

That Summer Study Guide

That Summer by Sarah Dessen

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Plot Summary

That Summer by Sarah Dessen portrays the struggles of a fifteen-year-old trying to accept the major changes in her life over which she has no control. With her parents' divorce, her father's second marriage and her sister's upcoming wedding, Haven feels she has no control over her life, so she dwells on memories of the summer that Ashley dated Sumner Lee and her family life seemed perfect. When Sumner Lee returns to Lakeview, Haven believes fate has sent him to remedy the past in some way, but she soon learns her memory does not mirror the actuality of the past. That Summer is a novel that explores the mindset of a teenage girl coming to terms with the past, accepting the present and looking forward to the future.

While attending Dad's second marriage to Lorna Queen, Haven dreads her sister Ashley's pending marriage to boring Lewis Warsher. She recalls the summer when Ashley dated Sumner Lee, their family went to Virginia Beach, and everything was perfect. Ashley cries at Dad's wedding because of the finality of the situation, but Haven never cries at weddings. While Ashley, Mom and Lydia stress over wedding plans, Haven laments her height, feeling gargantuan, and worries Mom will travel to Europe with Lydia after Ashley's wedding. Haven recalls how good things were when Ashley dated Sumner, and she recollects seeing Ashley dump Sumner on the front lawn after their Halloween party.

When Haven goes to dinner with Dad on Thursday night, she runs into Sumner who is working as a waiter, among other jobs, since he moved back to town a few weeks ago. She also sees him at the mall where she works at a children's shoe store and he is a security guard. Haven feels fate has sent Sumner back into her life to fix or alter the past somehow. After the final fitting for the bridesmaids' dresses, Mom informs Haven that she is considering selling the house since it is too big and expensive for just the two of them, and Haven suddenly dislikes all of the changes in her life which she has no control over. Haven encourages Sumner to visit Ashley, hoping he can bring back the sister she liked. She is distraught when she learns that Lorna is pregnant, so she turns to Sumner as proof that the time she looks back to actually happened.

Haven realizes how much she will miss Ashley once she is gone, and with wedding plans in an uproar the day before the wedding, Haven fights with a customer and gets fired. She is fed up with the changes in her life but feels she has finally grown into herself. When Ashley accuses her sister of being selfish for having a breakdown the day before her wedding, Haven runs off, but when she finds Sumner, he angers her by telling her that things are not how she remembers them when she blames Ashley for making him leave. Disappointed, Haven runs into the woods where Ashley finds her. When Haven asks about Sumner, Ashley explains she dumped him because she caught him cheating on her. He was the first boy to break Ashley's heart and the first boy to disappoint Haven. At Ashley's wedding, there is a lot that Haven wants to say to her sister, but when Ashley tells her that she loves her, Haven realizes some things do not need to be spoken between sisters. She finally acknowledges that the past does not

matter and begins to look forward to the future where there is plenty of time to make new happy memories.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

That Summer by Sarah Dessen portrays the struggles of a fifteen-year-old trying to accept the major changes in her life over which she has no control. With her parents' divorce, her father's second marriage and her sister's upcoming wedding, Haven feels she has no control over her life, so she dwells on memories of the summer that Ashley dated Sumner Lee and her family life seemed perfect. When Sumner Lee returns to Lakeview, Haven believes fate has sent him to remedy the past in some way, but she soon learns her memory does not mirror the actuality of the past. That Summer is a novel that explores the mindset of a teenage girl coming to terms with the past, accepting the present and looking forward to the future.

On the day that Dad gets remarried, Mom is awake at 6 A.M. defrosting the refrigerator, causing Haven to feel the usual desire to protect Mom from herself. Haven did not sleep well since Dad, the sports anchor for Channel 5, is marrying Lorna Queen, the weather girl, this afternoon. She, Mom and her sister, Ashley, used to wonder what Dad and Lorna were laughing about during the final minutes of the show, but it was not funny when they found out about Dad's affair. Mom always blames Dad, yet she reads books about divorce, trying to make it as easy as possible on Haven and Ashley. Still, it hurts, and Haven finds Mom's quietness more unnerving than any breakdown could be since Mom has always been dramatic. Ashley asks if Mom is going to the wedding since she was invited. Mom thinks it is in bad taste that Lorna invited her, and she will not attend Dad's second marriage. Haven cannot decide if Lorna is mean or just stupid, and Mom will not voice an opinion while Ashley insists that Lorna is just stupid because she cannot bear to criticize Dad. Haven is sad as Mom takes pictures of her and Ashley in their dresses, and she understands why Ashley wanted Mom to accompany them since it is so depressing to leave her behind. At the church, Ashley and Haven meet up with Lewis Warsher, Ashley's fiance, and as always, Ashley turns into a swooning belle as they are immediately connected. Ashley was not always like this. None of her other boyfriends affected her like Lewis, and Haven can recall major events in her life by the boy Ashley was dating at the time whose heart she eventually broke. Ashley met Lewis after the divorce when they both worked at the mall, and Mom says Ashley missed Dad and needed a protective figure which she found in Lewis. Lewis leads Ashley into the church as Haven follows, noting how different she and her sister look in their dresses. The church is filled with people since Dad knows everybody.

