



## The Lieutenant

*Kate Grenville*

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## **The Lieutenant** Kate Grenville

In 1788 Daniel Rooke sets out on a journey that will change the course of his life. As a lieutenant in the First Fleet, he lands on the wild and unknown shores of New South Wales. There he sets up an observatory to chart the stars. But this country will prove far more revelatory than the stars above.

Based on real events, *The Lieutenant* tells the unforgettable story of Rooke's connection with an Aboriginal child - a remarkable friendship that resonates across the oceans and the centuries.

## **The Lieutenant Details**

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Author : Kate Grenville

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## From Reader Review The Lieutenant for online ebook

### Annette Chidzey says

Sometimes when you are required to read a novel, its appeal is never quite the same compared to if you opt to do so by choice. Pleasingly this was not my experience in tackling Kate Grenville's 'The Lieutenant'. Daniel Rooke is an intriguing protagonist that we first meet as a five year old boy in 1767 and whom we last see in his final years in Antigua in 1836. Much of the focus centres on his experiences between 5 and 30 as both a young boy and young man.

While we journey with him as he moves from school in Portsmouth to Portsmouth Naval Academy to service on The Resolution before he becomes the astronomer on the Sirius bound for Sydney Cove, the account takes us inside the personal and individual world of Daniel who revels in his own solitude and privacy. Relationships prove challenging for Rooke who adopts masks depending whom he is with and struggles to converse naturally and be himself with those around him, even when he knows them well.

His fascination with the stars, numbers and fugues takes him into a world where people are almost incidental or superfluous but when these became replaced through his epiphany to 'acquire the native language' and document it as no-one had done before, this becomes his sole focus, bordering on obsession.

The acquisition of this language requires him to enter into a relationship with a young native girl, Tagaran, that though platonic renders him vulnerable. Even more significantly he finds himself unable to control his own destiny in a way he had never previously contemplated and comes to painfully realise that if behaviour or 'an action is wrong' your part in it, even if you tried to waylay it or undermine it, still made your part in it equally wrong.

In short, as Rooke attests, "If you were part of that machine, you were part of its evil."

Grenville provides opportunities on so many levels for us as readers to contemplate how we can learn about ourselves and what motivates our values and actions when, like Rooke, we have time for introspection and reflection. Often some of the most honest and revealing conversations start and end with ourselves.

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### Brian says

Kate Grenville's latest book tells the story of Daniel Rooke, an astronomer with the First Fleet sent from England to bring convicts to Botany Bay and his interaction with the aboriginal people, and in particular with a young girl called Tagaran. It's based on the historical account of William Dawes, lieutenant and astronomer with that first expedition who had a similar friendship with a young aboriginal girl.

The character of Daniel Rooke is powerfully conceived and his story is immensely human and deeply compelling. Much of the narrative focuses on his inner thoughts and on the nature of language and communication as he and Tagaran teach each other their respective tongues.

Like his historical counterpart, Daniel Rooke is ordered to take part in an expedition to capture or kill some of the aborigines as punishment for the killing of a white man and it is his reaction to these orders that forms the climax of the book.

My main reservation about this novel is that the ending is weak and feels rushed. Everything up to the climax seems to have been created with tremendous attention to detail. But the climax itself and what follows is almost glossed over so that I was left feeling a little disappointed.

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## Aarti says

Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* is one of my all-time favorite books, not only for the plot and the characters, but for Grenville's complete mastery over the English language. She knows how to wield it and wind it and make it magical. Part of the excitement of opening a new book, for me, is in the hope of discovering an author like Grenville, who can take my breath away with her writing.

*The Lieutenant* centers around the same theme as *The Secret River*- the colonization of Australia by the British, and the subsequent race relations between the British and the natives. She focuses particularly on the struggles of conscience many people faced. She approaches this topic, always, in a manner that manages to be sympathetic to both sides. Her language in this book is just as remarkable as it is in *The Secret River*- she uses such simple words, really, but she uses them so well.

