

I found Martha Brook's book, *Mistik Lake*, very easy to read. It was enjoyable and insightful. It's easy to relate to a family with secrets, and understandable to see 'this' family struggle. It is a novel about 'trusting your heart' and about 'the bad choices and secret suffering that haunts those who don't'

There are very mature themes throughout the novel, such as deception and homosexuality, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Auntie Gloria, unbeknown to her nieces, is gay and is also a sensitive and stabilizing influence in her nieces' lives.

I think that anyone who reads *Mistik Lake* would be challenged. Recommended for mature readers only [Upper High School]

Linda Marx, Mountain District Christian School, VIC

In *Mistik Lake*, Canadian writer Brooks uses multiple narratives and points of view, and each change of narrator and/or timeframe is clearly signposted with chapter headings. The result is a rich, vivid portrayal of a family over many years. The complex reality of the characters is enhanced by the natural unfolding of secrets. There are also vivid descriptions of landscapes and settings, with the *Mistik Lake* of the title emerging for the reader as a real place, the original Cree word 'mistik' meaning 'wood'. The meanings of the English words 'mist' and 'mystic' are played with by the author.

There is a mystery at the heart of the novel, and the betrayal of her daughters by their mother Sally is at the centre of the mystery, which started long ago when she almost drowned in Mistik Lake. There are strong connections between Mistik Lake in Manitoba and Iceland, an almost mystical land which has seeped into the fabric of the family's lives.

Brooks uses a mixture of first and third person to present her characters to the reader. The character of Sally is mostly revealed through the words of others, and slowly a detailed picture of her emotional life emerges. The novel starts and ends with Odella, and with the power of her love for her baby sisters.

Mistik Lake is well written, vivid and accessible. It provides an almost 'movie like' experience visually, and the plotlines and richness of characterisation within the layered structure add dimensions of complexity which make for compelling reading.

Helen Wilde, SA