

Ms Kate Grenville

The honorary degree of Doctor of Letters was conferred upon Kate Grenville by the Chancellor Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO at a special ceremony held in the Great Hall at 5.30pm on Saturday 10 November 2012.



Kate Grenville during the conferring ceremony.



Kate's response.



The Chancellor, Robin Warren, Kate Grenville, Lord Rees, Geoffrey Yunupingu, Cate Blanchett and the Vice-Chancellor Dr Michael Spence.



Kate in front of the jacarandah tree in the Quadrangle



The Chancellor, Kate Grenville and Cate Blanchett.



Kate, Cate and the Deputy Chancellor Alan Cameron.



Kate, Cate and the Deputy Chancellor Alan Cameron.

Citation

Presented by the Dean, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Professor Duncan Ivison:

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to commend Kate Grenville to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa). She has distinguished herself through her outstanding contribution to literature, touching on universal themes that have inspired worldwide acclaim. Many of her best-known works explore the origins of modern Australia, including the roots of conflict between Australia's Aboriginal peoples and the early settlers who took over their land.

Kate Grenville is a graduate of the University of Sydney and one of Australia's most celebrated authors, having published eight books of fiction and four books about the writing process. Her novels have won many awards in Australia and the United Kingdom and been translated into European and Asian languages. Several have been made into major feature films.

Throughout her illustrious career, she has retained her links with the University. She is an honorary associate in the Department of English, and it was in a room in the University's Woolley Building that she wrote at least some of one of her best-known works, *The Secret River*, which has been honoured with the Commonwealth Prize for Literature and the Christina Stead Prize.

She has said that the international acclaim for that book, with its underlying themes of belonging, identity and territorial rights, show that these concerns are shared all over the world as populations become more mobile.

Kate Grenville herself is no stranger to such mobility. She was born in Sydney, and after graduating from this University with a Bachelor of Arts in 1973, worked in the film industry before living in the United Kingdom and Europe for several years. In 1980 she went to the United States and completed a master's in creative writing

at the University of Colorado.

On her return to Australia in 1983 she worked in SBS Television's subtitling unit, before publishing her first book in 1984, a collection of stories called *Bearded Ladies*. This was followed by *Lilian's Story* (1985), which was awarded the Vogel/Australian Prize and was later turned into a successful film. This early body of work was notable for addressing gender issues.

More success followed, but in addition to her novels, Kate Grenville is also renowned for her body of work about the writing process itself. Her memoir *Searching for the Secret River* is used in many writing courses across Australian schools and universities.

Her most recent novel, *Sarah Thornhill* (2011), is a sequel to *The Secret River*. Together with *The Lieutenant*, the books form a loose trilogy about the first three generations of colonial Australia.

Kate Grenville has said her Sydney undergraduate degree in English was a "mind-expanding education in ways of looking at the world that were unfamiliar – the best education a novelist could want".

She has recently helped to "expand the minds" of a new generation of undergraduates through her involvement with the First-Year Book Club, a 2011 initiative that invited all first-year students at the University of Sydney to join the club and receive a free book. *The Secret River* was the selected book.

Chancellor, I present Kate Grenville for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*), and I invite you to confer the degree upon her.