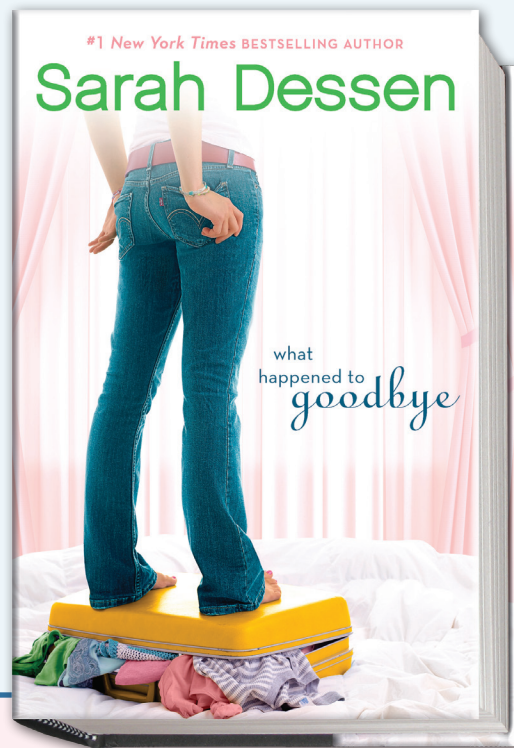


what happened to  
*goodbye*



HC: 978-0-670-01294-7 • \$19.99

Since her parents' bitter divorce, Mclean and her dad, a restaurant consultant, have been on the move—four towns in two years. Estranged from her mother and her mother's new family, Mclean has followed her dad in leaving the unhappy past behind. And each new place gives her a chance to try out a new persona: from cheerleader to drama diva. But now, for the first time, Mclean discovers a desire to stay in one place and just be herself—whatever that is. Perhaps her neighbor Dave, an academic superstar trying to be just a regular guy, can help her find out. Combining Sarah Dessen's trademark graceful writing, great characters, and compelling storytelling, *What Happened to Goodbye* is irresistible reading.

Discussion Questions for  
*What Happened to Goodbye*

- As the novel opens, and Mclean and her father visit Luna Blu for the first time, he tells her, "I see potential here" (page 1). What can readers infer about Gus from his reaction? In what ways does his positive attitude complicate life for himself and Mclean?
- Examine the novel's cover. In what ways is the image represented symbolic of the events of the book?
- After she changes her name on the first day at a new school, Mclean offers, "It was just so easy. Just like that, in the hurried moments between announcements, I wrapped up and put away sixteen years of my life and was born again" (page 6). In your opinion, why does Mclean embrace the opportunity to reinvent herself with each move she and her father make? How is this behavior indicative of her emotional state?
- How would you describe Mclean's family? Do you find them to be similar to most families? If so, in what ways? Is there anything about her experience to which you can personally relate?
- After seeing an online posting from a friend in a previous town remarking about her speedy departure, Mclean thinks, "But he was right. I hadn't said goodbye. It had been easier, like always, to just disappear, sparing myself the messy details of another farewell" (page 29). Do you agree with her assessment about goodbyes? Is it, in fact, easy to avoid them? What are possible ramifications of this approach?
- *What Happened to Goodbye* is told in first person; how would the story be different if someone besides Mclean were telling it? Do you think changing the point of view would make the story better or worse? Why?
- What role does basketball play in Mclean's life? In what ways is her rejection of the sport symbolic of the larger issues in her life?
- How would you characterize the relationship between Mclean and her mother? Do you believe Mclean has a right to be angry with her? Why or why not? How does their relationship evolve over the course of the novel?
- Consider Opal's reaction to the innovations proposed by Mclean's father, Gus, in regard to the operations at Luna Blu; why does she take his changes to the restaurant so personally? In what ways is her reaction telling about her life?
- In what ways is Mclean's life similar to Dave's? How are they different? What are some of the unique challenges faced by each of them? Do you think one has a significantly easier life? Explain your answer.

- Describe Mclean. What makes her a dynamic character? Are there elements in her life that remind you of your own experiences?
- How does constructing the model of the town help connect Mclean to her new friends and community? In what ways does this project bring out the best in each of the participants? What do the others get from the experience?
- Mclean reflects, "It was like when you ripped a piece of paper into two: no matter how you tried, the seams never fit exactly right again. It was what you couldn't see, those tiniest of pieces that were lost in the severing, and their absence kept everything from being complete" (page 165). How does her analogy capture the current state of her relationship with her parents? Why does Mclean feel so torn?
- Throughout *What Happened to Goodbye*, readers witness the complexities of the various relationships between the characters. Consider whose relationship seemed most similar to one of your own personal relationships. What about it reminded you of your experiences?
- In your opinion, why is Opal intimidated by council woman Lindsay Baker? Reflect on your own experiences with difficult or pushy people. What have you done to be more assertive, and what advice would you give to Opal to help her overcome this issue?
- After hearing her argument for the merits of moving often and not getting too attached, Dave tells Mclean, "But if you never really make friends, you probably don't have anyone to be your two a.m. . . . you know. The person you can call at two a.m. and, no matter what, you can count on them" (page 215). Do you agree with Dave's assessment that it's important to have such a person in your life? Why or why not?
- After Mclean runs away from her mother's beach house, she finds herself at the Poseidon; why is this motel so important to her? How does it serve as a symbol of the past and what she has lost?
- In what ways does finding evidence of Mclean's reinventions of herself finally propel her parents into understanding the toll their separation and divorce has had on her? Do you think their compromise will ultimately be a good one for Mclean? Why or why not?
- Explain the significance of the title, *What Happened to Goodbye*. In what ways does it accurately describe the events and relationships portrayed in the novel?
- Using the phrase, "This is a story about . . ." supply five words to describe *What Happened to Goodbye*. Explain your choices.

