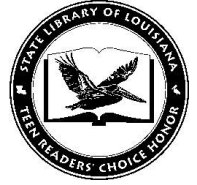




State Library
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Educator Discussion Guide

ONE OF US IS LYING

by Karen M. McManus

Louisiana Teen Readers' Choice Nominee 2019-2020

Grade 9-12

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Bayview High School's gossip app, About That, is popular. Its creator, Simon Kelleher? Not so much. When he suddenly dies while in detention with classmates whose secrets he was about to expose, the police have a ready-made list of suspects. Was it the Brain, Bronwyn Rojas? The Beauty, Addy Prentiss? The Athlete, Cooper Clay? Or was it the Criminal, Nate Macauley? All four of them are keeping secrets, but are they secrets they'd murder to protect? The four main characters take turns telling the story. Along the way they show that they are more than the stereotypes that seem to define them. The captivating whodunit format also allows the author to explore the many diverse pressures high school students today face while also reminding readers that no one can be, or should be, reduced to a one-word label.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen M. McManus has a Bachelor's of Arts degree in English from the College of the Holy Cross and a Master's degree in Journalism from Northeastern University. She currently lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with her son. When she's not writing or working, McManus enjoys travelling to places such as Paris and Columbia. *One of Us is Lying* is McManus's debut novel, but her second novel, *Two Can Keep a Secret*, released in January 2019.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at

www.karenmcmanus.com

Accessed September 25, 2018

BOOK AWARDS

An EW.com Best YA Book of the Year Selection

A BuzzFeed Best YA Book of the Year Selection

A New York Public Library's Best Book for Teens Selection

A Popcrush Best Young Adult Book of the Year Selection

A CBC Teen Choice Book Award Nominee

A Goodreads Best Young Adult Book of the Year Nominee

A YALSA Top Ten Best Fiction Book Nominee

A YALSA Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

Can You Believe Them?

Explain what an unreliable narrator is. Divide your students into groups and ask them to consider novels they've read or movies they've seen with an unreliable narrator. In what ways were these narrators unreliable? Were they biased, keeping secrets, mentally unstable, or did they simply lack all the information? When did your students realize or begin to suspect that the narrator was not reliable? What was the effect of having a story told by someone the reader or viewer couldn't trust? What are some reasons the writer may have chosen to tell his or her story this way? Do the students think it was an effective storytelling technique? What do they like or dislike about it? Have the groups present their chosen stories to each other and explain their opinions.

Preconceived Notions

Place the one-word stereotypes representing each of the main characters (Brain, Beauty, Athlete, Criminal, Outcast) around the room. Begin by asking students to stand by the character they are most interested in reading about. Continue with a series of questions like, "Which character comes from an immigrant family?" "Which character cheated on a test?" Eventually leading to "Which character will be blamed for a classmate's murder?" and "Which character committed murder?"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share a favorite quote from the book. Why did this quote stand out?
2. What are some of the assumptions the characters make about each other at the beginning of the novel? How do those perceptions change?
3. What are some of the assumptions you made about the characters? How did those perceptions change?
4. What is the importance of social media in *One of Us is Lying*? What message do you think the author was trying to convey regarding social media?
5. What is the importance of traditional media in the novel? What message does the author convey about the media?
6. Was it important that this story be told with high school students? In other words, could the author have told the same story or conveyed the same messages with characters who were older or younger than the main characters of *One of Us is Lying*? Explain your answer.
7. If there was a fifth narrator in this novel, which character would you like it to be? Why?
8. What did you like about the novel? What did you dislike?
9. Of the secrets the main characters were keeping, whose surprised you most? Whose surprised you least? Why?
10. Do you feel the title is appropriate? Why or why not?
11. What do you think of the main characters' parents? How do their relationships with their parents impact their experiences in this novel?
12. How would the characters' lives have been different if they had been allowed to keep their secrets? Would things have been better or worse for them?
13. The John Hughes film that partly inspired this novel, *The Breakfast Club*, has one iconic song associated with it, "Don't You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds. What song would you pair with *One of Us is Lying*? Why?
14. Which character did you find to be the most compelling narrator? Why?

15. Several main characters in the book are dealing with unhealthy relationships and/or destructive behaviors. Select an example of either an unhealthy relationship or destructive behavior. Write about why this is unhealthy, ways it could get worse and, alternately, what could happen to improve the situation.
16. Through the book the character Addy changes a lot from the opening scene to the conclusion. Explain some of the changes Addy undergoes and why you believe she makes these changes. Use examples from the text to explain. Do you believe these were these good or bad changes? Why or why not?
17. Did you suspect Jake was involved at any point before it was revealed in the novel? Why or why not? What about Simon? Janae?

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Technology:

- In the novel, Simon Kelleher builds a gossip app, About That. Based on descriptions in the book, and referencing how-to websites, such as: <https://www.businessapps.com/blog/how-to-build-a-mobile-app-in-12-easy-steps/> or <https://buildfire.com/how-to-create-a-mobile-app/>, have students detail how they would design the app.

Social Studies:

- After reading the novel, have students read the following article, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=cookie,ip,cpid&custid=s9099568&db=a9h&AN=100679952&site=ehost-live>, available through the Louisiana State Library's database. The students should then discuss which of the possible factors for suicidal ideation applied to Simon prior to his death. Could any of them apply to other characters in the novel?
- The Society of Professional Journalists has a webpage describing a Journalism code of ethics (<https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>). Have your students read this code of ethics and then discuss in what ways Mikhail Powers met those standards and failed to meet them.
- The secret Cooper Clay, the Athlete, is keeping in the novel is that he is gay. He worries, among other things, about how his sexual orientation may affect his chances of continuing to play baseball beyond high school. Are his concerns well-founded? Research other openly gay athletes to determine what Cooper's college or professional career may look like. Keep in mind his high level of talent described in the novel as compared to the other athletes'.

Art:

- One cover of *One of Us is Lying* has the faces of the four protagonists cut out of their photos. Draw what you believe they may look like, or find images online of what they may look like. Be sure to pay attention to skin, hair, and eye color.

English:

- Rewrite the ending. The author presents multiple suspects with motives, and then reveals that none of them murdered Simon. Write an alternate ending in which someone else is responsible for Simon’s death. It could be one of the protagonists, a minor character, or even a conspiracy among multiple characters.

Vocabulary:

Adrenaline	Endorsement	Oxymoron
Collusion	Haughty	Rhetorical
Commune	Hypocritically	Scapegoat
Confiscating	Martyr	Speculation
Contraband	McMansion	Terrarium
Degenerate	Notorious	Tudor

RELATED WEB SITES

Writer’s Digest “One of Us is Lying: Karen M. McManus on Her Gripping Bestseller”

<http://www.writersdigest.com/editor-blogs/there-are-no-rules/interviews/one-of-us-is-lying-karen-m-mcmanus>

An interview with the author of *One of Us is Lying*.

Youtube – One of Us is Lying Book Trailer

<https://youtu.be/KKUIKbkmarw>

Official *One of Us is Lying* book trailer.

Suicide Prevention Lifeline

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress. It also provides resources prevention and for people in crisis. It also provides educational information regarding suicide.

National Juvenile Defender Center

<http://njdc.info/>

The NJDC works to provide justice for juveniles through excellent legal defense. They work in diverse areas and also advocate for justice reform where necessary.