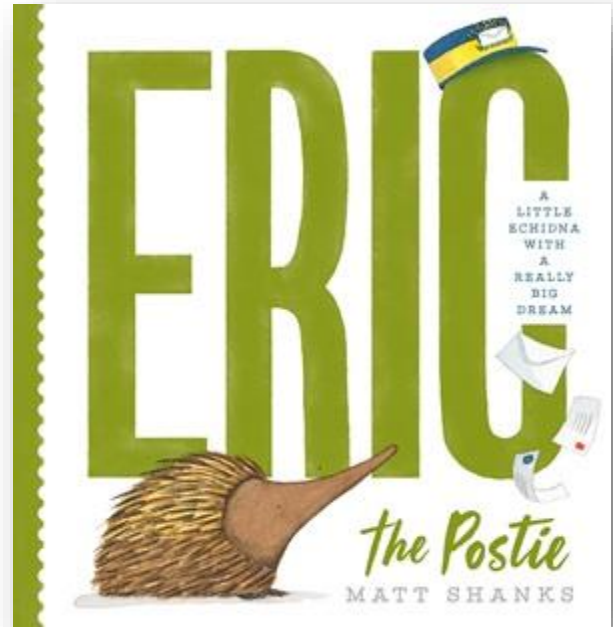


# Eric The Postie

Author/ Illustrator  
Matt Shanks



Eric dreams of being a postie, and he knows he would be the best postie ever. The only problem is, no one is letting him deliver mail! Eric starts his own secret mission, and soon the postman starts to notice mail going missing...

## TEACHER NOTES

### Themes

- Hopes and dreams
- Careers
- Australian animals
- Overcoming challenges
- Small communities
- Persistence

### Writing/Illustrating style

Matt Shanks uses watercolour illustrations and white space to convey the simplicity of his storylines, making the small artwork that is included on the page much more meaningful and adorable. Matt is inspired by the Australian landscape, telling uniquely Australian stories and in expanding the ideas behind the town of Wattleford – the ideas of rural Australia with small communities.

### Author Motivation

*Eric, a Little Echidna with a Really Big Dream* started as a small drawing of an echidna crawling into a mailbox. After some encouragement this flourished into a proper picture book of an echidna that steals people's mail to deliver them. Echidnas are one of Matt Shanks' favourite Australian animals because of their uniqueness.

### Author/Illustrator Background

Matt was born in Sydney, Australia and now resides in Melbourne. Sandwiched between the bush and beach, the inspiration for his short stories comes from a love of his unique country. His early fascination for the combination of words and pictures saw him complete a Bachelor of Design at the University of Sydney in 2003. It took him 10 years while working as a Creative Director at some of Melbourne's best design agencies to realise that this 'watercolour hobby' of his needed to be shared with more than just his wife and cat. Simplicity, humour and the art of the unseen are strong themes in Matt's illustration work. With his strong understanding of the commercial aspects of the business from a career in design, he is a uniquely creative and pragmatic artist. He loves to work collaboratively and iteratively to achieve the best result for the audience.

### Study Notes/Activities

- Eric wants to be a postie. What do you want to be when you grow up? Why? Have a dress up day and have everyone come to school dressed as what they want to be when they grow up.
- Eric would be a good postie because of his sharp spines, ability to burrow, long tongue and sharp beak. Why would you be good at your dream job?
- Eric thinks he would be the best postie – better than anyone. What are you the best at? Have a look through Guinness World Records here, <http://bit.ly/1QAVD5> Do you think you could beat any of them? Could you create a new record?
- Look at all the wonderful mailboxes people have in the book. Draw and design your own novelty mailbox. Create it out of an old shoebox or something else crafty.
- Look at the first set of endpapers, where different echidnas from Eric's family have had different careers. Can you identify what jobs these echidnas would have had from their pictures and their uniform?

- Eric's family used to be painters, scientists, cricketers and judges. What do your parents do? Do you want to follow in their footsteps?
- Look at the animals queuing for a post office job. Can you identify what each animal is? Why would these animals be good or bad at delivering mail? If they wouldn't be good mail deliverers, what jobs would they be good at?
- While researching for the book, Matt Shanks discovered that echidnas can't climb. Research other fun facts about echidnas including what they eat, where they live, and how long they live for.
- Discuss what the word 'persistence' means and how Eric has persisted.
- At the end of the book we find out that even Eric gets mail sometimes! Imagine that Eric the echidna was your mailman, and write him a letter and say thanks for delivering your mail. What else would you say to your mailman if he was an echidna?
- Look at different special stamps online at <http://bit.ly/2m2ZZ26> Australia Post sometimes commissions special stamps for special occasions, like centenaries and anniversaries. Design your own stamp and think of the special event it would commemorate.
- Write a letter to someone you don't live with, like your grandparents or family friends. As a class, take a trip to your local post office and buy some stamps and post your letters. See how long they take to be delivered.
- Look closely at the package that Eric receives at the end of the book. What do you think is in the box? (hint: look at the last page).
- At the very end of the book, Eric becomes a postie and wears a special postie uniform. Does your postie wear a uniform? Design and draw your own postie uniform that you would wear as a postie.
- Draw your own interpretation of Eric the Echidna!
- Posties use all different methods to deliver mail: motorcycles, bicycles, walking. How does your postie deliver the mail?
- The name Eric the Echidna is a literary technique called alliteration. Discuss what alliteration is. Create alliterating names for the other animals in the book, such as the kangaroo, koala and stork.