In the lobby, Aunt Ree greets the girls. She is there to represent Dad's family since they side with Mom after the divorce. After Aunt Ree asks about Ashley's wedding and compliments Haven's height, they go to help Lorna get dressed. Lorna tells Haven and Ashley they look beautiful, crying because she is so happy they are going to be a family. Ashley tells Lorna they are happy for her, speaking for Haven as usual where Lorna is concerned. With ten minutes left, Ashley helps Haven with her makeup, and this is the Ashley that Haven loved, away from Lewis and wedding plans. Neither of them can



cross the five year impasse between them. Ashley tells Haven not to cry, but Haven never cries at weddings. Helen, Lorna's sister, enters and greets the girls, asking about Ashley's wedding. Ashley is just ready to get it all over with. It is time, so they proceed to the church lobby. Haven is nervous as she follows Ashley down the aisle. Beaming as she walks down the aisle, Lorna kisses Helen, Ashley and Haven before Charlie Baker, the Channel 5 anchorman, hands her to Dad. As the minister begins, Haven looks around, wondering what Mom would think of this big ceremony. Ashley begins to cry, but Haven knows she is crying not because of the happiness of weddings but because of the finality of this and the fact that things will never go back to the way they were. Haven thinks of Mom at home and of other summers, long before Dad kissed his new bride.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Because there is something about summer that can change everything, everyone can point back to one summer that altered their life, and that summer was Haven's. While talking to Mom on the day of Dad's second wedding, Haven folds herself into a kitchen chair to seem as small as possible; she is very self-conscious about the fact that she has grown four inches since April and is now 5'11". Haven thinks about Dad's pending marriage to Lorna Queen and how he betrayed his wedding vows to her mother after meeting the Weather Pet. Mom tries to make the divorce as easy as possible on her daughters, Haven and Ashley, though she is obviously hurt by her husband's infidelity. Ashley is dramatic like Mom while Haven is calm like Dad. Their family functioned like science, but it is out-of-whack since Dad left. Ashley is twenty-one years old and was curvy and popular in high school. Haven thought Ashley's life seemed perfect then, but now Ashley scowls at her sister. Haven sees the butterfly tattoo that Ashley got when she was drunk in Myrtle Beach; Ashley was wild before she got engaged. Since Mom refuses to attend the wedding, Haven and Ashley leave without her. Haven wants to force Mom to come, but she does not because "at every wedding someone stays home" (page 7). As Ashley and Lewis are connected at the wedding, Haven thinks that she sees nothing spectacular about Lewis, and she finds it unsettling to watch her formerly tough sister shrink into his arms whenever the world rises up to face her. Entering the church, Haven recalls how she hated being able to hear Dad confess to Mom about his affair with Lorna. Crying, Mom told him to leave, and he moved in with Lorna. Dad took Ashley and Haven to lunch every Saturday, spending too much money to make up for his absence. That was a year and half ago, though, and now it is the day of his wedding, the first wedding that Haven is dreading this summer, foreshadowing Ashley's wedding and illuminating Haven's opinion about her sister's pending nuptials. As Ashley does Haven's makeup before the ceremony, Haven notes this is the Ashley she loves, setting up a contrast between her sister's former and current identities. As Haven walks down the aisle, Dad is smiling, and Haven keeps imagining his perfect rendition of the munchkins singing the Lollipop Guild song in "Wizard of Oz," but it does not happen because a wedding is serious business. Haven feels detached from Dad's second wedding. During the ceremony, Haven thinks about Mom and Dad's wedding as Dad says his vows seriously. Mom and Dad were married by a Justice of the Peace and had a low-key wedding reception in the Party Room of the Dominic Hotel in Atlantic City since Mom's father disapproved of the marriage and that was all Dad's family could



afford. When Ashley begins to cry, Haven indicates their sisterly connection by her knowledge that Ashley is crying because their lives will never go back to how they were, not because of the beauty of weddings. Unlike her sister, Haven never cries at weddings, foreshadowing her reaction to her sister's wedding in contrast to her father's.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Haven only remembers a few of Ashley's boyfriends beyond the dates and events they represent, and Sumner was the only one that mattered to her. Ashley met Sumner Lee at the beginning of tenth grade, and unlike the athletes she usually dated, he was skinny with black hair and blue eyes. Sumner was the type of person with whom one would want to spend the day, and he always stumbled into something interesting by accident. For example, when he took Ashley and Haven to the mall once, they ran into a commercial crew filming for a taste-test, and as the woman in charge urged the man to say it was the best cheese he had ever eaten, Sumner says the line. Though Ashley loved Sumner's craziness, it always embarrassed her. The crew filmed Sumner instead, and he became famous when the commercial aired. The summer after Haven finished fifth grade, her family went to Virginia Beach for a week, and Mom let Sumner drive Ashley and Haven down since he had to work late. Haven looks back to that day as when things were alright over the next few years when things got bad between her and her sister. Haven had sat in the back of Sumner's VW convertible and stared at the constellations as they sang along to music; everything had been perfect. In Virginia Beach, Ashley and Haven had shared a room while Sumner had slept on the couch on the other side of the wall, and he and Ashley would knock on the wall, attempting to communicate in code. Haven remembers every detail of that week in Virginia Beach in a way she cannot remember anything else, and when it had ended, she was sad it was over.

Everyone drinks, enjoying the reception, and it takes Haven forever to locate Dad in the crowd. She tells him that she is happy for him because it seems like the right thing to say, and Dad tells her it is important to him that she and Ashley are comfortable with this. He knows things will be smooth from now on and that Mom wants them to be, but Haven's stomach churns at the thought of Mom. When Ashley and Lewis join them, Ashley tells Dad she is happy, but Dad does not know that Lewis drove her around the block several times to allow her time to regain her composure before the reception. Dad tells Lewis he will be happy to have him in the family, and even Ashley looks uncomfortable by the way Dad speaks as if they are still one unit. Haven spends the reception listening to people talk about how tall she is before finally getting to go home. Mom is gardening when they get home. She has spent a lot of time gardening since the divorce, and Haven loves seeing Mom outside among the flowers. Mom asks about the wedding before holding sweet-smelling leaves to Haven's nose. Haven tells Mom that Ashley is drunk, and Mom tells her "we all have our ways of getting through" (page 34). Haven should comfort Mom then, but all she can do is follow her inside to the kitchen and think of how much she looks like Ashley, saying no right things as she watches Mom smell the lemon balm leaves.



