

KEEPER

A film by Ali Russell



It's what you look for

and what you look after

that matters.

A **STUDY GUIDE** BY KATY MARRINER



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Growing up in a small town divided by mining disputes isn't easy, but for Aboriginal teenager Jacinta Haseldine it's a stark contrast to her grandmother's life at the same age growing up on a mission.

This study guide to accompany *Keeper*, a documentary directed and produced by Ali Russell, has been written for junior, middle and senior secondary students. It provides information and suggestions for learning activities in Australian History, English, Geography, Indigenous Studies, Media, Religion and Society, SOSE/HSIE and curriculum projects discussing the themes of identity and belonging and exploring the issues facing contemporary Indigenous Australia.

Keeper has a running time of twenty-six minutes.

SYNOPSIS

Keeper is the story of two Aboriginal women living in the small town of Ceduna on the far west coast of South Australia. Sixteen year-old Jacinta Haseldine is a high school student, as interested in hip hop as she is hunting wombats and kangaroos. Her grandmother Sue Coleman Haseldine, born and raised on a mission, has taken Jacinta out bush her whole life to teach her to find medicinal plants and



SUE COLEMAN HASELDINE
AND JACINTA HASELDINE

take care of sacred rockholes.

When more than twenty mining companies start drilling nearby for gold, uranium and mineral sands, Jacinta and Sue's family becomes bitterly divided over million-dollar Native Title deals.

For Sue, who spent her childhood running away out bush to escape the welfare authorities, and Jacinta, a teenager who just wants her family to stay together, growing up means many different things.

About the filmmaker

Ali Russell is a producer, director and cinematographer based in Sydney, Australia.

In 2009, Ali was one of nineteen young media-makers selected by Andrew Denton to develop and produce the groundbreaking topical program *Hungry Beast* for ABC1. She directed, produced, shot, researched, wrote and edited stories on topics such as labiaplasty, outlaw motorcycle clubs, paedophilia, intersex, and exposing the myth of the notorious 'Gang of 49'.

Russell has produced, directed and shot numerous independent documentaries with subjects as diverse as experimental musicians, remote Indigenous communities, gender-bending Balinese artists, federal politicians and the bingo champions of Sydney's western suburbs. Her documentaries have aired on ABC1 and at numerous international festivals.

Keeper was produced by Ali Russell in partnership with Jacinta Haseldine and Sue Coleman Haseldine.



- 1: Jacinta collects traditional paints at Paint Lake
- 2: Jacinta concentrates during a driving lesson
- 3: On the way to the sacred Koonibba Rockhole



USING *KEEPER* IN THE CLASSROOM

Teachers may select from the following information and activities to support students' viewing and close analysis of *Keeper*.

AFTER VIEWING 'KEEPER'

- Allow students to share their personal impressions of the story told by *Keeper*.
- What are the central concerns of *Keeper*?
- What will be achieved by telling Jacinta's story?
- How has your understanding of the issues facing Aboriginal Australians changed after watching *Keeper*?

JACINTA

My name is Jacinta. I'm sixteen and I

live in a small town called Ceduna. It's on the far west coast of South Australia. The nearest city is a whole day's drive from here. I live in this town with my mum, my dad, my brother and my three younger sisters. – Jacinta

- In what ways is Jacinta like other sixteen-year-old girls? In what ways is she different? Draw on moments and statements from *Keeper* to support your answers to these questions.
- Why do you think the filmmaker shows us Jacinta in the family car with her cousins, eating junk food and singing along to hip hop?

'And the girls are supposed to be really into their rowing up there as well, so ... I don't know! Might give it a go.'
– Jacinta

- What does this comment tell you about Jacinta and the way she approaches life?
- What does it tell you about the differences between attending a public school in a small town and a private school in the city?
- 'The difference between me and my nana is that the principal knows I'm Aboriginal. I'm not going to be ashamed to tell everyone I'm Aboriginal, and if they don't like

- 1: Sue at boarding school in the 1960s
- 2: Sue as a girl at Koonibba mission
- 3: Nana Marcina at Koonibba Rockhole



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it then they'll have to deal with it. Because I'm not going nowhere.'

