

## These notes are for:

- Primary school
- Years 2-6

## Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Art
- HSIE

## Example of:

- Short story anthology
- Indigenous literature
- Australian literature

## Experience of:

- Reading
- Writing/composing
- Representing
- Indigenous perspectives
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures (cross-curricular perspective)

## Values addressed:

- Care & compassion
- Respect
- Understanding, tolerance & inclusion

## Themes:

- Animals
- Creation myths
- Legends and folktales
- Indigenous culture & identity

\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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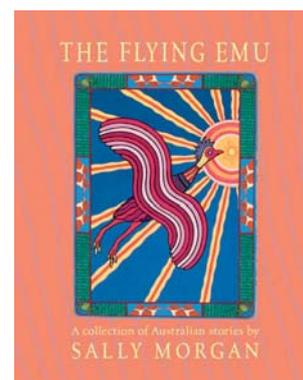
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## The Flying Emu

### The Flying Emu

**A collection of Australian stories**

Author: Sally Morgan  
 ISBN: 9781921720642  
 ARRP: \$19.95  
 NZRRP: \$22.99  
 Paperback  
 No. of Pages: 80  
 October 2011



## Synopsis

This entertaining short story collection is written and illustrated by one of Australia's most renowned Indigenous authors, Sally Morgan. Some of the stories were drawn from Sally's own childhood, while others were inspired by the interests of her children, nieces and nephews.

The stories have an earthy, folktale feel and are based around a host of characters comprised of Australian animals, introduced species, spirits, planets and humans. The title story, "The Flying Emu", tells of a beautifully-coloured emu who learns a potent lesson about vanity and immodesty when he accepts a race to the sun. Other stories include that of a po-faced moon, a seagull too lazy to build a nest, a boy who wants to tear holes in the sky and a magical bird who helps overthrow a tyrant.

The original version of *The Flying Emu*, released in 1992, was Sally's first published children's book. Part of the Walker Classics series, this new version features an updated preface and expanded glossary. *The Flying Emu* has a companion title, *The Greedy Crocodile*, which will be published in March 2012.

## Author/Illustrator Information

Sally Morgan is both a talented writer and visual artist whose work has won international acclaim. She has written books for children and adults, with her autobiography, *My Place*, recognised as an Australian classic. Together with her adult children, Sally wrote the *Stopwatch* series as well as several picture books, including *Curly and the Fent*, *Curly Saves Grandma's House*, *Sam's Bush Journey* and *Me and My Dad*. *My Place* has also been published in a special children's edition called *Sally's Story*.

Sally loves animals and is passionate about the Australian bush. She is a descendant of the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of northwest Western Australia.

## 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.

## Sally Morgan on writing *The Flying Emu*

“Aboriginal people have a tradition of storytelling that extends over thousands and thousands of years. I was brought up in a family where storytelling was an important part of our life. The stories you will read in the book are not traditional ones, but some of them were drawn from my own childhood, while others were suggested by the interests of my children and nieces and nephews.

One of my fondest memories as a child is of lying outside on the grass, with an old rug pulled over me, listening to my mother tell us stories. When she ran out of ideas she’d point up to the stars and we’d talk about them. Then we’d have a singsong, which generally went on until we lost our voices or fell asleep. One of our favourite ways of telling stories was for someone to begin and then another to continue the story. My brothers always made their part of the story as rude as Mum would allow.

My grandmother introduced me to the idea of bush creatures having their own stories to tell. I remember once crawling up as close as I dared to a goanna and thinking seriously about what it might say if it could speak. At other times I would hunt for fairies and elves under the big nasturtium leaves, convinced that these beings were bound to be doing something that would interest me.

Whenever I was bored or unhappy I would drift off into another world that was inhabited by all sorts of intriguing creatures. There I would have great adventures. And of course I was always the heroine!

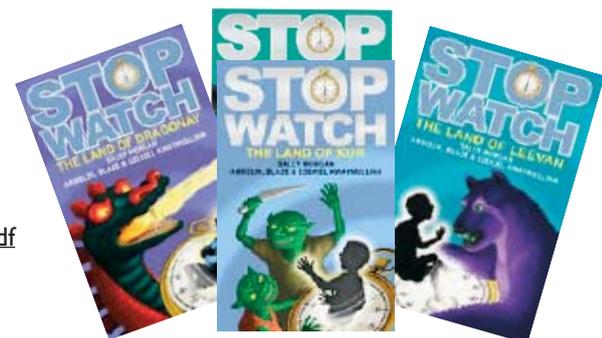
I hope you enjoy reading these stories and that you have fun making up stories of your own to share.”