Chapter 2 Analysis

Thinking about Ashley's past boyfriends, Haven notes that Sumner Lee is the only one who ever mattered to her. Sumner always had stumbled across adventure, and it had been fun for the McPhail family to go along for the ride. Normally, Ashley did not like hanging out with Haven, but Sumner had made her loosen up and enjoy things she normally would not have, like hanging out with her baby sister. Ashley had never laughed like she had with Sumner. She had always been pouty and quiet, but Sumner had made her warm and easygoing like summer itself. Haven recalls the week her family spent with Sumner in Virginia Beach. This is the time she looks back to when things are bad; she remembers this as the time when things between her family members were perfect. At the reception, Haven finds it disconcerting to realize she is taller than Dad now. She and her sister are both uncomfortable when Dad refers to their family as though they are still one unit, failing to recognize the rift he has wrought in his family. Lewis drives the girls home because Ashley is drunk, and Haven thinks about how quickly summer is passing; soon, she will be back in school and Ashley will move to Rock Ridge Apartments with Lewis. Ashley is ready to become someone else, and Haven and Mom will be left to remember what they can as they pass her empty room. Mom is gardening when the girls return home, a hobby she has taken up since the divorce, and though Haven yearns to comfort her mother, she is unable to think of anything comforting to say.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Haven wakes the next morning to a wedding crisis, hearing their neighbor, Lydia Catrell, talking to Mom at 8 A.M. about more problems from the troublesome bridesmaid, Carol Cliffordson. When Ashley enters the kitchen and learns Carol has cancelled again, she is furious that Carol is being so selfish and threatens to elope with Lewis before storming out of the house. Haven watches her sister standing on the front lawn in her nightgown, looking small and alone. Waiting until the storm dies down, Haven goes to the kitchen and grabs a Pop-Tart before rushing to work at Little Feet, the children's shoe store at the mall where she has worked since November. During her break, she walks to Dillard's where a stage is set up and a sign announces Lakeview Mall Models: Fall Spectacular. Everyone knows about the Lakeview Mall Models because of Gwendolyn Rogers, a local girl who began as a Lakeview Mall Model, has been on the cover of Vogue and does fashion correspondence on "Good Morning America." Haven has seen Gwendolyn once, when she had been about eight years old, sitting in front of her house, and Gwendolyn had waved at her. Ashley had tried out but had been too short to make it past the first round. This year's contest had taken place a few weeks ago, and Haven's best friend, Casey Melvin, had signed them both up. Terrified at the thought of walking alone in front of so many people, Haven hid at home on the day of tryouts. Fifteen girls had been chosen to become Lakeview Mall Models, and now, they are rehearsing for the Fall Spectacular that Sunday. As the girls pose, giggle and look important, Haven imagines herself dwarfing the girls. She walks away as they begin prancing around the stage.

Chapter 3 Analysis

The morning brings more problems with Ashley's wedding. One of her bridesmaids, Carol, has done nothing but cause problems. Carol is a distant cousin who had been Ashley's best friend for one summer at the age of twelve, and though Ashley had insisted that Carol must be one of her bridesmaids, Carol has objected to the dresses and then cancelled because her fiancé's family is coming to town the same weekend. She is supposed to leave directly after the wedding, but now her fiancé refuses to neglect his family to attend the wedding of a stranger. It is ironic when Ashley fumes about Carol being selfish by refusing to attend her wedding because Ashley is selfish during the wedding plans, treating others, especially Haven, as if they are insignificant. Haven goes to work where she describes her horrible job selling children's shoes. Since it is always her turn when it is slow, she helps the first customer, and when the little boy comments on her height, his mother chides him for being impolite; however, Haven is used to it because "kids are dead honest, no way around it" (page 45). When she notices the stage set up for the Lakeview Mall Models' Fall Spectacular, Haven explains how the Lakeview Mall Models are well-known because of Gwendolyn Rogers, a now-famous model who started her career in her hometown of Lakeview. As the new models

