

# Black Inc. Book Club Notes

**TITLE:** Salt

**AUTHOR:** Bruce Pascoe

**ISBN:** 9781760641580

**PRICE:** \$34.99

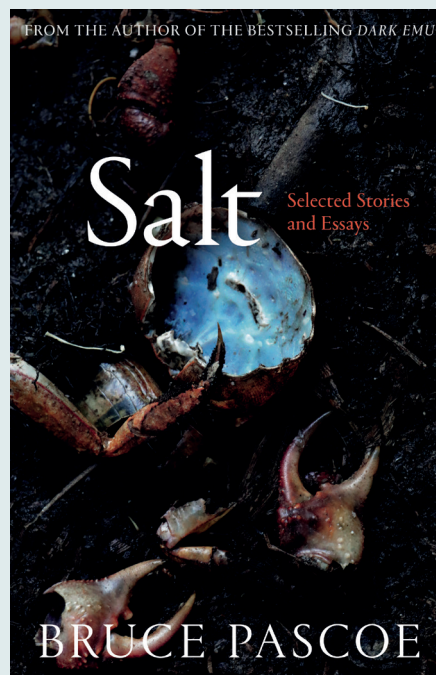
**SUBJECT:** Anthologies & Collections

## Book description

A collection of stories and essays by the award-winning author of *Dark Emu*, showcasing his shimmering genius across a lifetime of work.

This volume of Bruce Pascoe's best and most celebrated stories and essays, collected here for the first time, traverses his long career and explores his enduring fascination with Australia's landscape, culture and history.

Featuring new fiction alongside Pascoe's most revered and thought-provoking nonfiction – including from his modern classic *Dark Emu* – *Salt* distils the intellect, passion and virtuosity of his work. It's time all Australians know the range and depth of this most marvellous of our writers.



## About the author

Bruce Pascoe is an award-winning writer and a Yuin, Bunurong and Tasmanian man. He is a board member of First Languages Australia and Professor of Indigenous Knowledge at the University of Technology Sydney. In 2018 he was named Dreamtime Person of the Year for his contribution to Indigenous culture.



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## Quotes

'Salt demonstrates why Bruce Pascoe's voice is important to the country.' —**KIM SCOTT**

'A paradigm shift ... a wonderful expanse of thinking and storytelling ... In prose that is funny in one moment and devastating the next, Pascoe moves us from wry humour [to] the deep sadness that follows the wonder of discovering a history of richness and fullness deliberately obscured.' —**READINGS**

'Wonderfully eclectic ... Salt is layered with tender, ribald, and at times dark characterisations of people, place, memory, and belonging – deeply informed by Pascoe's humanist values.' —**AUSTRALIAN BOOK REVIEW**

'One of our country's greatest thinkers ... Salt is essential reading for everyone who loved *Dark Emu*, and is a fascinating foray into the mind of one of Australia's most treasured writers.' —**READINGS**

'Pascoe writes passionately about the richness of Aboriginal culture, especially the long history of land cultivation, and uses words such as "justice" and "decency" to explain the need to understand Aboriginal history. Powerful, stimulating writing.' —**GOOD WEEKEND**

'Pascoe stakes a claim as a gifted storyteller as well as a reader of history. Salt is layered with tender, ribald, and at times dark characterisations of people, place, memory, and belonging – deeply informed by Pascoe's humanist values.' —**AUSTRALIAN BOOK REVIEW**

'The poetry of Pascoe's writing makes it tempting to devour his words in one sitting, but this is a book worth savouring.' —**LAW SOCIETY JOURNAL**

'We see how generously Pascoe casts a cloak of words around us to enjoin us in his visions of Australian cultural and natural life.' —**CANBERRA TIMES**

'An enthralling, terrifically crafted and astonishing anthology that rubs figurative salt into the wound that is our collective and often wilful ignorance about our First Nations people and their 100,000-year-old connection to the land.' —**GOOD READING**

'The stories and essays of *Salt* succeed in doing what the mineral of its title is known for doing: this writing irritates and hurts, yet it preserves and makes possible a return to the meat of the matter of Australia.' —**READINGS MONTHLY**

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## Discussion Points

1. The pieces in the book are arranged in themed sections – how do the themes reflect the nonfiction and fiction pieces therein? Discuss the format of the book and how it leads the reader through the various topics.
2. How does Pascoe describe land and nature? What are some examples of human/animal characteristics that he gives to nature, and how does this reflect the Aboriginal relationship to the land?
3. In ‘The Imperial Mind’ and ‘True Hunters’, Pascoe outlines traditional Aboriginal agricultural and hunting practices used before colonisation. Why have these practices been largely ignored? Discuss what you knew about these traditional practices (if at all) before reading the book.
4. Many of the stories and essays in the book relate to finding a lost history, family and culture. How does the book express Aboriginal dispossession and the ongoing search for truth?
5. In ‘Rearranging the Dead Cat’, what does the cat signify?
6. ‘For the lore is not about success or failure, greed or power. It is about the land and the sea and our role in its continuance.’ (p.136) How much significance is placed on nature in Pascoe’s writing? How does he use Aboriginal folklore and storytelling to bring the natural world to life?
7. Pascoe argues that institutions and government have erased Aboriginal culture in education. Thinking about your own schooling in Australia, how was Aboriginal and Australian culture presented to you in both primary and secondary education?
8. What role did Christianity play in the historical subjugation of indigenous populations?
9. ‘Australians find it upsetting, a kind of betrayal, when light-skinned people identify with their indigeneity.’ (p.190) What does Pascoe mean by this? Where have we seen examples of this in the Australian media?
10. Much of Pascoe’s writing is in the form of a letter. Some of the intended recipients we know (John Howard, Andrew Bolt), and others we don’t. How effective is the letter form in literature? How do you, as a reader, respond to it?
11. The themes of death, birth and renewal are common in Pascoe’s writing. Discuss how these themes are framed in the various writing styles included in the book.
12. What is Pascoe’s vision for Australia? What does he ask of its people in moving toward recognition and understanding of Aboriginal history?