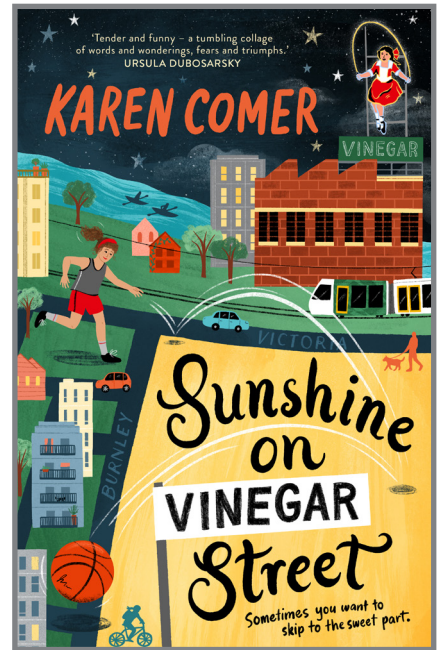


Sunshine on Vinegar Street



AUTHOR
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary

SYNOPSIS

Twelve-year-old Freya speaks straight from her heart as she navigates moving from her familiar and beloved Eltham with two homes side by side, to an apartment with her mum in inner city Abbotsford.

A change of schools and homes is not all Freya's navigating—she's also adjusting to a life without the day-to-day presence of her father. Being new also means having to explain her unconventional family (her parents are friends not a couple) to the people she meets. At least she has basketball, but not everyone is pleased to have a killer new player on the team and Freya finds herself at the mercy of her jealous teammates who are quick to make fun of her difference.

But Freya finds friends in odd places, including Spicey the Mouse, Ashok the kind apartment manager and Audrey, the Skipping Girl on the sign above her apartment. It's standing up for these friends (and in the process, saving all three of their lives) that helps Freya find her balance again.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Comer is a writer and editor and reader. Her mum said she used to read the cereal box at breakfast when there was nothing more interesting to read. Now her daughter holds her book at the table with one hand, eating cereal with the other.

Stories are Karen's passion. She reads them, writes them, tells them to her children, shares them with her friends. She works as a freelance editor from her home in Melbourne.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Before reading discuss the following questions about verse novels:
 - Define the terms verse and prose.
 - How might a verse novel differ from a prose novel?
 - What can a verse novel offer readers that a prose novel can't?
 - Which would you prefer to read? Why?
- Read the opening pages of *Sunshine on Vinegar Street* (from 'Power of three' until the end of the definitions of 'Steals'.) Divide a page in two, one column labelled Explicit Information and the other Implicit Information. (Explicit being that which is stated plainly and implicit being that which is implied and not stated plainly.) Now list everything

you learned about Freya and her friends from the opening pages.

- What can the reader ‘infer’ from the explicit definitions of the word ‘Steals’? Why do you think the author decided to include words with two meanings at key points in the novel? Are these pointers to what unfolds in the scenes that follow?
- Read from pp 4–19 (‘Summer hits’ until the end of ‘Trapped’) and find examples of the following poetic techniques:
 - Alliteration
 - Repetition
 - Rhythm
 - Metre
 - Enjambment
 - Assonance.
- The author, Karen Comer refers to Freya’s car radio as ‘sizzling with summer hits’ on page 4 and on page 6 Freya refers to summer as being ‘already full of one hit . . . after another.’ In the first example, summer hits refers to the songs played over long hot summer holidays and has a positive tone, while the latter references hits as something more physical or mental, and is negative in tone. What do we call this device?
 - Might the book’s title, *Sunshine on Vinegar Street*, be another example of this device?
- Verse novels generally have less words on each page and more white space, which sometimes means they present text in more unusual ways. One example of this is on p 15 when the words ‘The ball rolls around the rim in slow motion’ are shown in an arc, similar to the path taken by the ball. Did this technique make the scene more intense? Compare this example with one on p 33 where Freya is thinking about the saying she made up with her father about Curiosity.
- On p 16, Freya begins to score her new experiences as if she is playing a game of basketball against her new suburb. Why do you think the author used this device throughout the novel? Did it work for you as a clever way to track Freya’s successes and failures?
- Read pp 60–61. Why might the author have chosen the name Raptors for the basketball team? Highlight the words used to enhance the imagery of powerful and loud birds competing.
- What is a metaphor? What does Ashok mean in the below extract?

‘Basketball is a metaphor for life.
Be confident – take the shot!
Help others – as many assists as goals.
Don’t be selfish – raise your team.’ (pp 76–77)

 - Would you agree that metaphors make complex ideas easier to understand? How do you think they do that?
 - Can you find other examples of metaphors in *Sunshine on Vinegar Street*?
- Define the term symbolism. What might Audrey, the Skipping Girl, be a symbol of in *Sunshine on Vinegar Street*? Might Spicey be a symbol for Freya and her experience of moving to a new environment?
- Retell the story from Val’s point of view. Does seeing Freya’s arrival in Abbotsford from Val’s perspective make her actions more or less understandable?
- By the end of the novel, Freya decides the one word that describes what she stands for is BELONGING. Why do you think she chose this word? What word would you choose?
- Sketch yourself as the Skipping Girl. Draw yourself holding something of importance and standing on a sign showing a word that means something special to you.
- What does the term phobia mean? What phobias do Freya and Val have? What scene in the story provided a clue as to why Freya developed a phobia of lifts? Can you name other common phobias people suffer from?
- Val is as good a basketball player as Freya but is not selected for the VGBT. What is the one thing that makes the coach choose Freya over Val? Can you think of some other instances when truly working as a team raises everyone up?

AUTHOR OF NOTES
CAROLYN WALSH