



Dark places

Also published as *Albion's story*

By Kate Grenville

First published in 1994

Genre & subject

Australian fiction

Psychological fiction

Synopsis

Albion Gidley Singer creates his world as a vast collection of facts - facts he uses to support his own power and status. After an awkward childhood, aware that he is a disappointment to his father, he acquires the trappings of respectability - success in business, a family. But beneath his comically grand exterior Albion's soul remains a dark place of fear and loathing, driving him to terrifying deeds.

Author biography

Kate Grenville was born in 1950; her father, Kenneth Grenville Gee, was a District Court judge and barrister. She has worked as an editor of documentary films at Film Australia, a sub-editor of subtitles at SBS Television, and a teacher of Creative Writing.

In 2006 she was awarded a Doctorate of Creative Arts by the University of Technology, Sydney. In 2010 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of New South Wales.

Kate Grenville lives in Sydney with her husband, son and daughter. Her leisure activities include learning to play the cello and performing in an amateur orchestra.

Discussion starters

- Is Albion the victim of his life circumstances (family background, upbringing etc), or is he responsible for the way he is? Could the childhood events that made him mistrust women justify his misogyny?
- Why are facts so important to Albion?
- The image of emptiness or hollowness recurs in the book - but what is Albion really lacking beneath his worldly success? Do you think he ever recognises his emotional poverty?
- Does Albion learn anything, or change in his views of women or himself, over the course of the book?
- The book is written in the first person, which can have the effect of forcing the reader to identify with that person to some extent. Did you find you experienced any empathy for Albion?

- Is this just a period piece, or is this story relevant to today? The women in Dark Places are unable to stand up to Albion - do women still find it hard to stand up to this kind of abuse of power?
- Should novels deal with dark or confronting ideas? Or is it just adding to the amount of darkness in the world? Are certain kinds of subjects not appropriate to be written about as novels? Does a novel about this subject run the risk of normalising things that should stay in the realm of the taboo?
- The author describes this book as a "black comedy". Was this your experience of reading, or was it simply a tragedy - or did it have elements of both?
- Do you feel that reading the book extended your understanding about some of the "dark places" in the human psyche?

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