

Charlotte Illes Is Not a Detective

by Katie Siegel



Book Club Kit



A Conversation with

Katie Siegel,

Author of

*Charlotte Illes
Is Not a Detective*



***Charlotte Illes Is Not a Detective* was originally a TikTok series created by you, and then you took that further by developing the idea into its own book. How did you come up with *Charlotte Illes Is Not a Detective*, both as a TikTok series and as a novel?**

The original idea for *Charlotte Illes Is Not a Detective* came when I was trying to develop ideas for a new web series to do on TikTok. I had just finished a series called *Lavinia Uada Isn't Afraid of Ghosts* (genuinely didn't make the titles similar on purpose—apparently my brain just really likes titles like that!), and was trying to figure out what people would be interested in seeing next. I came up with three ideas and made “pilots” for them to let my audience vote on which they wanted to see more of.

The *Charlotte Illes* pilot ended up being wildly popular, which I was happy about, because it was secretly my favorite of the three. After that, it just came down to developing a story that I knew I'd be able to film with very limited resources (and very helpful and talented friends).

For the novel, I knew I wanted to go beyond the story from the TikTok series, not just try to stretch it out to fill a book. I kind of see the two existing in alternate universes. They have similarities, but they do exist in different worlds. There's a bit from the web series where Lucy is pretending to be a delivery worker, which ended up kickstarting the idea for the bigger mystery of the book. It all evolved from there!



The chapter titles are very interesting and quirky—can you tell us more about how you created those and why you decided to include them?

I love a fun chapter title. I grew up on the Percy Jackson series by Rick Riordan—I feel like a lot of people around my age can pinpoint those books as a significant contributor to their sense of humor. I honestly didn't put much thought into whether or not I'd do the fun titles, I just started including them. Maybe I thought there was a chance I'd stop coming up with good titles and just throw the whole idea out, but I think I managed to keep it up. My best friend's favorite chapter title is, “Dale's Room (Derogatory).” It's one of the few things she specifically texted me about when she was first reading the book. That's why I do what I do.

What are some of the major differences between writing a novel and writing video content for social media consumption? Did you find that there were similarities, as well? What were they?

I'm a dialogue gal. I don't know if that's a result of writing for videos for so long, or maybe I love writing for videos because I love dialogue, or some combination of both. And I love conversational dialogue in books, so the dialogue writing ended up being a similar experience for both the book and the TikTok series. A big difference between the two is the non-dialogue stuff in the novel, like exploring what Charlotte is thinking and describing settings. I saved a lot of setting descriptions to work on at a later date, because I feel like I have to be in the right mindset for it. Sometimes I wish I could just draw a picture. I'm not a great artist, though, so that's *probably* not a good idea.

Besides Charlotte, who was your favorite character to write and develop?

This feels a bit like cheating, but I honestly have to say it's a tie between Lucy and Gabe, for different reasons. Lucy was a character who already semi-existed because of the web series, so it was a lot of fun to flesh out her character so much more than we got to do in the series. And Gabe was brand new to me as I started writing, but he's just so fun to have around, and I loved creating this person who became such a natural member of this trio.

If you could be any kid detective for the day, who would you choose?

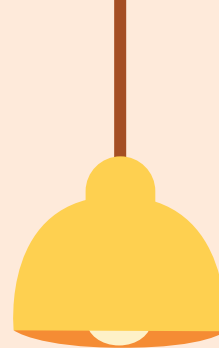
I would love to be Cam Jansen for a day. I feel like I have a not-great visual memory, so I want to see what it's like to have that photographic memory and just run around going "Click" all the time.

Throughout the book, we learn about some of the crimes that Lottie solved as a kid detective. Which one of the mysteries that she solved has been your favorite?

I have a soft spot for "The Case of the Missing School Supplies" from Charlotte's kindergarten year. It's simple and sweet, and marks the beginning of Lottie and Lucy's friendship. Hiding in closets, correcting your teacher, making a lifelong best friend—it has everything you could want!

What are you reading right now (and what's on your #TBR pile)?

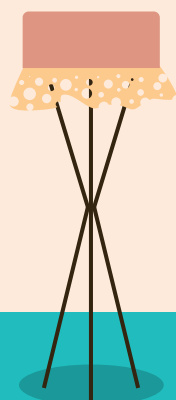
Ugh, I'm already behind on my reading goal for this year, but just a few books on my TBR that I'm looking forward to reading are *The Secret Service of Tea and Treason* by India Holton, *Highly Suspicious and Unfairly Cute* by Talia Hibbert, *The Sunbearer Trials* by Aiden Thomas, and *A Restless Truth* by Freya Marske.



