



## READING GROUP GUIDE



# No Filter and Other Lies

by **Crystal Maldonado**

### ABOUT THE BOOK

You should know, right now, that I'm a liar. They're usually little lies. Tiny lies. Baby lies. Not so much lies as lie *adjacent*. But they're still lies.

Twenty one-year-old Max Monroe has it all: beauty, friends, and a glittering life filled with adventure. With tons of followers on Instagram, her picture-perfect existence seems eminently enviable. . . except it's all fake. Max is actually 16-year-old Kat Sanchez, a quiet and sarcastic teenager living in drab Bakersfield, California. Nothing glamorous in *her* existence—just sprawl, bad house parties, a crap school year, and the awkwardness of dealing with her best friend Hari's unrequited love.

But while Kat's life is far from perfect, she thrives as Max: doling out advice, sharing beautiful photos, networking with famous influencers, even making a real friend in a follower named Elena. The closer Elena and "Max" get—texting, Snapping, and even calling—the more Kat feels she must keep up the façade. But when one of Max's posts goes ultra-viral and gets back to the very person she's been stealing photos from, her entire world – real *and* fake — comes crashing down around her. She has to figure out a way to get herself out of the huge web of lies she's created without hurting the people she loves. But it might already be too late.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In the opening sentence, Kat Sanchez says, "You should know, right now, that I'm a liar." (p. 1) Then she explains that her lies are usually little ones. Debate the difference in little lies and big ones. Explain what she means by "Not so much lies as lies-adjacent." (p. 1) Chart the many lies that Kat tells as the novel progresses. How does she lie to herself?
- Kat lives with her grandparents, but Leo, her younger brother, lives with her parents. Why does she feel she has to knock when she goes to her parents' house? Why is her mother intent on presenting them as a happy and functional family?
- The lie about where Kat lives haunts her. Explain what she means by "But this lie isn't mine. It was given to me by my mother." (p. 40) At what point does Kat get the courage to challenge her parents about this living arrangement? Why is she surprised when Leo takes up for her? How does this change Kat and Leo's relationship?

- Describe Kat’s grandparents. Discuss their unconditional love for her. Why did they agree to keep Kat when her parents moved out? Though Kat’s grandparents are rearing her, her parents, especially her mother, make the big decisions like curfew, etc. How is this unfair and confusing to Kat?
- Grandma extends Kat’s curfew on Halloween weekend. Discuss the friction this decision causes between Kat’s grandmother and her mom. Grandma insists that Kat respect her parents. Debate whether they deserve her respect.
- The need to belong is an underlying theme in the novel. What is the first hint that Kat’s sense of belonging is fragile? How does this need to belong contribute to the many lies that she tells?
- Hari lives in the shadow of his popular twin brother, Dev. Explain how this contributes to his insecurities about where he belongs. Draw a connection between Kat and Hari’s self-esteem issues and their need to belong
- Kat says that Hari has helped her understand the definition of “best friend.” Define “best friend” from Kat and Hari’s point of view. Kat says that one of her great comforts is hanging out with Hari. At what point does their friendship become fractured?
- Hari and Dev are grounded because of the party they hosted while their parents were away. Dev lies to his parents and escapes “house arrest.” What gives Kat the courage to rat on Dev to his parents? How is this a gesture of true friendship to Hari?
- Kat is an excellent photographer but struggles with getting her photos noticed on the internet. How does she become obsessed with her online presence? Explain how this obsession leads her down a dark path. Discuss what she means by “If anything, I’m simply taking a page out of my mom’s book. Why can’t I have my little fiction, too?” (p.122) What is her fiction?
- Kat craves the acceptance and adoration that Becca once had on her YouTube channel. Why did Becca give it all up? Becca is furious with Kat when she learns that Kat stole photos of her. How does she violate Becca’s trust? Discuss the consequences that Kat endures for her actions. What does Grandma mean when she says “It’s important not to mistake lies for control.” (p. 280)
- What is the first hint that Kat is searching for her sexual identity? Discuss Kat’s conversation with her grandmother about her sexual identity. How does Grandma give Kat the acceptance and understanding that she needs?
- Discuss what Kat learns from her mistakes. How does Kat’s father try mend his relationship with her? Most of Kat’s friends are making plans for their futures. What do you think is the next chapter in Kat’s life?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



photo credit: Crystal Maldonado

**Crystal Maldonado** is a young adult author with a lot of feelings. Her debut novel, *Fat Chance, Charlie Vega*, is a New England Book Award winner, a *Cosmopolitan* Best New Book, and a POPSUGAR Best New YA Novel. Her next novel, *No Filter and Other Lies*, explores teenage life in the social media age—and the lies we tell ourselves and others. By day, Crystal works in higher ed marketing, and by night, is a writer who loves Beyoncé, shopping, spending too much time on her phone, and being extra. Her work has also been published in *Latina*, BuzzFeed, and the *Hartford Courant*. She lives in western Massachusetts with her husband, daughter, and dog. Find her everywhere @crystalwrote or CrystalWrote.com.