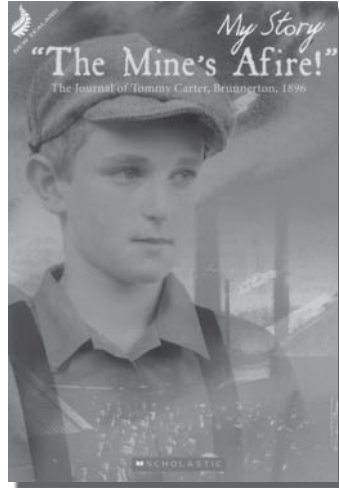




JUNIOR FICTION



My Story: The Mine's Afire!

Susan Battye & Thelma Eakin

Scholastic New Zealand

ISBN 978-1-86943-887-6 pb RRP \$17.99

Target age 10+

Tommy Carter is a typical boy living in the West Coast mining community of Dobson in 1896, looking forward to the day when he will leave school and get a job. He's not keen to follow his Uncle Fred down into the Brunner mine, with its hardships and ever-present danger. One terrible day, Tommy's worst fears come true when an explosion rips through the mine.

This fictional diary records the tragedy, heroism and bitter aftermath of New Zealand's worst ever industrial disaster.



Susan Battye and **Thelma Eakin** are both interested in drama and social history, particularly the history of the West Coast. When they realised that their students didn't know much about their local history, Susan and Thelma wrote a community-based play called *The Shadow of the Valley*, which was first performed in 1977. From this play came the idea to write about the event from the point of view of a boy caught up in a mining disaster that affected not just the local people but the whole colony.

Great Activity and Event Ideas

1. Find out if there are any current working coal mines.
2. If there was a mining disaster, what technology would now be available to help rescue people?
3. Imagine one of your family is in a mining disaster. Write a diary entry expressing your thoughts and feelings at the time.
4. At the miners picnic Tommy plays cricket and hurley while some others play with marbles (pg 23, 24). What other games were played in the 1890s?
5. Steam trains were used as the main form of transport between towns. What do you know about steam trains?



New Zealand Post
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Activity

Design a poster on mine safety for the miners in 1896.