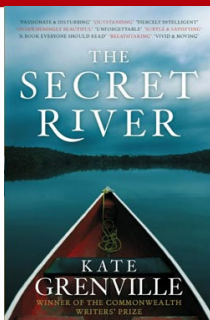


Book Club Discussion Notes



Secret River

By Kate Grenville

Author Biography

Kate Grenville was born in Sydney in 1950 and holds degrees from the University of Sydney and the University of Colorado. She has worked as a film editor, journalist, typist and teacher, and spent seven years in Europe and the USA working and studying. She has held fellowships from the International Association of University Women, and from the Literary Arts Board of the Australia Council.

About the book

This story is set in London, 1807. William Thornhill, happily wedded to his childhood sweetheart Sal, is a waterman on the River Thames. Life is tough but bearable until William makes a mistake, a bad mistake for which he and his family are made to pay dearly. His sentence: to be transported to New South Wales for the term of his natural life. The Thornhills arrive in this harsh and alien land that they cannot understand and which feels like a death sentence. But among the convicts there is a rumour that freedom can be bought and that 'unclaimed' land up the Hawkesbury offers an opportunity to start afresh, far away from the township of Sydney. When William takes a hundred acres for himself, he is shocked to find Aboriginal people already living on the river. Other recent arrivals - Thomas Blackwood, Smasher Sullivan and Mrs. Herring - are finding their own ways to respond to them. Soon Thornhill, a man neither better nor worse than most, has to make the most difficult decision of his life.

Website:

<http://www.alm.aust.com/~kategren/index.html>

Other titles:

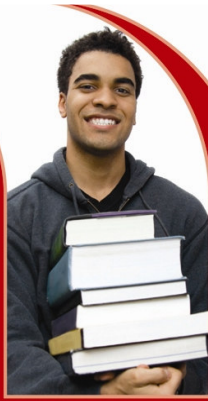
Novels

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Book Club Discussion Notes

Lilian's Story 1985
Dream-House 1988
Joan Makes History 1988
Dark Places 1994
The Idea of Perfection 1999
The Secret River 2005
The Lieutenant 2009

Non-Fiction

The Writing Book: a workbook for fiction writers 1990
Making Stories: how ten Australian novels were written 1993
Writing From Start to Finish: A Six-Step Guide 2002
Searching for the Secret River: The Story Behind the Best Selling Novel 2007

Points for Discussion:

1. Do you think this book is strictly a work of fiction?
2. What do you think of the relationships between the characters?
3. Did this book make you think about this period in Australia's history?
4. Talk about the time period in which the story is set. How well does the author convey the era? Did you have a sense of whether or not the author remained true to the events, social structures and political events of the time period?
5. How were indigenous people portrayed?
6. Is this a time period that you knew a lot about before you read this book? If so, did you learn anything new? If not, did you come away with a greater understanding of what this particular time and place in history was actually like?
7. Is it difficult to keep our own, modern-day experiences from influencing the reading of a historical fiction tale? Can we imagine what life was really like for the characters within the context of the time period?