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Nadia Wheatley , Donna Rawlins

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Starting in 1988 and going back 200 years, we are told the history of Australia by being told the history of one particular place, told by the generations of children who have lived in that one spot. Winner of Australia's Book of the Year 1988. Full-colour illustrations.

My Place Details

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Author : Nadia Wheatley , Donna Rawlins

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From Reader Review My Place for online ebook

lethe says

I had come across *My Place* in a review of by Richard McGuire, which was my favourite book of 2015. Because it sounded interesting (a kind of *Here* for children) I put it on my Book Depository wishlist. A few weeks ago while looking through that list I saw the price was a mere €6.20 and decided to order it. And I'm glad I did.

Written on the occasion of the Australian Bicentenary, the book relates 200 years of Australian history by focusing on a particular place (a house somewhere in present-day Sydney) and the (fictitious) children who have lived there, starting off in 1988 and jumping back in 10-year leaps to 1788.

Each double-spread is devoted to a decade, and introduces a child telling about his or her life and showing a hand-drawn map of the surroundings. Sometimes the child from the decade before is an older relative, and sometimes he or she is from a different family (because of course families move).

The maps and the children's stories make clear how much has changed in a relatively short time, but also the things that have stayed the same. There are a few constants, one of them the big fig tree that is never cut down. I loved the sometimes very subtle details, for example the Miller family who before WW1 were still named Müller.

There is some mild criticism of the way Aboriginals were treated. In 1888, during the Centennial celebrations, a neighbour tells the child Victoria that Australia is much older than 100 years and that "other people were living here, long before all of us". In the 20th Anniversary edition of 2008, of which my 30th Anniversary edition is a reprint, the timeline in the front is updated to include 1998 and 2008: "Australia says Sorry to Aboriginal people".

Definitely a book to keep and reread. It is wonderful, not just for children and not just for Australians.

Caroline says

I have just spent a delightful forty-five minutes reading the children's book "My Place". Winner of many awards in its home continent of Australia, it is fully worthy of all of them. What a joy and pleasure it was!

The book spans two centuries, from 1788 to 1988, and covers the same quarter acre of land – as we see how it has changed throughout this period. This is done via the voices of the children living there, and we visit them in 10-yearly intervals to learn about their lives and situations. The book travels backwards through time.

Without being overbearing, each write up has hooks which position the children strongly in the era being described....

Sofia in 1968 has photographs of Paul McCartney all over her bedroom wall, because he is her favourite

Beatle.

Col, in 1938, has the experience of seeing a neighbour getting evicted during the Great Depression.

Bridie, in 1928 and with much excitement, sees the arrival of electricity in her house.

Bertie, in 1918, has a brother who has lost a leg due to the War.

Benjamin, in 1858 was actually born in San Francisco. His family came here because of the gold rush.

Wilhemina in 1828, has a dad who used to be a convict, but he is now in charge of convicts himself, and runs a farm.

Sam, in 1798, is an eleven year old convict, sent to Australia from England for stealing a jacket because he was cold. He works for Mr. Owen, who sometimes beats him.

And finally, we go back to Barangaroo, in 1788, who is staying here with his Aborigine tribe.

These brief synopses do nothing to impart the warmth, charm and humour of these write ups....

Besides each child telling their wonderful stories, they also do a map of what the land looks like whilst they are living there, and thus - because we are going backwards - we see an unravelling of progress; as the landscape changes from a modern built-up townscape, through to farm land, and finally back to the wilderness of the aborigines. The one thing that stays constant is a much loved old fig tree.

I challenge any child to read this without wanting to make a map of their own environment. The maps are so individual and personal. You really feel they have been done by each of the children described - again they are full of charm, and usually dotted with idiosyncratic little notes.

This illustrations throughout the book are wonderful – I think done in pastels, vibrant and full of character. They augment the writing beautifully. At the bottom of the page shown below you can see one of the maps...

For anyone with young children, especially if you want them to learn a bit about Australia, this is a cracking read. It really brings Australian history to life.

Paula Catao says

wonderful book!

Wrigley says

The book will turn out different than you expect, at least different than I expect.

