

May we introduce to you an exciting new novel by Tania Roxborough, entitled *If I Could Tell You...* which has been written specifically for teenagers.

Tania Roxborough is an experienced and enthusiastic English and Drama teacher. She has been teaching since 1989 and has written nine books for high schools, including: *Performing With Purpose - a handbook for senior drama students*; *Fifteen Minute Shakespeare* and *Twenty Minute Shakespeare*; *Three Funny Plays* and *Three Spooky Plays*; the sequel to *If I Could Tell You...* entitled *Compulsion*; and recently, *Runaway* and *Grit*.

The teacher's resource that accompanies the novel was written with the School Certificate Syllabus in mind (Tania is a SC marker) but fundamentally keeping in step with all the English strands. It is a comprehensive resource, photocopiable and should allow busy teachers the opportunity to select appropriate sections for their classes with minimum preparation.

#### Synopsis:

As Kelly Marshall approaches her 16th birthday, she grapples with all the usual pressures. In this turmoil, she turns to her mother's schoolgirl diaries. What she finds there is not the comfort she seeks, but horrific descriptions of sexual abuse by Kelly's grandfather.

Unaware of the depth of feeling that her lifelong friend, Simon, has for her, Kelly turns to the spunky John Schroeder whose attitude to study is rather less intense than her own and who is keen to take their relationship further.

What should she do? And what about Simon? More than ever, Kelly craves for a mother to turn to.

Kelly must come to terms with her mother's dark secret, hoping that hidden somewhere in the diaries are the answers to her own pressing problems.

#### Issues raised in this book:

Motherless daughters; Sexual abuse; Friendship; Teenage sexuality; Bullying; Forgiveness.

#### What critics say:

"...very likely to engage the sympathy and understanding of teenagers...a useful book for teachers, counsellors or parents...Perhaps most convincing is the weird disjunction between Beth's ordinary family life and the frightening times when parents cannot be relied on. Beth can be full of self-assertion and rage, protecting herself successfully from her father. At other times there are signs of misery and self-hatred, and the reader fears that she is becoming a well-trained victim...Small wonder that fifth form readers reported very positively on this book..." Rose Lovell-Smith, NZ Herald

"..worthy of study - it has a dual plot, strong characters and strong style..."  
Sunday News

"...The story is a cracker, in terms of the narrative and the setting and the liveliness of the story... It's really super...As an English teacher, I know that literature is very important and I know that we need touchstone literature that enables children to read about their world and their lives and from that to go on to read about other worlds and other lives. And this one of those touchstone books..."

Stuart Middleton, Secondary Principal, Auckland

College of Education

“Difficult-to-put down reading and an appealing cover.” Around the Bookshops

“I finished *If I Could Tell You...* in one sitting after meeting the author. Her real-life story is sensitive, compelling and a darn sight more relevant than some of the novels in the curriculum when I was at school.” Jacqui Kerr-Bell, *The Northern Advocate*.

“A powerful and sensitive story.” Listener Women’s Book Festival.

“Written alternately in the present tense and in diary extracts, Tania Roxborough has presented with compassion and empathy, a believable novel which tackles a highly emotive topic - in a no-nonsense manner it conveys the tragedy of incest and the strength of its victims. The diary entries reflect the vocabulary and point of view of the young girl writing them.

This is not a negative book at all - there is a lot of strength and determination and at the end both Kelly and her mother are stronger in spirit despite their personal losses - though for the reader a box of tissues will come in handy. The author needs commending on her insight and courage in writing this novel which will no doubt cause considerable discussion and will hopefully make it into the right hands.”

Julie Harper, Manager of Jabberwocky Books, reviewing for *Magpies*.

“The poems written by Beth in her diaries poignantly reveal the depth of her trauma and are well worth close examination...The novel could certainly be offered for individual study to interested students and may prove useful to guidance counsellors in schools.” reviewed by Lesley Shepherd in *e:mag AATEL* mid-year 1998

“The dialogue is natural, the events believable, the story intriguing...Psychologically speaking, the development of characterisation rings true, the ethical dimensions is explored through both events and the character’s response to these events.....The ending is quite poetic but leaves the reader the gift of hope. Highly recommended for teenage/young adult readers.”

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### What students say:

“Students in the form 5 class...were absolutely touched and amazed by what was contained in this story...I have never known our whole class to have been so involved in such a novel...” HL Digby

“This novel was a great read, thought provoking and very interesting, also believable because the story is written in such a way that you can relate to the story and the characters. All college students should read this novel.” Vanessa Jones.