# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Questions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Lockhart: &quot;I rewrote We Were Liars about 15 times!&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author Interview: E. Lockhart</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion Questions

1. Do you trust Cady’s narration? Is she lying...or hallucinating?
2. Were the Liars justified in any way to commit the crime they committed?
3. Was the crime successful in any way?
4. Is the Sinclair family acting of their own free will or are they in some way merely moving through patterns established in fairy tales that existed long before them? Consider the author’s use of Shakespeare’s King Lear and Bronte’s Wuthering Heights.
5. Was the ending a surprise...or did you see it coming? Return to earlier passages in the book and locate instances of Lockhart’s of foreshadowing of events to come.
6. What does Cady come to learn at the end of the novel—what insights area gained?
7. The five sections of We Were Liars are entitled "Welcome," "Vermont," "Summer Seventeen," "Look, A Fire," and "Truth." Why does Lockhart choose to divide the book in this way?
8. Why doesn't anyone just come out and tell Cadence during summer seventeen that the other Liars are dead?
9. If Gat had been white, would Harris have treated him differently?
10. Why does Cadence's dad hate being a Sinclair?
11. Why doesn't Cadence's dad tell her, during their summer in Europe, what happened at Beechwood?
12. Can anyone besides Cadence see the Liars after their deaths? Does Carrie see Johnny?
13. Was it really heroic for the Liars to burn down Clairmont?
14. If Tipper had lived, would Harris have been less power-hungry?
15. What does Harris think Mirren, Johnny, and Gat were doing in Clairmont the night of the fire?
16. How is everyone able to write on the backs of both of their hands?
17. What does this story teach us about humanity?
18. What drives each of the family members?
19. What does Gat’s character add to the story?
20. How does lockhart unravel the plot?
21. What makes her an effective writer?
22. What is the message of this complex text?

http://www.shmoop.com/we-were-liars/questions.html
http://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/15-young-adult-fiction/9761-we-were-liars-lockhart?start=3
http://www.unleashingreaders.com/?p=3139
E Lockhart: "I rewrote We Were Liars about 15 times!"

Tuesday 19 August 2014, CaraErica

The author of the Guardian children's fiction prize longlisted book We Were Liarstakes our quickfire interview with site member CaraErica

Author E Lockhart: "I have been desperate and heartbroken and ambitious and angry."
Photograph: Heather Weston/Hot Key Books

Lockhart's book We Were Liars is a thing of pure beauty. But then tragedies often are – beautiful, until the blisteringly bittersweet end. But We Were Liars does more than just tell the story of a fairytale gone wrong: it confronts problems relevant to today's world, making it a reflective piece of literature, sure to go down as a modern classic.

With the opportunity to interview E Lockhart, I am fortunate enough to have some of my questions, about the book and the author behind it, answered. Hopefully, the ones I'm asking are those you would ask too!

How did you discover your passion for writing?
I was the only child of a playwright. I used to sit in the back of theaters and watch rehearsals, seeing how a story changed with revisions, cuts, changes in tone, lighting and inflections.

Which authors inspire you and why?
I am inspired by writers of the Spiderman comic books, Monty Python, Evelyn Waugh, John
Irving, and Alice Walker, among many, many others. I especially like writers who aggressively use stylized language to create a unique world.

**What do you enjoy most about your job?**
Some days I make something I am proud to have made.

**You mention you wrote your first novels in the third grade! How has your writing progressed since then and have you ever received criticism along the way?**
I took one college fiction writing class and got a B. The teacher didn't read my final stories because he said I was a "B student" and he knew it without reading them. That was unhelpful criticism. I didn't take any more writing classes. Later on I received huge amounts of useful criticism – ideas about how make my work better, given with respect for and interest in my projects – from editors and colleagues. I still get this kind of criticism and I adore it.

**Have you ever written books based on your own experience or do you prefer to draw from other sources of inspiration?**
The feelings in my stories always come from my own experience, but they are transposed into fictional situations. In *We Were Liars*, Cadence has chronic migraine pain, selective amnesia, a home on a private island, and a fortune coming to her. I have never had any of those things. But I have been desperate and heartbroken and ambitious and angry.

**Your writing is praised as revolutionary in the ways of modern literature. How did you create such a unique style?**
I do not think I am revolutionary at all. I think I am part of a long continuum of writers influenced by postmodernism and by high and low culture sources. I started by imitating the styles of writers I admired: Louise Rennison, Raymond Chandler and P.G. Wodehouse, to name a couple. Bit by bit, my own voice came together. Also, I rewrite a lot. I mean, a ton.