What projects are you currently working on?

I'm always working on *Dear Liisphyra*, which is my scripted fantasy radio advice show podcast (available wherever you get your podcasts). I'm also working on a secret project related to that, which might be not-so-secret by the time people are reading this.

I am also constantly battling algorithms, which is what I call posting videos on TikTok and Instagram. I also recently finished a screenplay for an original sitcom that I'd been working on for a while, so I've been filling that void by working on a screenplay for a hypothetical *Charlotte Illes* film, just for fun (or for serious, if anyone wants to scoop those rights). And of course, I'm working on the second *Charlotte Illes* book, coming out in 2024! I'm also really trying to find time to clean my bedroom. I need to bump that up the list. Ugh.



Reading Group Guide for

Charlotte Illes Is Not a Detective



- 1.** Charlotte says she feels like everyone she knows has everything figured out. Is there something you feel like other people your age have gotten the hang of that you're still struggling to figure out?
- 2.** Was there a moment or specific clue in the mystery that you identified as significant early on? One that you missed?
- 3.** Charlotte sometimes struggles with keeping track of all the details of the mystery. When reading or watching mystery stories, do you find you're able to follow all the details, or do you forget some things?
- 4.** Each chapter has a unique title. Which one did you enjoy the most, and why?
- 5.** Which character in Charlotte's circle did you relate to the most, and why? Who did you relate to the least and why?
- 6.** Think about your favorite kid detective from your childhood (for instance Nancy Drew, Encyclopedia Brown, or Harriet the Spy). What do you think they would be doing as an adult? Do you think any of their stories would be similar to Charlotte's? Why or why not?
- 7.** Is there an activity from your childhood that you'd like to re-engage with now that you're older? Is there one you feel you're too old to ever do again?
- 8.** What would you like to see happen next for Charlotte?



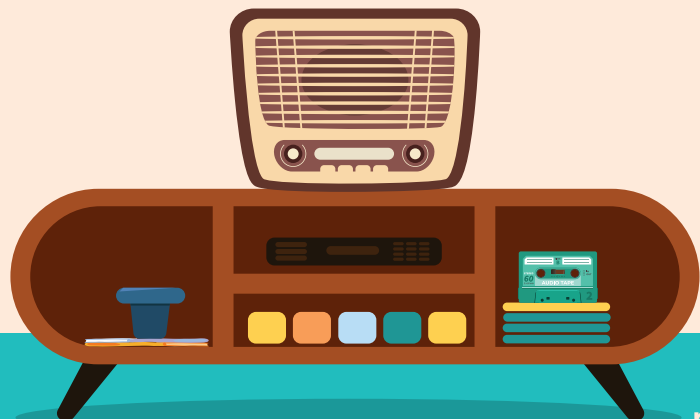
Charlotte Illes Is Not a Detective

Music Playlist



**Need some background music for your book club?
This playlist curated by the author will provide the perfect
vibes for your event. You can also listen to the playlist on
Spotify by clicking [here](#).**

01. "growing pains" by mxmtoon
02. "Lonely People" by Orla Gartland
03. "Younger" by Seinabo Sey
04. "Hurricanes" by Rina Sawayama
05. "NJ Transit" by Gossamer
06. "Young & Sad" by Noah Cyrus
07. "SCOOP (ft. Doja Cat)" by Lil Nas X
08. "Sarah Come Home" by Allie X
09. "Freak Show" by Ingrid Michaelson
10. "20 Something" by SZA
11. "Ribs" by Lorde
12. "With a Little Help From My Friends"
by the Beatles
13. "I Know A Place" by MUNA
14. "Ain't No Mountain High Enough"
by Marvin Gay & Tammi Terrell
15. "YOUTH" by Troye Sivan
16. "How It Ends" by FINNEAS
17. "Anxieties (Out of Time)" by The Regrettes
18. "All My Heroes" by Bleachers
19. "Nothing New (ft. Phoebe Bridgers)"
by Taylor Swift
20. "Nostalgia" by Uwade
21. "Landslide" by Fleetwood Mac
22. "As It Was" by Harry Styles
23. "I Am Not a Robot" by MARINA
24. "Quarter Life Crisis" by Taylor Bickett
25. "You're Not Special, Babe"
by Orla Gartland
26. "Secrets from a Girl (Who's Seen it All)"
by Lorde
27. "I'm Not Perfect (But I'm Trying)"
by Rachel Chinouriri
28. "Phantom" by Rina Sawayama
29. "Letter To The Past" by Brandi Carlile
30. "coming of age" by mxmtoon



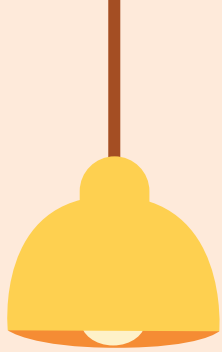
Character Quiz:

Are you a *Charlotte*, a *Lucy*, or a *Gabe*?

