

I'LL NEVER TELL

CATHERINE MCKENZIE

A READING GROUP GUIDE

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

1. The MacAllister children gather at Camp Macaw to hear the reading of their father's will. Unbeknownst to them, their father harbored a deep suspicion that Ryan was responsible for Amanda's injuries and wasn't sure if he should inherit the camp or not. What is your opinion of Pete MacAllister's actions? Was it cowardly of him not to address his suspicions with Ryan himself? Do you think he was afraid of something?
2. Pete MacAllister didn't acknowledge that Sean was his son. Do you think he didn't know for certain that Sean was his? Why do you think he kept Sean a secret? Do you think Pete's wife, Ingrid, knew about Sean?

3. Ryan isn't presented as a very likable character at first—he's rough with his sister, motivated by money, and seems to have a dubious past. How did you feel about Ryan? Did your opinion of him change by the end? Why or why not?
4. Margaux seems to be the most well-adjusted of the five MacAllister children. Would you agree with that assessment? Do you think she feels guilty about what happened to Amanda? If so, how might that have affected her and the relationships she has with her family and others?
5. Mary seems to relate better to horses than people. Do you think she actually understands that what she did was wrong? Would she really have stayed quiet about it and let Ryan (or Sean) take the blame?
6. Kate has hidden her homosexuality from most of her family for years, while Liddie dresses in a manner that leads everyone to believe that she is transgender. Why are the twins not open about their real identities with their family members?
7. Sean has been holding on to his Camp Macaw life more than any of the MacAllister children. What is it about the camp that has such a hold over him? Will that change for him now that he knows he's a MacAllister and that Margaux is his half sister?
8. The MacAllisters run a summer camp for children and yet seem somewhat unattached to and uninterested in their own kids (except for Pete's spying adventures, of course). What would it be like to be raised by people whose primary job is to look after other children? Could that have contributed to the MacAllister children's obvious issues?
9. Attending summer camp is often seen as a rite of passage, giving children independence and new skills at key stages.

Does this novel make you reconsider sending your children to summer camp? Did you attend camp? Was it a formative experience for you?

INTERVIEW WITH CATHERINE MCKENZIE

This is your ninth novel—congratulations! How do you keep coming up with new ideas?

Thank you! I honestly don't know sometimes. The best way I can describe it is that I have lots of proto-ideas or scenarios floating around in my head, things like: I'd like to set a book at a camp; I'd like to write a reunion book; I'd like to write an Agatha Christie-type closed-circle mystery; I'd like to write about a large family. Then one day those all fused together and the idea for *I'll Never Tell* emerged in my mind, beginning, middle, and end.

Why did you choose a summer camp as the setting for this story?

I spent nine summers at the same camp (and eleven in total at sleep-away camp), so it's kind of ingrained in my DNA. I've always thought it was a unique experience—people have friendships there that don't occur in the “real” world; people are often different at camp from how they are in real life, and that can create intense bonds and emotions. So I've been looking to set a book in a camp for a while and finally had the right story to do it justice (hopefully).

Were the camps you attended similar to Camp Macaw?

I attended several different camps, but Camp Macaw certainly physically resembles the one I spent the most time in, a camp located in the Eastern Townships in Quebec. Camps tend to have a lot of common features though, like a craft shop, a lodge, various beaches, etc.

I'll Never Tell explores the various secrets that the MacAllister family keeps from one another. Secrets and lies have been prominent themes in many of your novels (*The Good Liar*, *Hidden*, *Fractured*). Why do you keep revisiting them?

I think everyone has secrets, and I like exploring how keeping them can affect lives under pressure. I also think that all books are about secrets in one way or another.

There are many different characters and perspectives in this novel. How did you keep the various voices distinct, and is it more challenging to write from seven points of view?

It was definitely a challenge—one of the ones I set for myself in the book. But the characters were all clear and distinct to me, and I hope that came through.

Who was the hardest character for you to write?

Probably Mary. She's holding on to important secrets, and structuring her thoughts was sometimes complicated.

Did you have a favorite character?

The twins were fun to write. I like the idea of complete opposites who are also identical.

Was there any special relevance to including the mention of the book *The Secret Garden* in this story?

It's a favorite book of mine from childhood, and it's also a book about secrets and families.

What can you tell us about your next novel?

I'm working on it!