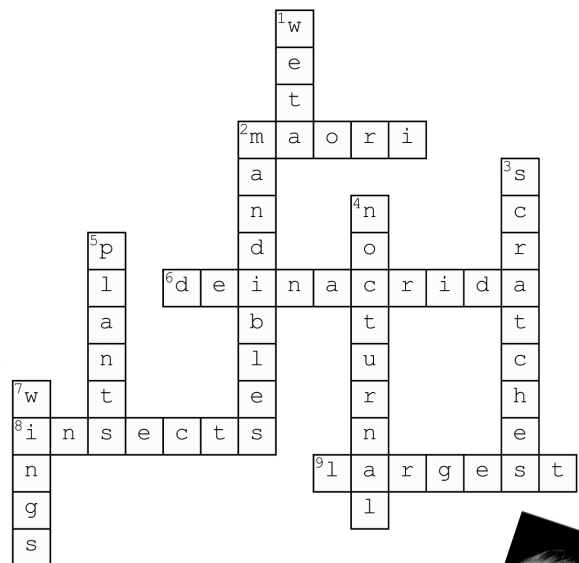
Extension Activities:

~ Plot points of well-crafted stories are woven together much like a interesting tapestry. Key story elements occurring early in the story serve to introduce important events that happen later in the plot. Write a short informative essay identifying early plot points in THE GREAT WETA ROBBERY that foreshadowed later events in the story, and how they helped to provide a satisfying conclusion to the story.

~ Weta are strange and fascinating creatures. Research facts about this insect. In a short essay, explore ways that the authors used factual information to inspire the creation of a genetically-engineered species – the mega-weta!



Vocabulary Crossword Answers:



A free audio book read by YA author David Hill is available at www.giltedgepublishing.co.nz.

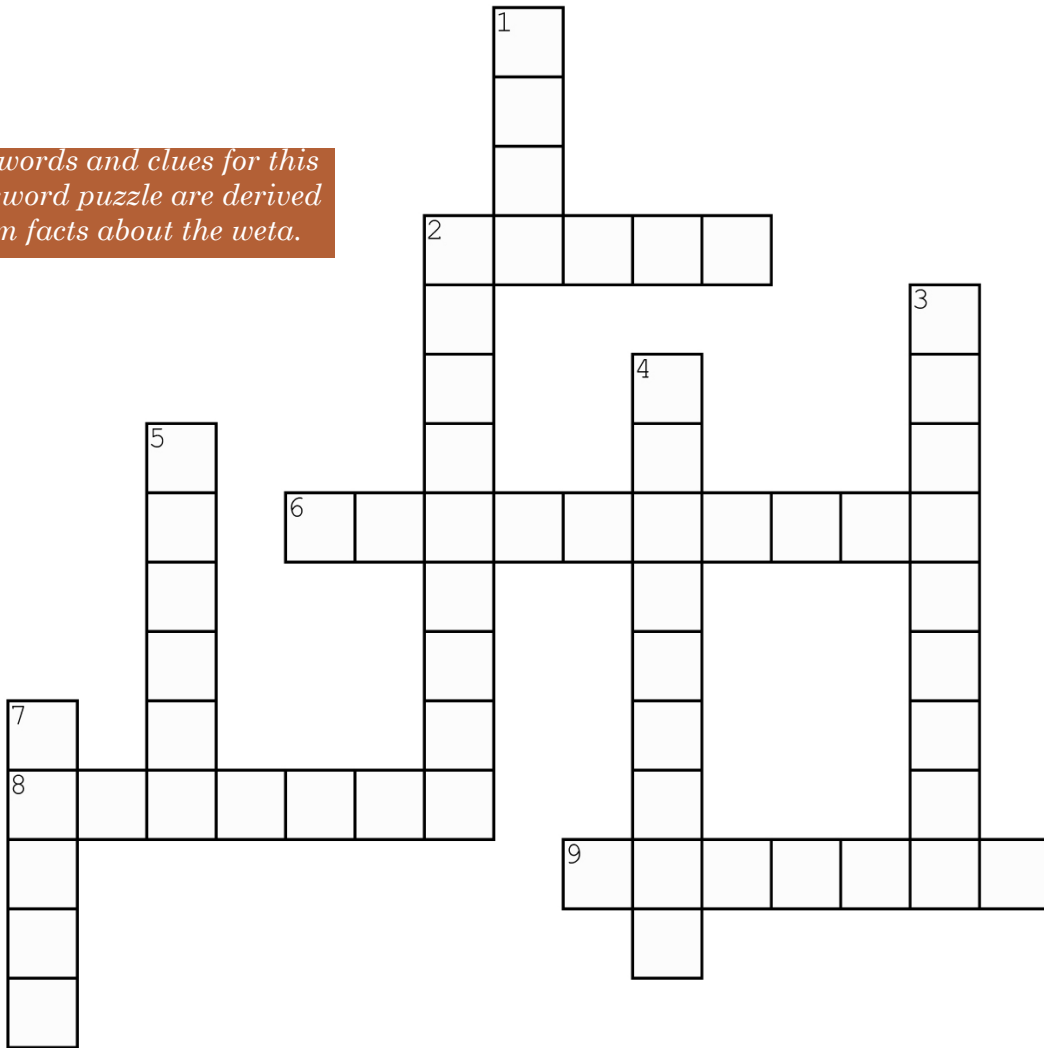


Guide created by Debbie Gonzales, MFA
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Vocabulary Crossword Puzzle

“Do you really want these creatures running around the neighbourhood?”
Vincent asked (pg. 22).

The words and clues for this crossword puzzle are derived from facts about the weta.



Across

2. One of New Zealand's official languages
6. Genus name that means 'terrible grasshopper'
8. Weta are _____
9. Some weta species are the _____ and heaviest insects in the world

Down

1. Insect name derived from the Maori language
2. Weta bite with powerful _____
3. Weta inflict painful _____
4. Weta sleep during the day and are awake at night
5. Weta diet consists of _____ and small insects
7. Weta are flightless because they have no _____

