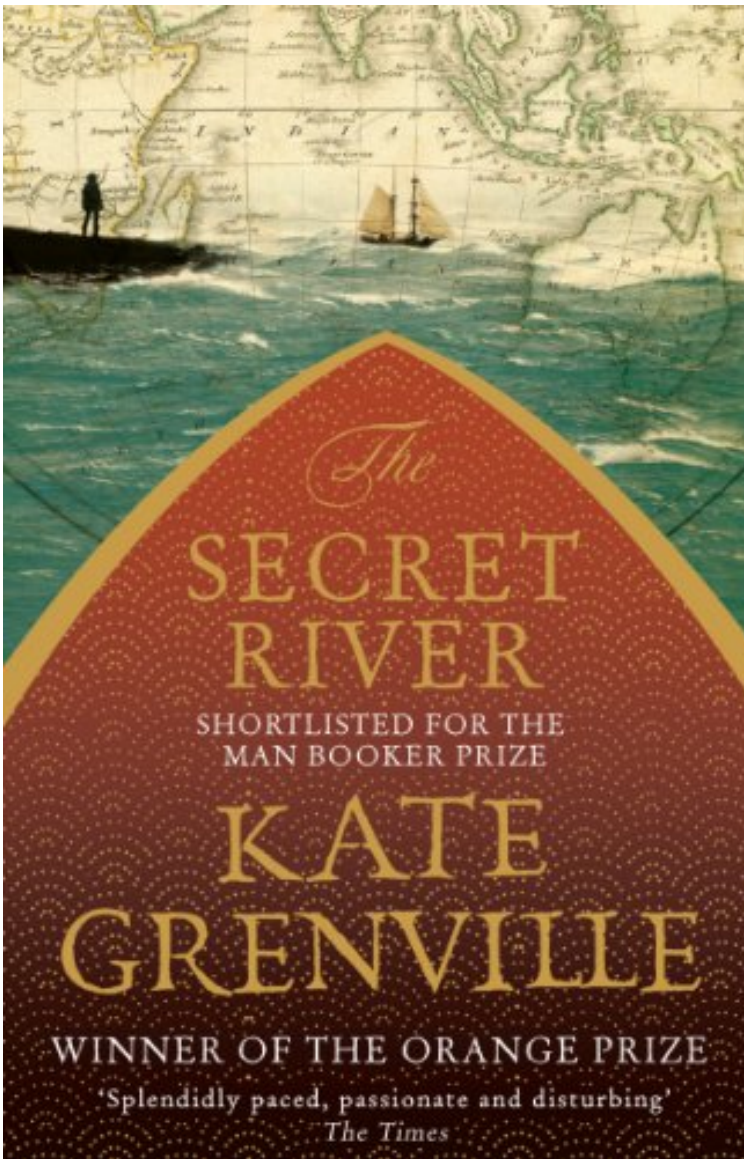


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The Secret River



Par Kate Grenville

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Par Kate Grenville : The Secret River before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Secret River:

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Description : Description du produitAfter a childhood of poverty and petty crime in the slums of London, William Thornhill is sentenced in 1806 to be transported to New South Wales for the term of his natural life. With his wife, Sal, and children in tow, he arrives in a harsh land that feels at first like a death sentence. But among the convicts there is a whisper that freedom can be bought, an opportunity to start afresh. Away from the infant township of Sydney, up the Hawkesbury River, are white men who have tried to do just that. But, as uninhabited as the island appears at first, Australia is full of native people, and they too claim the land as their own. Already a best-seller in Australia, The Secret River is the dramatic and potent story of Grenvilles ancestors, who wrested a new life from the alien terrain of Australia and its native people.

Prsentation de l'diteurLondon, 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, 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. And 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. From Publishers Weekly Grenville's Australian bestseller, which won the Orange Prize, is an eye-opening tale of the settlement of New South Wales by a population of exiled British criminals. Research into her own ancestry informs Grenville's work, the chronicle of fictional husband, father and petty thief William Thornhill and his path from poverty to prison, then freedom. Crime is a way of life for Thornhill growing up in the slums of London at the turn of the 19th century until he's caught stealing lumber. Luckily for him, a life sentence in the penal colony of New South Wales saves him from the gallows. With his wife, Sal, and a growing flock of children, Thornhill journeys to the colony and a convict's life of servitude. Gradually working his way through the system, Thornhill becomes a free man with his own claim to the savage land. But as he transforms himself into a trader on the river, Thornhill realizes that the British are not the first to make New South Wales their home. A delicate coexistence with the native population dissolves into violence, and here Grenville earns her praise, presenting the settler-aboriginal conflict with equanimity and understanding. Grenville's story illuminates a lesser-known part of history at least to American readers with sharp prose and a vivid frontier family. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From School Library Journal Adult/High School William Thornhill, a boatman in pre-Victorian London, escapes the harsh circumstances of his lower-class, hard-scrabble life and ends up a prosperous, albeit somehow unsatisfied, settler in Australia. After being caught stealing, he is sentenced to death; the sentence is commuted to transportation to Australia with his pregnant wife. Readers are filled with a sense of foreboding that turns out to be well founded. Life is difficult, but through hard work and initiative the Thornhills slowly get ahead. During his sentence, William has made his living hauling goods on the Hawkesbury River and thirsting after a piece of virgin soil that he regularly passes. Once he gains his freedom, his family moves onto the land, raises another rude hut, and plants corn. The small band of Aborigines camping nearby seems mildly threatening: William cannot communicate with them; they lead leisurely hunter/gatherer lives that contrast with his farming labor; and they appear and disappear eerily. They are also masterful spearmen, and Thornhill cannot even shoot a gun accurately. Other settlers on the river want to eliminate the Aborigines. The culture clash becomes violent, with the protagonist unwillingly drawn in. The characters are sympathetically and colorfully depicted, and the experiencing of circumstances beyond any single person's control is beautifully shown. Judy McAloon, Potomac Library, Prince William County, VA Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.