



How to Make Friends with the Dark

By Kathleen Glasgow

Book Summary

It's the brightest day of summer and it's dark outside. It's dark in your house, dark in your room, and dark in your heart. You feel like the darkness is going to split you apart.

Here is what happens when your mother dies.

That's how it feels for Tiger. It's always been Tiger and her mother against the world. Then, on a day like any other, Tiger's mother dies. And now it's Tiger, alone.

Here is how you learn to make friends with the dark.

From the author of the New York Times bestselling novel *Girl in Pieces* comes a new heartbreaking story about love and loss and learning how to continue when it feels like you're surrounded by darkness.

Key Learning Outcomes

- ACELA1551
- ACELA1564
- ACELA1565
- ACELT1635
- ACELT1812
- ACELT1815
- ACELY1749

Themes

Grief, Family, Foster care, Friendship, Guilt, Identity, Being okay, Abuse

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- When Tiger sees the dress her mum bought her for the dance, she thinks, 'It's a monstrosity' (25). Is she angry because the dress is ugly, or for another reason? What is the last thing Tiger says to her mum?
- When her mum dies, Tiger sees the dress as the last thing that connects them. She starts to wear it every day, explaining why to Teddy towards the end of the book. 'And the last thing she wanted me to do was to wear this dress. So I did' (382). What does Teddy say in response to this? How does this make Tiger feel?
- Make a list of moments where the dress is mentioned throughout the book. Who is talking? How is the dress connected to the emotions of the characters?
- Physical objects can be important symbols in a novel – they can show emotion, act as a connection to an absent character or place, offer comfort. Think of an object or item of clothing that was important to you as a child. Why was it important? Who gave it to you? How do you feel when you think about it? How does it smell, feel, look? Where was it kept? Think of a memory you have of this object. Write a short scene that tries to capture this moment, considering all the details you've noted above.
- 'I went from regular kid to full-blown criminal in a little over a month.' (366) Make a map of the things that happen to Tiger throughout the book that lead her to the end. Which things happen to her? Which does she have control over? For those ones, make a note of why you think she makes the decisions that she does. Could her life have turned out differently if she made different decisions? Is what happened her fault?
- Towards the end, Not-Karen asks Tiger 'What's gotten into you?' (368). What is her tone? Is any of this Tiger's fault? Who else might have helped her?
- In her author's note at the end of the book, Karen Glasgow talks about wanting to show the people fighting to make the foster system a better and safer place for young people. Why do you think this is important to her? Do you think she has succeeded?

- 'One morning, you wake up in the backseat of a small white car, surrounded by empty soda cans and crumpled plastic bags and all the other dirty shit that never gets cleaned out of the backseat of a car.' (53). Although the novel is primarily written in the first person, the author makes use of second person in a number of chapters to give Tiger (and the reader) distance from the situations that are most traumatic. What impact does this narrative shift have on your reading of the text? Try rewriting one of these chapters into first person. How does it change your reading of the scene? Is it more intimate or less? Does one feel more natural than the other?
- The author credits her brother with piecing her mother's story together – a history that had been largely missing to her, and which sparked the idea for the story. Her brother used Ancestry.com to do this. How much do you know about the people in your family? Do you ever wish you knew more about your family history? If you wanted to find out more about a particular person in your family, how would you go about it? Choose a member of your family that you would like to know more about and see if you can find out something about their life that you don't already know. Write a short story using what you've discovered as inspiration. What are our responsibilities to someone when we're using their lives as the basis of a story?
- How does Tiger feel when she finds out more about her mother? What does she wish for? How might Tiger's relationship with her mother have been different if she'd known more about her earlier? Use examples from the text to answer these questions.
- 'Maybe that's how small our lives really are, no matter how much we try to make them big while we are alive' (227). Our lives have meaning because of the way we are remembered. Discuss in relation to the novel.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kathleen Glasgow is the author of the New York Times bestselling novel *Girl in Pieces*. She lives in Tucson, Arizona.