



## Overview

This article explores different aspects of this New Zealand tree, including a description of its preferred habitat, the special features that help it survive, the creatures that live in or on it, and the significance it has for Māori. Students also learn that pōhutukawa are in danger from people and from possums – these trees need help to survive.

“Pōhutukawa” requires students to “confidently use a range of processing and comprehension strategies to make meaning

from and think critically about” text (from *The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 14). The characteristics of this text provide opportunities for students to make connections and inferences, identify and summarise, ask questions and look for answers, and use multiple sources of information to clarify meaning. There is an audio version of the text on the *Readalong 2012: Ready to Read and Junior Journal 44 and 45* CD as well as on an MP3 file at [www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz](http://www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz)

## Text characteristics

Key text characteristics relating to the reading standard for after three years at school are shown in the boxes with a solid outline.

Some unfamiliar words and phrases, the meaning of which is supported by the context or illustrations, including descriptive vocabulary and subject-specific vocabulary

A variety of sentence structures, including complex sentences

A mix of explicit and implicit content within text and illustrations that requires students to make connections between ideas in the text and their prior knowledge in order to make simple inferences, for example, about why pōhutukawa are important

### Features that help pōhutukawa grow

The top of the leaves are shiny and green with a waxy coating. This coating protects them from the sun, the salt, and long periods where there is no rain. Tiny hairs underneath the leaves stop them from losing water.



New flower buds have a special covering that protects them from the wind and salt.



The roots grow deep under the soil or sand. They take water from the ground to help them grow and stand up. The roots can grow around rocks when there isn't a lot of sand or soil. Roots can also be seen growing from the branches as they try to find water and places to grow.



The bark is rough. It protects the tree from losing water through its trunk and branches.



### Saving pōhutukawa

More than twenty years ago, Project Crimson was started. Over seventy thousand trees have been planted to make sure that pōhutukawa and rātā don't disappear. Rātā is part of the same family as pōhutukawa and has a similar flower.

In summer, when you see the flowers of the pōhutukawa, think about all of the features that make it an important tree.

### Glossary

**kina** – sea eggs  
**habitat** – a place where animals and plants live  
**nectar** – sweet water

Visual language features such as subheadings, text boxes, close-up photographs, and a glossary



**English (Reading)**

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

**English (Reading)**

Level 2 – Structure: Show some understanding of text structures.

**English (Writing)**

Level 2 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of structures.

**Science (Living World)**

Level 2 – Ecology: Recognise that all living things have certain requirements so they can stay alive.

**Suggested reading purpose**

*(What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?)*

- To find out about the pōhutukawa and its importance to animals and people

**Suggested learning goals for this text**

*(What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically about” texts?)*

**Select from and adapt** the suggestions below according to your students’ strengths, needs, and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

- The students make connections between their prior knowledge and the ideas in the text in order to make simple inferences.
- They identify and summarise the main ideas.
- They ask questions and look for answers.
- They use multiple sources of information to clarify meanings of unfamiliar words and ideas.

**Text and language features****Vocabulary**

- Possible unfamiliar words and phrases, such as “Pōhutukawa”, “prefer”, “special features”, “waxy”, “underneath”, “soothe”, “kina”, “Settlers”, “shipbuilding”, “Project Crimson”
- Words with the “ough” spelling pattern, including “rough”, “through”, “brought”.

**Possible supporting strategies**

Have pairs of students brainstorm parts of the tree and their functions and then share their ideas with the whole group. Create a shared word map. As the students suggest and explain the vocabulary used to describe the parts of the tree and their functions, help them illustrate their vocabulary. If necessary, feed in additional key vocabulary. Use the word map to support students with the vocabulary during and after reading.

If necessary, draw attention to the “ough” spelling pattern and the different ways it can be pronounced.

Monitor the students’ **decoding** attempts by noticing their use of words from the text during discussion. Prompt them to remember strategies they know, such as:

- breaking words into familiar chunks (“hab-i-tat”, “under-neath”, “wax-y”).

**Text features**

- The features of a report, including the use of headings and the use of mostly present simple verb forms to describe things that are always true (mostly connected to characteristics and habits)
- The glossary
- The photos, including the spread with labels for the parts of the tree, the close-ups, and the smaller labelled photos.

If necessary, remind the students that this is a report. Discuss the features of a report and how these support the reader to gain information about the topic.


Remind the students that the words in bold will be in the glossary.

**Specific knowledge**


- Familiarity with New Zealand trees, including pōhutukawa
- Some scientific understanding of what trees require to grow, the parts of a tree, and how they are used by birds and insects
- Some understanding of the ways people may use trees, such as for timber, carving, shelter, or decoration
- Some knowledge of Māori culture and early history in relation to pōhutukawa
- Some knowledge of early European settlement of Aotearoa New Zealand.