– Jacinta

- Use this claim to initiate a discussion of Jacinta's sense of her identity as an Aboriginal Australian.
- How has Nana Sue shaped the way Jacinta sees herself and sees the world?
- *The hopes for the future, I'm hoping that Jacinta will be able to keep all the family together, don't let the younger ones stray, keep fighting for the land, get a decent education where she can take on the white man's side as well, but make sure she keeps her Aboriginality and the cultural side of her. Because that's the side that will get her through.*

– Sue

Like Nana Sue, do you have high hopes for Jacinta?

SUE

Nana Sue, she lives on a farm just out of town with her husband, my Papa Keith. My dad grew up here with his six brothers and sisters.

– Jacinta

- 'She's just a fun nana to have around.'
 - Jacinta
- What words would you use to describe Sue and Jacinta's relationship? Match your choices with



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moments from *Keeper*. Are you close to your grandparents?

- What do Jacinta and her Nana Sue have in common? In what ways are they different? Are you like any of your grandparents? Or are you very different?
- 'Nana, she's a real big fighter she is. She'll do whatever it takes to keep looking after the rockholes.'

– Jacinta

Do you agree with Jacinta's estimation of her nana? What moments in the documentary show this claim to be true?

- Sue has a great sense of humour. This is evident when she can see

the irony of her requests for the road to Inla Rockhole to be fixed. What are her other strengths?

- Do you admire Sue? Why?

FAMILY

- How do you define family?
- How does Jacinta define family?
- How does Sue define family?
- What does the documentary reveal about Aboriginal Australians' perception of family? Working with a partner, use electronic and print texts to find out more about the concept of family in Indigenous Australian society. Share your findings with the class.

CEDUNA

Ceduna is located in the west coast region of South Australia. It is situated in the northwest corner of Eyre Peninsula, west of the junction of the Flinders and Eyre highways and around 786 km northwest of the South Australian capital, Adelaide. The town is the last major settlement before you reach the eastern end of the Nullarbor Plain. Ceduna is a town of some 4000



people and is supported by a number of local industries, including wheat farming, gypsum mining, salt mining and commercial fishing. The name Ceduna is a variation of the local Aboriginal word chedoona and is said to mean 'a place to sit down and rest'.

- Locate Ceduna on a map of Australia.
- Find out more about Ceduna by visiting <http://www.ceduna.net> and <http://www.nullarbornet.com.au/maps/cedunaM.html>.
- Compile a list of the advantages and disadvantages of life in Ceduna.
- What does *Keeper* reveal about the nature of life in Ceduna?
- How does Jacinta see Ceduna? Spend time discussing the ways in which Jacinta's identity has been shaped by the place where she lives. How has growing up in Ceduna shaped Jacinta's sense of where she belongs? Where do you live? How has this place influenced

1&4: Near the sacred Dinah Rockhole 2: Sue razor fishing at Denial Bay 3: Full moon near Dinah Rockhole

your sense of identity and belonging?

- Imagine that you are a journalist who has been asked to write an article about life in Ceduna. What will you draw to your reader's attention? How will you portray Ceduna? What purpose will your article serve?
- 'This is my people's country, Kokatha country.' – Jacinta Writing from Jacinta's perspective, create a description of Kokatha country. You may write poetry or prose. You may include an image in your final submission.

SACRED PLACES

All my life looking after the rockholes was happening. The oldies did it first.
– Sue

- What is the dictionary definition of the word 'sacred'?
- What places do you regard as sacred?
- What places in your community could be called sacred places?

Aboriginal spirituality is based on creation stories describing the way the ancestors left their marks on the land. In most stories of the Dreaming, once the ancestor spirits had created the world, they changed into trees, the stars, rocks, watering holes or other objects. These are the sacred places



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- 1: Sue's farm outside Ceduna
- 2: Eagles, *waltja*, represent the ancestors
- 3: Jacinta at Paint Lake



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of Aboriginal culture.

