



Restless Dolly Maunder

By Kate Grenville

First published in 2023

Genre and Subject

Australia Social life and customs 19th century Fiction

Self-realization in women Fiction

Biographical Fiction

Historical Fiction

Synopsis

Dolly Maunder was born at the end of the nineteenth century, when society's long-locked doors were starting to creak ajar for women. Growing up in a poor farming family in country New South Wales but clever, energetic and determined, Dolly spent her restless life pushing at those doors.

Most women like her have disappeared from view, remembered only in family photo albums as remote figures in impossible clothes, or maybe for a lemon-pudding recipe handed down through the generations. *Restless Dolly Maunder* brings one of these women to life as someone we can recognise and whose struggles we can empathise with.

In this compelling new novel, Kate Grenville uses family memories to imagine her way into the life of her grandmother. This is the story of a woman, working her way through a world of limits and obstacles, who was able—if at a cost—to make a life she could call her own. Her battles and triumphs helped to open doors for the women who came after.

Shortlisted, Women's Prize for Fiction, United Kingdom, 2024

Shortlisted, Prime Minister's Literary Awards, Fiction, 2024

Longlisted, Fiction, Indie Book Awards, 2024

Longlisted, Margaret and Colin Roderick Literary Award, 2024

Longlisted, ARA Historical Novel Prize, 2024

Author Biography

Kate Grenville is one of Australia's most celebrated writers. Her international bestseller *The Secret River* was awarded local and overseas prizes, has been adapted for the stage and as an acclaimed television miniseries, and is now a much-loved classic.

Her most recent novel is the bestselling *A Room Made of Leaves*. She has also written three books about the writing process. In 2017 Grenville was awarded the Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature.

Discussion Starters

1. Is Dolly a good mother? She describes herself as a difficult mother. Is she difficult, strong, or both?
2. How does Norma St Leon compare to the other women who Dolly meets in her life, and how is her experience different from Dolly's? What do they have in common, and what separates them?
3. Grenville describes marriage as, 'a rope around her neck'. Is marriage good or bad for Dolly? Does it have any advantages? What are they, if so?
4. Grenville describes Dolly and Nance's relationship as 'knotty'. Why might Dolly have a difficult relationship with her daughter, in particular?
5. How does Dolly's story both demonstrate admirable resilience and grit as a clever and energetic woman in a time when opportunities for women were so limited?
6. What opportunities did Dolly have that an indigenous woman at the time could not?
7. Dolly's mother tells the stories of her childhood over and over again, which Dolly finds herself doing in later life to her children, too. What are some of the most memorable stories of your childhood?

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- The idea of perfection by Kate Grenville
- Barkskins by Annie Proulx.

Author biography from Publisher

<https://www.textpublishing.com.au/authors/kategrenville>

Discussion starters and Read A likes from The Women's Prize Trust

https://womensprize.com/app/uploads/2024/05/Restless-Dolly-Maunder_reading_guide.pdf