Remind students of any relevant topic studies they may have undertaken about trees or possums that will support them with some of the ecological ideas and in making links to the vocabulary.

**Metacognition**

Effective readers are metacognitive. They are aware of the processes and strategies they draw on and are able to explain how they use these to successfully make meaning and think critically. Examples of metacognitive behaviours, or strategies teachers can use to promote metacognition, are threaded through the notes and indicated by .

**HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS TO READ, RESPOND, AND THINK CRITICALLY**

 Ask questions: *How did you know that bit was wrong? Or: I noticed that you reread that bit when you got confused. How did rereading help you?*

 Use prompts: *How did you know that bit was right? Think about the strategy you used. How did it help you?*

## Introducing the text

- Have the students read the title. If necessary, support them with the pronunciation and remind them that the macron over the “o” means that the sound is drawn out. *What do you know about pōhutukawa?* Have the students share their ideas.
- Give pairs of students one or two illustrations from the article. Have them label the illustrations as much as they can and make predictions about what will be in the article using vocabulary from the word map you may have co-constructed (see the Possible supporting strategies section for vocabulary).
- Alternatively, give students the subheadings from the article. Have them make predictions about what each section will include. Ask them what kind of text they think this is. Record any questions they have.
- Have the students read the first line. *I’m wondering how these trees are important to animals and people.*
- Share the reading purpose and the specific learning goal(s).

## Reading and discussing the text

Instructional strategies you can use to support the students to achieve the learning goals are in the right-hand column. **Select from and adapt** the suggestions below according to your students’ needs.

### What to look for, prompt, and support as the students work towards achieving their learning goal

#### Page 25

The students ask questions, for example, what creatures live on the tree and what they might eat.

The students use the question in the heading of the second paragraph and the information in the text to make connections to their own knowledge of the land. They make simple inferences to understand that the meaning of “prefer” here refers to the growing conditions that are best for pōhutukawa.

They ask further questions, for example, about the features that help the trees to live in sandy places.

#### Page 26–27

The students identify the key words in each box to help them make sense of the key facts and any supporting details.

They summarise the main idea that each feature enables the tree to live in warm, dry, and salty areas.

#### Page 28–29

The students identify the different ways that animals use the tree.

They summarise the main idea that pōhutukawa are important to these animals because they provide a home and food.

#### Page 30

The students make connections between the text and their knowledge of Māori history, culture, and the relationship Māori have with the environment to infer the significance of pōhutukawa to Māori. This includes the connections plants and people have to Tāne Mahuta and how pōhutukawa were used to make everyday items and medicine.

They identify that when people see the flowers, they know that kina are ready and that the summer will be warm.

They summarise the main idea that pōhutukawa are important to Māori.

### How you can support students to read, respond, and think critically

Have the students read the rest of the first paragraph. *What questions do you have?*

Have the students read the heading and the following paragraph.

If necessary, briefly discuss that although we may see pōhutukawa in other places, the word “prefer” tells us about the kind of place they like best.

*Have any of your questions been answered? Let’s keep reading and see what information we can find out.*

Have the students share further questions.

Allow time for the students to look at both pages so they can establish the relationship between the text boxes, the parts of the tree, and the lines connecting them.

Model how to identify the key words in one box, then support students to do this themselves, for example, *In the box about the bark, the most important words are “bark” and “protect”. The bark protects the tree. That’s a bit like the way our clothes protect us from being hurt.*

*Why do the roots grow around rocks? What key words help you work this out?*

Prompt the students to think about the main idea of these pages. *We’ve read about what features the tree needs to have so that it can live beside the sea. What would happen if each part of the tree didn’t have these features?*

Start a summary chart. If necessary, support the students to summarise the main idea that these features are important for the tree to survive.

Have the students read the heading, look at the photographs and captions, and then read the pages. Prompt them to notice that often the main idea is contained in the first sentence in the paragraph.

*What have you found out? How important are pōhutukawa to these animals? Why?*

Have the students think, pair, and share and then record their ideas on the summary chart.

Have students read the page. Allow time for them to discuss their prior knowledge of Tāne Mahuta. Ask students to share what they know about pōhutukawa.

*In what ways was the pōhutukawa used by Māori? Can you find information in the text that tells us this?*

If necessary, support the students with the meaning of “soothe upset stomachs”.

*How is the pōhutukawa still important today? What information tells you that?*

Record the students’ ideas on the summary chart.

Prompt the students to think about why the writer has put “pōhutukawa” at the beginning of the sentence (because it’s the main topic).

