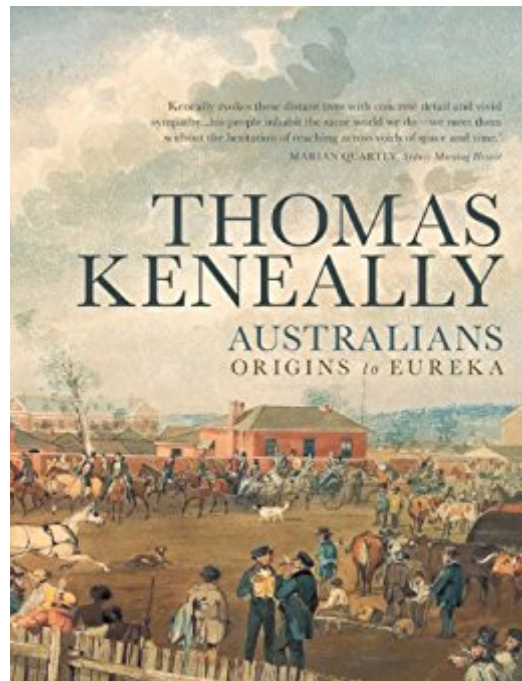


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Australians: 1



Synopsis

In this widely acclaimed volume, bestselling author Thomas Keneally brings to life the vast range of characters who have formed our national story. Convicts and Aborigines, settlers and soldiers, patriots and reformers, bushrangers and gold seekers, it is from their lives and their stories that he has woven a vibrant history to do full justice to the rich and colourful nature of our unique national character. The story begins by looking at European occupation through Aboriginal eyes as we move between the city slums and rural hovels of eighteenth century Britain and the shores of Port Jackson. We spend time on the low-roofed convict decks of transports, and we see the bewilderment of the Eora people as they see the first ships of turaga, or 'ghost people'. We follow the daily round of Bennelong and his wife Barangaroo, and the tribulations of warrior Windradyne. Convicts like Solomon Wiseman and John Wilson find their feet and even fortune, while Henry Parkes' arrival as a penniless immigrant gives few clues to the national statesman he was to become. We follow the treks of the Chinese diggers - the Celestials - to the goldfields, and revolutionaries like Italian Raffaello Carboni and black American John Joseph bring us the drama of the Eureka uprising. Were the first European mothers whores or matriarchs? How did this often cruel and brutal penal experiment lead to a coherent civil society? Tom Keneally brings to life the high and the low, the convict and the free of early Australian society. This is truly a new history of Australia, by an author of outstanding literary skill and experience, and whose own humanity permeates every page.

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Customer Reviews

There are a couple of authors in Australia who deserve plenty of international recognition for their insightful writings about Australian history. Australians are a little shy about their history (here read "British") as it is so short compared to other areas of the world. Keneally is one of those authors. I have mentioned the other author in reviews about his books. But let's concentrate on Keneally. The two volumes that I have read to date are blessed with careful attention to detail and a real understanding that the books are to be read by Australians and others - and that is important for those others who want to get a grip on Australian history. One of the major issues in the volumes to date is the treatment of aborigines. Keneally has gone to great lengths to show that while many leaders in the early years were sympathetic to the plight of aboriginal Australians, by and large those concerns were ignored by others. What is also highlighted by the author is the uncanny ability of London to ignore the requests and advice of governors and landholders in Australia. Australia is blessed or cursed by distance from anywhere. In the days of colonial Australia these travel delays were enormous. Keneally has a great style of writing. It personalises the history without straying from historical facts. Check out the bibliography. I look forward to the third volume. *Luceat Lux Vestra*

If you're looking for a relatively easy to understand volume on Australian History, look no further. *The Fatal Shore* by Robert Hughes is good, yet lacks a lot of accuracy. Keneally strives to remain accurate but to also deliver a good story. I actually used this as a reference text for a unit at University and found that I could very easily back up Keneally's points with other articles and books. The chapters on Eureka were particularly good in my opinion. I will confess I only read the sections that applied to my course (which still added up to a fair chunk of the book, which is enormous), but those were all insightful and well written.

A brilliant read, truly an enlightening alternative view of Australia's early history. Probably not quite the same detail as Robert Hughes' *The Fatal Shore* but highly recommended!

An amazing inside into the early days and settlement of Australia. What a brutal history. Interesting book but too lengthy.

The book is a detailed review of early Australian social & political history. An interesting feature is the reporting of various of the previous & followup story of the lives of many of the persons featured in early Australian history across the then growing British Empire. It is perhaps best read in chapters rather than straight through.

Great read with interesting personal histories embedded in the text making the general history discussion more accessible. Well worth the effort.

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