practice for the fashion show, Haven feels gigantic compared to them and is glad that she skipped tryouts, despite her best friend's insistence that her height would be an asset.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Haven listens to Mom pour her heart out to Lydia about Dad and other things she will never share with her daughters. Mom has Lydia, Ashley has Lewis, and Haven is alone on Thursday nights. Mom had gone to Las Vegas with Lydia's travel club, the Old-Timers, and is considering visiting Europe with them two weeks after Ashley's wedding but worries about leaving Haven alone. Ashley's wedding continues to consume their lives, promising disaster at any moment, and Mom's notes are like clues to allow Haven to share her concerns since she is only able to share Mom's concerns at a distance without Mom knowing. With Carol planning to be a bridesmaid again, Ashley is now concerned about her first sit-down dinner with Lewis's parents, and she asks Haven's advice about what to wear, wanting to send the right message so the Warshers will like her. Speaking carefully to avoid angering her sister since this is a rare moment since Ashley's engagement when she is not yelling at her, Haven assures her that the Warshers will like her. Still, Ashley worries what they will think of Dad and Lydia. When Lewis knocks on the door, Haven answers and puts the flowers he brings in water as he goes upstairs. It had not taken him long to feel at home in Ashley's house, and with Dad's absence, it makes sense that Ashley has found someone so normal and boring after the craziness of the divorce. Ashley had dated Sumner that whole Virginia Beach summer and the next fall. Ashley had been nice and even has a new best friend, Laurel Adams, a new girl that Ashley and Sumner introduced around town. On Halloween, Ashley and Sumner had taken Haven trick-or-treating before going to a party. Late that night, Haven had heard them fighting when Sumner dropped Ashley off. Ashley had refused to talk to him, telling him to just leave her alone no matter how much he begged. Ashley had slammed into the house, and Haven had seen Sumner standing on the lawn staring at Ashley's window before finally driving away. Getting into bed, Haven had known he would not be back because she had heard Ashley dump boys on the front lawn before and had recognized the finality in her voice. Sumner would disappear from their lives, and Ashley would have a new boyfriend within a week, changing herself to match the mannerisms of the new guy she would date, like a chameleon, as Sumner dropped into the ranks of the dismissed and broken-hearted with the impatient wave of Ashley's hand.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Lydia Catrell helps change Mom's life, aiding her in stepping into her own spotlight after Dad finally gets out of the way. Lydia, a widow, had blown into town like a cyclone and immediately pulled Mom in. Within a month, Mom had started dressing like Lydia and going to Ranzino's, the bar at Holiday Inn, every Thursday. When Mom smiles at Haven like she used to when things were better, Haven wants to pull her away from Lydia and the rest of the world to have Mom to herself, even if only for a little while. While helping her sister prepare for her dinner with the Warshers, Haven notes that Ashley has



become placating since she met Lewis. When Haven wonders if Mom will really go to Europe, Ashley thinks it will be good for Mom. She would have been wild to stay alone for a month at Haven's age, but it is good that her younger sister is not like her. Haven thinks of Ashley's boyfriends, especially Sumner, again. The McPhail family had always gravitated to Sumner when he had been at their house. It makes sense that Ashley has found someone as boring as Lewis after the craziness of the divorce because Ashley has always turned to a new boy when things get hard or lonely, but though she has always called the shots in her relationships, Ashley never shares her emotions, even when she is not the only one who is affected. Sumner would encourage Haven to stop hiding when she hung at the edges of the room to watch Ashley and Laurel, and Ashley had teased him about two-timing her with her sister, and this combined with the mention of Laurel Adams foreshadows the revelation that Sumner had cheated on Ashley. When Haven recalls Ashley dumping Sumner on the front lawn, it is obvious that Haven blames her older sister for making Sumner leave and that she believes their lives fell apart as a result of Sumner's absence.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Dad takes Haven to dinner every Thursday night. Ashley used to accompany them but has been too busy with the wedding lately. Dad tells Haven that Lorna wants to spend more time with her and Ashley and offers to send his three girls to the beach after Ashley's wedding, insisting that Haven would really like Lorna if she gave her a chance. His lecture is interrupted by Tony Trezzora greeting Dad as the waiter insists Haven needs pepper on her food. Haven nearly falls over when she recognizes Sumner whom she has not seen since a few weeks after Ashley broke up with him. He asks about Ashley and is surprised to learn she is getting married. Sumner and Dad catch up before Sumner has to leave for his other job. Sumner tells Haven to congratulate Ashley for him, and Haven claims she is sure Ashley would want to see him because it seems like the right thing to say, though she is uncertain whether it is true.

When they reach the house, Haven notes Ashley's scowl which means she is fighting with Lewis, and she explains this to Dad when Ashley does not return his wave. Ashley argues with Lewis because he did not defend her against his family's opinion, stomping off because she does not want to be around him now and is unsure when she will. Following her sister inside, Haven asks what is wrong, and Ashley tells her that Lewis's family ganged up on her when discussing the caterer and Carol. When they asked about Dad and the divorce, Lewis made it sound awful. Haven reminds Ashley that this is the truth even if it is embarrassing, but Ashley insists her sister does not understand since she is too young to worry about impressing anyone; though lots of people get divorced, no one else has their parents. Haven tells Ashley about seeing Sumner and how he asked about her, regretting it when Ashley seems indifferent. Ashley instructs Haven to tell Lewis she is sleeping if he calls because she does not feel like talking to anyone. When Haven expresses surprise at Ashley's lack of reaction to Sumner's presence, Ashley claims she does not have time to think about herself, let alone old boyfriends, and when Haven says she was glad to see Sumner, Ashley insists her sister did not know him like she did. Haven lets it go, like she does all things that make her sister sound tired and impatient because it is still important for her to stay in Ashley's good graces. Haven sits on the porch for a long time, unsure what she is waiting for, but there is still plenty of time for waiting because "it was still summer, at least for a while" (page 79).