Take this short quiz to find out which *Charlotte Illes Is Not a Detective* character you resonate with the most!

- Q1.** It's Friday night. Your perfect night out would be:
1. Getting ice cream with my best friends.
 2. Trivia night at the local bar, even though the mozzarella sticks are horrible.
 3. Trick question: My perfect night out is a night in.
- Q2.** Are you a(n):
1. Ambivert
 2. Extrovert
 3. Introvert
- Q3.** You win \$1 million in the lottery. What's the first thing you do?
1. Put the money in a bank account.
 2. Quit my job and buy a first class plane ticket to somewhere with a beach.
 3. Get a lawyer. Don't tell a soul. Do you know how many people get murdered when they win the lottery?
- Q4.** Pick a reality TV show to watch:
1. *The Great British Bake Off*
 2. *Love Island*
 3. *Taskmaster*
- Q5.** What's an item that's high on your bucket list?
1. Swim with dolphins.
 2. Take one of those photos where it looks like you're holding up the Tower of Pisa.
 3. Go to a rage room and break something.
- Q6.** Pick a superpower:
1. Super strength
 2. Time travel
 3. Invisibility
- Q7.** You're splitting a tub of Neapolitan ice cream with your friends. Which flavor are you going for first?
1. Strawberry
 2. Chocolate
 3. Vanilla
- Q8.** Your friend says they're thinking about getting back with their ex. What do you do?
1. Gently suggest they take some time to really consider this.
 2. Offer to set them up with your *much* hotter friend (and then quickly try to find someone because you *just* made that friend up).
 3. Show them the video you made them record where they promised to never get back with their ex.
- Q9.** You're in New York City for the day. What're you doing?
1. Thrift shopping
 2. Seeing a Broadway show
 3. Going to a museum
- Q10.** How would your friends describe you in one word?
1. Kind
 2. Funny
 3. Loyal





Quiz Results

**If you got
mostly 1's:
You're a
Lucy.**

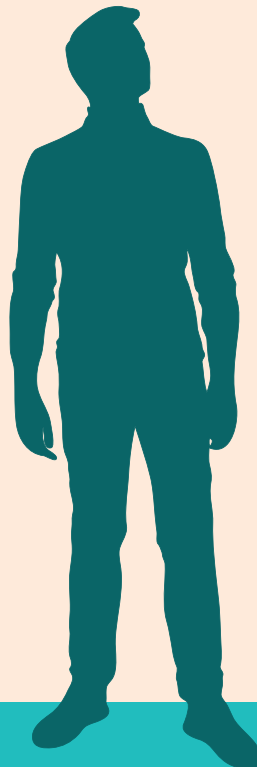
You are kind, loving, and might be the mom friend of your friend group. You enjoy helping others, and people feel safe around you.

**If you got
mostly 2's:
You're a
Gabe.**

You're the life of the party, and love having fun and making people laugh. You want to live life to the fullest, and will do almost anything for a good story.

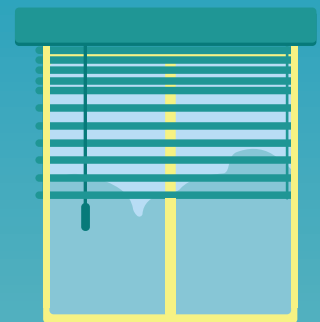
**If you got
mostly 3's:
You're a
Charlotte.**

You are practical, thoughtful, and incredibly loyal to the people in your tight-knit circle. You prefer quiet, peaceful situations, but aren't afraid of taking risks when the situation calls for it.



Look out for the next
"Not a Detective" mystery
starring Charlotte Illes,
Charlotte Illes Is Not a Teacher,
out July 23rd, 2024!

For more information on
Katie Siegel, visit her at:
www.katiefliesaway.com



P.S.: Want to hear a
special voice message
from Charlotte?
Call the Lottie Illes
Detective Agency
at 908-318-4612!