- Perhaps the most well-known sacred place in Australia is Uluru. Located in the centre of Australia, southwest of Alice Springs, the first European explorers named it Ayers Rock. The caves inside the rock are covered with Aboriginal paintings. In 1985 the Commonwealth Government of Australia returned Uluru to its traditional owners, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people.

Do you know of any other sites that are regarded as sacred places for Aboriginal people?

Knowledge of sacred places is learned through a process of initiation and gaining an understanding of Aboriginal law. It is, by definition, not public knowledge. This is why the existence of many places is not published unless these places are threatened.

The rockholes of Kokatha country are sacred places. Nala, Yumbarra, Inla and Yellabinna are some of these rockholes. The most important of all the sacred rockholes for the Kokatha women is Dinah Rockhole.

In *Keeper*, Sue tells the story of Dinah Rockhole:

This is the mother of the Earth. You



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can't see it now because it's full of water but that's the womb that goes into the Earth. And our ancestors will tell you – or, tell us – that if anything happens to this rockhole, women and children all over the world will suffer. She's only small compared to some of our other rockholes, but very, very powerful.

– Sue

The name Dinah comes from Jacinta's great-great-great grandmother Yabi Dinah who was a traditional, tribal Kokatha woman.

- Dinah Rockhole belongs to the Kokatha women. It is not a man's place. Why do some Aboriginal sacred places belong to men and others belong to women? Use the internet to research this subject and arrive at an answer to the question.

- Because Dinah Rockhole is a sacred place, it cannot be shown on film. Do you know why this is the case? Use the internet to research this subject and arrive at an answer to the question.
- Jacinta explains that years ago every rockhole had a 'keeper' – someone who looked after it all the time. Today, the women of Kokatha Country see it as their duty to protect Dinah Rockhole. Spend time discussing the concept of a 'keeper'. How does Sue view her role as keeper? What does Jacinta think of carrying on this cultural responsibility? Why is taking care of special places in the land important to Aboriginal Australians? Do you think Australian society should adopt this practice? What would be the benefits?

NATIVE TITLE

Nana felt like she couldn't do anything to stop the mining if she were in Native Title, so her, Nana Marcie, my dad and all the other nanas walked away. Now they don't want anything to do with Native Title.

– Jacinta

Native Title is the recognition by Australian law that some Indigenous people have rights and interests to their land that come from their traditional laws and customs.

In 1992, the High Court of Australia put an end to the idea called Terra Nullius, that meant Australia was empty before it was occupied by Europeans. It upheld the claim of Eddie 'Koiki' Mabo and his fellow plaintiffs that Murray Islanders were the traditional owners of land on the island (also known as Mer Island) in the Torres Strait. This finding formed the basis of the Native Title Act.

- Visit <http://www.nntt.gov.au/What-Is-Native-Title/Pages/What-is-Native-Title.aspx> to learn about Native Title.
- What are the advantages of Native Title? Write a list. Share your list with the class.
- What are the disadvantages of Native Title? Write a list. Share your list with the class.
- Invite some members of a local Indigenous community to your class to share their views of Native Title. After the introduction of Native Title, Sue and the rest of her family were recognised as the descendants of Yabi Dinah.
- Sue explains that when Native Title was introduced she and others embraced it.
Native Title has split families really and truly. Before Native Title and the greed and everything came in we were just sisters and nephews were sons, and with the fallout, well you don't have a son anymore,



that's one less son. You don't have a sister, there's one less sister or there's one less brother. It's tough to live in a small town and see your family and walk the other way. You'd pretty well say it's gone forever. Because you can't have it both ways.

– Sue

Use this claim to initiate a discussion of why Sue now opposes Native Title. Were you surprised by her view?

Can you find an example of another Aboriginal community where mining development has caused these divisions?

