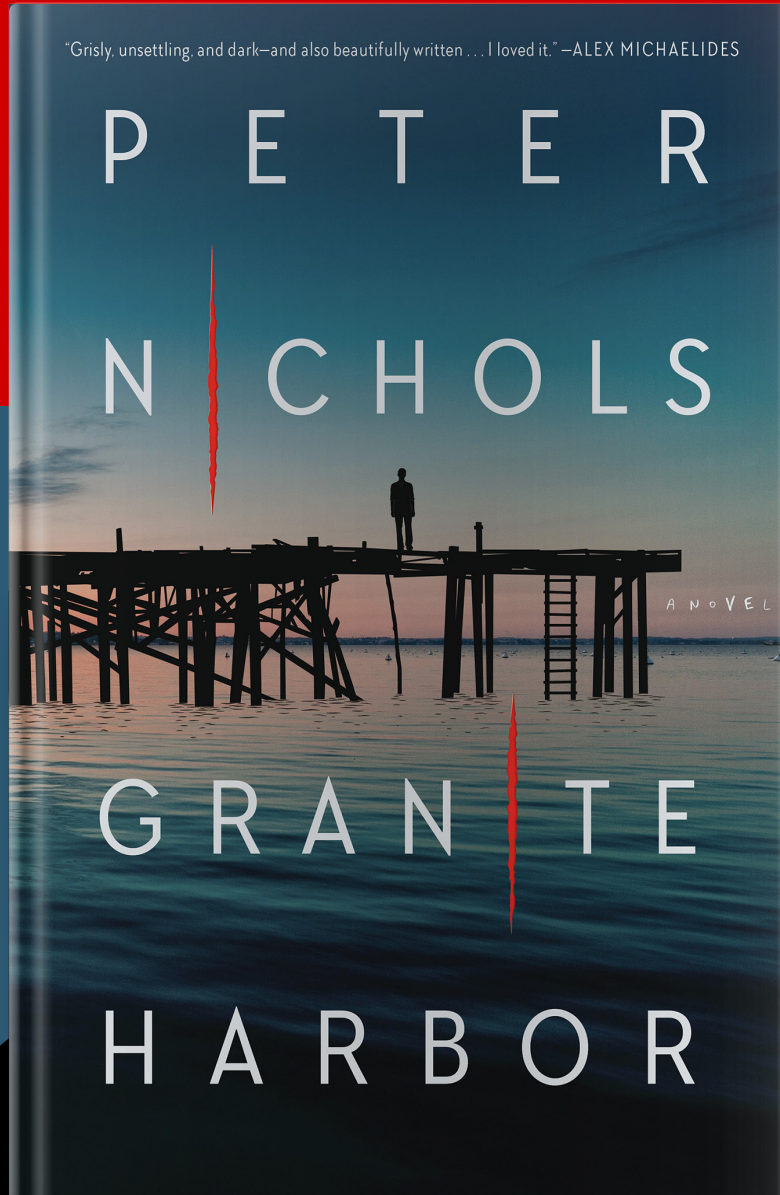


BOOK CLUB KIT



“WELL-WRITTEN, CHARACTER-DRIVEN PORTRAIT OF SMALL-TOWN NEW ENGLAND MEETS *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*.”

—KIRKUS REVIEWS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 How did the quiet setting of a coastal town in Maine play a role in creating the mood for the novel? Is Granite Harbor a place you would want to visit?
- 2 What was your initial impression of Alex Brangwen? How did this impression change over the course of the book?
- 3 Have you been to a re-creation or reenactment of history, such as the Settlement in Granite Harbor? How do you think this connection with the past relates to the major themes of the novel?
- 4 Many of the characters in *Granite Harbor* are teenagers or their parents. Did you relate the most to the parents or the children? Did you find yourself frustrated by the behavior of any particular parent or child?
- 5 Single parenthood is a major theme in the book. How did the various parent/child relationships add strain to the imminent threat of a serial killer?
- 6 Did you guess who the killer was before the reveal? If so, what clues led you to your suspicion?
- 7 When certain chapters immersed you in the backstory of the killer, to what extent did you feel sympathetic toward him? Did you feel you could understand how he became what he became?
- 8 What was the scariest moment of the book?
- 9 Talk about the ending. Why do you think the author chose to put Morgana and Isabel in control of the situation and to make Detective Brangwen helpless in the confrontation with the serial killer?
- 10 Have you read any other books by this author? Did his foray into a new genre surprise you?