Somehow, though, this story did not have the same magic for me that *The Secret River* did. I did not feel as emotionally invested in the characters. That's not to say that Daniel Rooke is not a commendable and admirable person, or that he wasn't fleshed out enough. He was- there was just something slightly flat about him to me. And I don't think I ever got to know any of the other characters well enough to warm to them. The spark of interest never quite ignited into a flame.

This book is shorter than it seems- I read it pretty quickly, and I don't think I was rushing at all to finish it. I think Grenville spends more time on Rooke's life before he reaches Australia, and so the time he is in Australia seems truncated in comparison. Rooke disappointed me as a character after the complexity of William Thornhill in *The Secret River*. I think she could have developed him more and made the story a bit longer to give readers a better read on him.

I did enjoy reading this book, and I would recommend it to anyone interested in Australian history and race relations. But I would much, much more highly recommend *The Secret River*. It is fantastic.

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## Dominique says

Was ok. Start was slow & boring, it ramped up and got easier to read towards the middle, but nearing the end I got bored again

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## Starseeker says

3.5 stars.

I enjoyed this novel quite a lot.

The main character was interesting to learn about and his interactions with the Indigenous tribe there was fascinating.

The plot was pretty placid and not a lot happened as it focused a lot on the main character himself and his relationships.

I loved this take on history and the characters within Grenville's novels so far seem to be complex which I also really liked as well.

I recommend this one as well if you're interested in Australian history.

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## Ana Ovejero says

This novel narrates the story of Daniel Rooke. At the beginning, it displays Daniel's interest in astronomy and the sciences. As he grows up, he enters the navy in order to travel and to be able to work as an astronomer.

In 1778, he sets out in a journey that is going to change the History of the world. He is a lieutenant in the first fleet that is taking prisoners and is going to establish a colony in New South Wales.

Having a letter of recommendation by the Royal Astronomer, he is allowed to set up a tent separated from the rest of the garrison. His main aim is to chart the constellations and to wait for the comet that is going to be seen for the first time after hundreds of years.

However, the stars are not the only things that he is going to chart. Becoming patient and humble, he is contacted by a group of natives that live nearby but have been suspicious of the invaders' intentions.

Soon, a relationship between Daniel and a young aborigine girl called Tagaran grows. This connection is going to make Daniel not only learn the language but also the fact that the natives are not as different from himself.

In times that not being western was dangerous, Daniel is trying to build a society in which everybody's rights are respected, even the natives who are considered inferior by the English.

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## Carol says

Kate Grenville based her novel on the life of a real Marine officer, William Dawes, who laid the foundation for learning the Aboriginal language - his studies were the most comprehensive at the time, and his notes show the friendly relationship he had with a native girl. Dawes later fought for abolition of slavery in Antigua and died in poverty. Grenville writes this novel about him - as Daniel Rooke - with great affection, and subtlety.

This is a beautiful novel - sensitive, learned and heartbreaking. It is the true tale of a socially awkward young man whose solitary pursuits of mathematics and astronomy insulate him from the power plays and moral compromises of 18th century society. His world is totally turned upside down when he travels with the First Fleet to Botany Bay and everything familiar disappears. In his desire to understand his new reality, he discovers that language is no barrier to human relationships built on the eternal values of trust, honesty and respect. But then the demands of Empire and the simple ways of the Australian wonderland collide and he must make choices.

Grenville's skill is such that we cannot help but feel empathy with the young Rooke from the very first page. Her characters are realistic, although Silk is perhaps not what he first appears to be. The dialogue takes us very effectively back to the 18th century. Grenville conveys the feel of the place and the time with consummate ease.

This is a novel about language and communication, solitude and loneliness, duty and integrity. Grenville explores friendship, truth, a man's place in the universe. And what is worth risking one's career or even one's life for. The end leaves a lump in the throat.

What a pleasure this novel was to read. Once again, I am extremely taken with Ms. Grenville's beautiful prose and her ability to take the reader to the time and place of her novel and keep him/her there.

