

## MY PLACE FOR YOUNGER READERS

SALLY MORGAN

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YEAR LEVEL: Y5–9

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITY: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Sally Morgan always wondered about her family: who they were, where they came from, what they were hiding. She asked questions, but received few answers. So Sally travelled to her grandmother's birthplace. What started as a tentative search for information became an extraordinary pilgrimage that would change their lives forever.

First published in 1987, the great Australian classic *My Place* is adapted here for younger readers.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sally Morgan is from the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Born in Perth in 1951, she grew up in suburban Manning. Sally completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Western Australia in 1974, majoring in Psychology. She also has postgraduate diplomas from the Western Australian Institute of Technology (now Curtin University) in both Counselling Psychology and Computing and Library Studies.

Winner of the 1987 Australian Human Rights Award for Literature and the 1990 Order of Australia Book Prize, Sally's first book, *My Place*, is an Australian classic.

Sally has gone on to write, edit and illustrate many works for both children and adults, including the verse novel *Sister Heart*, winner of the 2016 Prime Minister's Literary Award. She is also a celebrated artist with works in numerous private and public collections in Australia and overseas.

### THEMES

- Aboriginal histories and cultures
- The Stolen Generations
- Identity
- Family
- Country and place
- Truth-telling

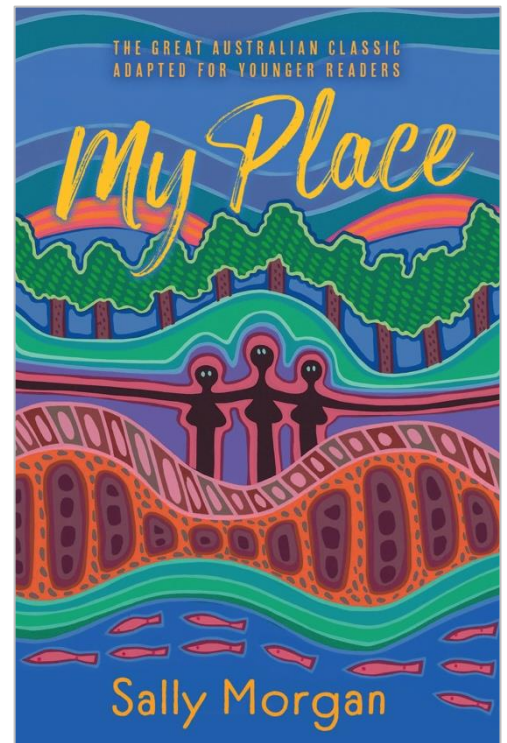
### AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Y5–9 English

Y5–9 Humanities and Social Sciences (History)

### USEFUL WEBSITES

- Books by Sally Morgan: <https://www.fremantlepress.com.au/contributors/sally-morgan>
- Racism No Way – Stolen Generations factsheet: <https://www.racismnoway.com.au/teaching-resources/factsheets/the-stolen-generations>



## CLASSROOM IDEAS

### Discussion questions

1. Reread the book's dedication (p. 5). What do you think the author means by 'letting things stay as they were'? What would Sally and her family have been deprived of?
2. What does *My Place* have to say about belonging and about knowing who you are? Why is the book called *My Place*?
3. Gladys pushes Sally and her siblings to do well in school, while Nan is happy to let them stay home. What accounts for the difference in their attitudes towards schooling?
4. What are some examples of Nan's and Gladys's fear of authority? What lies behind their fear?
5. In what ways does Sally recognise this reticence in herself and how does she overcome this?
6. Why do Gladys and Nan both finally decide to tell their stories, despite their apprehension?
7. Compare and contrast the structure and style of Arthur's (pp. 166–231), Gladys's (pp. 246–309), and Daisy's (pp. 324–350) respective stories. What might explain the similarities? The differences?
8. *I liked my language, but I got a good hiding if I spoke it. I had to talk English.* (p. 171) How does being forbidden from speaking their Indigenous language affect Arthur and Daisy?
9. Why do you think Arthur, Gladys, Daisy and Sally devote so much narrative space to explorations of their childhood? In what ways might their childhood experiences shape who they are as adults?
10. Compare the conclusions to Arthur's, Gladys's and Daisy's stories. What hopes do they share? What advice do they offer future generations of Australians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous?
11. At different times in the text, Sally, Jill, Gladys and Nan each have experiences or visions with a mystical or spiritual quality. What do you think about these? Do you think your own cultural context influences how you evaluate these moments? How would you describe your own cultural context?
12. What are Sally's motivations for collecting her family's stories into a published book?
13. Arthur's, Gladys's and Daisy's stories are represented in the text as if the reader is listening directly to each of their voices. Why do you think the author chose to highlight the oral quality of these stories?
14. At times the narrative becomes *recursive*, revisiting events that have already been covered in the text through the perspective of a different character. How does this affect your reading experience?
15. What does *My Place* have to say about truth-telling, both in our own lives and as a nation?
16. How has understanding of Indigenous experiences changed since the publication of *My Place* in 1987?

### Humanities and social sciences (History)

1. Construct a timeline incorporating the significant events for one of the principal characters in the text, alongside major events in Australian and world history.
2. Oral history:
  - a. What does 'oral history' mean? What is the value of such history?
  - b. In what ways do personal histories differ from national histories? What are the insights and limitations of each?
  - c. Record an oral history by interviewing an older member of your own family. This could be a parent, grandparent or another family member that you invite for an interview. Once the family member has accepted your invitation to be interviewed on an agreed topic, arrange a time and place for the interview. With the family member's written permission, record the interview, then transcribe it (i.e. type it up). Give the family member a chance to read the transcription and make changes, deletions and corrections. Include a title page with the name of the interviewee, name of interviewer, topic of interview, date of interview, and place of interview.
3. *Aborigines Act 1905 (WA)*:
  - a. What was the *Aborigines Act 1905 (WA)*? Read a copy of it (<https://aiatsis.gov.au>).
  - b. What aspects of Aboriginal people's lives did the Act control and restrict?
  - c. In what ways did the Act draw a line between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people?
  - d. Who did this Act give power? Who had power taken away?
  - e. What is the legacy of this piece of legislation?
4. Research the history of the Stolen Generations in Australia. Present your findings in a report. List all sources consulted in your research.