Chapter 5 Analysis

When Haven goes out to dinner with Dad every Thursday night, it is always awkward at first, as if they do not know each other very well anymore. At dinner, someone always visits their table, but Haven is accustomed to sharing Dad since he is a local celebrity. Haven is shocked to see Sumner waiting tables at the restaurant. He explains he is taking some time off from school in Connecticut and just got into town a few weeks ago,



but he walks away just before Haven suggests he call Ashley which is probably for the best since it is unlikely she can handle a blast from the past right now. After she eats, Haven sees Sumner counting money in the back, and he waves her over, asking what is new besides the fact that she is tall and gorgeous. He says Haven should be grateful that she is tall, and when Haven claims she just wants to be normal, Sumner tells her that no one is normal. Sumner acts oddly when Haven suggests that Ashley would love to hear from him, foreshadowing the truth behind their break-up. On the way home, Dad confesses that he does not remember Sumner; all of Ashley's boyfriends blur together. As usual, Haven refuses Dad's offer of money to make up for his daily absence, thinking of Mom whenever she is tempted to accept. At home, Ashley and Lewis are fighting because he made the divorce sound so horrible while at dinner with his family, and when Haven points out that many people get divorced, Ashley argues that no one else has their parents though. When Haven tells Ashley about seeing Sumner, she is surprised by Ashley's complete indifference, and Ashley's comment that Haven did not know Sumner like she did again foreshadows the true reason behind their break-up.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

During the first week of August, there are two homecomings in Haven's neighborhood. First and of little importance to anyone else is Casey Melvin, Haven's best friend, who returns from 4-H camp with lots to tell about her new, long-distance boyfriend, Rick, from Hershey, PA. Casey shows Haven pictures from camp and talks incessantly about how much she misses Rick. She also informs Haven that Gwendolyn Rogers came home because she has a nervous breakdown after being badly hurt by a man and the modeling industry. When Casey's mom knocks on the door, Casey flicks her cigarette out the window, sparking a fire in the gutter, and after Mrs. Melvin smells smoke, an argument ensues during which Haven is asked to go home. Haven sees Sumner again at the mall later that week while she is on her break. He drives the security golf cart up to Haven and offers her a ride. Sumner stops at the stage and bows to an invisible public. Riding through the mall, Haven wants to pull the banners overhead down, thinking of how much has changed, and though she wants to ask Sumner if he knows how it feels to be tempted to go wild, she lets it go for now.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Haven is excited when her best friend returns home from summer camp, and Casey also informs her that Gwendolyn Rogers, the famous Lakeview Mall model, has returned home after having a nervous breakdown due to a man and the industry. It is supposed to be a secret, but Casey overheard her mother telling the neighbor about how Gwendolyn does not talk to her parents, does not sleep and walks through the neighborhood all night long. Haven leaves the Melvins' house after Casey gets in trouble when she is caught smoking. Later that week, Haven joins Sumner on a golf cart ride through the mall. With Sumner next to her, Haven sees the mall as undiscovered country since he has a way of making even ordinary things seem fun. He had always played with her and convinced Ashley to include her. Haven never forgets how Sumner stuck up for her. As they ride around, Haven is tempted to go wild because of all the changes in her life, but she lets it go for now; this foreshadows her eventual breakdown.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Haven continually runs into Sumner, partly because he has so many jobs, but she always thinks that it might be fate; he was meant to come back into her life and fix or change something. Ashley and Lewis fight and make up almost daily, and Haven finds it easier to like Lewis now that he is also suffering. With two weeks until the wedding, Mom and Ashley frantically go over the final plans. Mom chides Ashley for commenting that Haven has probably outgrown her dress because she knows Haven is sensitive about her height. Mom also lectures Ashley about her attitude concerning the wedding. Being stressed does not entitle her to be rude and selfish, and Mom wants Ashley to know how her behavior is affecting everyone else. Ashley knocks on Haven's door and apologizes for taking her stress out on her younger sister, also insisting that Haven will be grateful to be so tall someday. At the final fitting, Mrs. Bella Tungsten, the seamstress, says Haven's dress will be shorter than the others because she cannot let it down anymore. When Ashley asks Haven not to grow anymore for two weeks as a personal favor, Mom yells at her. Mom and Haven go to lunch at the mall, and Haven can tell something is bothering Mom so she asks what is wrong. Mom does not want to make any major decisions without consulting Haven since it will just be the two of them after the wedding. She is thinking about selling the house because it is too big and expensive for just the two of them. Haven objects, suddenly disliking all of these changes in her life that she has no control over; "a marriage, a sister, a house, each an elemental part of me, now gone" (page 107). Mom calms Haven down, suggesting maybe they can work something out. Apologizing, Haven engages in small talk to end lunch on a good note. Then, she sits alone to put off going to work and looks out at the mall where parameters are neatly marked and only Sumner seems out of bounds. When Sumner approaches, Haven tells him what is going on with the house, and he recalls how tough it was when his parents got divorced. Haven wishes she could go somewhere. Sumner asks how Ashley responded when Haven told her she saw him, wondering if she ran screaming at the mention of his name, and Haven says Ashley said to tell him hi, unable to tell him she was indifferent. Sumner is surprised that Ashley remembered him, but Haven claims he is not so forgettable, suggesting he visit Ashley at work at the Vive cosmetics counter in Dillard's. Sumner does not think that is a good idea, but Haven does not understand why since it is not like he ever did anything to her. Sumner looks at Haven oddly before saying he has to get back to work. Haven tells him to think about it since Ashley did not hate him. She does not know why this is so important to her; maybe she thinks Sumner can bring back the Ashley that she liked. Haven watches Sumner walk away until he is lost to her.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Since Haven keeps running into Sumner, she is convinced that fate has brought him back into her life to fix or change the past somehow. Though she knows it sounds silly, it



