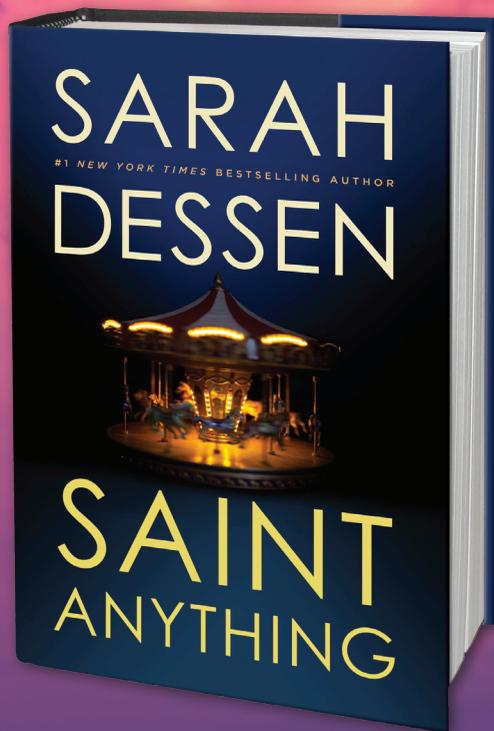


SARAH DESSEN

"Sarah Dessen is synonymous with contemporary YA fiction."

—*Entertainment Weekly*



COMING MAY 2015

ABOUT THE BOOK: Peyton, Sydney's charismatic older brother, has always been the star of the family, receiving the lion's share of their parents' attention and—lately—concern. When Peyton's increasingly reckless behavior culminates in an accident, a drunk driving conviction, and a jail sentence, Sydney is cast adrift, searching for her place in the family and the world. When everyone else is so worried about Peyton, is she the only one concerned about the victim of the accident?

Enter the Chathams, a warm, chaotic family who run a pizza parlor, play bluegrass on weekends, and pitch in to care for their mother, who has multiple sclerosis. Here Sydney experiences unquestioning acceptance. And here she meets Mac, gentle, watchful, and protective, who makes Sydney feel seen, really seen, for the first time.

The uber-popular Sarah Dessen explores her signature themes of family, self-discovery, and change in her twelfth novel, sure to delight her legions of fans.

PRAISE FOR SAINT ANYTHING

★ "Once again, Dessen demonstrates her tremendous skill in evoking **powerful emotions through careful, quiet prose**, while delivering a satisfying romance." —*Publisher's Weekly*, starred review

"A rich emotional landscape . . . A many-layered story told with a light touch."
—*Kirkus*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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 several 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 spoiled dogs where she spends her time gardening, watching bad TV, and trying to break her addiction to the clearance rack at Gap.

Visit her at www.sarahdessen.com.



SARAH DESSEN

Writing Prompts & Discussion Questions

QUESTIONS CAN BE USED AS WRITING PROMPTS OR ALTERNATIVELY, THEY CAN BE USED TO AS TARGETED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION.

- ★ When describing herself, Sydney states, “I was used to being invisible. People rarely saw me, and if they did, they never looked close. I wasn’t shiny and charming like my brother, stunning and graceful like my mother, or smart and dynamic like my friends. That’s the thing, though. You always think you want to be noticed. Until you are.” Why does Sydney go from wanting to be noticed to realizing that the sudden attention she is receiving isn’t something she particularly wanted? Have you ever been in a similar position? In what ways was your experience like hers? How was it different?
- ★ Consider the first time Layla and Sydney encounter each other—Sydney feels Layla watching her and without saying a word, Layla’s body language and eyes offer her a sense that she wants to make sure Sydney is ok. How does this first exchange between them set the course of their relationship after the two meet in school? In what ways does this experience offer readers a glimpse of the kind of person and friend Layla is? Reflecting upon what you learn about her through the course of the story, do you find that to remain consistent? Why or why not?
- ★ Peyton is described as “gorgeous” and that his looks had such an effect on people that once he realized their power, it was “like discovering a superpower, both thrilling and daunting, all at once.” Do you believe that having such a desirable physical appearance has benefits? What are the drawbacks? Do you believe that there’s a certain amount of pressure that comes with being highly attractive?
- ★ Sydney recalls that when she and Peyton played hide and seek as children, he took the game so seriously that he became almost impossible to find and as he shared, “You just have to find the invisible place.” In what ways does Sydney actually become quite good at doing so?
- ★ Why is it so difficult for Sydney to feel like a “normal” teenager? In what ways would her life be different had Peyton not gone to prison?
- ★ Sydney’s brother, Peyton, is treated very differently by their parents than she is. Why are their expectations for him so different? How are their parents different from each other?
- ★ How does Sydney’s relationship with her mother change? What does she discover about her mother throughout the course of the story?

SARAH DESSEN

Writing Prompts & Discussion Questions

QUESTIONS CAN BE USED AS WRITING PROMPTS OR ALTERNATIVELY, THEY CAN BE USED TO AS TARGETED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION.

