

# Incredible Insects

## BEFORE 1: Project WILD First Impressions

**Before** your visit to get students thinking about how they feel about insects and why. Students will (1) distinguish between reactions to an animal based on myth or stereotype and those based on facts, and (2) recognize the value of animals' contributions to ecosystems, even those that people sometimes respond to with fear.

### VA Standards Addressed

English/Language Arts (2024): 2.W, 2.R; 3.W, 3.R

Science (2018) 2.1 c, d, f; 2.6; 3.1 c, d, f; 3.5

Mathematics (2023): 2.PS.1; 3.PS.1

### Materials

- Appendix A: Insect set ([Appendix A](#)) of a variety of invertebrates, including some the students might think are "cute" and some they might think are "scary". NOTE: You may choose to focus on just insects or use insects and other invertebrates and have students classify the organisms to reinforce insect structure. A sample Appendix A: Insect set is included at the end of this document.
- Scissors
- Glue sticks
- Initial Impressions Graphing Datasheet
- Materials to make a flyer (Or use a computer)



### Background

People respond differently to different invertebrates. For instance, some people express fondness for butterflies but may feel disgust or fear when confronted with a cicada. Their first reaction may be to recoil if they see a cicada; their second may be to kill the animal as quickly as possible. Yet cicadas cannot hurt a person, and provide important food in an ecosystem.

### Lesson Preparation

1. Prepare sets of images showing a variety of different invertebrates. You'll need two sets per team of 2-3 students.
2. Divide students into groups of 2-3

### Instructional Strategy

1. Student teams cut out the images of insects and sort them based on how they feel about each invertebrate (😊, 😐, ☹️). They then take these sorts and use them to create a graph of first impressions.



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- a. Alternative: Do this as a whole class - Show a large version of each image to the students, asking them to take turns saying the first word that comes to their minds as they look at the picture. Record the name of the animal and the words the students suggest on a table. Accessibility note: students can also give a thumbs-up or thumbs-down in response. Images can be sorted based on the majority response.
2. Ask the students analyze their data - identifying if they which category got the most/least responses.
3. Ask each team to find out more about one of the animals. (You may let them choose, or make assignments.)
  - a. First, they should list what they think and already know about the invertebrate (including their reactions).
  - b. Then, they conduct research. In their research, the teams should try to figure out whether the reactions of the students to the animals were based on fact or opinion.
4. Each team prepares a flyer about the invertebrate, including a labeled image of the organism, and a description of what it does in its habitat. The goal is to convince others that they have the coolest invertebrate.
5. Ask the students to present their flyers. Talk about the values and contributions animals make-from ecological to aesthetic. Ask if their feelings about the organisms changed, and why or why not.
6. Students then cut out the same images and do a new sort.
7. Return the initial sort, and ask them to look at their data:
  - a. What changes are there?
  - b. What stayed the same?
8. As a class, discuss "first impression opinions" and contrast this with basing perceptions of animals, plants, people, ideas, etc. on the best evidence available.

## Extensions

1. Invite an expert to bring in live invertebrates. Reach out to extension offices, universities, or natural history museums. Prepare students by telling them what invertebrates will be brought, and help them generate a list of questions for the expert.
2. Draw a picture of a "favorite" invertebrate and one of a "scary" invertebrate. Write a short story about each, including the value of each invertebrate.
3. Prepare a series of large photos or drawings of a variety of different kinds of aquatic invertebrates. Select a range so that there are likely to be some that provide a fearful or negative "first impression." Conduct the activity as described above.

