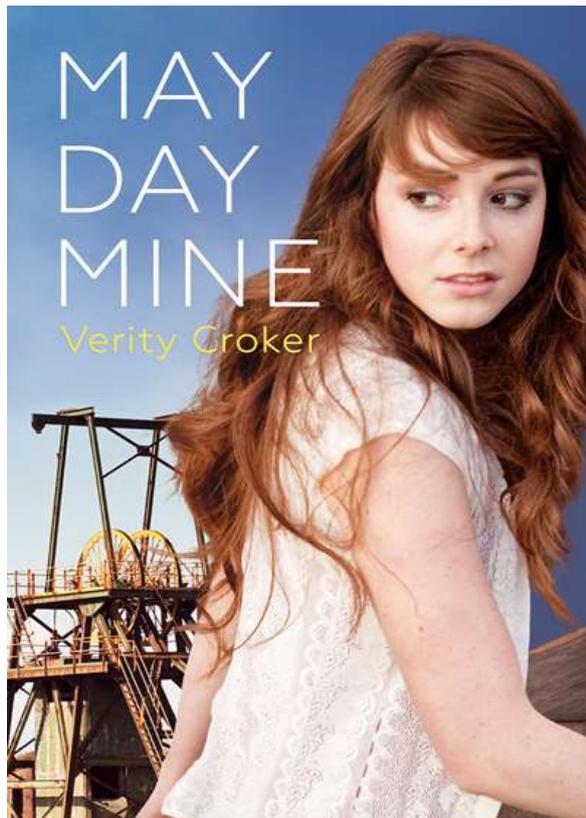


May Day Mine by Verity Croker

Teaching Guide



About *May Day Mine*:

Life in a small mining town can be like living in a fishbowl—with everyone knowing everybody else's business. Fifteen-year-old Jodi's mother wants her father to quit his binge-drinking and his dangerous job at the mine—even more so after a collapse leaves two miners dead and three trapped deep underground.

As tensions escalate both at home and around the town, Jodi seeks comfort with her friends, but soon faces a double betrayal. Meanwhile, her ten-year-old brother Jake reacts by joining a gang of schoolyard bullies who engage in increasingly dangerous antics.

As Jodi struggles to gain autonomy over her life, she begins to discover the person she really is. But with everything around her spiraling out of control, it may not be the right time to let her family, friends, and ultimately the whole town know—no matter how much she wants to.



Verity Croker writes across a range of genres. Her young adult novels, *Jilda's Ark* and *May Day Mine* are published by Harmony Ink Press in the US. Her middle grade chapter books, *Cyclone Christmas* and *Block City*, have been published by Sunshine Books / Wendy Pye, NZ.

She has written travel articles for *Journeys* magazine, and articles for newspapers. Some of her short stories appear in journals, anthologies, and on ABC online. She is also a published poet.

Verity completed her Master of Arts (Creative Writing) at the University of Tasmania in 2013, and worked at UTAS in Hobart, teaching English to international students. She originally trained as a schoolteacher. She is now a full-time author, based in Brisbane.

Discussion Questions and Activities:

HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY:

- 1) *May Day Mine* is set in Australia in a small unnamed country town. It is based on the real-life mining tragedy in Beaconsfield, Tasmania, that took place in 2006. Take a look at a map of Tasmania. Can you find Beaconsfield?
- 2) What do you know about Tasmania? Its history? The indigenous population? Politics? Famous landmarks? Famous people? The cities? The towns? The countryside? The climate? The culture?
- 3) Make a timeline of the events as they occurred during the mining disaster at the mine itself as depicted in *May Day Mine*, focusing on the trapped men.
- 4) Find and read an account online of the Beaconsfield mining disaster. Do you think *May Day Mine* depicts this event accurately? What is happening at the mine now?
- 5) Do some online research about other mining disasters around the world. When and where did they occur? Why did they occur?
- 6) How has mine safety changed over the years?

ART & CRAFT:

- 1) We know what Jodi looks like from the cover of *May Day Mine*. Sketch or paint Dana, Finbar, Dad, Mum, and Jake.
- 2) Jodi had a part-time job in a news agency and loved reading the sayings in the greeting cards. Create some cards suitable for various occasions—draw them, or make some 3-D decorations using colored paper, ribbon, etc. Write some greetings or poems that would be suitable for your cards.
- 3) Make a model of a mine head from papier-mâché or modeling clay.

LANGUAGE & WRITING:

- 1) Write a review of *May Day Mine*.
- 2) These are the themes of *May Day Mine*:
 - Small-town secrets
 - Friendships under stress
 - Betrayal
 - Bravery
 - Self-discovery
 - Coming out (LGBTQI+ themes)
 - Family solidarity

Can you find examples of these in the book? Do you think there are other themes the author didn't even realize she was writing about? What are they and how are they exemplified?

- 3) Jodi liked going in the May Day marches which celebrated workers' rights. Write a chant or a song suitable for a march like these, or a similar one.
- 4) What do you think Jodi and Dana will be doing in five years' time? Ten years' time? Write a short story about their future lives. Will they still be together?
- 5) There is some uniquely Australian slang in the book—can you find some examples? What words or expressions could have been used instead?
- 6) Which character in the novel do you relate to most and why? Write a paragraph or two explaining your reasons.

OTHER:

- 1) Dana was intending to do a hairdressing apprenticeship. What is involved in such an apprenticeship? What other jobs need an apprenticeship, and what is involved in those apprenticeships?
- 2) Jodi had some ideas for her future job. What about you? What do you want to do and why?
- 3) Jodi's father had an addiction to alcohol. How do addictions affect both the person involved, and others? What can be done to assist people with addictions?