## Page 31

The students use the heading, the photograph, and their prior knowledge about nature “in danger” to predict that they will read about things that harm the pōhutukawa.

They draw on their prior knowledge of the meaning of “in danger” and how that differs from “endangered” to make the connection that if pōhutukawa are in danger, they are at risk of dying out.

They identify that through the history of settlement, pōhutukawa were cut down and are still being cut down. They also identify possums as being a major threat to pōhutukawa today. Some students might make connections between the text and other texts they have read, for example, *Too Many Possums*, to also help them understand the damage that possums cause.

☑ They use the heading and the key words to help them identify and then summarise the main idea that there are not as many pōhutukawa as there used to be.

## Page 32

The students share their ideas about ways to help pōhutukawa.

They make connections between this part of the text and the information on the previous page to infer that because there has been a decline in the number of trees, a large amount of planting has to be done.

They think critically about the implications of a world without pōhutukawa, for example, the loss of an animal habitat.

The students use the heading to identify the main idea that efforts are under way to make sure there will be more pōhutukawa in the future.

They make connections between the text and other conservation projects they know of and ask questions such as “What can we do to help?”

☑ With support, the students reflect on their learning. They revisit the reading purpose and learning goal(s) and explain some of the things they did to meet them, for example, how they used the headings and key words to identify the main ideas.

☑ The students identify some challenges in the text and how they worked (or tried to work) them out.

Have the students read the heading. *What do you think you will find out on this page?*

*What do you already know about plants or animals that are in danger that might help you here?*

If necessary, prompt the students to use the photograph and make connections to what they already know.

Prompt the students to think critically about the difference between “in danger” and “endangered”. Support them to infer that a tree now “in danger” could easily become “endangered” if nothing is done to prevent this.

Have the students read the rest of the paragraph.

*What happened to the large forests? What is happening to pōhutukawa now? Show me the parts in the text that tell you that.*

*Do you have any more questions?*

*What’s the main idea on this page?* Add this to the summary chart.

☑ *What strategies did you use to find the main idea?*

Have the students read the heading. *How might pōhutukawa be saved?*

Have the students read the first paragraph.

*Why have so many trees been planted?*

Prompt the students to think critically. *What could happen if more pōhutukawa aren’t planted?*

Have the students read the last sentence.

*What is the main idea on this page?*

Review the summary chart to focus on some of the key ideas that might help answer how to help save the pōhutukawa.

Revisit the reading purpose and learning goal or goals.

☑ *Ask questions: How did identifying and summarising the main ideas help you to understand how pōhutukawa are important to people and animals?*

☑ *What strategies did you use to help you solve any difficulties you had when reading this text?* If necessary, explain or model some strategies the students could use.

## After reading

- Students can reread the article as they listen to the audio version on the *Readalong 2012: Ready to Read and Junior Journal 44 and 45* CD or MP3 file. Audio versions also provide English language learners with good models of pronunciation, intonation, and expression.
- Provide opportunities for the students to further practise their skills of summarising main ideas.
  - Have them reread the article, and with help, write a sentence to summarise each section. The students can then use these summaries to present a brief explanation (orally or in writing) of why pōhutukawa are important to animals and people. They can present their explanations to the rest of the class or make a poster to share more widely. To support your students, refer to the word maps you created during the reading session and the features of information reports.
  - Have them draw a pōhutukawa tree and use pages 26–27 as a model for how to label specific parts of the tree. Have them write a brief description about how each part is used, or has been used, by people and animals.
  - Have them make a labelled diagram of another plant, bird, or animal they have read about, summarising the important features in the labels.
  - Have them write a persuasive letter to the principal or a local authority, urging them to plant and protect pōhutukawa. Remind them to give reasons and to suggest specific actions.
- Provide opportunities for students to build their knowledge of Māori and their connection to the natural environment.
  - Have a range of traditional stories available about Ranginui and Papatūānuku and their children and Tāne Mahuta and his children.
  - Have information available about particular pōhutukawa trees, such as the one at Cape Reinga, that are of importance to many Māori.
- Provide opportunities for the students to apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge beyond this text by having them find out about the ways local trees and plants are used and protected. Invite an elder from your local hapū or iwi to share their knowledge of the pōhutukawa and its importance in your area.
- Provide opportunities for the students to practise and consolidate their skills of summarising across other texts. See the Related texts section below for examples of other texts you could use in a guided reading session.

## Related texts

Texts that require students to summarise, for example “Catching Mustelids” (JJ 43), “Tākapu” (JJ 45).

Texts with a conservation theme: “A New Home for Mocomoko” (JJ 43), *Too Many Possums* (RTR Gold).