

Matt Formston: Surfing in the Dark

AUTHOR

JOHN DICKSON

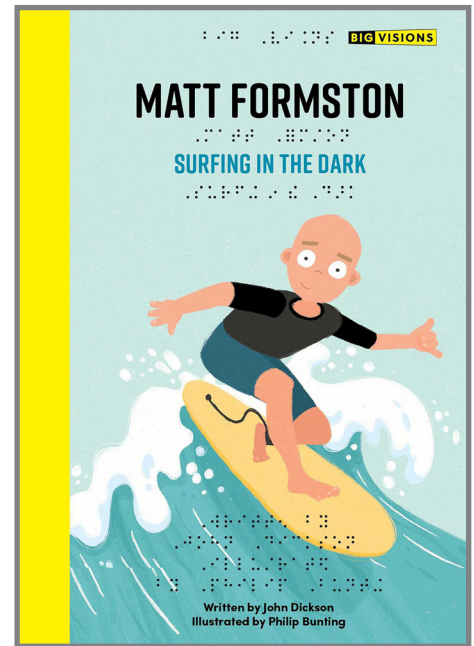
ILLUSTRATOR

PHILIP BUNTING

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

Meet Matt Formston, the blind surfer with big visions. Matt Formston always dreamed of becoming a professional surfer. But by the time he was five years old, he was almost completely blind. Matt never let that stop him. Now he is a record-holding cycling Paralympian and a world champion surfer. Discover how being vision impaired has made Matt who he is today.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Dickson is an experienced and successful journalist, copywriter and award-winning children's author. He has written several children's books including *M is for Mutiny: history by alphabet* (shortlisted, Children's Book Council of Australia Awards, 2018), *Under My Bed, Norton took Something* and *The Good, the bad and the silly: stories of our past*.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Philip Bunting is an award-winning illustrator and author. Philip explains that his work 'deliberately encourages playful interaction between the reader and child, allowing his books to create a platform for genuine intergenerational engagement and fun'. His books include *Give Me Some Space!* which was a National Simultaneous Storytime pick, and *Not Cute!* which was a Children's Book Council of Australia Awards Honour Book in 2021.

STUDY NOTES

- Matt Formston cannot see the ocean, but he can hear it and feel it. What can he learn from the ocean, using his senses of hearing and touch?
- Why do you think Matt initially hid his blindness?
- Matt's parents decided to keep him in his school, let him play sports and avoid using the word 'can't'. How did these decisions impact Matt's life?
- Two things helped Matt a lot: his willingness to ask questions and his fearlessness about making mistakes. Why do you think those qualities were so important to him?
- What events in Matt's life led him to become a Paralympian Cyclist?
- When Matt returned to surfing, he kept tackling bigger and bigger waves. What do you think motivated him?
- Matt says his disability has made him who he is. Can you think of things in your life that have helped to make you who you are?
- This book is printed with braille alongside the printed text. Why do you think the publisher chose to include braille in the book rather than making a separate braille edition?

- Close your eyes and run your fingers across the braille in the book. How does it feel? Draw a picture of a letter/word you feel with your fingers. For example, do you feel two or three dots in a row? Compare your drawing with the actual braille. How close were you to drawing what is printed in the book?
- Matt's willingness to make mistakes has helped him grow. Write about a time you made a mistake that ultimately helped you learn something.
- Close your eyes for one minute. During that time, observe how your other senses kick in to help you. Write a list or draw a picture of what you notice about the room when your eyes are closed.
- Matt has had to overcome a lot of challenges. Make a list of three challenges you have had to overcome. Compare your list with one of your classmate's. What do you notice? Are your challenges similar or different?
- Matt has done a lot of inspiring things in his life. Write down or draw a picture of someone else who inspires you. What do you admire about him/her?