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## **Helen says**

Fitting book to have read at the start of a new year. Fictionalised account loosely based on true story. Having read Watkin Tench's account of life in the first settlement and story of William Dawes, I could see the similarities. This was my first audiobook and in a way, glad I stuck with it because I don't know if I would have finished it if I had read it. However it's a book that makes you think long and hard about people and situations that start to make you question the status quo, look at things differently and in the process, grow. It's made me want to now look into the story of William Dawes more closely especially his later years helping to abolish slavery.

I can't help but feel that by reading accounts of the First Fleet to Australia that somehow the people who made the journey and survived, were "changed" in some way - that they could stand rigid and fight for tradition and keep order as it was in the old country back home or admit that they had to accept the new and different and change to survive a harsh country and new environment.

Hence why I thought it was quite fitting to read this book at this point in time as people try to make sense of an ever changing new world.

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## **Roger Brunyate says**

### **A Universe of Impossibility**

Kate Grenville has a genius for placing her readers at the heart of a moral dilemma and making us feel it as though it were our own. Unbearably, it is a context whose outcome we already know, where good decisions are virtually impossible; even the most sympathetic characters will be forced by the tide of history to make, or at least condone, decisions that they feel to be morally wrong. In her magnificent previous novel, *The Secret River*, Grenville fictionalized the life of one of her own ancestors, an early convict settler in New South Wales, able with difficulty to wrest a living from the strange terrain, but ultimately defeated by the problem of coexisting with the aboriginal people. Now in *The Lieutenant*, she isolates the issue in a clearer spotlight, going back half a generation to fill out the story of a young marine lieutenant, William Dawes, who came to Sydney in 1788 with the First Fleet, and began the first study of the aboriginal tongue.

Daniel Rooke, as the lieutenant is called in this fictional version, is presented as a precocious child but socially awkward—a character that spoke to me immediately. Through the influence of the Astronomer Royal, whom Daniel had met as a teenager, he gains a commission to sail on the First Fleet to New South Wales as official astronomer. In this capacity, he is allowed to build a hut on an isolated promontory, which both relieves him of the chore of dining in the mess, and puts him in a unique position to meet native visitors. He is visited with increasing frequency by a group of prepubescent girls, one of whom, Tagaran, joins eagerly in his game of exchanging words and phrases, until eventually they enter into a relationship of

something like friendship, enhanced for Daniel by the excitement of true discovery. Grenville subtly contrasts his approach with that of his friend and senior officer Talbot Silk, who has a book contract waiting on his return to London; while Silk processes everything into prose that would appeal to English tastes, Rooke learns the language as a means of entering a new culture. Eventually, the differences in private attitudes have public consequences; the worlds of the British military and the aborigines inevitably clash, and Daniel Rooke is caught in the middle. On the one side, his new-found friends; on the other, his oath to the King; what can he do?

This is a good book about a serious issue whose consequences are still felt today. It has an attractive protagonist, is written well, and is very easy to read. But it feels slight compared to *The Secret River*, and is literally only half its length. It tells us less about Australia, and especially lacks the passionate sense of landscape of the earlier book. Most seriously its narrowness of focus, though clarifying the moral picture, quite scants the social context. Both books begin in England, but while Daniel Rooke is just an individual schoolboy, William Thornhill in *The Secret River* is seen at the center of a Dickensian complex of interlocking districts, trades, and families, spanning classes and generations. Daniel is a bachelor and a bit of a hermit; any sexual attraction between him and Tagaran is understated; but Will Thornhill is a married man with a complex emotional life and a growing family. Daniel lives with words and ideas, which can be hard to make interesting; Will's work is physical, and has the excitement of an adventure story. And at the end, Daniel faces his dilemma alone, but Will acts as part of a group of settlers of different views and backgrounds. Daniel is a man in a private spotlight, Will represents an entire society. This latest book is merely a very good one; the other was a masterpiece.

