

## Angel Creek

Sally Rippin

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Fiction, B paperback

Recommended for Upper Primary

### Resource Kit Contains

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### Praise

'Secret hideaways, dangerous rescues, broken rules, and a girl who must protect something fragile and precious and out of this world...I loved this book.'

Martine Murray

### Synopsis

In her new falling-down home, in her new street, in her new suburb, Jelly waits for high school to begin. She can only feel happy up in the branches of the old apricot tree and by the creek at the back of the house. One night, Jelly and her cousins spot something in the creek's dark waters. At first they think it's a bird, but it isn't—it's a baby angel with a broken wing. And they decide to keep it.

But soon things start to go wrong, and Jelly discovers that you can't just take something from where it belongs and expect that it won't be missed.

Sally Rippin's *Angel Creek* is a book about growing up: being brave and selfish and tough and scared. It's a book about an angel. But not the sweet variety. It's a book about the things that change and the things that always stay the same.

### About the Author

Sally Rippin was born in Darwin and grew up in South-East Asia. As an adolescent she studied traditional Chinese painting for three years in Shanghai and Hangzhou. Returning to Australia, her time overseas inspired her first novel *Chenxi and the Foreigner*. Sally has also written and illustrated many books for children, including titles from the *Go Girl* and *Aussie Bites* series and the popular *Fang Fang* stories. She is also the illustrator for many other books, including the recent *Me, Oliver Bright* (2009) by Megan de Kantzow

and *Mannie and the Long Brave Day* (2009) by Martine Murray. Sally lives in Melbourne where she writes and illustrates full time.

### Pre-reading Activities

#### Policeman's notebook

1. Pretend you are an angel policeman, sent by the Heaven Police Department to investigate the disappearance of Jelly's angel. You need to have a very accurate description of the angel to make sure you find the right one. As you read the book, note every description of the angel given by the characters—what it sounds like, what it smells like, what it looks like, what it feels like. At the end of the book, draw a picture of the angel to help you on your hunt.
2. Make a timeline of all the events of Jelly's Christmas. Every time something important happens in the book, mark it on this timeline. You can use pictures or words to mark out the events on the timeline.
3. When you think of angels, what are the first five words that come into your head?
4. *Angel Creek* is set at Christmas time. What is the meaning of Christmas to you? What is your favourite thing about Christmas?
5. *Angel Creek* is a book about growing up. Are you looking forward to being a grown-up? Why or why not?
6. Sally Rippin uses lots of similes in this book. What is a simile? What are some commonly used similes? Use the internet to find some, and then make a poster using these similes. Add pictures that relate to the similes. Make your poster colourful and fun.

7. As you read the book, make a list of similes used to describe people, places and objects. Think about the similes you have found. See if you can come up with some of your own. Use similes to describe the people in your family.
  8. Looking at the cover and title of the book, what do you think the book will be about? What genre of book do you think it will be? Do you think it will be a funny book or a serious one?
  9. Read the blurb of the book. Does the blurb make you want to read more? Do you think you will enjoy this book? Why or why not?
  10. *Angel Creek* is a book about family. Use ten describing words to describe your family.
8. On page 46, the author spends a long time describing the boys that Jelly meets. Draw a picture of one of them based on this description.
  9. Act out Jelly's confrontation with the boys.
  10. On page 126, Jelly says there might be different kinds of angels. There are lots of pictures of angels in famous artworks. Find some images of angels in art and make a collage of them.

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### Creative Writing Activities

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### Debate Topics

- Gino should have been allowed to keep the angel.
- Angels don't exist.
- It can't be a proper Christmas without presents.
- Growing up is exciting.
- Keeping wild animals as pets is good for them.
- First impressions are always right.

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### Art and Drama Activities

1. Sally Rippin has created some really interesting characters in *Angel Creek*. In small groups, choose one character from the book. Make a poster about this character. You can draw a picture of them, if you like, or draw things that they like, or similes used to describe them, or you can write words that you think describe them.
  2. Choose one of the characters (apart from Jelly), and write a monologue from their point of view, talking about the angel. Present this monologue to your class.
  3. Act out the scene where the children find the angel.
  4. In small groups, choose one of your favourite scenes from the book and turn it into a play. Write a script for the play and perform it to your class. Use costumes, props and sound effects to help tell the story.
  5. Family is very important in this book. On a piece of paper, draw a family tree for Jelly's family. You can make your tree look however you want—like a normal family tree with lines and bubbles, or like a real tree where the people in Jelly's family become leaves!
  6. Make a model or a sculpture of the angel, using any medium you like—cardboard, cotton wool, glitter, paper plates, pipe cleaners, clay—whatever your class has available.
  7. Do you like the cover of the book? Make a new cover showing some of the characters and themes of the book.
1. Write your own version of the story, where the creature found is not an angel but another creature. It could be a mermaid, a werewolf, a unicorn, a fairy, a goblin, a vampire or any creature you like. Do some research about the characteristics of this creature before you begin.
  2. Lots of songs mention angels. Find some of these songs on the internet, and then write your own angel song.
  3. Write the story from the point of view of Gino, or Spook.
  4. Write the first chapter of the sequel to *Angel Creek*, where Jelly starts high school. What happens to her?
  5. Write a short story about what happens to the angel when it goes back to Heaven.
  6. Gino and Jelly are cousins. Write about one of your cousins, or another family member. Write about what they look like, what hobbies they have, what music they like, how they dress.
  7. Jelly's favourite secret place in her new home is the apricot tree. Do you have a special secret place that's all your own? Write about it.
  8. Jelly feels like she is in the wrong tree, in the wrong garden, in the wrong neighbourhood. Write a story about waking up one day in a completely different house with a new family.
  9. On page 4, Jelly describes her Nonna's house. Describe the house of your grandparent, or favourite aunt, uncle or family friend. Use similes and metaphors to do this.
  10. Jelly, Gino and Pik go looking for treasure in the creek. Write a story about finding treasure in a creek.
  11. Jelly is afraid of going to her new school. Have you moved schools before? Or have you joined a new club or team? Write about it, and the emotions you felt before you were about to do it.
  12. Sally Rippin describes Jelly's tears as 'long and silky'. Write a poem describing tears.
  13. Chapter five is about Christmas. Write about your best Christmas ever.
  14. Nonna has a special flowery apron. Write about your favourite piece of clothing. Why do you like it?