is hard to dismiss his timing. Ashley apologizes to Haven after Mom lectures her about how her attitude affects everyone else. Haven teases Ashley that she is used to it. Because Ashley's bedroom is next to Haven's, she knows when her sister cries herself to sleep or has nightmares, forming a strange, unintentional bond between them since Ashley tries to keep her feelings private. Haven will be sad to see her sister leave home in only two weeks. During the final dress fitting, Haven feels gargantuan and is embarrassed because the dress is shorter on her than on the other bridesmaids. This reemphasizes her self-consciousness about her height. When Mom talks to Haven about selling the house, Haven begins to resent all of the life changes over which she has no control, and though she squashes the feeling, the resentment foreshadows her inevitable breakdown. Sumner's belief that Ashley may have run away at the mention of his name and his reluctant attitude about seeing Ashley foreshadows the revelation of the reason behind their break-up.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Though Casey is grounded for smoking, drinking, long-distance calls and disappearing for an entire day, Mrs. Melvin allows her to visit Haven because she is sick of dealing with her daughter. Casey discusses her plans to sneak off and visit Rick when she gets her license soon, and when Haven objects that it is a bad idea, Casey insists Haven does not understand since she has never been in love. Casey stops short as she notices Gwendolyn Rogers standing in the middle of the yard, and Gwendolyn is so tall she makes Haven feel small for the first time in a long while. Gwendolyn looks at the girls, but Haven doubts she actually sees them. Casey notes that Gwendolyn looks horrible as Haven drags her away. When Casey and Haven stop at the Melvins' house for Casey to check in, Haven watches the news on television and is shocked when Lorna announces she is pregnant. The Melvins stare at Haven who insists she needs to go home. Sumner pulls up and offers Haven a ride, and when she tells him that Lorna is pregnant, he assures her that Dad is not forgetting her and it will all work out. It seems Haven is always dealing with a crisis when she sees Sumner, but he always knows what to say. Sumner drops Haven off so he can go to work at the senior center where he teaches dance. Haven did not know Sumner could dance, so he tells her he taught Ashley every dance she knows. Ashley is incredible at the waltz, but she always wants to lead since she has never been much of a follower. As Sumner drives away, Haven thinks of Dad, Lorna and the baby, realizing that even Sumner cannot make some things go away.

Chapter 8 Analysis

As Casey talks about her plans regarding Rick, Haven notes that her best friend has changed a lot this summer. She feels she cannot talk to anyone; "Sumner seemed like the only one who listened at all, the only one who asked for nothing and took nothing from me" (page 116). Haven is distraught when she learns from the news that Lorna is pregnant. Realizing that Dad's life is progressing as she walks home, Haven gets the feeling that indicates another change in her life is about to take place and she must prepare for the aftermath, but she is tired of hanging on. She wants to cry because everything seems out of control, but she needs to be somewhere else. This further foreshadows Haven's imminent breakdown. Luckily, Sumner arrives and manages to calm Haven down; however, even Sumner cannot change the fact that Dad is having a baby with Lorna. Haven suppresses her emotions again, building toward an emotional break.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

This weekend is the official premiere of the Lakeview Models, and the Fall Fashion show has been altered to include a special appearance by Gwendolyn Rogers who Haven thinks about a lot lately. Casey meets Haven at the show, complaining that Rick's parents will not let her talk to Rick when she calls. When Gwendolyn is introduced, she seems lost and uncomfortable as she climbs to the stage and thanks the audience for having her. The show commences with the models gyrating and prancing about in suggestive apparel that sends a large portion of the audience fleeing. Gwendolyn's head is bowed as if watching is too much for her, and when they bring her back on stage for pictures at the end, she bursts into tears. As her mother leads her away, Gwendolyn laments "it's so awful, they just don't know how awful it is, those poor girls" (page 137). When Casey comments that Gwendolyn must have really gone crazy to break down in front of so many people, Haven argues that she is sick. They come upon Sumner, and Haven introduces him to Casey. Haven assures him that he is the best of Ashley's ex-boyfriends, dragging Casey away when she starts to flirt because she is not sure she wants to share Sumner with Casey or anyone. Casey mocks Haven for being such a good girl, but Sumner insists Haven is wild before leaving. Casey asks why Haven did not tell her she is after a guy at the mall, but she cannot understand because her whole life has not changed in the past few years.

Chapter 9 Analysis

At the Fall Fashion show, Haven thinks about how much Casey has changed this summer as her best friend continues obsessing about Rick, and she wonders if her own changes are as obvious. Gwendolyn's breakdown on stage and Haven's defense of the model foreshadows and parallels Haven's pending breakdown. When Haven introduces Casey to Sumner, Sumner announces that he likes to think of himself as a family friend, not just another of Ashley's ex-boyfriends, because he wants to believe he made his mark. This foreshadows the discovery of exactly how Sumner made his mark on Ashley and Haven's lives. Haven is revolted when Casey suggests that Haven is interested in Sumner. Casey does not understand because her life has not been completely altered in the past few years; Sumner is proof that the time Haven looks back to actually happened, and that is exactly what she needs this summer.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Eight days before the wedding, Ashley goes to her bachelorette party which consists of strippers and tequila after dinner. Haven falls asleep on the couch, watching television, and wakes to the doorbell to find Ashley splayed out on the front porch with men's underwear around her neck. Haven thinks about how much she will miss her sister once she is gone. After Haven situates Ashley on the couch with a trashcan, Ashley calls her back to talk, saying she will miss her and that Lewis is the only one who has ever cared about her. She tells Haven that everything will be alright and they have to think about the good times instead of worrying about the past and what happened at the end. Haven needs to grow up and realize it is no one's fault, and at least they had good times, like that perfect summer at the beach. Haven reminds Ashley that Sumner was there, and Ashley sleepily agrees that he was the best before passing out. Haven pulls the blanket over Ashley and watches her dream. In the morning, Ashley is very sick, but Lewis brings her hangover remedies, chiding her for partying so hard instead of spending a relaxing evening like he did. When Haven mentions the men's underwear, Lewis is furious that Ashley went to a strip club because they promised not to do that kind of traditional stuff. That vow had been meaningless so he wonders if the others will be, before he leaves angrily. That night, Casey calls Haven to meet in between their houses, and when they meet up, Casey is in tears because Rick broke up with her. He had had his parents tell her he was not home, hoping she would lose interest. There is only so much one can do in these situations, so Haven comforts Casey as she cries.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Haven shows her unwavering devotion to her sister when she tends to a drunken Ashley after her bachelorette party. The men's underwear around her neck foreshadow her argument with Lewis. Haven has not seen Ashley drunk in a long time because her sister had given up drinking when she met Lewis in order to become bland like him. Haven feels Lewis saps her sister's individuality and spunk. Ashley tries to comfort Haven, telling her that they cannot dwell on the past because no one is to blame. When Lewis visits to tend Ashley the next morning, earlier foreshadowing is fulfilled when an argument ensues after Haven mentions the men's underwear her sister had worn around her neck the previous night. Ashley is furious at Haven, but Haven does not feel bad because she is sure she owes her sister for something nasty that Ashley has done to her, so instead she savors her last act of revenge against her sister. This attitude indicates Haven's belief that she is losing her sister because Ashley is getting married. Later, Casey turns to Haven because she is heartbroken when Rick breaks up with her. Haven has never been in love, but she has watched others weather it so now she sits with her best friend and holds her, trying to shoulder some of the hurt. This indicates Haven's empathetic nature which will draw her closer to Ashley when she learns the true nature of Ashley's break-up with Sumner.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

