

Teacher's notes

The Mystery of the Blue Mines

by Kris Anderson



SUMMARY

In the opal mining centre of Australia, Arralooma, a policeman called Andy is found dead and Sydney policeman, Steve Malone, is sent there by his boss to investigate. The policeman was killed near a mine owned by Blue Mines and the police know that the company is doing more than digging for opals. But what?

Steve goes to Arralooma and gets into a fight in the local pub, defending a young Aborigine called Eddie from a group of miners from the Blue Mine. Later he finds a poisonous snake in his bed and realizes that he is in danger. The next morning, Steve goes to visit Moornie, Eddie's uncle and the man who found the murdered policeman. Moornie tells Steve about the the McKenzie brothers, how they died and that their ghosts haunt the McKenzie mine. But Moornie knows more than he tells Steve, but when they leave, Eddie shows Steve a secret runway for planes to land on.

Steve tries to get an interview with the owner of the Blue Mine, Mr Duvall, who refuses to talk to him. Then Steve is chased and attacked by four men but he is saved by the local policeman, Bill Travers. Travers tells Steve that he knows who he really is and that there is something strange going on at the Blue Mine.

Steve meets Crazy Fred Vickers, who owns the local store and Liza, Andy's girlfriend. He realizes that Liza is friendly with Mr Duvall and knows something about Andy's death. Steve tries to get into the Blue Mines but guard dogs force him to stop and go back to town. But the next day, a miner called Jim Bowman agrees to help Steve get into the mine. That night Steve and Bowman go into the mine and find a secret tunnel where they are not mining opals but making deadly nerve gas. Steve overhears Sheila, the local barmaid, talking to Duvall and learns that she brought Andy to the mine where he was killed with nerve gas, and she also put a snake in Steve's bed. There is a brief gunfight and Steve and Jim Bowman escape down a tunnel. But the scientist, Dr Frank, throws a canister of nerve gas after them. They escape to the McKenzie mine helped by Liza, Moornie and Eddie and then to Moornie's mine where they reach the surface. The police arrive and arrest the people at the Blue Mines.

Steve learns that Liza is also a police officer and they arrange to meet later in Sydney. Is this the start of romance?

ABOUT KRIS ANDERSON

Kris Anderson used to be a university teacher but she is now a full-time writer. She has written a dictionary, *The Longman Dictionary for Language Teaching and Applied Linguists*, and other books for learners of English, including *Better Ways with Adjectives and Adverbs*, *Better Ways with Nouns and Pronouns* and *Better Ways with Phrasal Verbs*. She also writes detective stories and love stories for young people.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

The Mystery of the Blue Mines is set in the fictional town of Arralooma, where several miners look for opals. The town is almost certainly based on the real-life town of Coober Pedy in the south of Australia. Coober Pedy is the real centre of the opal mining industry and because it is so hot there in the summer (over 40°C) many of the people there do really live under the ground where it is cooler.

The themes behind the book are those of crime on an international level and one man's struggle to fight a much more powerful organization. In the story, the organization is secretly manufacturing deadly nerve gas under the cover of an opal mine. They will go to any lengths to protect their secret activity, including murder.

Steve Malone, an undercover policeman, is sent to investigate the death of another policeman at the mine, but knows nothing of the secret work that is being done there. He has to suspect everyone and can trust nobody. He is up against overwhelming odds, but soon finds help from some of the people in the town who have no reason to like the people at the Blue Mines. With their help, he is able to solve the mystery and have the criminals arrested.

In the end, this is a classic adventure and detective story. From the start we know that the Blue Mines holds a dark secret, but not until the end of the book, do we find out what it is.

E

1

2

3

4

5

6

PRE-
INTERMEDIATE

THE MYSTERY OF THE BLUE MINES



Teacher's notes

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader, and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of discussion and pair/groupwork questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

- Put students into small groups. Tell them to look at the illustration on the cover of the book and the title. Ask them to discuss what they think the story will be about. What country do they think it will be set in?
- Put students into groups. Tell them to read the Introduction on page v. Were they correct in their answers to question 1? What do they now think the story will be about? Do they think that Steve will succeed? Why/Why not?

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

Chapters 1–3

- In pairs, students discuss why they think that Andy died. What do they think killed him?
- In pairs, students make a list of the things Steve knows about the Blue Mines at the end of Chapter 1 and the things he still needs to find out. Pairs should then compare their lists.
- Ask students to work in small groups. On page 13 it says 'Steve realized that Moornie was keeping quiet about something.' Ask students to discuss what secrets Moornie might have and why he doesn't want to tell Steve about them.

Chapters 4–7

- In small groups, students make a list of the people that Steve has met in Arralooma. Tell them to decide which of the people he can trust and which he can't trust. Students must give reasons for their decisions.
- In pairs, students decide what they think Steve should do next to solve the mystery. Each pair should present their ideas to the other pairs.

Chapters 8–11

Put students into small groups. Tell them to choose one of the characters in these chapters (Steve, Moornie, Eddie, Jim, etc) and to retell the way the story ended from that character's point of view.

Students should make notes and then tell the end of the story to the other groups.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Students work in small groups. They have to write Steve's report to his boss about what happened at the Blue Mines. They should make notes about the people who were there and what they did, what happened and what the mystery was. Then they write their report.