Sally Morgan, from *The Flying Emu*

## In the classroom

### English/Literacy activities

- In the Preface to the book, Morgan writes, “Aboriginal people have a tradition of storytelling that extends over thousands and thousands of years. I was brought up in a family where storytelling was an important part of our life.” How important is storytelling in your family? What stories were you read or told as a child? These could be fairytales or legends, stories from books or real stories about things that actually happened to members of your family. (Discuss the meaning of the word “anecdote”.) How are these stories different? At home, interview a parent, grandparent or older person about stories they were told as a child. Choose one story and share it with the rest of the class. (If it is not your story, make sure you have permission to share it.) You may like to illustrate your presentation with a prop such as a book, family photo or piece of family memorabilia.
- Choose one short story from the book and, as a class, discuss the different elements of the plot: orientation, complication, rising action, climax and resolution. Then, working in groups, use the attached worksheet to analyse the plot structure of *another* short story from the book. Present your findings to the class. Try to ensure that all stories in the anthology are represented.
- Select one story from the book and create a character chart for the main characters. Draw a picture of each character on a large sheet or paper of cardboard. Around the pictures, write adjectives to describe them and quotes from the book which illustrate their character.
- Write one or two sentence “morals” for each story in the book. For instance, the moral of “The Flying Emu” might be, “Those who think too highly of themselves will quickly be brought back down to earth.” After you have finished, share your ideas as a class. Did everyone interpret the stories in the same way? What differences were there? What can we learn from this?
- Discuss the use of humour in the book. What characters, events or descriptions did you find the most amusing? Why do you think Sally Morgan decided to make her stories humorous? Overall, do you think her main purpose in the book was to instruct (teach a lesson) or entertain?
- Research traditional Aboriginal Dreamtime stories on the internet or in the school library. In what way are Sally Morgan’s stories similar and different to these stories? Why do you think this is the case? Some websites which may be useful are:
  - [www.abc.net.au/dustechoes/dustEchoesFlash.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/dustechoes/dustEchoesFlash.htm)
  - [www.teachers.ash.org.au/jmresources/dreaming/stories.html](http://www.teachers.ash.org.au/jmresources/dreaming/stories.html)
  - [www.aboriginaleducation.sa.edu.au/files/links/Dreaming\\_stories\\_and\\_bird.pdf](http://www.aboriginaleducation.sa.edu.au/files/links/Dreaming_stories_and_bird.pdf)



Co-authored by Sally Morgan  
The *Stopwatch* series

- Sally Morgan writes, “One of my favourite ways of telling stories was for someone to begin and then another to continue the story.” Adapt this concept in groups. Have everyone sit in a circle then have one person begin telling a story. The next person takes over after 20 seconds. (Use a watch to time!) Continue around the circle until the story has reached its conclusion. Alternately, instead of going around the circle, you may like to toss a ball to the person who must continue the story, or throw a ball of wool across the circle back and forth to see the story “unravel.”

A variation of this can be done on paper where everyone writes the orientation of a story. The stories are then all collected and redistributed for somebody else to read what has been written so far, and then write the next stage of the story, the rising action. (As this is the longest part of the story, this stage could be shared by several students – just make sure they don’t continue up to the climax!) Redistribute the stories once more, with the next person writing the climax, and then a final time, for the resolution. At the end, return the stories to the original authors so they can see how the plot unfolded! Did the story turn out as they expected? (This is a good activity to do as a homework task over a week, as it allows the students more time to develop their ideas.)

- What are some of the other ways Sally Morgan got inspiration for her stories, according to the Preface? In small groups, brainstorm a list of ways you can get ideas for stories. Some possibilities could include:
  - making up stories in pairs with each person saying one word alternately. eg. “Once” “upon” “a” “time” “there” “was” “a” ...
  - “alphabet stories” where words begin with consecutive letters of the alphabet. eg. “A boy called David every fortnight got horrible ideas...”
  - using internet story prompters
- - reading the first page of a book you’ve never read before and continuing it on
  - using a picture or photograph as inspiration
  - using a piece of music as inspiration
  - observing a stranger in the street and writing a story about who they might be
  - choosing a well-known story and telling it from a different perspective
  - choosing an important historical event and asking what might have happened if it had turned out differently
  - selecting five words at random from the dictionary and incorporating these into a story.
- The stories in *The Flying Emu* take place in the Australian bush and involve animals, birds, plants and features of the landscape. If possible, go for a walk in a national park or some bushland near the school. What different creatures do you observe? What are they doing? What can you hear, smell and feel? Use your observations as the inspiration for a short story. Illustrate your story with appropriate pictures, then as a class, create an anthology for the school library featuring the stories you have written.
- Read your story to the class. Think carefully about how you can use volume, expression, pace, posture and gesture to bring your story to life. Alternately, you may like to record or film your story.

## Visual Literacy/Art activities

- Look at the different illustrations Morgan has used throughout the book. How do these help enhance the stories for the reader? Discuss the events or characters she has chosen to represent for each story. Are they what you would have shown if you were given the task of illustrating the book? Why or why not? Choose one story and create an alternate illustration for it. Present your work to the class.
- Use the internet to look at the earlier covers of *The Flying Emu* (Penguin Books, 1992 and 1997). Which version do you prefer? Why? Consider the use of visual techniques such as subject (what is shown), framing/borders, colour, composition (how the picture has been set out), font/lettering and size. Roughly copy one cover design into your workbook then label the visual features.
- Look at the glossary in the back of the book. What is its purpose? Are there any words from the story that you think need to be added? Copy each term into your workbook then draw pictures to illustrate them.
- Working in small groups, choose one story from the book and transform it into a play. Create masks, costumes or puppets to incorporate into your play. After you have rehearsed, perform your play to the class.
- Select one story from the book and convert it into a comic strip, storyboard or digital story. (See the following website for advice on how to make a digital story: [www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au/national-celebration-literacy/digital-stories](http://www.literacyandnumeracy.gov.au/national-celebration-literacy/digital-stories))

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# *The Flying Emu* by Sally Morgan

## Plot Graph

Choose a story from *The Flying Emu* by Sally Morgan, then use the table below to show what happens at each stage of the plot. Copy the table into your workbook if you need more space.

<b>Title of Story</b>	
<b>Orientation</b> - Who are the main characters we are introduced to? What do we learn about them? - Where/when is the story set?	
<b>Complication</b> - What is the main problem, or conflict, in the story?	
<b>Rising action</b> - What are the events that help move the story along? (Hint: sometimes these are little problems or obstacles that the main character has to overcome. This is the longest part of the story!)	
<b>Climax</b> - What is the most important or intense moment of the story? (Hint: this comes towards the end of the story and usually involves the main complication being overcome or resolved in some way.)	
<b>Resolution</b> - How is the story concluded? How have the characters or the setting changed as a result of what's happened?	

# THE FLYING EMU

A collection of Australian stories by Sally Morgan

Colour in the drawing.

