

## ***St. Anything***

By: Sarah Dessen

### *Grade Levels:*

- 9 – 12

### *Synopsis:*

- After her charismatic but troubled brother, Peyton, is incarcerated for paralyzing someone while driving drunk, Sydney is ready for a fresh start. She withdraws from an elite private school in favor of the local public school. Almost immediately, she befriends Layla, whose cheerful nature is contagious. Layla introduces Sydney to her close-knit family: her loving parents and handsome brother Mac. Though Layla's family has its share of problems, Sydney can't help but compare them to her family. Sydney's mother is in denial of Peyton's situation and her father has remained closed-off to his family's feelings. Meanwhile, Ames, a friend of Peyton's, comes to live with Sydney's family. Though Sydney's mother is enthralled by Ames, he has always made Sydney feel uncomfortable. Through her friendship with Layla and her growing romance with Mac, Sydney learns to trust her instincts regarding Ames, develop self-confidence in communicating with her parents, and come to terms with her brother's choices and crime.

### *Author Website:*

- <http://sarahdessen.com/>

### *Curricular Connections:*

- Juvenile detention centers, substance abuse, drunk driving, family life, relationships

### *Lesson Ideas:*

- Health: Examine the effects of Peyton's drunk driving accident on himself, his victim, and his family.
- Health, English: Compare and contrast Sydney and Layla's families
- English: Describe Sydney's "hero's journey".
- Health, Social Studies: Could Peyton's accident have been prevented? How can drunk driving accidents be decreased?
- Health: List factors that show how Sydney and Mac's relationship shows aspects of a healthy relationship.

### *Common Core Standards:*

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2](#)  
Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3](#)  
Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

*Suggested Companion Titles:*

- *This is What Happy Looks Like* by Jennifer E. Smith
- *The Porcupine of Truth* by Bill Konigsberg

*Professional Reviews*

- *Booklist* (04/01/2015)
- *Horn Book Guide* (10/01/2015)
- *Kirkus Reviews* (03/15/2015)
- *Library Media Connection* starred (12/01/2015)
- *Publishers Weekly* starred (02/16/ 2015)
- *School Library Journal* (04/01/2015)
- *Teacher Librarian* (06/01/2015)
- *Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)* starred (04/01/15)