15. The angel doesn't like to eat bread, but it does like peeled grapes. What do you think angels would eat? Why? Make up a menu for the perfect meal for an angel.
16. Jelly says there is no point having something magical happen if you can't share it with your best friend. Has something happened to you before that was so exciting you couldn't wait to share it with your friend? Write about it.
17. On page 44, Jelly describes clouds as being like fairy floss. How would you describe a cloud? Write a poem or a short piece about clouds.
18. Write about your first day at school. It could be your first day ever at a new school, or it could be your first day of a new year. What emotions did you feel? What things were exciting or scary?
19. The boy with black hair is unexpectedly very kind and helpful to Jelly. Write about a time when someone was kind to you.
20. Jelly is not the real name of the main character. All the kids in Jelly's family have nicknames. Do the people in your family have nicknames? Or your friends? Write about how one of your friends or family got their nickname.
21. There is a freak wave like a tsunami in the creek. Write a story about what you think might have caused it.
22. On page 86, the author says the train has 'prying eyes'. Personification is the act of giving human emotions or expressions to something that is not human. Can you think of any other examples of personification? See if you can find some examples on the internet, and then write your own.
23. Write a short story about the events of this book from the perspective of the angel.
5. Whereabouts in the world do you think the book is set? Why do you think this? What clues does the author give about where the book is set?
6. The angel doesn't look like other angels Jelly has seen before. Maybe the way we think angels look isn't actually true. What do you think angels look like? What has made you have this impression of angels? Is it TV shows? Church? Bible stories?
7. Be creative and make up your own idea of what an angel might look like. Give reasons for your suggestions.
8. Every chapter heading in this book has a name. Why do you think this is? What effect does it have on the way you approach each chapter? Do you think it is good that the author did this?
9. Jelly knows how to fix the broken wings of birds. Do some research about how to do this.
10. On page 40, Jelly says that there are lots of things adults have to worry about. Write a list of things you think adults have to worry about. Do you think grown-ups have more to worry about than children? Why or why not?
11. Do some research about angel sightings in history.
12. On page 41, Jelly wonders if the angel is here for a reason. What do you think this reason might be? Do some research about the roles of angels. What are some special jobs that angels are meant to do?
13. On page 42, Jelly sneaks a peek at the present Gino bought her. Have you ever done this? Do you think it's a bad thing to do? Why or why not?
14. On page 47, Jelly is brave and stands up for something she believes in. Write about something you believe in strongly.
15. On page 50, Jelly says the angel sounds like a bird. Do some research about bird calls on the internet. Which bird do you think the angel sounds like?

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### Research/Discussion/Essay topics

1. What nationality do you think Jelly's family is descended from? What clues are there? Do some research about the country you have decided upon. On a map, colour in this country. What language do they speak there? What are some foods they eat? Draw a picture of their national flag.
2. What is a creek? How is it different from a river or a lake? Do some research into different waterways and what makes them different. Choose at least three of the following: ocean, sea, river, pond, dam, waterfall, lake, lagoon, harbour.
3. This book is set at Christmas time. Do some research about the history of Christmas and record what you find out. Choose one country that celebrates Christmas and write about how they do so.
4. *Angel Creek* has many themes. What is a theme? What do you think are some of the themes of *Angel Creek*?
16. On page 68, the old lady from across the road calls out *Buon Natale* to Jelly. This means 'Merry Christmas' in Italian. On the internet, see if you can find out how to say 'Merry Christmas' in ten other languages.
17. In chapter eleven, Jelly gets a migraine. What is a migraine? Do some research about migraines, what causes them and how they affect people.
18. On page 80, Jelly is worried that the angel might get put in a museum. Go to the British Museum website and write about three treasures that are in that museum.
19. On page 85, Jelly and Gino argue about whether they should let the angel go. Which of them do you think is right? Why do you think this?
20. On page 92, the boy with black hair tells Pik it is bad luck to catch an angel. Make a list of some other things that are considered bad luck.

21. On page 96, Jelly asks her dad, 'If someone you knew—your friend—was doing something you didn't think was right, what would you do?' How would you answer this question?
22. Jelly's dad thinks it's wrong to keep wild animals as pets. What do you think about this? Give reasons for your opinion.
23. In chapter fifteen, Jelly's Nonna says some words in Italian. Make a note of them, then look up in a dictionary, or on the internet, the meanings of these words. Once you have done that, make a list of ten other words—like cat, ball, apple or car—that you would like to know how to say in Italian. Look these words up too and write them down.
24. On page 109, Jelly says she wonders if you get a say in when you die. What do you think about this? Do you think you get a choice? Why or why not?
25. On page 116, it is revealed that the angel has been granting Jelly's wishes. Did you suspect that this was happening? What would you wish for if an angel could grant your wishes?
26. Do you know of any other books that are about wishes? Make a list of them, and write a short synopsis of their stories.
27. Do you think the angel was real? Why or why not?
28. Was the ending of the book a good one? Why or why not? What would you have changed about it?