**It is often said that nothing today is original and partly this is true. However, We Were Liars takes advantage of this by combining well-known stories, such as King Lear and Wuthering Heights, and beautifully morphing them into something completely new. Why did you choose to intertwine these stories with your own and how did you think it would impact the reader?**
I started with the King Lear idea because sibling rivalry over money and love is a universal topic I wanted to explore, but I realized *We Were Liars* was connected to *Wuthering Heights* rather
late in the game. I have read Emily Brontë's novel many, many times, but I didn't see that I had brought it into my own work until I had done several drafts of my story.

**How difficult was it to not give the ending away in* We Were Liars* and why was it important for us to learn the truth alongside Cady?**

I have no trouble keeping the secrets of the story – and my readers have been wonderful. I think people have enjoyed finding creative ways of talking about *We Were Liars* without saying too much.

**How did you develop your ideas for* We Were Liars* to create such an intricate story line?**

I rewrote this novel maybe 15 times, and reorganized it over and over.

**In* We Were Liars* there are deviations to fairytale stories - what was your inspiration for these and why are they important?**

Fairy tales get told and retold because they tap into truths about human beings. I used the fairy tales in *We Were Liars* to have Cadence tell truths about her family that she felt were unspeakable any other way.

**How would you encourage others to pursue creative writing and what tips would you give to any wannabe writers?**

Read widely. To me it is that simple. Every new book you read puts language and imagery and storytelling techniques into your head that weren't there before.

**Having been longlisted for the 2014 Guardian children's fiction prize, how do you feel and what do you hope to achieve in the future through your writing?**

I am thrilled and surprised to be on this list along with some of my favorite writers. I hope to write books people want to argue about and read more than once!

[https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2014/aug/19/quickfire-e-lockhart-we-were-liars-childrens-fiction-prize](https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2014/aug/19/quickfire-e-lockhart-we-were-liars-childrens-fiction-prize)
Author Interview: E. Lockhart

E. Lockhart's newest novel, WE WERE LIARS, is a brilliant, beautiful and unforgettable read about a distinguished family with a shocking secret. After reading the novel, we couldn't wait to learn about what inspired the intriguing read, what Lockhart hopes readers get out of the novel and so much more! Find out for yourself with the interview below!

MISS LITERATI: What inspired you to write WE WERE LIARS?
E. LOCKHART: WE WERE LIARS is a suspense tale about a set of four very close friends — three cousins and an outsider — who spend every summer on a private island belonging to an iconic, old-money family. As they grow older, the friends begin to see the family differently — to uncover secrets. People lie to one another and to themselves. My central character, Cadence, wants to make her way to the truth.
I wanted to put my characters in an isolated setting because human interactions are intensified when people are trapped in close proximity.

MISS LITERATI: The book was so thrilling that it was impossible to put down! What advice can you give to our Miss Lits who want to write a page-turning novel?
E. LOCKHART: Thank you. My advice: Every scene in your book should either create curiosity in your reader or change the situation for your protagonist. If it doesn't do one of those things, the scene is deadweight.

MISS LITERATI: Readers feel a lot of emotions when reading the novel. How do you add emotion to your novels?
E. LOCKHART: In WE WERE LIARS, I dramatize a lot of incidents to show how they feel rather than what actually happens. For example, when Cadence’s father abandons her family at the start of the book, she reports that he shoots her in the heart with a handgun. Then she bleeds all over the lawn and her heart rolls out of her chest and beats disgustingy among the peonies in the garden.

But: He didn’t shoot her at all. It is pretty obvious. I use the gun to show how violent his abandonment feels to her. It’s a good technique if you don’t overuse it.

In first drafts I often avoid writing the deep emotional scenes. They are really difficult for me. I have to go back and layer them in, developing them with each revision.

MISS LITERATI: What do you hope readers get out of WE WERE LIARS?
E. LOCKHART: I hope it’s a page-turner that they want to talk about once they’ve read the ending.

MISS LITERATI: So far you have written nine books! Do you ever suffer from writer’s block? If so, how do you overcome it?
E. LOCKHART: Pretty much every day I begin work feeling that I can’t write. I just force myself to do it. I write something dumb or whatever seems easiest, like a description of a landscape. Alternately, I jump ahead in the plot and write some scene from closer to the ending. I write the new material stupid and rough and figure just getting those words on the page is good enough.

MISS LITERATI: Do you have any future writing projects in the works?
E. LOCKHART Yes. I can’t really talk about it except to say it will be told backwards.

MISS LITERATI: What are some of your favorite YA novels?
E. LOCKHART: Three that were published last year that I especially love:

Far Far Away by Tom McNeal
Teeth by Hannah Moskowitz
September Girls by Bennett Madison
MISS LITERATI: What advice do you have for aspiring young authors?

E. LOCKHART: Reading is like eating. If you don’t eat, you eventually keel over and die. If you don’t read, your writing brain eventually keels over and dies. It needs sustenance. Read as much and as widely as you can.

http://www.missliterati.com/author-interviews/e-lockhart