

## AUSTRALIAN WOMEN FACT FILE

### THEA ASTLEY

(1925 - )

Writer

- 1925 Born in Brisbane on 25th August. Educated at All Hallows Convent and University of Queensland where she studied Arts. Attended Teacher's Training College
- 1948 Married Jack Gregson and moved to Sydney where she joined the NSW Education Department teaching mainly in high schools
- 1961 Commonwealth Literary Fellowship
- 1962 *The Well Dressed Explorer* won the Miles Franklin Award (sharing the prize with George Turner)
- 1964 Commonwealth Literary Fellowship
- 1965 *The Slow Natives* was published, and won both the Miles Franklin Award and the Moomba Award
- 1968 Senior Tutor at Macquarie University, Sydney
- 1969-1970 Commonwealth Literary Fund Lecturer for Queensland
- 1970-1971 Editor for *Coast to Coast* Magazine
- 1972 *The Acolyte* was published and won the Miles Franklin Award
- 1975 *A Kindness Cup* won The Age Book of the Year Award
- 1980 Retired from her post at Macquarie and went to live for five years near Cairns, Queensland. *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* won the James Cook Foundation of Australia Literature Studies Award.
- 1985 *Beachmasters* was published.
- 1997 *The Multiple Effects of Rainshadow* was nominated for the 1997 Miles Franklin Award
- 2000 *Drylands* won the Miles Franklin Award

**Thea Astley**, until her retirement in 1980, had successfully combined her two careers of teaching and writing. She once stated that when she first began writing, there was no place in Australian fiction for a woman's voice. To date she has won the Miles Franklin Award four times.

Astley's writing is influenced by her Catholic upbringing, and by her experience teaching in small towns. Her journalist father has also had an impact on her writing, as well as a diverse range of authors including Patrick White and Ernest Hemmingway.

Queensland is especially important to Astley, who was quoted as saying, "*Queensland ... is the place where the tall yarn happens, where it is lived out by people who are the dramatis personae of the tall yarns*". Small Queensland communities are important for observing conflict amongst her characters, who represent Australia's minority groups and

outcasts. She is featured on the Albert Street Literary Trail in Brisbane, which commemorates authors who have used the city as a location.

### **Published Works**

#### **Novels**

- \*Girl with a Monkey (1958)
- \*A Descant for Gossips (1960)
- \*The Well Dressed Explorer (1962)
- \*The Slow Natives (1965)
- A Boat Load of Home Folk (1968)
- \*The Acolyte (1972)
- \*A Kindness Cup (1974)
- \*An Item from the Late News (1982)
- \*Beachmasters (1985)
- Reaching Tin River (1990)
- \*Vanishing Points (1992)
- Coda (1994)
- \*The Multiple Effects of Rainshadow (1996)
- \*Drylands (1999)

#### **Short Story Collections**

- \*Hunting the Wild Pineapple 1979
- \*It's Raining in Mango 1987
- Collected Stories 1997

#### **Sources**

- \*Baker, Candida *Yacker: Australian writers talk about their work* Pan Books 1986
- The Pictorial Who's Who: Notable Australians* Prestige Publishing/Paul Hamlyn 1978
- \*Held in JSNWL
- © Jessie Street National Women's Library (2003)