



Love Notes from Vinegar House
Karen Tayleur
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Teachers Notes

“There are some things you should know about me if we are going to be friends. Like I don’t believe in ghosts.” Freya Jackson Kramer has done some stupid things before, but this is the first time they’ve been splashed across Facebook. When she escapes to Vinegar House for the holidays, she thinks she’s leaving her troubles behind. But Freya’s troubles are just beginning. How will she deal with her manipulative cousin, Rumer? How can she avoid the ex-love of her life, Luke Hart? And what secrets lie in the locked attic?

Karen Tayleur has worked in advertising, the print media, publishing and as a singer in a dinner dance band for approximately five minutes. She married her husband because she liked his surname. Her books are published in Australia and overseas. Her “things to do” list is so long she fears she will run out of time before she can get to everything. Her favourite motto is “Life is not a dress rehearsal”.

Karen Tayleur’s strength is the voice of her narrators, which is always so strong.

- Why do you think Karen Tayleur has decided to write her novel in the first person? Consider how it allows the reader to share the protagonist’s experience and relationship with others and her surroundings more powerfully. Do you think it could have been written in the third person? Explain your answer.
- Analyse the way language was used to create atmosphere, particularly in and around Vinegar House. Auditory imagery was used frequently, particularly in Chapter 26. “Thunder rumbled. Then I heard the rattle of the doorknob to the Blue Room and pressed myself further into my hiding space.” (221). Identify the auditory image in the book that you found to be most powerful.

Some other imagery techniques to consider include:

- Visual imagery: “I felt the darkness of the Blue Room push down on me. I opened my eyes to its oily blackness then closed them again at the sound of another thud.” (220)
- Tactile imagery - touch: “He shifted a little closer. I could feel the heat of his shoulder branding mine.” (181)
- Olfactory imagery - a smell: ‘Sometimes I dream about Vinegar House. It starts with the smell of lavender.’ (25)
- Kinesthetic imagery - movement or tension: ‘I hadn’t realised I was trembling, but it wasn’t the cold weather making my body shake.’ (140)
- Gustatory - taste - Outside, the air tasted like a crisp Granny Smith apple, all tart and juicy. (p. 138)
- How has Freya’s ordeal at Vinegar House changed her outlook on her regular life in Homesea? Consider how she opened her story and how it closed. While they remain similar, how has she changed and grown?
- Discuss the role Freya’s cousin Rumer plays in the book. How does her development as a character parallel Freya’s?
- Explore how the idea of love and loss underpin the novel on both a literal and symbolic level.

Did you enjoy the last line in the book? Have fun creating some alternatives!