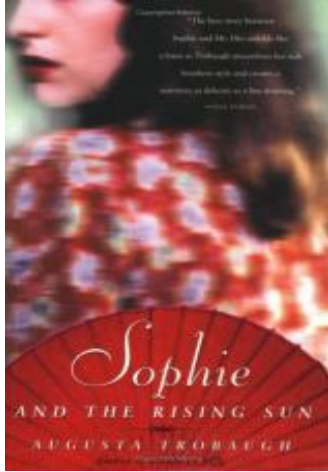


# Sophie and the Rising Sun

by Augusta Trobaugh

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## About the Book

Salty Creek is a sleepy Georgia town where everyone knows everyone else's business, along with their place in the hierarchy of color, class, and family history. Strangers rarely enter their midst, and a mysterious arrival in the spring of 1939 soon sets tongues wagging.

A quiet, unassuming man with a secret history of his own, Mr. Oto is taken in as a gardener by Miss Anne, the town's conscience?and its heart?with no illusions about Salty Creek or its inhabitants. One of these is Sophie, who lost her love during World War I and has resigned herself to a passionless existence taking care of her mother and maiden aunts. Then one day, she and Mr. Oto speak for the first time. To Mr. Oto, whose heart has been full from the moment he saw Sophie, it is one of life's miracles?when they finally break the silence of "the beauty of words unspoken."

When the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor and Mr. Oto's newfound life comes under siege, it is Miss Anne who once again comes to his rescue in an act of uncommon courage and sacrifice. As for Sophie, who has fallen in love with Mr. Oto, she must decide how much she is willing to risk for a future with this man who has brought such joy into her life.

## Discussion Guide

1. Sophie does not seem to have much of a life in Salty Creek beyond her reading group and her painting. What keeps her in this town?
2. One of Sophie's few childhood friends was Sally, a friendship Sophie's mother put to an end when she discovered it. Given that Sophie grew up in an environment that fostered prejudice and segregation, how is it that she is able to see beyond the close-mindedness she had been taught?

3. Is Miss Ruth or Miss Anne more emblematic of the town of Salty Creek? Why?
4. Is it a feeling of patriotism, a feeling of friendship, or some combination of both that causes Miss Anne to hide Mr. Oto?
5. Japan is known as "The Land of the Rising Sun," but in the terms of this novel, could the image of a rising sun mean something more?
6. What is the significance of Mr. Oto's first and middle names?
7. Sally suggests, and Sophie agrees that, "you got to have bad feelings toward some folks...because they do things [that are] bad." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
8. Does Sally's method of revenge against the women of Salty Creek?cleaning their houses with an intensity so as to "make all those white ladies feel like they been living in a pigsty before"?yield the results she seeks?
9. Spiritual faith is an important theme in **Sophie and the Rising Sun**. How does it shape the lives of Mr. Oto, Miss Ruth, and Miss Anne, respectively?
10. At the close of the novel, what do you think happened to Sophie and Mr. Oto?

## Author Bio

Augusta Trobaugh is the author of three previous novels, **Sophie and the Rising Sun**, **Resting in the Bosom of the Lamb**, and **Praise Jerusalem!**, a semi-finalist in the 1993 Pirates Alley Faulkner competition. She holds a Master of Arts degree from the University of Georgia, with a concentration in American and Southern literature. Her work has been funded through the Georgia Council of the Arts.

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