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## Kim says

In this novel, Kate Grenville returns to the time and place which inspired her in *The Secret River*: the early days of the British colony in New South Wales. This time her central character, Daniel Rooke, is based on Lieutenant William Dawes, the First Fleet's astronomer, who was also a skilled linguist, engineer and surveyor.

Grenville portrays Rooke as a brilliant but shy and socially awkward man: a mathematician, musician, linguist and astronomer, who becomes friends with a young girl from the local Cadigal indigenous clan and learns and records her language. Through this relationship, Rooke finds out who he really is and learns where his true loyalties lie.

In some ways, reading this novel is like being plunged into an alternative universe where everything is the same, yet different. In her author's note, Grenville states: "This is a novel; it should not be mistaken for history". To reinforce this point, Grenville has renamed real life historical figures. William Dawes becomes Daniel Rooke. Dawes' friend Patyegarang is renamed Tagaran. The first governor of the colony is not Arthur Phillip but James Gilbert. A chronicler of the early days of the colony - Watkin Tench - is now Captain Silk. I can see that renaming historical figures gave Grenville the freedom to depart from her sources and make the novel a work of the imagination rather than a work in which faithfulness to the historical facts is expected. However, as a reader with some knowledge of those historical facts, it was initially disconcerting to be confronted by characters I knew by other names. It ceased to matter, though, as I became fully engrossed in Rooke's journey of self-discovery.

For me, the most fascinating aspect of the novel is Rooke's connection with Tagaran and the process of learning and recording the Cadigal language. I love learning about language and at heart I'm a frustrated linguist. Anyone who has spent time learning a foreign language knows that magical moment when an

undifferentiated mass of sound resolves itself into recognisable words and then into sentences in which the parts of speech can be identified, even if some of the individual words remain unfamiliar. Modern language learning is supported by teachers, manuals, dictionaries and sound recordings, which don't make learning a language any less interesting, but do make the process predictable. Reading this novel made me appreciate how it must have been for those who learned a language not previously heard or recorded. When, through his interaction with Tagaran, Rooke starts to recognise not just individual words but the patterns formed by syntax and grammar, he wonders:

Was this what Galileo had felt, turning his telescope to the night sky and seeing stars that no one had seen before?

Learning a new vocabulary and grammar is one thing. Forming a connection with another human being through that language is something else. For Rooke, this starts to occur when he and Tagaran are able to share a joke. He records the moment:

What had passed between Tagaran and himself had gone far beyond vocabulary or grammatical forms. It was the heart of talking; not just the words and not just the meaning, but the way in which two people had found common ground and begun to discover the true names of things.

Rooke later contemplates what happens when understanding of language deepens to the extent that a real conversation can occur:

This exchange was not a language lesson. It was a conversation. For the first time, he and Tagaran were on the same side of the mirror of language, simply speaking to each other. Understanding went in both directions. Once two people shared a language, they could no longer use it to hide.

And then language leads to something else again; not just a conversation, but a relationship:

What he had not learned from Latin and Greek he was learning from the people of New South Wales. It was this: you did not learn a language without entering into a relationship with the people who spoke it with you. His friendship with Tagaran was not a list of objects ... It was the slow constructing of the map of a relationship.

The names of things, if you truly wanted to understand them, were as much about the spaces between the words as they were about the words themselves. Learning a language was not a matter of joining two points with a line. It was a leap into the other.

In depicting the relationship between Daniel Rooke and Tagaran, Grenville shows the life-changing experiences which can result from true communication between people from totally different worlds. For William Dawes, the man on whom Daniel Rooke is based, his relationship with the Cadigal people of New South Wales was life-changing indeed. It directly led to his later career working for the abolition of slavery in Antigua.

This is neither a long novel, nor a difficult novel to read. What stops me from giving it five stars is that the last part of the work feels rushed. Very little time is devoted to Rooke's experiences after he makes a decision which affects his future in the colony and the summing up of his career after leaving New South Wales comes too soon. Many novels are too long for their content. This one is arguably too short.

