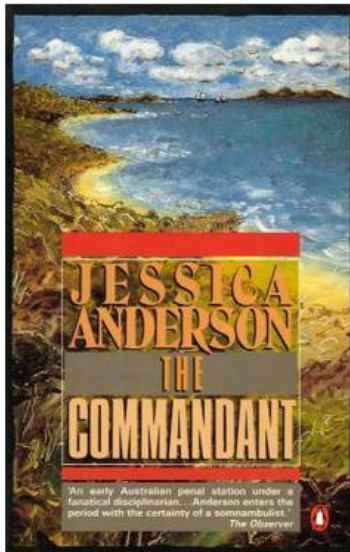


## October 2018



This month we got together to discuss [The Commandant](#) by [Jessica Anderson](#). Anderson's only historical novel set in Queensland's penal settlement of Moreton Bay in 1830, is drawn from the story of Patrick Logan who was noted for his harsh methods and who was murdered while out on an expedition. Commandant Logan's wife's younger sister, Frances, en route to Sydney, has been introduced to "radical" ideas critical of his regime. She confronts the realities of living in a penal settlement for second offenders while questioning his practice.

Characters in Moreton Bay include Logan's family and servants, his wife, Letty's two women friends, officers including two medical officers, the man sent to replace Logan and some prisoners. Frances' would-be beau is in Sydney, as are the sisters of a newspaper editor jailed for criticising the regime against whom Logan is taking libel action.

Frances was seventeen at the beginning of the story. She questions herself and learns from several painful experiences. Much of the story is told in dialogue. Letty's lisp is an ironic touch and some of us felt that there was far too much dialogue.

There are some wonderful descriptions of nature and the landscape. There are small flashbacks which help illuminate the characters as well as a couple of brief foreshadowings which give us a sense of the sisters' futures. The novel is about humanity, how we treat each other and about mercy.

The convicts are tempted to steal off into the bush. Some are injured by Aborigines and return, while others join up with them. There is speculation as to whether the Aborigines are violent towards the settlers of their own accord or whether they are incited by the escapees. Anderson shows the lengths people will go to in order to edit out the history they would prefer others not to read.

The Commandant was out of print for a long time and this version has a good introduction by Carmen Calil. Our group felt that Anderson chose to relate a significant historical story.

With credit to reviews by John Boland and Whispering Gums

**Ratings:** Nicola 3; Janet 3.5; Claudia 3; Judith DNF; Michael 3.5; Dianne 3.5; Margie 3 and Viv 2.5

Next month we will meet on the 12/11 at 6:30PM at [Preece House, 50 Nerang St Bischof Pioneer Park, Nerang \(next to 54 Nerang St. shops\)](#) to continue with this years' list of Australian books. The book to be discussed will be [Illywhacker](#) by [Peter Carey](#)

Hope to see you all there and happy reading!

# Other Books We Read

**October 2018**

Our book of the month was *The Commandant* by Erica Anderson but we also read other books. Maximum rating is 5.

*The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupery, 5

*Baking Cakes in Kigali* by Gaile Parkin, 2.5

*The Cow Book* by Jon Connell, 4

*Atlantic Black* by A S Patrić, 3

*The Butterfly Man* by Heather Rose, 4 and 3.5

*The Crossway* by Guy Stag, 3

*The Mere Wife* by Maria Dahvana Headley, 2

*Dancing with Strangers* by Inga Clendinnen, 4

*Waiting* by Philip Salom, 4

*The Trauma Cleaner* by Sophie, 4.5

*War light* by Michael Ondaatje, 2.5

*Tracker* by Alexis Wright, 3.5

*Notes on a nervous planet* by Matt Haig, 3

*Always another country* by Sisonke Msimang, 3.5

*Happy Valley* Patrick White, 4

*The Narrow Road to the Deep North* Richard Flanagan, 3.5

*The Power of Hope* Kon Karapanagiotidis, 3