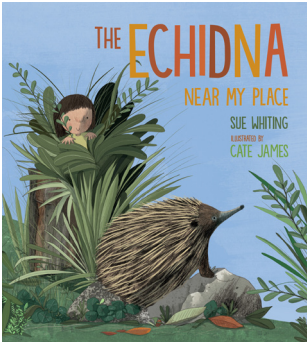




Walker Books Classroom Ideas



The Echidna Near my Place

Author: Sue Whiting
Illustrator: Cate James
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

Nana and I walk through the paddock most days. And you know what? An echidna lives here. We don't always see it. But I'm always looking for it.

As a young child and their nana go for walks together, they follow a short-beaked echidna keenly observing and discussing what its life might be like. Learn with them about what echidnas eat, where they live, and how they protect themselves.

A wonderful addition to the acclaimed and award-winning Nature Storybook series, which provides memorable reading experiences, combining narrative and factual forms.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Sue Whiting is a children's and young adult author and editor who lives and works in a small coastal village south of Sydney. She has written numerous books in a variety of genres: fiction and nonfiction, picture books through to YA, including the best-selling *Missing*, and the CBCA 2019 Notable Book, *Beware the Deep Dark Forest*.

Sue is passionate about storytelling and the power of story to transform lives, and has been fascinated with picture books since her early years as a primary school teacher. Join her on her adventures in story at <https://suewhiting.com>.

Cate James moved to Australia in 2015 from Scotland where she studied Printmaking and Illustration at Edinburgh College of Art. She is now living in the Northern Beaches of Sydney with her husband and her sausage dog Sebastian. Cate is a full-time illustrator, and when she's not drawing for children's books, she likes to find different ways to be an artist. She volunteers with ArtEx at the Sydney Children's Hospital in Randwick where she also exhibits her work, and teaches art to primary-aged children and printmaking to adults in various locations around Sydney. Cate is also a printmaking technician at UNSW. She has illustrated over 25 books for publishers in the UK, US and Australia and was awarded the Penguin Random House Illustrators' Showcase Award in 2019.

How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Ages 5-9
- Years 1-3

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Science

Example of:

- Picture Books
- Non-fiction
- Narrative Non-fiction

Themes/Ideas:

- Nature
- Habitats
- Geography
- Science
- Australian Animals



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Before Reading:

View the cover and title of the book. Identify the following:

- The title
- The author
- The illustrator
- The publisher
- The blurb

Look at the front cover and read the blurb on the back. Try to predict some of the events that might happen in the story.

As a class, brainstorm what you know about echidnas then use this information to create a mind-map. Use subheadings to help organise the information. E.g. appearance, food, habitat, behaviours etc.

Write down 5 adjectives you would use to describe echidnas. Come up with a list of questions about echidnas. Look for the answers to these as you read the book, then use any unanswered questions to guide further research.

Exploring the Text:

Text types

Is *The Echidna Near my Place* an imaginative, informative or persuasive text? Is it a combination of more than one of these types of texts? How can you tell? Who do you think the book was created for? If you were a librarian, what section of the library would you put the book in?

The text in this book is presented in two styles. Identify the formats. Why do you think the book is designed this way? Read the book using each format separately and then discuss how the different formats change the purpose and alter the perception of *The Echidna Near my Place*. Which writing style do you prefer: the descriptive storytelling style or the informative factual style? In what types of texts would each of these writing styles usually be used? For example: novels, chapter books, short stories, newspaper articles and information books.

The narrative text

Revisit the list of adjectives you wrote to describe echidnas. Did the author use any of “your” adjectives? Cross off any which you think no longer apply and add 3 new words.

Retell the story verbally focusing on sequencing, or the order in which events happen.

Choose a spread and write a short paragraph about how you think the child is feeling and why, using the text and illustrations to support your opinion.

When the child and their nana come across the echidna in the wild, they make sure to give the echidna space. Do you think this is important? Why or why not?

When the child gets too close, the echidna makes itself into a ball shape, with its spikes sticking out. Why do you think the echidna felt threatened? Research other threats to echidnas, and discuss ways your class could help protect them.

