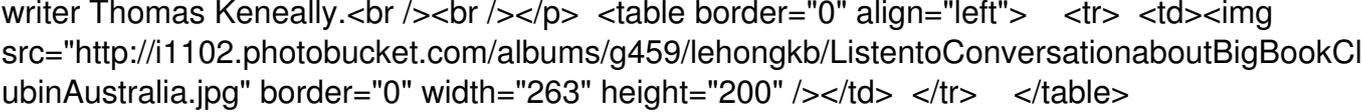


Listen to Conversation about Big Book Club in Australia

In recent years, book clubs have become very popular in Australia. In South Australia, they've got a very big book club that includes people from all over the state. Each month The Big Book Club selects a book and organises with that month's author a book tour to New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland. Please see below for confirmation on the author's tour and event details.

MIKE SEXTON: The Flinders Ranges in the South Australian outback is no place for the genteel tourist. This is an unforgiving country, especially in summer. And one man who's learnt this the hard way is writer Thomas Keneally.



THOMAS KENEALLY, AUTHOR: I try to hike in Wilpena Pound. An early defeat from the South Australian weather, you know. It's South Australia, 42 degrees, Keneally, nil.

MIKE SEXTON: So what then brings the international best-selling author back to this part of Australia? Well, he has a date with the big book club at Quorn, an old railway town with a population of just over 1,000.

THOMAS KENEALLY: There is a bit of frontiering in this Big Book Club, too, for us soft easterners.

MIKE SEXTON: The Big Book Club began as an idea at an Adelaide writers' festival where a group involved in the arts and publishing decided to start a state-wide book club. Just over a year later there are clubs based in 139 public libraries. Every month a new book is selected and hundreds of readers across the state work their way through it and chat online about it.

MANDY-JANE GIANNOPOULOS, THE BIG BOOK CLUB: This book club is about encouraging and inviting people in the most remote areas, people who haven't necessarily read books in recent years, as well as those who are passionate about it, to get involved and have a discussion.

MIKE SEXTON: At the end of the month, the book's author is brought to South Australia to visit club members in Adelaide and the country, to places like Quorn. Here, the librarian Bev Lowe serves the needs of both the community and the school and today she's hosting Thomas Keneally.

THOMAS KENEALLY: What do you reckon I ought to talk to the kids about? Have you got any suggestions?

BEV LOWE, LIBRARIAN: Initially, we were a bit nervous because we will host a Big Book Club author and then found out it was him. We've had lots of interest, not just from people who live in Quorn. We've had phone calls, we've had travellers come through who have booked in and booked from other towns. No, it's been lovely.

MIKE SEXTON: For the main session, there isn't a spare seat to hear the Booker Prize winner. Those packed in under the canopy of local handicrafts are soon involved in a lively analysis of the book, 'The Tyrant's Novel', a story set in a fictitious country where a writer finds himself in a detention centre.

MIKE SEXTON: The final appointment of Thomas Keneally's Big Book Club tour is at the Port Augusta Golf Club.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I thought he was great, just his

command of language, his humour, his ability to choose words and engage us as an audience. We were really privileged in Port Augusta to have him, weren't we?

MIKE SEXTON: In the end, the session stretches well into the night, by the end of which it's clear the exhausted writer has had a very big book experience.

THOMAS KENEALLY: Who else at 69 except a novelist gets asked to rabbit on about what their obsessions are and people listen tolerantly? It's wonderful to be a writer.

story notes
The Flinders Ranges
He was travelling through South Australia, visiting the Flinders Ranges, Quorn and Port Augusta.
who's
This is the short form of who has. The word we spell whose has a different meaning. Follow the link to find out more.
more information: whose & who's
date
A date means a meeting, or an appointment.
began
Began is the past tense of the irregular verb begin
more information: begin
writers'
There is more than one writer being talked about here, so we use the possessive apostrophe after the s.
Example: writers'
more information: possessive apostrophe
selected
chosen
work their way through it
He means they keep reading the book until they've finished it.
online
on the internet
read
When the word spelled r-e-a-d (read) is used as it is here as the past participle of the irregular verb read, it is pronounced 'red'.
Follow the link to find out when we pronounce it 'reed'.
more information: read
brought
Brought here is the past participle of the irregular verb bring. For more about words with this 'ought' spelling, see today's spotlight.
ought to
Ought to here means should. For more about words with this 'ought' spelling, see today's spotlight.
found out
discovered
Example: We found out that smoking causes cancer.
Here, found is the past tense of find.
more information: find
thought
Here, thought is the past tense of the irregular verb think.
For more about words with this 'ought' spelling, see today's spotlight.
more information: think
command
Here, command means knowledge and ability.
his humour
how funny he was
privileged
lucky, fortunate
novelist
A novelist is another word for an author or writer. But it's someone who writes novels, or books of fiction.
rabbit on
To rabbit on is slang. It means to talk for a long time, or to go on and on about something.
Example: He rabbits on about computers all the time.
obsessions
the things he's interested in