

KATHLEEN ERNST WAS BORN in 1982 into the 1870s
Kathleen Ernst
which emerged from
WRITING AT THE INTERSECTION OF PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THE PAST
the trees, present, and against a
cloud-studded blue sky.



Discussion Guide for *Mining for Justice*

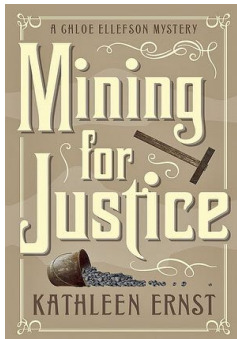
Chloe Ellefson Historic Sites Mystery #8

Written by Kathleen Ernst

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"I'm worried about Libby," Roelke said. Chloe Ellefson glanced sideways at the man she loved. He hadn't spoken since they'd left home almost an hour ago, so she'd known *something* was on his mind.

Thus begins the eighth book in the popular, multiple award winning, Chloe Ellefson Historic Sites mystery series. These stories combine history and mystery with a little romance, and are written for adults and mature teens who enjoy books *without* explicit sex, gratuitous violence, or gore.



Chloe Ellefson is excited to be learning about early Cornish immigrants and lead mining history while on temporary assignment at Pendarvis, an historic site in charming Mineral Point, Wisconsin.

But when her boyfriend, police officer Roelke McKenna, discovers long-buried human remains in the root cellar of an old Cornish cottage, Chloe reluctantly agrees to mine the local historical records for answers.

Soon she's trapped in the center of a heated and deadly controversy that threatens to close Pendarvis. Struggling to save the historic site, Chloe must unearth dark secrets, past and present, before a killer buries her.

Bestselling author Kathleen Ernst writes award-winning mysteries, historical fiction, and non-fiction books for adults and young readers. Her work has earned numerous honors, including an Emmy, a LOVEY, and nominations for an Edgar and multiple Agatha mystery awards.

SPOILER ALERT! The following pages reveal key plot points.



1. Chloe is forced to confront the reality of inadequate financial resources to spread among the state historic sites. It's true that a great deal of money was spent to move and restore the historic structures at Old World Wisconsin. It's also true that if that hadn't happened, architectural treasures—buildings that tell important stories about Wisconsin history—would have been lost forever. Is it best for the historical society to collect what they can, while they can; or commit to preserving only a few sites?
2. Rather than standing up to Dan Raymo, her ex-husband, Libby ends her fledgling relationship with Adam Bolitho, and declares that she won't date until her children are older. Under the circumstances, was that an appropriate response?
3. Roelke was determined to let the Palmyra police handle Libby's problem with Dan Raymo. However, in the end, Roelke took matters into his own hands. Were there other options he could have pursued? What would you have done in his place?
4. How far would you go to protect a child? Libby decides to buy a gun after swearing she'd never have one in the house, and is ready to shoot her ex-husband. Roelke plants drugs in Dan Raymo's car. Claudia Doyle lies to the Mineral Point police to keep them from focusing on her daughter. Chloe descends into an abandoned mine shaft to search for a child she thought she heard crying. And Mary Pascoe kills Parnell Peavey. How would you have reacted in the same circumstances? Where would you draw the line?
5. Mary's finance Ruan Trevaskis was unwilling to accept her idea of adopting Ezekiel, an enslaved African-American boy. Given the times, was his attitude understandable? Or should Ruan have been able to open his heart to the child? When he gave Mary the ultimatum, did she make the right choice?



6. Mary Pascoe spent much of her life feeling inadequate, thanks in large part to her interaction at a young age with Mrs. Bunney in Cornwall. Late in life, Mary comes to believe that—even after killing a man—she is a respectable woman. Do you agree?
7. *Mining For Justice* touches on several elements of Cornish folklore, including the presence of knackers living in mines. How did you interpret the mine cave-in that saved Chloe's life? Did it result from an intercession by a knacker, or from the spirit of Jory Pascoe, or was it pure coincidence?

Have you ever experienced anything you can't explain while visiting a museum or historic site?

8. Tamsin Bolitho did not want Chloe to discover anything that might reflect poorly on her ancestor; Evelyn was willing to kill in order to protect her ancestor. Why did the past matter so much to them? Would you be uncomfortable if an unsavory story about an ancestor of yours came to light, or would you shrug it off?
9. At the end of the book Roelke had done what he felt he needed to do—and gotten away with it. Yet when he gets home, he begins to cry while watching Dierdre and Chloe dance. Was that a realistic response to the situation? How did you feel after the final scene in the book?
10. In fifth book, *Tradition of Deceit*, Chloe and Roelke pledged to not keep secrets from each other. But as the *Mining For Justice* story progresses, they each have a hard time keeping that promise. Sometimes one doesn't want to worry the other. Sometimes—as in the case with Roelke—one keeps a secret so that it does not become a burden for the other person.

Do you believe any relationship can be totally secret-free? Are there times when it's OK to protect one's partner by keeping silent?

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Hosting a discussion? Consider making a Cornish treat like figgy hobbin! Kathleen wrote an entire blog post about its history, including a recipe. Read it at <https://sitesandstories.wordpress.com/2017/12/28/figgy-hobbin/>

Kathleen did extensive research when writing this novel. Some of her discoveries ended up influencing the story; some appear in the book. A rich mix of these 'behind the scene' details about the people, places, and the past that went into *Mining For Justice* are available online.

In addition to this guide, Kathleen's website includes an interactive custom Google map showing where key scenes are set in Mineral Point, a slide show of story-related artifacts and descriptions, an author's note, book reviews, author interviews, and book-related blog posts. Discover all this at https://www.kathleernerst.com/book_mining_for_justice.php.