## Lyn Elliott says

I have read a considerable amount of Australian history over the years and though *The Lieutenant* is at least part invention, this fictionalised story has had a more powerful effect on me than has reading the more dispassionate histories.

I approached 'The Lieutenant' with a sense of foreboding, knowing that its theme of first contacts between English settlers and Aboriginal people in Sydney must deal with cruelty, violence and dispossession.

Kate Grenville has managed, however, to write about the characters and their actions in such a way that we see only obliquely the brutality of life for convicts and soldiers, and are spared being made to face the actuality of an atrocity ordered by the colony's governor.

Atrocities similar to that planned in 'The Lieutenant' did take place in Australia, with hunting parties sent out to kill Aboriginal people to demonstrate superior force, as 'punishment', or simply to push them off the land they occupied.

The character of Daniel Rooke chooses not to take part in the daily life of the new convict settlement, but to isolate himself on a nearby hill top where he establishes a primitive observatory. Rooke's preferred displacement allows the reader to see through removed eyes as well, confronting the horrors only when Rooke is forced to: hanging a marine who contested an order (this in England before being sent to Australia); the flogging of a food thief in the colony; and enforced participation in the punishment expedition against the 'natives'.

Isolated here, he is able to forge relationships with several Aboriginal people and to learn and record their language.

Rooke conceals this, knowing that the Governor desperately wants contact between the two peoples and to have someone to learn their language. He is aware, and so are we, that concealment might have consequences. But he also feels that revelation is likely to be a betrayal of some sort, and it too will have consequences.

We see early in the book the dilemma that will haunt the soldier Rooke and that he must eventually confront: will he obey unquestioningly or hold to principles he believes in.

This realization stirs in England when he is forced to witness the punishment of three marine lieutenants who talked about disobeying – potential mutiny. The leader was hanged, the other two humiliated and expelled from the forces; 'sent into oblivion, ... They would never again have a place in the world'.

'Rooke knew he would not forget. In that afternoon in which feeling had been assaulted into numbness he saw that under the benign surface of life in His Majesty's service, under its rituals and its uniforms and pleasantries, was horror.

'He had thought to find a niche in which he could make a life [as astronomer and navigator]. What was forced into his understanding that eternal and burning afternoon, was that a payment would be extracted. His Majesty had no use for any of the thoughts and sensibilities and wishes that a man might contain, much less the disobedience to which he might be inspired. To bend to the king's will required the suspension of human response. A man was obliged to become part of the mighty imperial machine. To refuse was to become inhuman in another way: either a bag of meat or a walking dead man' (p. 29).

A little later, when Rooke is offered the opportunity to join the first fleet to the new colony of New South

Wales, he accepts, knowing he cannot trust the machinery of life to move in harmony, as he had. 'Now he did not trust that machine. He did not think he ever would again. Life might promise, but he knew now that while it gave it also took'. (pp 38-39)

These warnings come throughout the book, with perhaps too heavy a hand.

Rooke volunteers to join the expedition to found the penal colony of New South Wales, urged by his friend Silk, a great story teller, who is excited at the prospect of writing about the new land.

Rooke realises that Silk too 'had been marking time, waiting for his vocation to become possible...[W]hen Silk told those stories in the mess it was not simply to entertain. For Silk, the making of the tale – the elegance of its phrases, the flexing of its shape – was the point of the exercise. The instinct to rework an event, so that the telling became almost more real than the thing itself – that had been born in Silk the way the pleasures of manipulating numbers had been born in Rooke'. (p39)

Silk becomes increasingly unpleasant a character throughout the book, manipulative, spiteful. He pries for information to round out his stories for publication, regardless of consequences. Rooke becomes increasingly careful about what he tells Silk, protective of himself and friends, white and black. Silk's gaze on Rooke is 'wordless coaxing'. Rooke 'felt ugly in his skin, clumsy in his attempt to be secret. He wondered if writers of narratives could smell when there was more to a story than met the eye.

