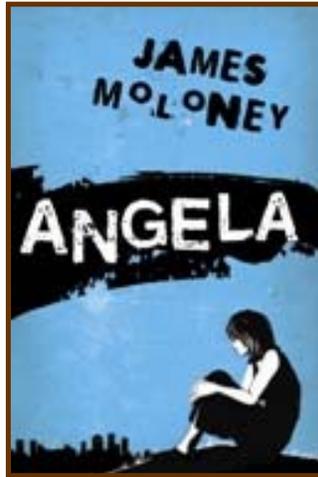


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ANGELA

James Moloney



Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising middle school teacher-librarian

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SYNOPSIS

Angela concludes James Moloney's contemporary trilogy dealing with a range of issues facing Aboriginal society. Narrated by Gracey's best friend Angela, it confronts a wide range of personal and social issues for both girls.

Angela and Gracey are first year university students. Here, they embark on individual journeys that open their eyes to life beyond high school. New ideologies, influences and peers change their friendship that was once indestructible. Gracey in particular is trying desperately to embrace being a Murri, joining an indigenous students' support group ('the Unit') on campus. While Angela tries to be supportive, Gracey appears to drift away from all she has known from the 'white' world of Angela and their school days together.

Angela raises many political and race relation issues, particularly with regards to policy decisions made in the past. The Stolen Generation is the major focus of this text, although there are many other aspects of white Australia with which Gracey struggles. Eventually, it is Gracey's acceptance of both black and white Australia that ensues; a small step towards reconciliation. This however is a difficult and at times painful journey.

Angela presents a diverse range of perspectives on Aboriginal issues affecting modern Australia.

THEMES**Relationships:**

- Angela and Gracey's friendship undergoes several trials and stresses. Angela tries to be supportive and understanding but sometimes doesn't fully understand Gracey's pain and resentment. Gracey needs the space to feel angry, bitter and disheartened by her people's past.
- The girls both find new friendship groups as they begin university.
- Angela discovers that her grandfather, a church minister, was involved in removing an Aboriginal child from his mother decades prior. Their relationship changes as this truth unfolds.
- Gracey's relationship with Angela's mother, Cheryl, changes as Gracey becomes more impassioned by her Murri heritage. Rhonda Haines, a Koori from 'the Unit', influences Gracey's thinking and emotions.

Identity:

- Gracey has finally embraced being a Murri. She has a new respect and sense of belonging to her 'mob'. For Gracey, it is about knowing her people.

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- Angela discovers things about her own past that shock her. She has to absorb and accept these things in order to move forward.
- Angela learns to accept Gracey's identity, to stop ignoring that she's black and to treat her more like a Murri. This is difficult for her to understand as she's always been such a supportive and beautiful friend to Gracey. They share a genuine love and bond.

Racial Issues:

- The Stolen Generation
- Inequality of opportunities for black Australians
- Whites trying to 'colonise' blacks
- Whites' ignorance of Aboriginal customs, tribal connections
- Reconciliation

WRITING STYLE

Angela narrates this text. It is told in first person, past tense. This is the only book in the trilogy told through the perspective of a white character. Angela's genuine love for her friend and the innocent and rather naive sentiments of a first year uni student are portrayed effectively.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

Angela was written six years after Gracey and come about when James Moloney needed to explore his own understanding of 'The Stolen Generations'. Having heard a report describe the policy as genocide, he felt he needed to know for himself whether this claim could be justified. His reading and research resulted in a story that forces a good-hearted but rather naïve white girl to understand the role her immediate relations played in the lives of living black people. This was intended to parallel the journey that all white Australians were then being called on to make towards recognition and response.

Moloney was also keen to explore, with honesty, the experience of young Aborigines who become politicized and how non-Aboriginal people react to the anger that increased awareness of the past can bring.

STUDY NOTES

- The inscription page at the start of the book has a quote from well known Aboriginal leader, Noel Pearson. (ABC Radio, 1997)
*Older whites want war, older Aborigines want peace.
 Young whites want peace, but young blacks want war.*
 Explain how this quote is reflected through the telling of *Angela*.
- After finishing Year 12, Gracey is desperate to leave Cunningham and so joins Angela and her family for a holiday at Noosa. Contrast the world

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that Gracey has fled from with that of Noosa, exploring the issues and settings thoroughly.

