

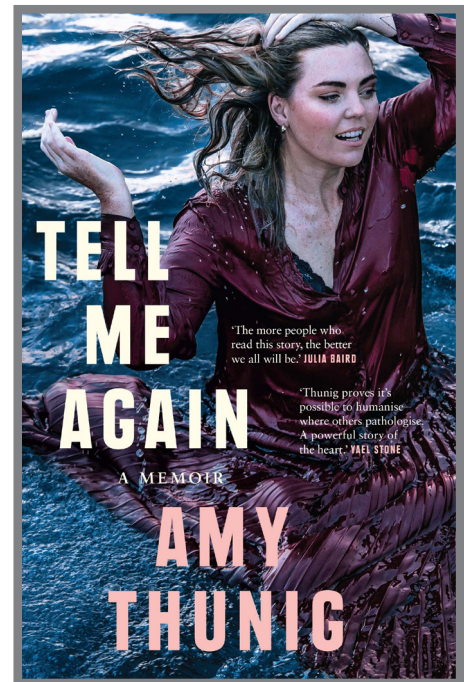
Tell Me Again: A Memoir

AUTHOR
AMY THUNIG

SCIS: 5425677

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Secondary
(Drug and Alcohol References, Violence)



SYNOPSIS

For years, Amy Thunig thought she knew all the details about the day she was born, often demanding that the story of her birth be retold. Years later, heavily pregnant with her own first child, she learns what really happened that day. It's a tale that exemplifies many of the events of her early life, where circumstances sometimes dictated that things be slightly different from how they might seem—including what is meant by her dad being away for 'work' and why her legal last name differs from her family's.

In this remarkable memoir, Amy Thunig narrates her journey through childhood and adolescence, growing up with parents who struggled with addiction and incarceration. She reveals the importance of extended family and community networks when your immediate loved ones are dealing with endemic poverty and intergenerational trauma. In recounting her experiences, she shows how the stories we tell about ourselves can help to shape and sustain us.

Above all, she shows that joy and love exist in spaces that are often dehumanised or overlooked, proving that life can be rich and full of beauty even when things are—in many ways—terrible.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Amy Thunig (B.Arts, M.Teach, PhD) is a Gomeri/Gamilaroi/Kamilaroi yinarr (woman) and mother who resides on the unceded lands of the Awabakal peoples. An academic in the field of education, Amy is also a Director at Story Factory in Redfern, and in 2019 gave their TEDx talk: 'Disruption is not a dirty word'. As well as being on various committees and councils, Amy is a media commentator and panellist, regularly appearing on television programs such as ABC's *The Drum*, and writing for publications such as *Buzzfeed*, *Sydney Review of Books*, *IndigenousX*, *The Guardian* and more.

THEMES

- Love
- Family
- The role of storytelling in maintaining connection to culture, shaping identity and sustaining our spirit
- Respect and importance of recognising all peoples' intrinsic human worth
- The role of Old People (Elders) and ancestors in our lives
- Life cycles: the 'seasons' of life, ebb and flow
- Code-switching and moving between different 'worlds' in society
- How intergenerational trauma and poverty can play out in a family
- Inadequacies in the welfare/support systems available to vulnerable people

- Strength, resilience and resourcefulness in the face of challenges
- Possibilities for surviving and thriving in life
- Connection to Country and the importance of Country in healing

STUDY NOTES

- Using the AIATSIS Aboriginal languages map and Gambay interactive map, identify key settings in the memoir.
- Discuss the very 'normal', almost cosy, household scenes on pp 2 and 37, and how they show Amy's parents doing their best to house and educate their children. How important are the lessons they teach Amy in setting her up for a successful life? How do these depictions of her parents contrast to the stereotypical descriptions of people struggling with mental health or addiction? How do these depictions help humanise her parents for the reader?
- Discuss the role of extended family in supporting Amy and her siblings in *Tell Me Again*. In what ways do these family relationships help to humanise Amy's parents by affirming their worth within the wider family? Also, consider how practical support such as providing stable housing can be life-changing for people struggling with poverty. Can you find examples in the text?
- Discuss the realisations Amy makes as an adult when she comes to understand her parents. How can these lessons help us to respect and honour the humanity in all people? How can her final reflection offer hope to people in similar circumstances? Why do you think she chooses to end the memoir with the final reflection?
- Consider and discuss some of the memories Amy shares that illustrate the cycles of trauma within her family and the struggle of addiction and poverty. Consider also the resourcefulness Amy shows in how she responds to and manages these scenarios.
- A common challenge for First Nations people is being able to 'code-switch' and operate in their family and cultural context and in the broader white Australian community. This is often exacerbated in 'white' institutions such as academia and the arts (theatres, art galleries, etc). Consider and discuss the places in which Amy feels comfortable and uncomfortable. What personal qualities does she need to use to get through the difficult experiences? Who helps her in these situations? How important is it to reach out and be an 'ally' to people experiencing these challenges?
- Amy changes from referring to her parents in third person to second person at key points in the text. Do you think this is a conscious choice, in order to somehow highlight or exaggerate the parents' story, or do you think she naturally slips into the second person when referring to an intimate moment when her mum or dad is speaking to her? What is the impact of this change in point of view on the reader?
- Amy's dark humour is seen in a few of the anecdotes within the text. Discuss the relief that this provides the reader after reading about intensely stressful experiences. Can you find examples of Amy's dark humour in the text?
- Anecdotes are a common literary device used in memoirs which outline a short, amusing or important story often based around one incident or key memory. Analyse the anecdote about the spelling of 'terrarium' on pp 67–69 in terms of how it fits the anecdote structure.
 - Students can then follow this structure to write their own anecdote of a memory from their early schooling.