'All Silk hungered for was a piquant addition to his narrative [about the capture of Aboriginal men]. But if he should get hold of the story the way Gardiner had told it [to Rooke] in the privacy of the hut, and make it public, it would be a catastrophe.' Gardiner would be sent back to England for court-martial and punishment. (p122-3).

In this scene, Rooke is running through the consequences, not of Gardiner's disobedience to orders, but to his regret at having obeyed them.

Not long after this scene, Rooke at last sees 'how different they truly were, he and Silk. Silk's impulse was to make the strange familiar, to transform it into well-shaped smooth phrases.

'His own was to enter that strangeness and lose himself in it'.

Silk is slippery, smooth, slick. Slid a suggestion to the Governor that Rooke be included in a punitive expedition against the natives to Rooke's utter horror. Slipped sharpened hatchets into bags to carry their heads back in triumph to the settlement.

Rooke is straight, moves in straight lines like the rook on the chess board, vulnerable to unforeseen attacks from the side. When the final terrible decision has to be made, he acts to save Aboriginal lives and puts himself outside the life he has known, into exile.

This story is based on real characters in the early years of the settlement of Sydney in the colony of New South Wales from 1788 onwards. William Dawes is the model for Daniel Rooke. Watkin Tench, the diarist, is the original around whom Captain Silk is drawn. Governor Phillip has become Governor Gilbert. Author Kate Grenville notes that though she used historical sources, including Tench's works, this is a novel, not history.

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## Cherie says

I expected a dry, factual story. That is what all of the reviews I read seemed to indicate.

How wrong this was. It was not dry, but it was not the snappy, fast paced stories that we are all used to

reading these days. There was no danger or surprise waiting around every corner.

Facts, facts are sometimes dry and slow. An introduction into the world of a young boy and what he saw and how he felt in a world that he did not seem to fit into at all is what I saw and read. It was told as simply as it happened. A young boy, a math prodigy at five years old, already reading, and obsessed with finding prime numbers starts school. He is quiet. He does not know how to fit in. The teacher thinks he is stupid. He is bullied. He is taken to see a doctor who recognizes his gifts and at seven is yanked away from his family and placed into a Naval Academy School. He goes home on Sundays to be with his family. His only peace is in solitude. The summer he is thirteen, he meets the British Royal Astronomer. He is introduced to the night sky, and chess, and Euclid and Newton open up a whole new world to him. After school, he enlists in the Royal Marines and is sent off to fight in the war against the Americans, who are fighting for their Independence. In his first naval engagement, he is hit on the head and spends months in the hospital, finally recovering after being nursed by his sister Ann. Yeah, it was just about like that.

Then he is shipped to Australia to help settle the first colony called New South Wales, in 1788. He is still a marine, but he has been dispatched with the special orders from the Royal Astronomer to watch for the return of Halley's Comet. He sets up a small observatory on the top of a point at the entrance to Sydney Cove, a mile from the settlement. He records the wind direction, temperature, rainfall and weather conditions everyday into his notebook. Boring, huh?

It sounds boring, but then he meets some natives and starts learning the language they speak from a young girl and some other children, who come to visit his hill top. He writes down what he learns into a couple of notebooks. In what is not so plain to him, he falls in love, but there is trouble with the natives and the settlers and he is sent out on an expedition to capture some natives to bring back to the settlement to be punished and to be set up as an example of British justice. He rebels, goes back to the settlement and confronts the Governor. He is sent back to England to be tried for insubordination and never goes back to New South Wales. Is this a great story or what?

The story is based on a real person, who was really an astronomer, and really did write down the native Australian language that he learned. The rest of the story was embellished by Kate Grenville. It was wonderful. It was so simple, but so beautifully written. Her native characters were alive and their interactions with the main character, called Daniel Rooke were captivating. I could not help but admire Rooke and fall in love with him, a little. His character is so singular and so well explained. What happened to him and how the story ends, is for you to find out. I had tears in my eyes, from admiration at what he accomplished with his life and from sadness, as I read the last lines.

