

My Brilliant Career



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MILES FRANKLIN

Like the protagonist of her novel *My Brilliant Career*, Miles Franklin was the daughter of an Australian landowner and a descendant of aristocrats. Her family moved around during her childhood and early adulthood, losing more and more money until they finally settled in a suburb of Sydney in 1913. Her family couldn't afford an extensive education, but Franklin nevertheless took an interest in literature and writing, and she published *My Brilliant Career* when she was only 22. As a young woman, she worked as a nurse and a housemaid and moving to the United States in 1906. For the next several years, Franklin worked as a secretary and assisted in philanthropic efforts. In 1915, she moved to England, where she continued to write. In her time away from home, her patriotism and love of Australia grew, and she returned to Australia in 1912. She wrote short novels about the Australian bush under the pseudonym *David of Bin-Din*, and she was actively involved in Australian literary work. Like Sybilka Malaya (the protagonist of *My Brilliant Career*), Franklin prioritized her career over romance, and she never married.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Feminism was gaining traction in Australia when Franklin was writing *My Brilliant Career*. Australian women fought for suffrage throughout the late 19th century, inspired by their New Zealand counterparts, who made history in 1893 as the first women in a self-governing nation to achieve the right to vote. Many Australian states legalized women's suffrage in the 1890s, and in 1902, Australia granted its female citizens the right to vote in all federal elections. Other social movements also began in the 1890s, including labor movements and the movement to form a federated Commonwealth of Australia.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The 1902 novel *This Is Life* was written by Australian author Joseph Furphy, a contemporary and associate of Franklin's. It examines rural life in late 19th-century Australia, and it makes use of Australian slang and dialect. Another friend to both Furphy and Franklin was teacher Kate Baker, who worked with Australian writers such as poet John Shaw Neilson and novelist Nedra Palmer. Because *My Brilliant Career* features mothers around Sybilka's navigation of social customs and expectations, it's also worth considering the book alongside famous novels of manners like Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* or *Sense and Sensibility*, in addition to Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*.

Like—all of which feature young women making their way through challenging societal conventions in ways that often parallel Sybilka's experience in *My Brilliant Career*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *My Brilliant Career*
- **When Written:** 1899
- **Where Written:** Australia
- **When Published:** 1901
- **Literary Period:** Realism, Australian Nationalism
- **Genre:** Roman à clef
- **Setting:** Australia, 1890s
- **Climate:** Sybilka rejects her father's marriage proposal for the last time
- **Antagonist:** Poverty, Sexism, Oppressive Institutions
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Surprise Secret: Miles Franklin wrote a sequel to *My Brilliant Career*, titled *My Career Goes Bang*, but it remained unpublished until 1966.

Honoring Australians: The Miles Franklin Literary Award is an annual literary prize established in 1952 to honor Australian literature.



PLOT SUMMARY

In late 19th-century Australia, Sybilka Malaya comes of age while her family undergoes serious financial struggles. Though Sybilka starts life wealthy, her father moves the Malaya to a remote province called Pressure Gulch in an attempt to make a career trading stocks. He fails, and the family turns to dairy farming to make a living. The labor is hard and unrewarding, and Sybilka longs for the chance to make something of her self.

Sybilka gets in frequent disagreements with her mother, and when Mrs. Malaya writes to her own mother, Mrs. Bosker, the older woman offers to take Sybilka in at the Bosker estate. At the estate, called **Cadblagat**, Mrs. Bosker promises to reform Sybilka into a proper lady and prepare her for marriage. Sybilka eagerly leaves Pressure Gulch and falls in love with life at Cadblagat, where she lives with her grandmother, her Aunt Helen, and her Uncle Julius. Also residing at Cadblagat is the laborer Frank Hawdon, who makes sexual advances on Sybilka despite her repeated rejections.

My Brilliant Career Study Guide

PT Brinkman



My Brilliant Career Study Guide:

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In an era characterized by interconnectedness and an insatiable thirst for knowledge, the captivating potential of verbal expression has emerged as a formidable force. Its ability to evoke sentiments, stimulate introspection, and incite profound transformations is genuinely awe-inspiring. Within the pages of "**My Brilliant Career Study Guide**," a mesmerizing literary creation penned with a celebrated wordsmith, readers attempt an enlightening odyssey, unraveling the intricate significance of language and its enduring affect our lives. In this appraisal, we shall explore the book's central themes, evaluate its distinctive writing style, and gauge its pervasive influence on the hearts and minds of its readership.

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