AN INTERVIEW

with Peter Nichols



Peter Nichols is the author of the bestselling novel *The Rocks*; the nonfiction bestsellers *A Voyage for Madmen* and *Evolution's Captain*; and three other books of fiction, nonfiction, and memoir. His novel *Voyage to the North Star* was nominated for the Dublin IMPAC Literary Award, and his journalism has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. He has an MFA from Antioch University Los Angeles, and has taught creative writing there and at Georgetown University, Bowdoin College, and New York University in Paris. Before turning to writing full-time, he held a 100-ton USCG Ocean Operator's license and was a professional yacht delivery captain for ten years. He has also worked in advertising in London, as a screenwriter in Los Angeles, a shepherd in Wales, and has sailed alone in a small boat across the Atlantic. He is a member of The Explorers Club of New York.

You've written several nonfiction books and novels, but this is your first thriller. What inspired you to write *Granite Harbor*?

Thirty years ago, I was researching the colonial period of the United States for another book, and I learned that toads were used in apothecary medicines. Somehow, an image came to me of a toad that suggested a murder, but I didn't know what to do with it, or the reason for the murder — until I started writing *Granite Harbor*.

Separately, I wanted to explore the state of siege that overtakes a small community of families and children under the threat of a serial killer. I believe genre fiction offers the same possibilities to explore character, manners, and society as mainstream fiction, but it's a lot more fun for both writer and reader.

Granite Harbor's protagonist, Detective Alex Brangwen, shares some of your outward traits: a novelist and single father, living in Maine. What other details in this novel were personal to you?

Years ago, in another state, I was writing, as always, but I was broke and a long way from receiving the next advance or royalty from writing. I had a young son, and I had to get a job. A friend of mine, a musician, had been in a similar situation and he got a government job as a prison guard, mostly for the security and benefits. I didn't want to be a prison guard, but I looked on the local town website, and two jobs were available: school janitor and policeman. I was almost middle-aged, but there was no upper age limit to the police job, so I applied. I'd been a runner for years, and I was fit. I had more than the minimal educational qualifications. I passed all the physical tests, written exams, interviews, and a lie detector test, and finally was accepted into that state's police academy. I was fascinated

at this unanticipated turn in my life: I began to watch reality crime and police TV shows; I thought the experience might offer good writing material. I thought my then very young son would have liked seeing me in a police uniform, and it also occurred to me that his mother, from whom I'd had a very acrimonious divorce, might be more restrained in her behavior toward me if I were a cop. But just before I entered police academy, I was offered a creative-writing teaching job in Maine, and I took it as a sign from fate that I had no business being a policeman. So I moved and took the teaching job. But I've always wondered what it would have been like to have become a police officer. And this book explores that *Sliding Doors* choice.

What was your process for getting inside the mind of this unique killer who targets teens? And was this process complicated by the fact that you're the father of a teenage son?

The moment my son was born, I feared for his life and safety. Maybe this happens to all parents. And I'm a novelist, so I write about my life and my experience and my fears. I imagine dark scenarios. I can imagine someone coming for my boy, who is the love of my life. I've had dreams about that. But, rather than posit a loony psychopath and simply describing his terrible crimes — I find such villains uninteresting — I wanted to create a very human, even sympathetic character. I believe all fictional characters, however nasty or reprehensible, should be understandable and, to some extent, sympathetic. I wanted to show someone who had functional personal relationships, who was a part of a community. I went into my killer's history from birth, and I genuinely felt for him. And I became immersed and fascinated in exploring his childhood and the acquisition of the tools he used as a killer. I really enjoyed writing these sections, and I hoped and believed that if it felt real, and even sympathetic, to me, that would convey to a reader. The novel's titular setting, a small, secluded town in Maine, and the town's historical reenactment village "The Settlement" are vividly drawn throughout the book.

How did you create this eerie and atmospheric backdrop?

Years ago, I visited Plimoth Plantation, the wonderfully re-created original pilgrim settlement at Plymouth, Massachusetts, and spoke with the people who reenacted the lives of the pilgrims there, wore pilgrim clothes, interacted with tourist-visitors, and made the place seem real. I was fascinated by the historical ghost that lived beneath the surface of the modern town. I originally imagined my story in Plymouth, but then I moved to Maine. I live here now, in the sort of small intimate town I write about in *Granite Harbor* — I live in Granite Harbor! I'm a dreamer, and none of it was a stretch of the imagination for me.

If you decide to adopt *Granite Harbor* for your book club, we would love to hear about it! Please let us know by emailing us at reader@celadonbooks.com or post on social media using the hashtags #CeladonBookClub