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## **Jenny says**

The Lieutenant is about Daniel Rooke and his self-discovery of who he is. Lieutenant Daniel Rooke arrived in Australia in 1788 on the first fleet. Lieutenant Daniel Rooke never felt in belong in the marines, so he wandered away from camp and set up an observatory and in the proceeds befriended an aboriginal woman called Tagaran. The readers of The Lieutenant will continue to follow this blossoming friendship between Tagaran and Lieutenant Daniel Rooke to see what happens.

I did enjoy reading The Lieutenant. However, it was not as good as The Secret River for me it took awhile for me to engage with the plot and the characters. Kate Grenville does a great job in bring early Australian settlement alive for her readers. I love Kate Grenville portrayals of her characters. Lieutenant is well written and researched by Kate Grenville. I like that Kate Grenville ensures that her readers found out what happened to Lieutenant Daniel Rooke after he left Australia.

The readers of The Lieutenant will learn about living in Sydney during the eighteen century. Also, the readers of The Lieutenant will learn about setting up an observatory.

I recommend this book.

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### **Penny says**

This is about the opening up of the convict settlements of Australia. It follows the life of a young lieutenant who is actually involved with astronomical studies. He is a good linguist and becomes involved with local aborigines - as the relationship between the English and the Aborigines deteriorates he finds himself unable to please both sides.

This is well-written as all Kate Grenville books are and although it is a stand-alone story it continues with the theme of Australian history that she has in her other books The Secret River and Sarah Thornhill.

This one is a little restrained in its writing - the main character is not as sympathetic as in the other books, and as such I did not feel as connected to the narrative. However, the book takes the reader through the events slowly with a gentleness that belies the cruelty of what is actually witnessed by our protagonist. Worth a read!

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### **PattyMacDotComma says**

Loved it. I knew it was based on a real story, but I didn't realise it was so closely based that it was really a fictional biography - the real story with the blanks filled in. Only the names were changed to protect, etc.

But limiting a review to such an offhand summary would be to sell Grenville short, and she is much too valuable a literary asset to do that. She certainly did more than fill the blanks.

She has dramatised a remarkable set of real circumstances - a sensitive young man who comes out with the First Fleet and attempts to set up an astronomical outstation where he can live, work and observe the night skies in seclusion. He tries to separate himself as much as possible from his rough and ready compatriots whose cruel behaviour appals him.

Grenville can set a scene and create a mood effortlessly, by which I mean, there is no effort on the reader's part because the words flow so naturally you feel that's the way they were always meant to be put together. In some writing, you can read a phrase and almost see the author glowing and thinking "I wrote that!"

I never feel that with Grenville. The rivers, the dust, the humpies, the weather - they're all such a natural part of the story that I never feel like skipping a paragraph to get on with the plot, which happens often enough with other authors, I'm ashamed to admit.

The young fellow comes to know, awkwardly at first, some local Aboriginal people, breaks bread and trades words, but most importantly, establishes a shy, mutual respect with one young girl in particular. And all of that is true. If it didn't happen exactly as she describes, it should have.

Loved it.

## Russell says

I love Kate Grenville's writing, and on the whole this book is as enjoyable to read as any other by this author. However, one thing is doing my head in: the names of the characters. The story is based on William Dawes, as the author points out in her note at the end of the book, but is a work of fiction, so I guess this is why the main character is called Rooke, and not Dawes. Unfortunately, there are many easily identified characters in the book who are based on real historical figures, and it is perplexing that the author has renamed ALL of them! Most Australians learned many of these names at school: Arthur Philip, the first governor; Watkin Tench, the officer and writer; John Hunter, captain of the flagship, and later explorer and second governor. Why the need to change the names of these historical figures just because the book is a work of fiction? The names of the ships, the landmarks and parts of the settlement are intact, so why not allow the same treatment for the chief historical figures? Why? Why? Why? Why? I've recently finished Hilary Mantel's wonderful Thomas Cromwell books (*Wolf Hall*, *Bring up the bodies*). If Mantel can interpret history like this, what was stopping Kate Grenville? Is the difference between 500 years and 200 years a cause for greater circumspection and care when dealing with real people? Hopefully the second half of this book will redeem it.