With three days to go, the house is in an uproar with wedding plans. Working early the day before Ashley's wedding, Haven gets in an argument with a customer who, furious they do not have the shoe she wants in the right size, throws the shoe at Haven, and Haven chases the woman through the mall and hits her in the forehead with the shoe, running out of the mall as the woman threatens to have her fired. Reaching the edge of the parking lot, she hears Sumner calling her but cannot stop, even for him. At the neighborhood park, Haven tries to figure out what came over her, but instead of thinking about today, she thinks about that Virginia Beach summer, wishing she could go back and start over. She misses who they were then, but "one summer and one boy, and suddenly things weren't the same" (page 162). At home, Ashley is furious because Carol has cancelled again, and when Mom follows Haven upstairs to ask about her issues at work, Haven refuses to discuss it. Shutting her door, Haven tells Mom this is not about Ashley for once. Mom reminds her that Dad is coming because Haven promised she would shop for Ashley's wedding gift with him. Laying on her bed, Haven tries to ignore them talking about her as Ashley calls her selfish for having a nervous breakdown so close to the wedding. Since it is too late to cancel on Dad, Haven dresses and waits for him on the porch, but she ignores his beeping because she wants him to walk up to the house and claim her, to cross the line she did not draw since this stopped being shared property. Mom looks out the window, and Dad pulls away as Haven watches, hidden.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Haven resents everyone lately and feels things are coming to a head, foreshadowing her imminent breakdown. She also feels like she is finally growing into herself which is both amazing and terrifying simultaneously, and this indicates that Haven is nearing a peaceful emotional state that can only be achieved after her breakdown. At work, Haven gets into an argument with a customer, beginning the fulfillment of the foreshadowing regarding her breakdown. Haven wonders if Gwendolyn has ever felt so lost and searching for peace, indicating her association with Gwendolyn and the fact that her breakdown is incomplete. Refusing to discuss things with Mom, Haven feels guilty but pushes it away; she is tired of protecting Mom from Dad, forgiving Dad for leaving them and letting Ashley hurt her just because she is the bride. When Dad arrives to take Haven shopping, she waits for him to approach the house, indicating that she is tired of her parents' behavior and tired of playing peacemaker without concern for her own feelings as she has been doing since the divorce. Haven finally takes a stand in this chapter and begins to focus on her own needs instead of everyone else's.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

It seems like forever since Dad drove away because this is the longest day of her life, and as she lies in bed listening to Ashley pack and Mom talk to Lydia, she thinks of the quiet that will come later when it is only her and Mom. Ashley calls out to her as Haven passes Ashley's room, and as Haven stands tall and waiting, Ashley asks if she is alright. She is concerned by how Haven treated Mom, claiming it suddenly seems that Haven does not care about anyone but herself. When she claims Haven is being selfish and she asks her to keep whatever is bothering her to herself until after tomorrow, Haven laughs because Ashley has been selfish for the past six months. Ashley says she has worked too hard to let Haven ruin her day out of spite, so Haven tells her to shut up and goes downstairs where Mom and Lydia stare at her as if she is no longer recognizable. With nowhere to go and nothing to do, she wanders around downtown, imagining the crisis at home where everyone must wonder what has happened to her. Only Sumner, who had managed to breathe life into her this summer, would be on her side. Haven calls Casey who tells her Mom is frantically looking for her for fear she will ditch the rehearsal dinner at 6:30 P.M. tonight. Feeling like a fugitive, Haven realizes she needs a better place to hide than the neighborhood park, and as she walks toward the street, she hears Sumner's car. Unable to get his attention, she walks toward the senior center, and inside, she hears a woman commenting on how beautiful she is. She finds Sumner at a table where he picks for each dance "a wallflower wanting to join in but with something stopping her" (page 181). For the last dance, Sumner convinces Haven to dance, and though she does not dance, she closes her eyes and allows him to lead her across the floor, not thinking about how tall and awkward she feels. When the music stops, the seniors are circled around Sumner and Haven, applauding. In Sumner's car, he tries to find out what is wrong. Haven admits she is mad at Ashley, and when Sumner reminds her the wedding is stressful, she says she has had problems with Ashley before the wedding. She had been different with Sumner; he changed her, and she laughed more. Haven expects anger or sympathy from Sumner, but he drives silently. When he heads toward her house, Haven refuses to go home, so they drive toward the mall and pull over. Haven nearly cries because Sumner sounds fed up and does not understand, so she explains how much has changed since Ashley sent him away. Sumner says there is a lot that Haven does not understand, but Haven does not want to talk about her sister whom she hates and blames for Sumner leaving. Sumner angrily claims he cannot deal with this because there had been a lot involved with him and Ashley and it had not been the way Haven remembers it. When he insists on taking her home, Haven exits the car into the rain, "knowing I couldn't go back to him, that he wasn't what I'd wanted him to be. Maybe he never had been" (page 187).

