

Change in social values essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ New South Wales has a life of its own now, beyond any intention that any man – The Governor, even the King himself – might have. ” Explain with reference to the text the life and the values that you believe had been established in the new colony from your reading of *Secret River*. Many claim that migrating from one place to another is simply for the benefit of living a new life whilst attempting to move on from the past. Although, in this case there is a situation where one is forced to leave their home country and live a new life as a form of punishment.

Kate Grenville’s novel *The Secret River*, explores the concept of values and the understanding of the changes during colonisation. The protagonist William Thornhill is explicitly characterised throughout the novel to demonstrate the conflicting issues that began in London. As New South Wales currently has a life of its own, Kate Grenville emphasises that the deconstruction of the class system has been initiated, the prime set of values have changed, just as well as the accustomed laws that were simply forgotten.

Moreover, Grenville expresses the Aboriginal culture in ways that determine their rights that they were entitled to have during the 18th and 19th century. Within the early stages of *The Secret River*, the author Kate Grenville has examined how the class system had affected the lives of the Thornhills. She exempts the fact that the levels of power run throughout the whole novel yet manages to explore the impact of social ranking.

During William Thornhill’s early life, his unpleasant experiences had marked his character for life; this however, leads to William constantly craving the

thrill of wielding power over another individual. “ He had a sudden dizzying understanding of the way men were ranged on top of each other, all the way from the Thornhills at the bottom up to the King, or God, at the top, each man higher than one, lower than the other. ” This statement extracted from Thornhills position had imposed to the reader that Thornhill was not categorised to be rich.

William had generally started off as a poor man who would continually break the law in order to survive. In William’s world, Mr Middleton stood at the top of the ladder due to his goods which involved having his very own stable business and a home. More throughout the novel, Grenville states that William claims to want to be treated equally. This is exposed when William does not become hesitant when it came to the opportunity of creating a new life. His freedom then became one of his main priorities.

When William had assigned himself with two convicts, Grenville had simply emphasised his enjoyment of no longer having to be classed as a man that is to be on the bottom rung of society. When William had first set foot on the Hawkesbury river, he was instantly awed to the idea of having his own land, in which he decided to name it “ Thornhill’s Point”.

From living with Mr Middleton and previously reassuring that his family was in good shape, to admiring his new land and his future. William Thornhill’s dream of owning land had created the first divide in his relationship with Sal. He wished he could explain to her the marvel of that land, the way the sunlight fell so sweet along the grass. But she could not imagine, did not want to. He saw that her dreams were small and cautious, being of nothing

grander than the London they had left. Perhaps because she had not felt the rope around her neck. That changed a man forever. ” Although Grenville characterises Sal’s angelic personality, she intentionally describes Sal’s discouraging thoughts towards the land. As clearly mentioned within the novel, Sal prefers to cling to her memories and is greatly determined to return home.

Sal and William’s ideas differ due to their past experiences. Sal had lived a comfortable and happy childhood, where she believes they can return to their familiar life in London. In contrast to William’s experiences with hunger, poverty, and near-death that had killed his desire to return to his childhood home. At this point in time, Sal and Thornhill are struggling to come to terms in ways where their prime values have changed from the fight for survival, to the longing piece of land that could entitle their family to a new and improved lifestyle.

In London, as the class system had imponderably stated, men of the lower classes were not able to own land. But when the Thornhills had migrated to New South Wales, much of these laws had changed. Due to the large piece of land that appeared to not be inherited by any obvious individual, Thornhill decided to take over. “ He let himself imagine it: standing on the crest of that slope, looking down over his own place. Thornhill’s Point.

It was a piercing hunger in his guts: to own it. To say mine, in a way he had never been able to say mine of anything at all. The authors direct use of descriptive language had indicated that Thornhill was ambitious, especially when it came to something he had had his eye on. When William had first

spotted the empty stretch of land on the Hawkesbury River, he realised that he could finally gain the security that came with ownership of the land. William was determined to take pride and the social standing of a landowner, yet he knew that there was still work to be done. More in depth, he was purely decisive when he had the opportunity to take the first step in building a solid and secure life for his family.

On the alternate side, not forgetting that Thornhill was a convict that was punished, there was still no knowledge of any laws that declared him to be able to claim that specific location. In other words, Thornhill was entitled to declare ownership of Thornhill's Point regardless of his criminal past. An important concept of values that was explored throughout the novel, was the Aboriginal's and their rights. Kate Grenville had presented the Aboriginal culture in a way that forced readers to focus on the equal weight between the Aborigines and their way of life.

Grenville had also attempted to empower the label of savage, as it was what the settlers decided to call the Aborigines. Grenville also conveyed the richness of their culture and their deep attachment to the land. " There were no signs that the blacks felt that the place belonged to them. They had no fences that said this is mine. No house that said, this is our home. There were no fields or flocks that said, we have put the labour of our hands into this place. " This quote indicates the true understanding of ownership from the Aboriginal conception in which signifies that they and the land are one.

The Aborigines simply lived in harmony with their traditional environment, and so when there was existing land, there would always be existing

Aborigines. When the Thornhills had invaded their land, the values had changed as the Aborigines attempted to protect their land, concluding with the tragic massacre. With the main Aboriginal values of land and culture, Grenville suggests that the white settlers could have learned much from the Aborigines whereby, the modern world with its disregard for the natural environment should open its eyes to the wisdom of native peoples.

Although the movement from one country to another appeared to be overly deceiving, the Thornhills always appreciated what they had in front of them. They overcame barriers that were affecting their lives, but at the same time they were reeling in complications. The characterisation of William Thornhill clearly contributes to the idea of the class systems have changing in ways where he as an individual can overcome his social status.

Also, the initial values that determine ones true intentions, whether it may be William's ambition towards his land, or the comforting vibe of being back in London. Moreover, the justified laws that were simply forgotten. All in contrast with Aborigines and their rights, Grenville establishes the complications through William's behaviour towards the Aborigines. Finally, these change in values all depict the central values that have been explored throughout Kate Grenville's, *The Secret River*.