



Author Profile

Lara Morgan is a first-generation Australian of Croatian and Bermudian descent. She wrote her first book when she was seven – a plagiarised version of *The Magic Faraway Tree* – and has been writing on and off ever since. She has worked in community arts and at a community newspaper but now spends most of her time writing. *Awakening*, Book One of her adult trilogy, *The Twins of Saranthium*, was released in 2008 by Pan Macmillan. Book Two in the series, *Betrayal* was released in March 2010. For more information go to www.laramorgan.com

From Lara Morgan

Part of *Equinox* takes place in a separate state called Gondwana Nation, which seceded from the rest of the Australian continent several hundred years prior. It is, at its core, a nation owned and run by Indigenous Australians, but it is not exclusive to them and it is known as a better place by those in the Senate run lands. It is also technologically superior and outside Senate control. The creation of Gondwana Nation was my way of exploring a possible future for race relations in this country but to do it in a way that lead more down the path of self determination rather than assimilation. I have a deep interest in race relations but I tried to address them in this books in a way that wasn't too heavy-handed or political.

Space exploration and planet colonisation also interests me and while I was researching *Equinox* there was a lot of buzz coming out of the scientific community about the red dwarf star called Gliese. Gliese is twenty light years away from Earth, but the excitement was generated by the discovery that it is orbited by Earth-like planets, so I was excited to think about what it might be like to be colonising them in the future. So of course I incorporated the system into *Equinox* as being the planets everybody is trying to reach faster through the wormhole and Equinox Gate projects.

Synopsis

Equinox is the thrilling second instalment in the *Rosie Black Chronicles* by talented WA author Lara Morgan.

Rosie's dad is locked away, Pip has abandoned her, and Riley isn't telling her the full story. Bent on revenge, Rosie is still working in secret to try and take down the evil Helios group. But what sacrifices is she prepared to make to destroy Helios?

Reviews on *The Rosie Black Chronicles Book 1: Genesis*

- "This read will have you on the edge of your bus seat!" Dolly
- "This book is action all the way, it is a fast paced ride and it doesn't let up until right at the end." Bookiemonster blog
- "Nothing could tempt me to put such a novel down. Whether it be my hunger, or my eyes falling heavily wary. Nothing could tear us apart." Orbit
- "Morgan gives us some fabulously strong female characters, a beautifully rendered multicultural society, and a thoughtful consideration of the social and economic issues that might result from our current environmental sacrilege, and adds a twisty plot and some fabulous pacing." Read in a Single Sitting blog
 - "Verdict: Will have you itching for more." Daily Telegraph
- "From Martian canyons to the futuristic cities of Earth, *The Rosie Black Chronicles* is one of the freshest, best sci-fi stories in years." Illawarra Mercury

Discussion Questions

See the Discussion Notes on *The Rosie Black Chronicles Book 1: Genesis* for additional ideas and activities.

- How has the relationship between Pip and Rosie developed from Book 1? What role does Dalton play in this? What other characters or events have affected the course of their relationship?
- Rosie is initially inclined to dismiss Dalton as “just another spoilt rich boy, craving attention” (58). Is her assessment fair? To what extent does Dalton conform to this stereotype and to what extent does he exploit his reputation and privileged status in his fight against Helios? What motivates Dalton’s resistance to the organisation?
- How has Morgan used suspense to keep readers engaged throughout the story? Think about both tense moments in the plot and unanswered questions which underlie the story. What were some of the main questions you had in your mind as you were reading? When were these questions answered? Were there any that were still unresolved at the end of the book? What role does romantic tension play in keeping readers absorbed throughout the novel?
- There are a number of characters in the book whose loyalties are ambiguous and who cannot be immediately identified as either allies or enemies. What examples can you think of? Why might Morgan have included these characters? Think particularly about their role in maintaining tension and shaping relationships between characters.
- Riley places all of his research in a time-coded implant in Rosie’s cortex, telling her that it is merely a tracking device to protect her. Cassie defends his actions, saying, “He must have been betting on Helios getting hold of Rosie at some point, so he puts the info in her. It either becomes useful to her if she’s not caught, and life-saving tool for her if she is.” (303) How do you view his behaviour: was it a clever way of keeping Rosie alive or was he just being opportunistic and using her as a vehicle for his own ends? What are some of the ramifications of his actions?
- Agent Sulawayo tells Rosie, “Things need to change; that’s why I’m doing this... Changing things from the inside. You could help.” (274-5). Can Agent Sulawayo’s desire to create change from within Helios be viewed as pragmatism, or is she instead deceiving Rosie? Is it possible to change a corrupt organisation from within it, or does this inherently involve compromising your ideals?
- Pip says, “That deal, those plans for me you came up with to use Helios to find a cure. It was exactly what they did to me, making decisions about what I should do without giving me a say.” (374) Do you agree with his view of the situation? Is Pip’s decision to persist with trying to find a cure for the MalX on his own, selfish in any way, given his lack of success so far? Should he be thinking of the greater good and trying to bargain with Helios? Or does he have a better understanding of Helios because of his past and is correct in his claim that they cannot be trusted?
- What ultimately motivates Rosie to try and remake her deal with Agent Sulawayo? Is she weighing up the overall benefits and acting strategically, or rather betraying both her ideals and Pip? Is Rosie naive in thinking that she can bargain with Helios and not be hurt? What would you do in her situation?
- When Rosie confides in Dalton at the end of the book, she asks him not to tell Pip that her implant could potentially kill her. Why does she do this? Are her actions in any way similar to Riley’s actions earlier in the book?

Activities

- In *The Rosie Black Chronicles*, Lara Morgan uses jargon and invented technology to create a unique futuristic world. What examples can you find? How does this add to the authenticity of the characters and setting? Create a glossary for the books.
- The story is related from the point-of-view of Rosie. Choose one major episode in the book and retell it from the perspective of one of the other characters.
- Compose a Venn diagram showing how the Academy is both similar and different to a typical high school. Consider the behaviour of the students, the school culture, and the content of the lessons.
- Design a “Wanted” poster for Rosie after she evades escape at the hospital. Consider how you can use visual techniques such as colour, framing, font and composition to both convey key information and catch the viewer’s attention.
- Create a Lonely Planet-style visitor’s guide for New Perth or Gondwana Nation. Include information about food, transportation, areas to visit and avoid, health, rules and regulations etc.
- Research wormholes on the internet.
- Divide the class into two sides and have a class debate arguing the following statement: “By making a deal with Agent Sulawayo, Rosie is cooperating with the enemy and betraying her friends.”
- Imagine that *Equinox* was being turned into a feature film or TV series. Choose one key scene and write directors notes outlining where you would film this scene, what actors you would like to play the main roles and why, the music you would use in the soundtrack and how you would use film techniques to create atmosphere and suspense (eg. camera shots and angles, cuts, lighting). Create a storyboard of your chosen scene and present it to the rest of the class.
- View the *Equinox* trailer on the Rosie Black website. In your opinion, is this an effective trailer? Why or why not? Create an alternate trailer for the book. For more information on how to create your own book trailer, visit: www.insideadog.com.au/teachers/book-trailers
- What expectations do you have of the next book in the series? What might it be about? Where might it be set? How do you think the relationships between key characters will develop? Compose the opening of this book.

View the *Equinox* trailer at www.rosieblack.com

For information about new releases, the latest awards news and links to a range of teacher resources, sign up to our education newsletter at www.walkerbooks.com.au/Teachers