- *Families and people, they do care about the land because this is what we're made out of. It just hurts that my nanas and that are fighting with their own family.* – Jacinta
How does Jacinta view her grandmother's campaigns?
- Working in groups, design and produce a presentation using PowerPoint to tell the class about one

1: Growing up on Koonibba mission in the 1950s 2: A Native Title claimant group signs an agreement with miners

of the following aspects of Native Title:

- the history of Native Title
- the Native Title Act
- Eddie Mabo
- 'terra nullius'
- Native Title claims
- Indigenous land use agreements

Limit the presentation to five slides. You should use both words and images. You may incorporate audio effects into your presentation.

MISSIONS

Sue was born at Koonibba Mission in 1951.

- In *Keeper*, Sue tells her story of growing up on the mission.
On the mission we lived with our grandparents in a house with them, my mum and all her daughters and one young son. We were all pretty happy there ... But because my mum was not a married woman her kids were always up for grabs. Fair-skinned kids were always up for grabs. I don't know how the oldies got a message that welfare was coming out for the fair-skinned



kids, but we used to do tracks through the scrub – the grandparents used to take us. The older kids had to carry the little kids and we'd go for about three [or] four days or until it was safe to come back to the mission.

In a subsequent comment, Sue reflects on how racially intolerant practices and policies robbed her mother and her aunts of their racial identity. They lost their language and their culture. She learnt her language and about her culture because her grandparents were overlooked by white authorities. They taught the children their traditional culture while their mothers worked for white Australians. What do Sue's stories tell us about the history of Aboriginal Australians?

- *My name is Marcina Coleman Richards. I was born at Basra tank, my father delivered me into the world. I can remember years ago my father going out hunting for*

1: Welcome to Ceduna 2: Sue by the campfire 3: Ceduna is the last main town before the state border 4: Driving out to visit the sacred sites

roos with a sharp pocketknife and a tomahawk and a kangaroo dog and a waterbag. They'd ride from Koonibba right to Foggo's Corner there, to get to the dog fence. Soon as they catch one kangaroo they'd cut the meat up and put it in the kangaroo skin, make the boys carry it. After school, Mother would bring us up here to the rockhole to see which direction they coming from. Next day, my father would peg [the] kangaroo skins out on the ground. When he'd brought enough of that kangaroo skin, he'd sell it to Goldsbrough Mort in Adelaide, or R.M. Williams. And he finished up with a little whippet car

which we was all pleased of. That's why that ground behind Koonibba here means the world to us. I just hope nothing will happen to this ground behind Koonibba. – Marcie

Like Sue, Nana Marcie grew up on a mission. Nana Marcie decides to tell her story. Why do you think that she struggles to start? What does Nana Marcie's story reveal?

- The British government and colonial humanitarians became concerned about the fate of Aboriginal people as European settlement of Australia progressed. The solution was to set aside reserves of land variously known as stations, missions or reserves on which Aboriginal people could live. While the government ran some Aboriginal stations, others were in the control of missionaries such as those of the Anglican or Lutheran churches. Regardless of their secular or religious management, life on Aborigi-



1: A mining peg near Inla Rockhole 2: Sue and the greenies' protest makes headlines

nal stations revolved around efforts to control and 'civilise' Aboriginal people.

Find out more about Aboriginal missions in Australia by consulting print and electronic texts. Begin your research at <http://www.abc.net.au/missionvoices/general/missions_and_reserves_background/default.htm>.



EDUCATION

- *I just completed Year 10, and I was the only Year 10 girl in my class. And now ... Aboriginal girls, mainly the Aboriginal girls, have dropped out. Our class used to be full of girls.* – Jacinta
Visit the websites of Australia's daily newspapers and current affairs programs to find media articles about the provision and standard of education in Aboriginal communities. Spend time reading these articles online. Print one of the media texts to share with other students from your class. Tell your group about the information and view that is presented in the article. Later on, spend time as a class discussing your findings and your views.
- Jacinta has been offered a scholarship to go to boarding school in Adelaide. Accepting the scholarship means that Jacinta's education will be paid for by a mining company. Given her family's political views,

this must have been a complex decision for Jacinta. Make a list of some of the reasons for and against her accepting the scholarship.