[c - maps are right up my alley. This book starts in 1988 and dedicates a 2 page spread to showing the lives of the children who live in this place each decade back to 1788. Each child draws a map of the area and we get to see how it changes from decade to decade. We also get to know just a little bit about the families who live in "my place" for more than one decade.:]

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

My Place depicts a neighborhood in Australia and its changes over time. Wheatley starts with present day (or, rather, what was present day when the book was first published) and moves back ten years for each two page spread. I, like most Americans, know absolutely nothing about the world outside the U.S. of A. so almost all the historical events depicted in this book were new to me. I enjoyed that. I enjoyed taking a small trip through a small part of Australia with Wheatley and Rawlins. Well done.

Maggie says

Brilliant children's book showing the same suburb visited each ten years, beginning from the present day and travelling backwards until pre colonial days. This book could be read forwards or backwards. It is jammed with history but doesn't feel like a history lesson. Each decade is accompanied by a detailed illustration showing the changes time has made. No wonder it won the Children's Book of the Year. Find a copy at your library and enjoy a wonderful children's book, even if you don't have any children near by.

Lisa Vegan says

My goal today was to read at least a half dozen of the couple dozen picture books I have at home, but I think it's going to be just this one because it took me so long to read and view. This book was well worth the time I took with it. It's a superb book.

This is definitely a book for readers because it is both so text heavy and because all the pictures/maps have captions for every little thing, so a lot of reading is involved. Pre-readers may also enjoy it but I wouldn't recommend this book for reading aloud unless the listener(s) can also read along, and not really even then.

This book has two page spreads, including wonderful maps (that could have been made by children) and each time the reader turns the page they get taken back ten years, starting from 1988 and ending in 1788. Each section is narrated by a child who describes their life and place. And, for all 200 years it's the exact same place in Australia. Readers will see the different circumstances of the children, and their similarities, and will see how the place dramatically changes over time. I have to say that creek spends way too many years being unusable!! At times the children's stories are very poignant (the hardships are many and there are many deaths) and at times the accounts are very amusing. I loved this: "I'd quite like to be a savage." (from the 1868 child) and many other parts too.

I appreciated the full circle of this starting and ending with Aboriginal children and the more straight line of showing how the place changed over time. I loved learning about the various immigrants over the years, and

their varied circumstances.

Sometimes the every ten years seemed too short a time to show. The changes seemed drastic sometimes, possibly not 100% realistic (but maybe that's how it really was) but sometimes I loved the time changes, especially when someone was mentioned in two time periods, such as at age 21 mentioned by that child and then back to at age 11 narrated by them 10 years earlier.

I adored the illustrations, especially all the maps of the place. I loved the kids and their surrounding, including the many animals. There is so much detail, and it's all fascinating.

There is a short glossary in the back, and while I knew the meaning of the majority of the words, I learned a few new ones.

This would make a perfect book for older elementary school age readers who love maps, history, learning about people from different cultures in different times, Australia, and so much more. Great for kids about to make a trip to Australia. Great for kids who like reading about how other children live and have lived. Great for kids who like maps, and this book could be used as an inspiration for kids making their own maps of their places and also researching the history of their places.

This is an incredibly busy book and it's worth taking hours to read. I'd have poured over this many times as a kid and probably eventually memorized its contents.

I'd love other books such as this about other places, including my little area of the world. It hasn't changed quite so much so quickly in recent years though, but I'd find it really interesting to go back 200 years and see the changes in land and peoples. I'd love books such as this for many other locations. This one was captivating!

Sally Edsall says

This book came out in 1988 during Australia's bicentennial of the European invasion of Australia. It shares a title with a book by Sally Morgan, an Aboriginal women whose search for her own identity and place was published at the same time. This book can be read in either direction. For younger children, it may be easier to start at then end and move forwards. For older children, part of the fun is in uncovering the history of the place - an inner urban area of Sydney.

The book emphasises the timeless continuity of the place, and that even though we might be the temporary custodians of a piece of land, we share a common history and linkage through our humanity, and our Aboriginal history. Lushly illustrated by Donna Rawlins, and words by Nadia Wheatley. A valuable asset to any school library, primary or secondary, and public library, as well as the shelves at home.

