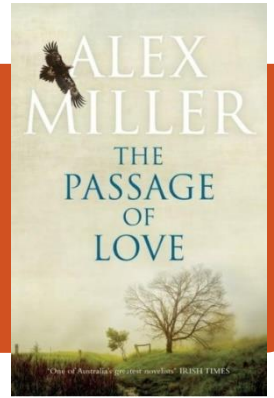




# The Passage of Love

Alex Miller



## Author Background

Alex Miller was born in London, England in 1936 to a Scottish father and Irish mother. He migrated alone to Australia at the age of 16 where he worked as a ringer in Queensland. He studied at night school to gain university entrance and went on to graduate in English and History at the University of Melbourne in 1965.

In 1980, Alex co-founded the Anthill Theatre and was the founding member of the Melbourne Writers' Theatre.

Alex taught writing at TAFE and La Trobe University in the 1980s and 1990s and has written full-time since 1998. He has written 13 novels and one non-fiction book. His work has won or been shortlisted in all the major Australian literary awards. Some of these awards include the Miles Franklin twice (*The Ancestor Game* and *Journey to the Stone Country*), the Commonwealth Writers' Prize (*The Ancestor Game*), the Age Book of the Year (*Lovesong*) and the Victorian Premier's Literary Award (*Coal Creek*).

*The Passage of Love*, published in 2017, is Alex's most autobiographical work, a deeply moving story of the writer's early struggles and loves from the vantage point of old age.

Alex is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and a recipient of the Centenary Medal for an outstanding contribution to Australian cultural life.

Alex has two children to his second wife of 47 years, Stephanie. The couple live in country Victoria.

## Book Summary

Sitting in a New York park an old man holds a book and tries to accept that his contribution to the future is over. Instead, he remembers a youthful yearning for open horizons, for Australia, a yearning he now knows inspired his life as a writer. Instinctively he picks up his pen and starts at the beginning ...

At twenty-one years, Robert Crofts leaves his broken dreams in Far North Queensland, finally stopping in Melbourne almost destitute. It's there he begins to understand how books and writing might be the saving of him.

When Robert is introduced to Lena Soren, beautiful, rich, and educated, his life takes a very different path. But in the intimacy of their connection lies an unknowability that both torments and tantalises as Robert and Lena long for something that neither can provide for the other.

## Discussion Questions

- ❖ What are the main themes of *The Passage of Love*?
- ❖ The Oxford definition of 'passage' is "*the action or process of moving through or past somewhere on the way from one place to another.*" How does this definition sit in the context of the book?
- ❖ Do you think Miller successfully blends memoir and novel in this book? Do you like autobiographical fiction? Discuss.
- ❖ How well do you think Miller examines the domestic and private lives of his characters?
- ❖ The protagonist, Robert Crofts, reflects on his youth and is haunted by memories of his tumultuous relationship with his father. How does memory play a role in the story?
- ❖ Have you read any of Alex's other novels? If so, how do they compare with *The Passage of Love*?
- ❖ What feelings did this book evoke for you?
- ❖ Have you been to any of the locations mentioned in the book? If so, has Alex described them well?
- ❖ *The Passage of Love* is a long book, going into detail about rudimentary, everyday things such as a room within a house. Do you feel this level of detail was unnecessary or was it crucial to the style and nature of the book?
- ❖ Were you satisfied with the ending? Why / why not?

## References

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