- The filmmaker shows Jacinta sorting through the brochures from her new school. Why is this scene significant? What did you learn about Jacinta? What does this scene reveal about the way she is feeling? Share your stories of getting ready to start at a new school. Were you excited? Anxious? Keen to start afresh?
- Why is getting a good education important to Jacinta? Like Jacinta, is getting a good education important to you? What value does your family place on education?
- Jacinta wants to be a dentist. What do you want to be when you finish your schooling?
- *My Nana Sue has taught me everything I know about the land. I know how to hunt wombats and kangaroos, about respect for the ancestors and all sorts of other things.* – Jacinta

Discuss why Jacinta values what her Nana Sue can teach her. Like Jacinta, do you take the time to learn about your cultural background and traditions?

- Sue shares her story of secondary education:

I did eventually get sent away to college, must have been at thirteen, age thirteen. Everybody has to have an interview with the principal so he asked me what nationality I was and I told him Aboriginal. And he said, 'Oh, we'll put you down as European.' And that's when me and him clashed immediately. I said, 'You won't. I am who I am.' And from that time on I gave that poor fella hell. Just wouldn't conform to any authority at all, anybody that held authority was – I wouldn't listen to them. I ran away, because they wouldn't send me home. So I just left. And found my own way home in the finish.

What does the principal's suggestion reveal about the cultural prejudices of the time?

What do you think Sue's rebellion shows about how she values her culture?

MINING

There's a few mining companies setting up offices in town now. A lot of people think it's good, because there's not many jobs around, especially for Aboriginal people. – Jacinta

- 'The way Nana sees it, you've got to have the land to learn the culture. She's dead against mining. She just wants the land to stay how it is.' – Jacinta
Use this claim to initiate a discussion of why Sue regards the mining companies as a threat.
- 'Protestors have blockaded an access road in Yumbarra Conservation Park north of Ceduna, saying that mining exploration is threatening sacred Aboriginal

sites ...' (radio broadcast)

Would you call Sue an activist? Is Sue fighting a losing battle?

- *I think by coming together with a company like Iluka that we can truly find better jobs for our families, our kids' future. And we welcome Iluka to hold our hands as we did with all the Native Title claimant groups that have come together.*

– Mitch Dunnart

Sue is critical of the Aboriginal people who support mining. She sees them as motivated by greed and claims they have forgotten the true value of their relationship with the land.

Are they greedy, as Sue claims, or are they looking out for their families and their futures?

Many Aboriginal people live in poverty. This makes the offer of large sums of money much harder to refuse. Is it a fair choice that the mining companies give to Aboriginal families?

- The filmmaker takes us to the town meeting. The community is meeting with representatives from the mining company Iluka, who have an interest in the resources in the region.

Why is this sequence significant? What were you thinking and feeling as you watched this sequence?

- 'For a lot of people it's pretty hard to say no to money like that.'

– Jacinta

How does Jacinta see the situation?

- Based on what is shown in *Keeper* and the knowledge you have acquired by completing other tasks from this study guide, who do you agree with?

PRODUCTION VALUES

- Why do you think the filmmaker chose the title *Keeper* for the documentary?
What title would you have chosen?
- What expectations does the opening sequence create? How are you positioned as a viewer?
- *Keeper* is a short documentary. Its running time is twenty-six minutes. Working as a class and by drawing on moments and aspects of the



Collecting traditional paints at Paint Lake

documentary, make a list of the likely challenges of filming *Keeper*.

