

# GET WRITING! HEAR TIPS AND TRICKS FROM KAREN M. McMANUS

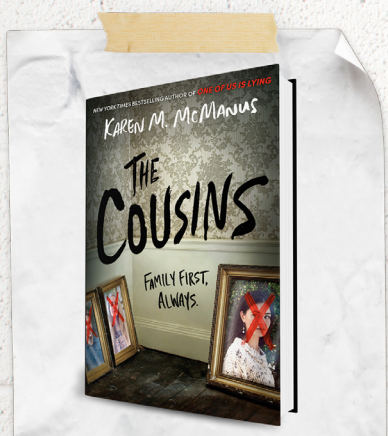
IN HER WRITING VIDEO, AND THEN USE THE FOLLOWING  
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND  
PROMPTS TO PLOT OUT YOUR OWN THRILLER!



- *One of Us Is Lying* has been described as *Pretty Little Liars* meets *The Breakfast Club*. What is it that makes high school dramas universal? Why do they continue to be relatable and entertaining? What book or film or show inspires you to create your own version of its story?
- What effect do the multiple perspectives have on each story? When brainstorming your own story with multiple perspectives, create detailed character outlines for each main character, including notes on their personality, their family, how they look and dress and talk, their likes and dislikes, and anything else that pops into your head.
- *One of Us Is Lying* and *One of Us Is Next* both include psychological manipulation. How do the characters manipulate each other? How does the author manipulate the reader? What devices do authors use to manipulate their readers? Share examples from books you've read or shows you've seen.



- When plotting thrillers, it is important to create a sense of urgency. This can be done with a countdown. It doesn't have to be a literal ticking clock—any looming threat will work. For example, in *Two Can Keep a Secret*, terrible things have happened in Echo Ridge around homecoming, so as that date approaches, the characters' suspicions and fears are magnified.
- In *Two Can Keep a Secret*, multiple members of one family are hiding things and lying. How do the different family members react when the truth is uncovered? Think of a story that centers around one family, with each member having different motives or goals.
- Writing tip: Use different types of tension. While you're escalating toward whatever your big reveal is, you can keep audiences invested by creating tension between or within characters and by creating smaller sub-mysteries that support the ultimate resolution.



- *The Cousins* is full of characters pretending to be people they're not. Which reveal surprised you the most? Why? And when did you figure it out? Think about how the timing of the reveal impacted your reading. Think of a story in which a character's true identity is hidden.
- Abraham Story's philosophy was "Family first, always." Do his children live by this motto? Brainstorm a story that references a specific motto. How will you incorporate the motto into the story?
- Multiple characters in *The Cousins* are driven by a need for revenge on behalf of their families. Who would you say was successful, and why? Why is revenge a strong motivator, especially in thrillers?