

## MY PLACE

SALLY MORGAN

ISBN (PB): 9781760996185

YEAR LEVEL: F–10

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITIES: Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Histories and Cultures

### ABOUT THE BOOK

In 1982, Sally Morgan travelled back to her grandmother's birthplace. What started as a tentative search for information about her family turned into an overwhelming emotional and spiritual pilgrimage.

*My Place* is a moving account of a search for truth into which a whole family is gradually drawn, finally freeing the tongues of the author's mother and grandmother, allowing them to tell their own stories.

### 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.

*My Place* is Sally's first book, and upon publication it immediately achieved bestseller status. It was the winner of the 1987 Australian Human Rights Award for Literature and the 1990 Order of Australia Book Prize, and is now considered 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 Awards. She is also a celebrated artist with works in numerous private and public collections in Australia and overseas.

### THEMES

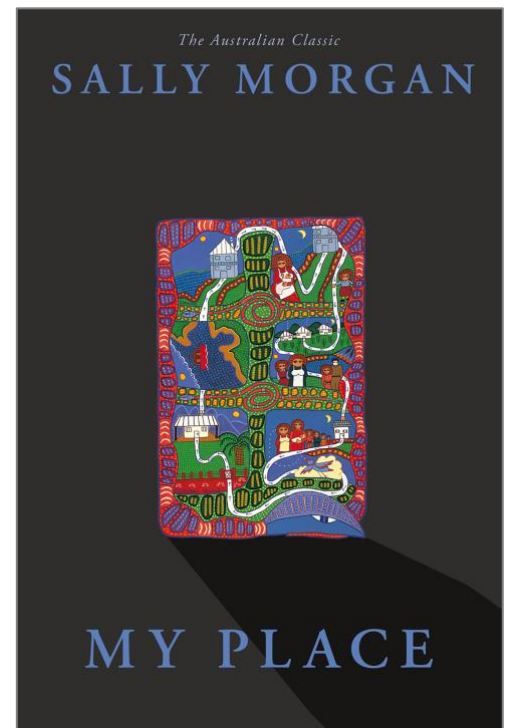
- Identity and self-discovery
- First Nations history
- Truth and oral storytelling
- Family and belonging
- Colonisation and oppression
- Resilience

### AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

- F–10 English
- F–10 Humanities and Social Sciences
- F–10 General Capabilities: Literacy, Personal and Social Capability and Critical and Creative Thinking

### USEFUL WEBSITES

- *My Place* by Sally Morgan, Fremantle Press: [fremantlepress.com.au/books/my-place](http://fremantlepress.com.au/books/my-place)
- Reconciliation Australia: [reconciliation.org.au](http://reconciliation.org.au)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols Guide – for Teachers: [sbs.com.au/learn/resources/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-protocols-guide-for-teachers/teacher-resource](http://sbs.com.au/learn/resources/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-protocols-guide-for-teachers/teacher-resource)



## CLASSROOM IDEAS

### Before Reading

1. Create a mind map exploring the title 'My Place' and its possible literal and metaphoric meanings.
2. Look at the cover artwork, which is a painting created by Sally Morgan. What predictions can you make about what will happen in the text based on this artwork?
3. Discuss as a class: What is your place and what does it mean to belong there?

### During Reading

1. List some of the family and kinship structures, laws, traditions and/or customs of the Palyku people which Sally learns about through Arthur and Daisy.
2. Sally tells Gladys, "'Mum,' I reasoned, 'it's already hurt people. It's hurt you and me and Nan, all of us. I mean, for years, I've been telling people I'm Indian! I have the right to know my own history.'" (p. 195). How do the members of Sally's family show resilience despite the historic and ongoing impacts of colonisation?
3. Compare Nan, Gladys and Sally's views towards education over the course of the novel. How did their various experiences impact this view?
4. Why is education, in particular, the skills of writing and reading, powerful?
5. How do Sally's childhood experiences inform her decisions and path in life as an adult?
6. Create a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts Sally's childhood memories and view of her father versus the man we learn about from Gladys and Nan over the course of the text.
7. Why do you think that Arthur, Gladys, Daisy and even Sally devote such extensive narrative space to explorations of their childhood?
8. Why do Gladys and Nan decide to keep their Aboriginal identity hidden from the children?
9. How do you think the prohibition of the Indigenous language impinges on the characters of Arthur and Nan?
10. Evaluate Nan's statement: '**you can't put no lies in a book**' (p. 411). What does this say about her conception of text and narrative? Why has she developed such an understanding?
11. Daisy Corunna says, '**Could be it's time to tell. Time to tell what it's been like in this country**' (p. 437). Why is truth-telling and hearing First Nations voices so important to our understanding of history?
12. Compare the conclusions to Arthur's, Gladys's and Daisy's stories. What hopes do they share? What advice do they provide for future generations of Australians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous?

### After Reading

1. Revisit the class's discussion of the title 'My Place' after reading the text. Select one character (Daisy, Arthur, Sally or Gladys) and describe their deep connection to and responsibility for Country and/or place.
2. Who was A.O. Neville, and why does Arthur say about him, '**any blackfella that had dealings with Neville got no good word to say about him**' (p. 267)?
3. Revisit the cover artwork for *My Place* and annotate it with key information about Sally's family and place you have learned.
4. Research the historical and contemporary impact and ongoing contributions of *My Place* and/or Sally Morgan. How was *My Place* received at the time of publication compared to now? How was it received by First Nations vs non-First Nations readers?
5. How does this connect to oral storytelling as a way for First Nations peoples to traditionally pass down knowledge?
6. *My Place* was released years before the *Bringing Them Home report* (1992). How does *My Place* help the truth-telling about the Stolen Generations and the impact of colonisation on First Nations people?
7. Conduct a 'True for Who?' visible thinking activity wherein asking students to explore claims about key points of the novel from different perspectives, particularly events which had a great impact on the family.

8. Discuss Sally's motivations for collecting her family's stories orally and reproducing them in book form. What is the power and value of memoir and recorded oral history as a contribution to our understanding?
9. What was the *Western Australian Aborigines Act 1905*? What is the legacy of this piece of legislation?
10. Locate Corunna Downs on a map. Research the contemporary situation for Indigenous Australians living in the Marble Bar area. Discuss your findings as a class.
11. What information can you find about the Parkerville Children's Home and the Swan Native and Half-Caste Mission? How do your findings compare with Gladys's and Arthur's descriptions?
12. In the closing moment of *My Place*, Sally hears the bird call her Nan had heard before she dies (p. 448). Explain the significance of this event.



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