What's so great about Sarah Dessen?

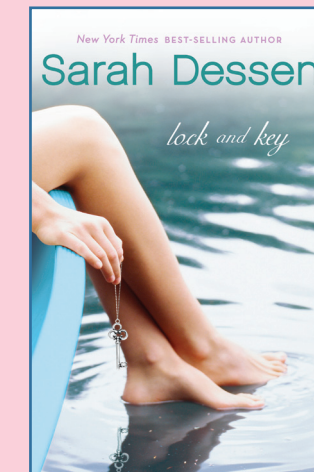
Read them all!



Visit the world of Sarah Dessen at [Sarah-land.com](http://Sarah-land.com)

Viking • Speak  
Divisions of Penguin Young Readers Group [www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians](http://www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians)

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9783001182425



HC: 978-0-670-01088-2 • \$18.99  
PB: 978-0-14-241472-9 • \$8.99

When Ruby's mother disappears, Ruby remains silent and lives alone. When she's discovered by the landlord, Ruby knows that the game is up. Social services place her in the care of Cora, the sister she hasn't seen in ten years, and Cora's husband Jamie, whose down-to-earth demeanor makes it hard for Ruby to believe he founded the most popular networking Web site around. A luxurious house, a fancy private school, a new wardrobe, the promise of college and a future—it's a dream come true. So why is Ruby such a reluctant Cinderella, wary and defensive? And why is Nate, the genial boy next door with some secrets of his own, unable to accept the help that Ruby is just learning to give?

Viking • Speak  
Divisions of Penguin Young Readers Group



HC: 978-0-670-06105-1 • \$18.99  
PB: 978-0-14-241097-4 • \$8.99

Last year, Annabel was the girl who has everything—at least that's the part she played in the television commercial for Kopf's Department Store. This year, she's the girl who has nothing: no best friend because mean-but-exciting Sophie dropped her, no peace at home since her older sister became anorexic, and no one to sit with at lunch. Until she meets Owen Armstrong. Tall, dark, and music obsessed, Owen is a reformed bad boy with a commitment to truth-telling. With Owen's help, maybe Annabel can face what happened the night she and Sophie stopped being friends.

Viking • Speak  
Divisions of Penguin Young Readers Group

## Discussion Questions for *Just Listen*

- Do you believe that people who seem to have everything are truly happy? Why or why not?
- Annabel is unable to talk about what has happened to her; why do you think she chooses to remain silent?
- Why does Annabel find it so difficult to be honest about her feelings in general? How have her own actions caused her to be in the miserable situation in which she finds herself?
- Due to the death of her own mother, Annabel's mother seems unaware of the emotional turmoil faced by her daughters. How does her emotional absence contribute to her daughters' problems?
- In what ways have Owen's issues with anger management shaped who he is today? Do you think he is a better friend to Annabel because of it? Why or why not?
- Owen tells Annabel, "Don't think or judge. Just listen." (page 183) Explain what you believe he means by this statement. Do you agree with him?
- In what ways could Annabel's family have dealt differently with Whitney's eating disorder?

## Discussion Questions for *Lock and Key*

- When Ruby is discovered living alone, why is she so afraid of being taken from the yellow house? Why does she want to prove that she can make it on her own? Why does her mother abandon her?
- The new life Cora offers Ruby is ideal in many ways: they live in a beautiful home, Ruby gets to attend a private school, and she has a family on whom she can count. Why do you think Ruby wants to reject this new life?
- What is the significance of Ruby attempting to run away from her sister's home? Why do you think she ultimately decides to remain?
- In what ways is Nate in denial about his relationship with his father? Do you think he is right to excuse his behavior?
- Discuss the significance of the necklace trend that Ruby unintentionally starts. Why is the charm so important? What do you think the key symbolizes?
- What does Ruby learn from her relationship with Nate? How are their relationships with their individual families similar? In what ways are they different?
- From your experience, do you think it's difficult for most people to reach out for help? To whom do you turn when you are in need?

