

## Further Reading

**Philomena**  
**Martin Sixsmith (2013)**  
**BIOGRAPHY LEE**

When she became pregnant as a teenager in Ireland in 1952, Philomena Lee was sent to a convent to be looked after as a "fallen woman." The nuns of the convent took her baby from her and sold him, like thousands of others, to America for adoption. Fifty years later, Philomena decided to find him.

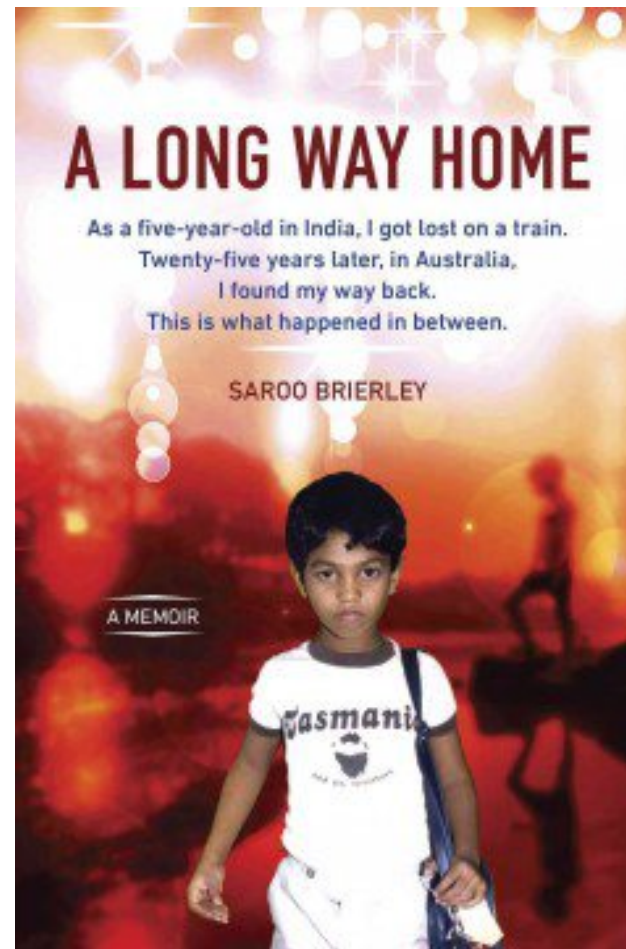
**The Mistresses Daughter**  
**A.M. Homes (2007)**  
**HOMES**

An acclaimed novelist's memoir about what it means to be adopted and how all of us construct our sense of self and family. Before A.M. Homes was born, she was put up for adoption. Her birth mother was a 22-year-old single woman having an affair with a much older married man. Thirty years later, her birth parents came looking for her.

**Trail of Crumbs: Hunger, Love and the Search for Home**  
**Kim Sunee (2007)**  
**BIOGRAPHY SUNEE**

Traces the South Korean author's personal quest for identity and belonging after being abandoned at the age of three and subsequently adopted by a New Orleans couple in a non-Asian community.

## Book Discussion Guide



## About the Book

An account of the author's inspirational effort to find his India birthplace and how he was accidentally separated from his family in the mid-1980s, his survival on the streets of Calcutta, his adoption by an Australian family, and his headline-making Google Earth search.

## Discussion Questions

1. What propels Saroo Brierley as an adult to search for his birth home, especially as he writes, "I am not Indian...and I have family bonds [in Australia] that cannot be broken (p. 252)? If that is the case, why the drive to find his Indian roots?
2. What role does memory play in shaping our self-identity? What are the memories Saroo has of his early childhood, and how have those memories, many of them traumatized, shaped Saroo's sense of himself? How did Saroo continue to "work" his mind in order to keep his childhood memories alive for 25 years?
3. Discuss Saroo's ordeal on the streets of Kolkata. Also, what about the railway worker who took him in for a time-- why does Saroo run away from the man's seeming kindness?
4. Talk about the genuine kindness of other people Saroo encounters in Kolkata: the ISSA orphanage and Mrs. Saroj Sood, in particular.

5. Describe Sue and John Brierley as parents and the kind of family they provided for Saroo and his brother Mantosh. What were Sue's experiences in her early years? To what degree did her background as a refugee influence her desire to adopt two Indian children?

6. What are some of the darker aspects of this book surrounding poverty? Consider this passage from the book:

*Today there are perhaps a hundred thousand homeless kids in Kolkata, and a good many of them die before they reach adulthood.... No one knows how many Indian children have been trafficked into the sex trade, or slavery, or even for organs, but all these trades are thriving, with too few officials and too many kids..*

7. Talk about Kamala as a single mother and her struggles to keep her family fed. Is her experience typical of Indian village women? Also, consider her insistence on remaining in the same home in hopes that her son might someday return to her. What does that suggest about the kind of woman Kamala is and the strength of her optimism and her faith?

8. Discuss Saroo's use of technology to locate his family: Facebook and Google Earth, in particular. Would this story have had a different outcome without the internet?

9. What was your experience reading *A Long Way Home*? Did you find it too focused on Saroo's experiences? Or did the story capture the multiple experiences of Saroo and his two families? Was the story engaging, suspenseful, heart-rending? Was there one part of the story you found more interesting than the other?

*Courtesy of Harperacademic.com*