- When Gracey lives with Angela's family after starting uni, the reader may feel a sense of relief and satisfaction with this situation. Why is this? Does this make the reader guilty of trying to 'colonise' Gracey too? Discuss.
- Gracey is quickly influenced by Rhonda Haines. Why do you think Gracey is so impressionable?
- Why is Rhonda Haines so dismissive of Angela? Does Angela deserve this treatment? Discuss both Rhonda's and Angela's perspectives.
- Angela attends a meeting at which she hears some disturbing accounts of the Stolen Generation. Some white people at the meeting apologise, however some of the Aborigines don't accept their apologies. Why is this? Did Angela have a right to attend this meeting? Discuss.
- After reading a book given to her by Rhonda, Gracey exclaims how the text made her cry. Rhonda however feels angry rather than sad. (p76)
- Explain the difference between these two characters and their reactions to the situation.
- Gracey is confused and upset and after moving out, still takes comfort in Angela's company. Angela describes herself as "Ms Comfortable." (p78) Explain what James Moloney means by this statement.
- Reread pages 94-95. Gracey is of the perception that Angela can't possibly understand the pain experienced by black Australians after the Stolen Generation. There is much anger and resentment in these pages. Some interesting arguments from both Gracey and Angela are expressed.
 - Imagine that you are trying to educate younger children, say around 10 years of age, what the Stolen Generation issue is about. Create a text suitable for a picture book that sensitively communicates both Gracey's and Angela's perspectives. (Illustrate this too if desired.)
 - Examine picture books about this issue. Below are some examples:
 - *The Burnt Stick* by Anthony Hill
 - *Lowitja* by Joan Cunningham
 - *Idjhil* by Helen Bell
 - Look at picture books that tell a story by using abstract images and unfamiliar settings such as *The Rabbits* by John Marsden and Shaun Tan. Retell the story of the Stolen Generation in a similar way.
- Compare *Angela* with texts/films such as *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington.

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- Watch Kevin Rudd's 'Sorry Speech' given shortly after he took office as Prime Minister. Take particular notice of the groups of Aborigines both inside Parliament House and outside on the lawns. Write a reflective piece discussing the significance of this speech to reconciliation in Australia.
- Watch the *Australian Story* episodes "Cry Me a River" (28/5/07) or "Cape Crusade" (03/09/07) on Noel Pearson. What solutions does Noel Pearson suggest to improve his people's situation? Do you think that Rhonda Haines and Derek Campbell would agree with Pearson or not? Discuss. (Live streams can be watched on the ABC Australian Story website - <http://www.abc.net.au/austory/>)
- Angela seems concerned that Nadia could give her young son away to her relatives to look after. Is there any difference between Nadia doing this and the government taking children away from their mothers? Explain.
- Cheryl is a little dismissive about the girls attending a protest. She also has her own opinion on the 'Stolen Generation' issue. Why does Gracey become so angry with Cheryl? (p102+) Does Cheryl have a valid point or not?
- How does attending Uni change Gracey and Angela?
- Why does their ritual of going to 'The Corner' stop? What does this reveal about the girls' friendship?
- Gracey is at first reluctant to attend 'the Unit'. Why is this? How does 'the Unit' affect the girls' relationship?
- Gracey accuses Angela of trying to 'colonise' her. Is this true? Give examples to support your answer.
- In small groups, establish your Reconciliation Plan for the future. Present your ideas to your classmates.
- Many private boarding schools have embarked on programs designed to bring promising students from troubled black communities to the large cities for a better chance at quality secondary education. These programs are often funded by wealthy firms. Discuss whether such programs could be viewed as an attempt to spirit Indigenous students away from their cultural roots.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Sydney, James Moloney grew up and was educated in Brisbane. He completed teacher training at Griffith University and also holds diplomas in Teacher Librarianship and Computer Education. He has taught in a number of Queensland State Schools as both a classroom teacher and a librarian. His experiences as a young teacher in western Queensland have had a profound effect on his writing, especially in his early novels.

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James now writes full-time and has written over twenty books for children and Young Adults. His first novel, *Crossfire*, was listed as a Notable Book in the CBCA awards in 1993. His short novel *Swashbuckler* won the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award in 1996 and in the following year, *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* was named Book of the Year in the CBCA's Older Readers category. His other titles have appeared regularly on shortlists for literary prizes and children's choice awards ever since.

James says: 'I like to get inside the head of today's adolescents, to connect with the passion they have for life and understand what they care about. The challenge then is to express it in a story. That challenge keeps me young. I love it.'