... 160 pages later ... The writing in the second half of this book makes up for any historical awkwardness caused by changing all the character names. This is a superbly written book, and it offers some wonderful insights into language and cultural differences. It unravels some of the complex issues that arise from a clash of cultures, without going too far and suggesting simplistic solutions. These are issues we still grapple with in Australia - not just between indigenous and Anglo-European cultures, but between "new" Australians and those whose families have been here for 5 or 6 generations; and between resident Australians and refugees; and to some extent between users (mining, industry) and conservers (environmentalists, the green movement); and of course, between conscience and authority.

This is a book I want to revisit - even if just to read the last third. I didn't find the resolution of the story at all unfulfilling or rushed, as many other Goodreads reviews suggest. I think brevity was important to maintain the link between the mood of Rooke's last day in Port Jackson and his last days of life. The central theme of the book is achieved more clearly by combining these two significant stages of Rooke's life into a single chapter.

Four-and-a-half stars - please, Goodreads, can we have half stars? This book is better than four, but I can't give it five due to the annoyance I found with character names. So, a clear-cut reason to give four-and-a-half!

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## Yiannis says

Ευκολοδι?βαστο, συναρπαστικ? αλλ? δεν εμβαθ?νει.

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## Tracy Terry says

Not a book I enjoyed. Personally I longed for this to be more of a 'human interest story' about relationships and less of a story, no matter how interesting, about astronomy and Daniel's unravelling of the native

language.

Sectioned into what was effectively three parts I really struggled with the first part which dealt mainly with Daniel's childhood in England as it felt as if I wasn't reading a story so much as reading a list of notes the author had jotted down to remind herself of where she intended to go with the story.

The rest of the book, the second portion (set in Australia), the third (the latter part of Daniel's life in Antigua) fared a little better but overall I was disappointed in that the author never seemed to delve too deeply into any of the issues raised but rather seemed to take the reader right to the brink of something deep and meaningful only to shy away at the last moment.

Not at all what I was expecting from this novel, at heart I think it had some really important things to say and yet everything about it, both plot and characters, seemed to be totally underdeveloped and woefully lacking.

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### **Brenda says**

Daniel Rooke was five years old when it was confirmed to him how different he was from his peers. His love of numbers set him apart, made him a person to tease and ridicule, and this was his life until in 1775 and at thirteen, he met Dr Vickery who was a kindred spirit. His love of astronomy lit a passion and enthusiasm which would last Rooke his lifetime.

As a lieutenant who narrowly avoided death during the war, Daniel was assigned to the First Fleet which arrived in New South Wales in 1788. The rugged country was filled with aggressive but fearful natives and when Sydney Cove was named, the settlement in the new country began. Rooke's great desire was to locate an area where he could live and work quietly and without the company of the other men; his observance of the night skies – so different to home – and the anticipation of the predicted Halley's comet, excited him.

But it was Rooke's friendship with a young Aboriginal girl named Tagaran which caused his life to change...

*The Lieutenant* is a fictionalized version of the life of William Dawes (Rooke), of the Marine Forces which landed with the First Fleet in 1788. Aussie author Kate Grenville has made it easy to feel empathy for Daniel Rooke; to take his journey with him and feel his heartache, his uncertainty and the connections he made. Recommended.

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### **Fiona says**

A really lovely, satisfying read. Similar in many ways to *The Secret River* but, for me, so much better. Although Grenville's writing sometimes seems simplistic due to her very measured way of writing, if you take the time to think about the words and phrases on the page, the depth and beauty of her descriptions of people, places, and the natural world, are achingly poignant. I suppose that's why I don't listen to audiobooks.

The timeless message of the book is that to stand by and watch whilst others do evil is to be complicit. If you're not true to yourself and your own beliefs, you have nothing.

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