## Discussion Questions for

- Why is it so difficult for Auden to feel like a "normal" teenager?
- In what ways are Hollis's and Auden's childhoods different? How has this affected them as they have matured and made important decisions about their lives?
- Auden and her new sister, Thisbe, are named after literary influences in her father's life. Why are names so important to Auden's dad, Robert? What does he believe the right name will do for his children? How does the baby's name cause a conflict between Auden's dad and Heidi? What does the result of their disagreement indicate about their relationship?
- Auden's mom tells her, "People don't change. If anything you get more set in your ways as you get older, not less" (page 13). Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Are there any characters in the novel who show considerable change throughout the course of the story?
- Explain the significance of the picture frame Hollis sends home to Auden; why does the inscription, "The Best of Times" bother her so much? How does this gift serve as a catalyst for change in Auden's plans?
- Why does Auden feel she needs to stay with her dad and Heidi after their baby is born? What does she hope to gain from her visit?
- In what ways is Robert contributing to Heidi's sense of helplessness and depression? How would you describe his character?
- On her first night in Colby, Auden has a personal encounter with Jake. Why does she regret her actions? How do the other characters regard her because of this experience?
- Auden's mother calls her daughter regularly in order to receive reports about how things are going at Auden's father's. Why does her mother show so much interest in Robert's life?
- From Auden's perspective, the girls she works with at Clementine's (Maggie, Leah, and Esther) are frivolous teenage girls. In what ways is her vision reshaped as she gets to know them more intimately?
- Do you think Auden's mother is threatened by her daughter's choice to spend the summer with her father and his new family? What does her mother fear will happen?

## Along for the Ride



- How does Auden's relationship with her stepmother, Heidi, change? What does Auden discover about Heidi throughout the course of the story?
- Auden's first encounter with Eli comes when she is taking her baby sister for a stroll in hopes of settling her down. When Eli observes the crying baby, Auden tells him, "It's been a long night." Eli comments, "Aren't they all." What can you infer from his statement?
- Describe Auden. Is she the type of person you would want to befriend? Why or why not?
- Auden thinks, "Stuff that would be weird in the bright light of day just wasn't so much once you passed a certain hour. It was like the dark just evened it all out, somehow." In what ways do the night time events liberate her?
- Since much of the action of the story takes place at night, do you think the relationship between Auden and Eli would have been the same if their time together had been during the day?
- In what ways are Auden and Eli similar? How are they different?
- Eli tells Auden, "It's never too late to have a happy childhood" (page 15). What does Eli do to help Auden change and grow as a person?
- Adam tells Auden, "It all counts. The bottom line is, what defines you isn't how many times you crash, but the number of times you get back on the bike. As long as it's one more, you're all good." Do you agree? Why or why not?
- In what way does Auden finally learn to go "along for the ride"?

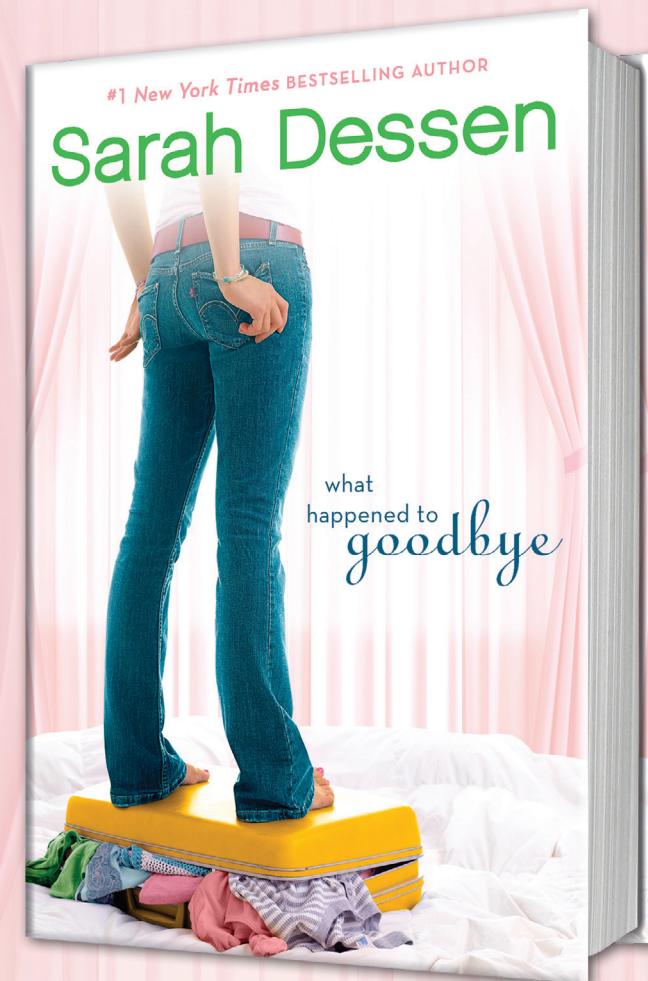
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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## Sarah Dessen

Sarah Dessen grew up in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and attended UNC-Chapel Hill, graduating with highest honors in Creative Writing. She is the author of ten novels, including *Someone Like You* and *Just Listen*. A motion picture based on her first two books, entitled *How to Deal* was released in 2003. Sarah lives in Chapel Hill with her husband, daughter, and two very spoiled dogs, where she spends her time gardening, watching bad TV shows, and trying to break her addiction to the clearance rack at Gap. Visit the world of Sarah Dessen at [www.sarah-land.com](http://www.sarah-land.com).



## Reading Group Guide

Read her once and

*fall in love*