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the 'Longman Active Study Dictionary'.)

Chapters 1–3

breathe (v) to take air into your lungs and send it out again
dugout (n) a large hole under the ground where people live
fog (n) cloudy air near the ground that it is difficult to see through
ghost (n) the spirit of a dead person that people think they can see
licence (n) an official document giving you permission to do something
manager (n) someone who is in charge of all or part of a company
mine (n) a deep hole under the ground that is dug to find coal, gold, etc
opal (n) a type of white stone with changing colours in it
shaft (n) a large passage that goes down into the ground
snake (n) an animal with a long thin body and no legs, that often has a poisonous bite
tunnel (n) a passage that has been dug under the ground

Chapters 4–7

bark (v) to make the short loud sounds that dogs make
bullet (n) a small piece of metal that you fire from a gun
fence (n) a structure made of wood or metal that surrounds an area of land
sergeant (n) a low rank in the army or police, or the person who has this rank
trust (v) to believe that someone is honest and will not hurt you

Chapters 8–11

experiment (n) a thorough test using scientific methods
laboratory (n) a special room or building in which scientists test things
nerve (n) one of the thin parts like threads in the body that send messages to the brain
rope (n) a very strong thick string made by twisting many threads together



Student's activities

The Mystery of the Blue Mines



E

1

2

3

4

5

6

PRE-INTERMEDIATE

THE MYSTERY OF THE BLUE MINES

Photocopiable

These activities can be done alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

Activities before reading the book

- Look at the picture on page 1 of the book and answer these questions.
 - Who do you think the man is?
 - Why do you think he is running?
 - Where do you think he is? How do you know?
- Talk to a partner. What do you think the story will be about? What do you think the 'mystery' is?

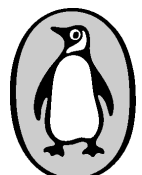
Activities while reading the book

Chapters 1-3

- Who are these people? What do you know about them?
 - Sheila
 - Steve Malone
 - Moornie
 - Big Max
 - Jim Bowman
- Who said these things? Who were they talking to?
 - job completed.
 - On the beach. The weather's beautiful.
 - You have to go up to Arralooma, the opal mining place.
 - You started it, Max! Get out! And take your friends with you!
 - You had a fight with a snake.
 - Someone killed him?
 - Eddie's friend is my friend.
 - It's dangerous to ask too many questions.

Chapters 4-7

- Put these sentences in the correct order.
 - Steve spoke to Mr Duvall.
 - Steve drove back to the hotel.
 - Crazy Fred tried to lock Steve in the freezer.
 - Andy told Steve that he knew he was a policeman.
 - A police car arrived and Steve was saved from the men who were going to attack him.
 - Steve went to Liza's dugout.
 - Steve thought that Liza was Duvall's friend.
 - Steve realized that a car was following him.
 - Steve drove to the Blue Mines.
 - Steve tried to get into the Blue Mines.
- Each of these sentences contains a mistake. Find the mistake and correct it.
 - Steve told the guard that his name was Steve Malone
 - The opals were so big that they had to be flown out from the airfield.
 - Steve was followed from the mine by two cars.
 - Five men got out of the car to attack Steve.
 - Steve was ready to tell the policeman what he was doing in Arralooma.



Student's activities

- (f) The police sergeant knew about the secret airfield.
- (g) Crazy Fred tried to trap Steve in the freezer.
- (h) Steve and Liza went back to Steve's hotel.
- (i) Steve was stopped going into the Blue Mines by three large dogs.
- (j) Liza was cleaning the bar when Steve got back to the hotel.

Chapters 8–11

- 1 Match the beginnings and endings of these sentences.
 - (a) Let's go to your hotel room.
 - (b) If I give you the money now,
 - (c) Steve used the same secret language
 - (d) He opened a little door
 - (e) Tomorrow night we'll put it onto the lorries
 - (f) He's the last man in Arralooma
 - (g) There were shots,
 - (h) The metal can hit the floor of the tunnel with a loud noise
 - (i) When they were all on the other side
 - (j) I'm so grateful to you for all your help
- (i) and take it to a secret airfield.
- (ii) and the door shut behind them.
- (iii) you won't have to wait for two months.
- (iv) I don't want anybody to see me anywhere with you.
- (v) and they went quietly inside the building.
- (vi) Eddie and Moornie again started to close the opening as fast as possible.

- (vii) and Jim gave a shout of pain
 - (viii) that I want to have as a boyfriend.
 - (ix) and put a message into the machine.
 - (x) and I have so many questions.
- 2 Who says these sentences? Who are they talking to?
 - (a) Let's talk about Duvall. What's he done to you?
 - (b) Do you think you can get me in?
 - (c) It's a terrible gas. It kills all the nerves in your body.
 - (d) Sheila likes Steve.
 - (e) I don't want to kill your boyfriend ...
 - (f) The white fog It's coming closer! I can't breathe!
 - (g) We'll drive Jim to hospital. Don't worry, he'll live.

Activities after reading the book

- 1 Work with some other students. Talk about these questions.
 - (a) What do you think will happen to Dr Frank and Mr Duvall at the end of the book. What will happen to Sheila and her father?
 - (b) Do you think that Steve and Liza will see each other again?
- 2 What do you think will happen to the Blue Mines?

