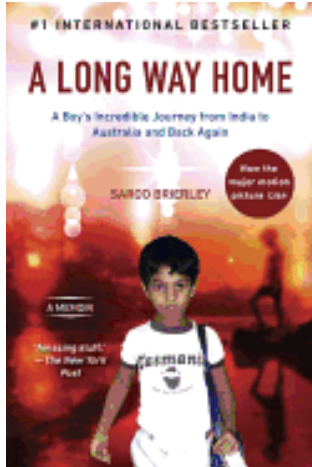




# ELPL Lit Kits



## *A Long Way Home* by Saroo Brierley

When Saroo Brierley used Google Earth to find his long-lost home town half a world away, he made global headlines.

Saroo had become lost on a train in India at the age of five. Not knowing the name of his family or where he was from, he survived for weeks on the streets of Kolkata, before being taken into an orphanage and adopted by a couple in Australia.

Despite being happy in his new family, Saroo always wondered about his origins. He spent hours staring at the map of India on his bedroom wall. When he was a young man the advent of Google Earth led him to pore over satellite images of the country for landmarks he recognised. And one day, after years of searching, he miraculously found what he was looking for.

Then he set off on a journey to find his mother.

*A Long Way Home* is a moving and inspirational true story of survival and triumph against incredible odds. It celebrates the importance of never letting go of what drives the human spirit – hope.

**About the Author:** Born in Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh, India, **Saroo Brierley** lives in Hobart, Tasmania, where he manages a family business, Brierley Marine, with his father. Saroo's story has been published in several languages and is now a major motion picture from The Weinstein Company.

### 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 absent the internet?