

# This is Our Place

AUTHOR

**VITOR MARTINS**

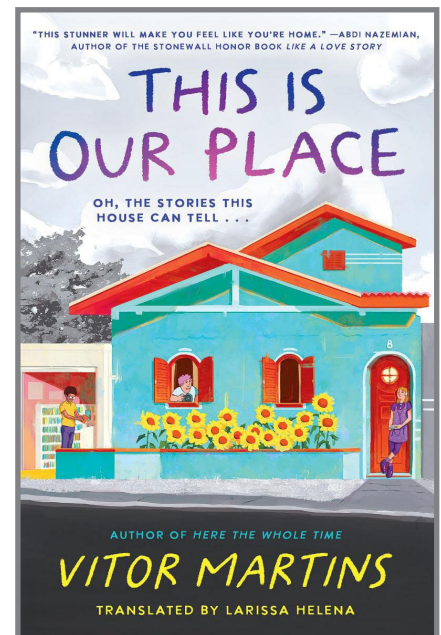
TRANSLATOR

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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Upper Secondary  
(Sexual References)



## SYNOPSIS

*If the walls of Number 8 Sunflower Street could talk . . .*

As Ana celebrates the new millennium, she is shocked to learn that she must leave behind her childhood home, her hometown, and—hardest of all—her girlfriend for a new life in Rio de Janeiro.

Ten years later, Greg is sent to live with his aunt—who runs a video rental store from her garage and owns a dog named Keanu Reeves—as his parents work out their not-so-secret divorce.

And ten years after that, Beto must put his dreams of becoming a photographer on hold as the Covid-19 pandemic arrives in Brazil, forcing him to live with his overprotective mother and overachieving sister.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vitor Martins lives in São Paulo, Brazil, and works as an illustrator and book marketer. He believes that representation in young adult literature is a powerful weapon, and his main goal as a writer is to tell stories of people who have never seen themselves in a book. Follow him online at [vitormartins.blog](http://vitormartins.blog) and on Twitter and Instagram at [@vitormrtns](https://twitter.com/vitormrtns).

## STUDY NOTES

### BEFORE READING

- Before reading the story, as a class discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
  - What does 'Our Place' mean?
  - What can you learn about this story by looking at the cover?
  - What genre do you think that this book might be?
  - Where and when do you think this book might be set? What makes you think this?
  - What language was this book originally written in? How can we tell?
- Locate São Paulo on a map. As a class, discuss what you can learn from this. Research São Paulo further, either in the library or online, and discuss your findings. Some things to include in your discussion might be:
  - What country is São Paulo in?
  - What language is spoken there?
  - How large is the city of São Paulo?

- How large is the state of São Paulo?
- What is the climate like in São Paulo?
- What do you know of life in São Paulo?
- What can you find out about the history of São Paulo? How have things changed between the first stories told in the book at the turn of the century, and the last story set at the start of the pandemic?
- Why was Ana so hesitant to tell her father that she was a lesbian? Why, even after Ana told her father, was Letícia so absolutely adamant that her mother could never know? What were attitudes and laws like in Brazil during this timeframe, and how would they have affected young people and their ability to publicly admit to being gay?
- All three of the main characters in the novel are young people who are struggling with learning how to live as an openly gay person at times in a disapproving society, while also navigating the pitfalls and challenges associated with discovering romance in a changing world. What do you see as the similarities and the differences between them all? Write two or three paragraphs sharing your perception of the similarities and differences between Ana, Greg and Beto, being sure to include evidence from the text to support your assertions.
- Has the world changed much between Ana's day and Beto's, and if so how much and in what ways?
- What was the Y2K bug, why were people worried, and why did nothing dreadful come of it in the end?
- Find and view some footage of people celebrating New Years Eve in 1999. Does it look like the scenes you would see today? Why/why not, and in what ways?
- Helena, Lara and Beto are all struggling to cope with the effects of the pandemic lockdowns. Did you also find lockdown difficult to handle emotionally? What was the best part of your personal lockdown experience, and what was the worst? Create an artwork that you feel reflects your emotional response to the lockdown experience, and caption it with a quote, aphorism or relevant description.
- The novel has a fairly complicated narrative structure, and jumps between different times, focusing on three different characters in three different decades. In pairs or small groups, create a timeline for the action in the novel, locating each chapter in time, and noting which characters appear in it.
- Orlando is mentioned in Ana's story first, but then reappears in Greg's, and finally in Beto's. Are there any other characters or events who play a role in more than one character's story—and when and why do the main characters from the first story-arc appear in later arcs?
- Why do you think that the author chose to tell the story with the house as the narrator? And why did they choose to have the dog narrate the final chapter? As a class, discuss how having the house, and then the dog, narrate the events that they have seen unfold within the house's walls both allows the author more narrative freedom in some ways, and constrains them in others. Write a brief analysis of what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of this choice, sharing specific examples from the text to support your assertions.
- During the lockdowns, Beto and Lara decide that they are going to try to do a new thing together every day. What are some of the things that they decide to try? If you were going to do a new thing every day, what types of activities would you like to try? In pairs or small groups, make a list of as many different fun activities that you haven't tried before as you can. Share your list with the class, and as a class, choose five activities from different lists that can be done as a class, and have a 'new activities' week, where you try a different one each day. Write a short recount at the end of each activity, noting how difficult it was, how successful it was, and whether or not you would like to repeat it. At the end of the week, compile your recounts into a single discussion document, sharing your experiences with these new activities, and ranking them from your most favourite to your least favourite, giving firm reasons why you ranked them this way.
- Write a description of Ana's leaving with her father from the point of view of Letícia. Include the events that Ana mentions, but cast everything through the lens of what Letícia is thinking and feeling as events unfold, and as she watches Ana drive away.
- What do you think of the ending of the story? How well do you think the author tied up all the loose ends in the final chapter?
- Write a short story of your own titled 'It's up to us to make a house a home.'

#### AUTHOR OF NOTES

**RAE CARLYLE**