- Jacinta is both narrator and participant. Make a comment about the way she manages these different roles in *Keeper*.
- What strategies does the filmmaker use to allow us to connect with Jacinta and Sue?
- The filmmaker spent three years making this documentary. Why do you think she would have spent this long on the project? What would have been some of the challenges in making a film like this?
- A lot of the film was shot in an observational or 'fly-on-the-wall' style. What do you think would be the advantages and disadvantages of filming this way?
- In what ways is *Keeper* different to other documentaries that you have watched?
- Discuss the filmmaker's use of archival vision and photographs. What purpose is served by these historical images?
- List the locations used by the filmmaker. What do these locations suggest about the filmmaker's purpose?
- Discuss how music complements the narrative, shapes our understanding of the subject, creates mood and evokes particular emotional responses.
- Why do you think the filmmaker decided to finish *Keeper* with the family out bush, enjoying each other's company and singing 'Bumpy road, take me home to the place I belong. Far west coast of South Australia, take me home, bumpy road'?

RESPOND

The following topics could be explored via written text responses, debates, panel discussions and online forums.

- Drawing on both moments and statements from *Keeper*, discuss the documentary's portrayal of Indigenous Australia.
- Do you think the stories told in *Keeper* encourage a greater understanding of the challenges of being an Indigenous Australian?
- 'Keeper shows that a sense of identity and belonging to a family are fundamentally interconnected.' Discuss.
- While *Keeper* is primarily a personal narrative of an adolescent's sense of identity and belonging, it also becomes an important social document. Do you agree?
- 'Connection to place is vital to our sense of identity – both personal and communal.' Drawing on *Keeper*, personal experience and other real-world examples, discuss the validity of this claim.
- 'Keeper affirms the importance of maintaining cultural heritage.' Do you agree?

CREATE

- Start a personal journal. Devote a page to the subjects listed below. Each entry should explore your current view of these subjects and how they are currently shaping who you are.
 - family
 - friends
 - school

- culture
- home town
- Where do you live? What other places and spaces do you inhabit? What do these places say about who you are and your sense of belonging?
Create an A3 poster that reveals your place in the world. Use words and pictures to create a collage of your relationship with places in the city, suburb, town or region in which you live. This task offers you the chance to work in a 'word smart' and 'picture smart' way. The images and the layout play as significant a part as the words.
- Jacinta has reached a turning point in her life. *Keeper* explores her decision to attend boarding school. She will be separated from her family and Ceduna during the school terms. Jacinta admits that she will be homesick but acknowledges that accepting this opportunity will benefit her future, her family's future and her community's future.
Make a short documentary film about a turning point in your life. All elements of the production should be undertaken collaboratively.
Submit a production design plan that indicates your:

- characters
 - storyline and/or outline of content
 - intention
 - dialogue, voiceover and/or interview questions
 - camera: framing, position and movement
 - style
 - location and/or setting
 - audience
 - techniques of engagement
 - location and/or setting
 - lighting
 - edit details and transitions
 - music and/or sound effects
- Your film should be ten to fifteen minutes in duration including titles and/or credits sequences.
When the films are finished, organise a screening and invite other members of the school community to attend.
- *Keeper* is just as much Sue's story as it is Jacinta's.
Create a digital story about a grandparent or elderly relative who plays a significant role in your life. Aim to explore an aspect of their story. Endeavour to use your focus to reveal their identity as an individual, adventures or challenges they experienced when they were young that shaped them as a person, and to reveal the nature of

your relationship to them.
A digital story uses multimedia tools and visual and audio resources from personal archives. Most digital stories are approximately two to five minutes in length. Digital stories are a unique and powerful way to tell a story. You will need to construct a storyboard, write a script and source photographs and other keepsakes to compose the story. Then there are other decisions. Who will narrate the story? What sounds and music will be part of the digital story? What is an appropriate title? Include a dedication and end credits.
Further information about digital stories can be found on the website of the Australian Centre for the Moving Image <<http://www.acmi.net.au>> and elsewhere on the internet.

- How do you express your cultural identity?
Prepare an oral account about an aspect of your cultural identity. You may use props to support your presentation.

REFERENCES

Keeper press kit, 2010.

Keeper post-production script, 2010.

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