- ★ Sydney explains that once Peyton moved to the upper school at Perkins Day, things began to change for him when he began to steal from the cafeteria and sneak off campus at lunch. She states, "This is when Peyton's legend began in earnest. He was bigger than life, bigger than our lives." Do you think teenagers are more vulnerable to temptation? Why might that be so? In what ways is Peyton's family not enough to keep him fulfilled?
- ★ Describe Sydney. Is she the type of person you would want to befriend? Why or why not?
- ★ When describing her dad, Sydney shares, "I grew up believing there was no problem my father couldn't solve. For much of my life, I'd never seen any proof otherwise." She describes her mother as a the family's "chief operating officer" that "if my mom did something, she did it right." Consider how Sydney's impression of her parents change throughout the course of the novel. Would you describe Sydney and Peyton's parents as typical parents? In what ways are they similar or different from your own?
- ★ What is it about reality TV shows that Sydney is so drawn to? In what ways do they fulfill a void in her life? How do they ultimately allow for a connection or commonality between Sydney and Peyton?
- ★ Why don't Peyton's parents show more concern for his earlier busts for drugs, shoplifting, and reckless driving?
- ★ In your opinion, what does Sydney hope to gain from leaving Perkins Day for Jackson High School? Do you think her choice is the right one or not? Defend your answer.
- ★ What is it about Seaside Pizza that draws Sydney in? How does it serve as a bridge from her old life at Perkins Day to her new one? In what ways does Seaside Pizza serve as a platform/catalyst in Sydney's journey of self-discovery?
- ★ Describe the Chatham family. What is it about them that Sydney is so drawn to? In what ways are they exactly what she needs?
- ★ Why do you believe Sydney's parents aren't able to see Ames in anything but a favorable light? What is it about him that causes Sydney such concern? How does Layla's understanding of the danger he poses help Sydney feel less alone?

SARAH DESSEN

Writing Prompts & Discussion Questions

QUESTIONS CAN BE USED AS WRITING PROMPTS OR ALTERNATIVELY, THEY CAN BE USED TO AS TARGETED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION.

- ★ Sydney shares that "It seemed impossible that someone I'd not known at all six months earlier was now often the only person who understood me." In what ways is her friendship with Layla different from her friendships with Jenn and Meredith? What does her relationship with Layla offer her that she hasn't had in a friendship before?
- ★ Compare and contrast Mac and Layla's home to Sydney's? In what ways are their dwellings indicative of the way their respective families operate? Which family would you prefer to be a part of and why?
- ★ Based on what Layla shares about her brother, has Mac's physical transformation changed him in any way? Do you believe he still sees himself as an overweight kid? How might this impact him in regards to his relationships with others?
- ★ Who is your favorite secondary character in the novel? What makes them so appealing to you?
- ★ In what ways are Sydney and Mac similar? How are they different? What makes them a compatible couple?
- ★ After asking permission to go to dinner at Layla's, Sydney finds out her mother wants her home for dinner to discuss issues concerning her brother. Julie, Sydney's mom declares, "I'm just tired of being the only one who seems to care about Peyton." Why do you think she reacts this way? Is she right to do so?
- ★ How does the Chatham family deal with their mother's illness? How does each child deal with her MS differently?
- ★ Mac tells Sydney, "The first time you came into Seaside, you weren't invisible, not to me. Just so you know." Why do you think he feels it's important for her to know this?
- ★ While considering her parents disinterest in the well being of the young man Peyton injured, Sydney reflects, "Not for the first time, I wondered if this was the reason I was so obsessed with David Ibarra and his aftermath and story. Someone had to carry the guilt. If my parents couldn't or wouldn't, it was left to me." Consider Sydney's feelings; do you think she's she should feel as she does?

SARAH DESSEN

Writing Prompts & Discussion Questions

QUESTIONS CAN BE USED AS WRITING PROMPTS OR ALTERNATIVELY, THEY CAN BE USED TO AS TARGETED QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION.

- ★ Explain the significance of the carousel Mac finds in the woods. Why does it seem so magical to Sydney?
- ★ After Mac apologizes to Sydney upon learning more about Peyton's problems and tells her he's sorry about what happened to him, she swiftly corrects him and states, "It didn't happen to him. He did something. There's a difference." Do you agree with that assessment?
- ★ Consider her parents' reactions to coming home and finding Sydney and her friends in their home; do you feel they reacted appropriately? Why or why not?
- ★ Examine how each member of Sydney's family deals with Peyton's incarceration. Why do you think their individual reactions and actions regarding their outreach to Peyton are so very different? Does Sydney have the right to be frustrated by her parents' choice to treat Peyton like a victim? Explain your position.
- ★ As Mac explains his mother's faith in patron saints, he shares, "She always liked the idea of protection, but especially since she got sick. I'm not wholly convinced. But I figure it can't hurt, you know?" In what ways does this offering give Sydney hope? In what ways does Mac become like a patron saint to her and why does the idea of a "Saint Anything" garner faith and trust in him and herself?