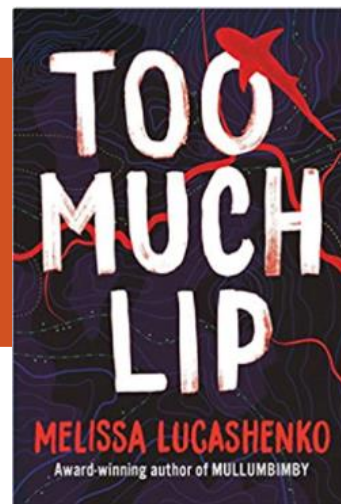




# Too Much Lip

Melissa Lucashenko



## Author Background

Melissa Lucashenko is an acclaimed writer of Bundjalung and European heritage. She has written adult literary fiction and non-fiction, as well as novels for teenagers.

After graduating from Griffith University, with an honours degree in public policy, Lucashenko co-founded Sisters Inside, an organisation which supports women and girls in prison.

In 2013, she won the Walkley Award for her feature writing piece called *Sinking below sight: Down and out in Brisbane and Logan*. In 2019, she won the Miles Franklin award for *Too Much Lip*.

Lucashenko's first work to be published was the novel *Steam Pigs* (1997), followed by *Killing Darcy* (1998), *Hard Yards* (1999), *Too Flash* (2002), *Uptown Girl* (2002), *Mullumbimby* (2013) and most recently *Too Much Lip* (2018).

In 2019, Cenozoic Pictures optioned *Too Much Lip* for a screen adaptation, with Lucashenko as a co-writer and co-creator alongside Veronica Gleeson.

## Book Summary

Wise-cracking Kerry Salter has spent a lifetime avoiding two things – her hometown and prison. But now her Pop is dying and she's an inch away from the lockup, so she heads south on a stolen Harley.

Kerry plans to spend twenty-four hours, tops, over the border. She quickly discovers though, that Bundjalung country has a funny way of grabbing on to people. Old family wounds open as the Salters fight to stop the development of their beloved river. And the unexpected arrival on the scene of a good-looking dugai fella intent on loving her up only adds more trouble – but then trouble is Kerry's middle name.

Gritty and darkly hilarious, *Too Much Lip* offers redemption and forgiveness where none seems possible.

## Discussion Questions

- ❖ Throughout many books, a common theme is the use of humour as resistance. In what ways do Kerry and other characters use humour to overcome the challenges they face?
- ❖ What does Aunty Tall Mary fail to see? What may Black Superman not be considering? In what ways are they both right?
- ❖ In Chapter Ten, while breaking into Buckley's office to "effect a few choice reparations" and search for her missing backpack, Kerry encounters the ghost of her Grandad Joe. Grandad leads her to a steel cupboard bolted to a wall in Buckley's office. "She had come for revenge but was leaving with the most precious object imaginable."

What does Kerry find in the cupboard? Why does that matter? What purpose does Granddad's apparition fulfill in this scene, and why might he have been the best vehicle for the message?

- ❖ When Donna returns after twenty years, and their mother doesn't react the way she expects, Kerry reflects: "They say every child grows up in a different version of the same family." What does Kerry mean by this? What information was she missing at this point? How are the siblings similar? Dissimilar?
- ❖ As with many indigenous communities, *Too Much Lip* touches on the challenges that indigenous people face in protecting sacred sites from development. How does the development of the prison impact Kerry? In what ways does the prison symbolize more than the imprisonment of people? In what ways does it further reflect on how Aboriginal Australians are viewed by the law?
- ❖ Why did Donna stay away for so long, why did she return, and what impact did being removed from her family and community for so long have on her and her family? Is Donna's behaviour unique to the experience of indigenous Australians?
- ❖ Some readers of *Too Much Lip* have said that the book draws a fine line between making survival seem easy while simultaneously impossible. How do the characters' struggles with poverty, racism, colonialism, alcoholism, addiction, and other issues speak to this point? In what ways do the characters disprove this point? (e.g. when men with muskets shot Granny Ava as she swam across the river to save herself and her unborn child.)
- ❖ The novel is full of examples of characters who are both victims and perpetrators of violence. Can you think of examples? How does Uncle Richard reframe and contextualize family violence throughout the novel?

## References

- ❖ Well Read Native: <https://wellreadnative.com/f/too-much-lip---discussion-questions>
- ❖ Melissa Lucashenko: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melissa\\_Lucashenko#Novels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melissa_Lucashenko#Novels)