The child and their nana follow the echidna many different places. Draw a map of all the places the echidna goes, including the paddock, the road, the garden and anywhere else you think the echidna might have gone along the way.

The child says they’ll tell Dad and Ronnie all about the echidna at dinner. Imagine you’re the child, and write a short speech telling your family about the day.

Nana and the child have a great day following the echidna. What are some things you like to do with your grandparent? Make a plan for a fun day of activities together.

Choose a section of the book to read aloud. Think about how you can use your voice and body to bring the story to life for listeners. For example, facial expression, pausing, changing your pace and volume, posture and actions/gestures.

The Factual text

The Echidna Near my Place includes an index at the back of the book. What is the purpose of an index? How do you use it? In what kind of books would you normally find an index? Using the index as a starting point, collect any other words from the book that you don’t know the meaning of and create an *The Echidna Near my Place* dictionary. You can also collect words and phrases from any further research to add to your dictionary. Illustrate some of the entries to help further explain their meaning.

Compare the factual text in *The Echidna Near my Place* to a fiction picture book. How is the language different in each? Why have the authors of these texts chosen this language?

Make a list of the facts about echidnas that are included in the text. Check this against the mind map created before you read the text. Cross out or edit any incorrect information then add in anything new that you’ve learnt. Use these facts to write an information report on echidnas.

What do echidnas eat? Use the text and illustrations for clues, and check your answers in the Information about the short-beaked Echidna note at the back of the book. Add to your list as you do further research.



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Exploring the Illustrations:

Look at the colours the illustrator, Cate James, has used in *The Echidna Near my Place*. Why do you think she chose to use these colours? Do they accurately represent the environment that echidnas live in?

Choose one of the spreads and have a class discussion about the following:

- How do you think the child is feeling? What clues might there be in the pictures?
- Is there a main colour in this spread? How does it make you feel?
- Do the colours change from spread to spread? Why might that be?
- Do the pictures take up the whole page, or are they framed?
- How do things close up look different to things in the picture that are far away?
- How do the illustrations add to the story? How would the story be different if there were no illustrations?

Further Activities About Echidnas:

The child says they'll tell Dad and Ronnie all about the echidna at dinner. Imagine you're the child, and write a short speech telling your family about the day.

Research more about echidnas on the internet, using the list of questions you came up with before reading the book as a guide. Create a PowerPoint presentation and present it to the class.

Make a list of websites which are useful for learning about echidnas. Make sure you consider whether the information each site provides is reliable, who wrote or manages it and how up-to-date it is.

In what areas might you find echidnas? Shade a map of Australia to indicate where echidnas live. Echidnas are one of the few Australian animals that hibernate. What does hibernate mean? What other animals can you think of that might hibernate?

Look at photographs or video clips of echidnas on the internet. Do they look or act differently to how you imagined them from the story? Did you learn any extra information?

Draw a picture of an echidna and label its main parts. Also write a brief description of what each part is for.

In small groups, create a diorama in a cardboard box to represent the echidna's habitat. Try to incorporate materials from the natural environment into your display.

Do you think an echidna is a good animal for a pet? Why or why not? Hold a class discussion.

General Activities:

Write a book review of *The Echidna Near my Place* stating what you liked and disliked about it, who you think would enjoy it the most and whether you think the information provided is credible. Use persuasive language to make the reader understand your opinion.

Compare *The Echidna Near my Place* with another book from the "Nature Storybooks" series. How are they similar and different?

Create a soundscape for the book using either recorded sounds found online, or sounds that you create yourself. Choose sounds that capture the mood of the story.

Create a new front cover for the book using a different illustration style. You may like to look at other books in the "Nature Storybooks" series for inspiration.

Choose an animal/subject to research then write your own story about it, in the style of the "Nature Storybooks" series.

Other Great Titles From Walker Books



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Sue Whiting
Mark Jackson
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9781925381139 PB
Classroom ideas available



Searching for Cicadas
Lesley Gibbes
Judy Watson
9781922244420 HB
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