My son first showed interest in it at about age 4, and returned to it periodically - ie over 2 years. It will stay with him for many years yet!

Susie Hall says

Topic 9, non-fiction narrative.

Wheatley, Nadia. (1987) *My Place*. Australia. Collins Dove, Melbourne.

This little book reveals a series of stories about the history of Children in Australia. Starting from 1988 the individual little stories go back in time dating back to 1788.

Each page demonstrates what the homes looked like and a map of the area in which the house is positioned. They seem to demonstrate some of the issues which affected the society at the time, tapping into the local issues and then following such issues of the immigrants coming to Australia, their language and their lifestyles. Although you get caught up with the story of the children sharing, it is also the pictures that you can spend time on searching for various changes. It is not till you stop and look a little closer that you realise that it is the land which is the main item.

The story shares about the various people who have lived on that patch of ground and the way in which it changed over the past 200 years.

I found this brilliant, for many of us we do not often stop and think of the changes that have happened over a fifty year period, let alone a two hundred year span. I found this book fascinating as it made me think about the various changes that I have seen in the past years.

This book would be excellent for children and adults to read as it is thought provoking and an interesting way to help reflect over the past.

For teachers this would be a brilliant tool for teaching the history of Australia as it can help to encourage children to think about the changes that have happened to their house over the years. It can assist in maths in many areas and it can also be used in Lote lessons to demonstrate the various changes of society and the various languages that have been used over time. Although the grammar is not exact it is shared through a child's language which I feel makes it easy to relate to the child reading it. As an Adult I found myself going back to it to check it out and each time finding something new. This is an excellent book to read and reflect. The story demonstrates the delicate issues with the fact that Aboriginal People were on the land first. It is gentle in the way that the people of the past have changed Australia, the effects that it has had on the land and the people. It shares of the different migrants that have come to Australia and even the thoughts that they have gone through.

A very thought provoking book of our past history in Australia. This could help children understand what it would have been like for those families, living in the house under the various circumstances that they came from. It could help them understand the sadness of the Aboriginal People of the past having their land taken away from them and it can help them understand some of the difficulties that migrants and refugees go through today.

An awesome idea of a book for history to teach children.

Michelle says

I love this book. It's a read again and again and again kind of book.

LauraW says

This is another picture book that is better pored over than read aloud. The premise is a look backwards in time for a single location - tracing the people who lived in one house over time, and then back beyond that to who lived there, even before the house was built. My favorite part is the map that is found on each page, showing how the location changed over the years. I love maps.

If you are looking for story, you have to construct it by looking carefully at the changes. More straightforwardly, this book speaks to a people who cherish PLACE in their lives.

Liz Murray says

I love the concept of this book. The story starts in present day (1980s) and goes back ten years at a time to tell the story of the people who live in this place (house/land). It is a story of immigration, and of Aboriginal Australians. It isn't a picture book to read in one sitting but it is a book you can use with the upper primary grades to talk about the history of this country through a specific lens.

Annie Preston says

In primary school, my teacher read this to the class and I absolutely *loved* it, so much that I searched for it in op shops everywhere until I could have a copy of my own.

It's just a really cool way of showing not just children, but anyone, the changes through Australian history - good and bad - and the reader can go back and spot the little connections between each decade as well.

Really anyone would find something interesting in this book, but I highly recommend reading this to primary school age children, perhaps grade 2 and up.

AD says

This picture book is a clever way to explore Australian history. It starts in 1988, looking at a terrace house in Sydney from the perspective of 10-year-old Laura, who lives there. Each double page spread tells you a bit about the house and life of the inhabitants, and it's the same house on each page, but as you turn the pages you also turn back the years. The stories of the different Australians who have lived in this spot are followed right back to 1788, when Barangaroo used to live in the same spot with his family during the summer. The repetitive format shows how similar we all really are, and the map of the area, drawn by each child-occupant, shows how the landscape has changed over time.

Cheryl says

Oy. Working backwards was confusing. If I really cared, I'd work forwards on a reread next week. But really, my only question now is, What kind of tree is a Big Tree that lives for so very long like that? An 'early' picture shows mangroves.... And where is this, actually? There's a reference to Sydney Town and a mention of being close enough to see the ocean....