Cutting through the woods that lead to her neighborhood, Haven gets lost, and when she runs into a clearing, she stumbles into someone, Gwendolyn. Haven and Gwendolyn stare at each other for a long time, and Gwendolyn touches Haven's face as if unsure she is real. Haven wants to say something about what they have in common to



make this real, but Gwendolyn offers a small smile as if "she knew me, had lost me along the way and only now found me again, here" (page 189). When Ashley calls Haven's name, Gwendolyn pulls back as Haven faces her sister. Ashley is worried because Sumner stopped by the house to tell them that Haven ran into the woods, and when she asks what happened to Haven today, Haven wants to put the whole day behind her, but first she needs to ask Ashley one thing: why did she dump Sumner? Ashley tells Haven that Sumner cheated on her with Laurel Adams, and Ashley caught them at that Halloween party. Realizing Haven never knew, Ashley informs her sister that Sumner broke her heart, and when Haven does not believe it, Ashley insists she loved him and he hurt her badly, warning her sister that sometimes the good guys, even those one wants to believe in, turn out to be liars. Sumner begged for forgiveness, but that did not change what he did. She says maybe it is a good thing that no one else is like Sumner because it is impossible to love anyone like that more than once in a lifetime since it hurts too much. Driving home, Haven and Ashley do not talk. Haven thinks about Sumner, that summer and how he affected her and Ashley both, though differently. Sumner is the first boy to have broken Ashley's heart, and he is the first boy to have let Haven down when he had taken the myth away.

Chapter 12 Analysis

In the middle of August, Haven wakes from a nap from a bad dream on a particularly hot day where someone had been showing her things while leading her down the street. Though she has hated her body since she grew, she draws herself up and thinks of the power in height as she showers, seeing herself differently. Haven argues with Ashley, finally standing up for herself, and during their fight, it is ironic that Ashley calls Haven selfish when Haven tries to control her emotions to protect her family members while Ashley takes her stress out on everyone around her. Feeling the tether to Mom snap when she goes downstairs, Haven refuses to discuss it, no longer caring if Mom goes to Europe or sells their house. Leaving the house and passing the mall, Haven is someone else, thinking only about putting distance between herself and what she left behind. Haven succumbs to her emotions and spends some time alone, contemplating the changes to her life. When Casey offers to meet her, Haven promises she is on her way home, though she is not sure that is true; "I liked this freedom and I wasn't ready to share it" (page 177). Needing to find another place to hide, Haven seeks Sumner and dances with him at the senior center. There is something special about Sumner, and Haven gets to be part of it again for the length of a song. When Haven talks to Sumner, she confesses that she blames Ashley for breaking up with Sumner and the subsequent rift in her family. She is furious when Sumner claims she does not understand, and his uncharacteristic agitation foreshadows the truth behind his break-up with Ashley. Running from Sumner, Haven flees into the woods where she encounters Gwendolyn who looks at Haven as if she lost her and just found her again. Haven seems to reciprocate this feeling of finding herself at this point, revealing the importance of her association with Gwendolyn. When Ashley finds Haven, Haven asks about Sumner, and the earlier foreshadowing is fulfilled when Ashley explains that she broke up with Sumner because he cheated on her. Haven is very disappointed in Sumner because she realizes the past had not been as perfect as she remembers it. Ashley knows that



Haven does not like Lewis, but Ashley needs to be able to trust someone she loves; after Sumner and Dad, she had been losing faith in everything. When Haven objects that she thinks Sumner still loves Ashley, Ashley argues that he loved the fifteen-year-old girl she used to be who trusted everyone but she is not that girl anymore. On their way home, Haven thinks over what her sister said, and she wants to tell Ashley that she is right, the first boy is always the hardest, but some things are understood between sisters without needing to be said. Haven's breakdown is completed at this point, fulfilling the foreshadowing throughout the novel leading up to this point. Now, she is able to continue on to the next step, finding peace.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

When Mom announces it is time, Mom and Lydia praise how beautiful Haven looks. They both always cry at weddings, but Mom knows that Haven will be the strong one. After Haven had come home last night, Mom simply had hugged her, and Mom, Haven and Ashley had spent the night talking about old times. Holding Mom's hand as they walk to the car, Haven thinks they will now start over with their own memories. Haven will start her own timeline with her own boyfriends. She wants to tell Ashley, but the church is too crowded. Walking down the aisle, Haven wishes she could apologize to Ashley for yesterday and explain that now she understands about Sumner and "how he had brought us back together and given us something in common again" (page 197). Last night, Haven had been unable to think ahead to this day and what would follow it. As "Here Comes the Bride" begins, Ashley appears, looking beautiful as Lewis blushes and Mom begins to cry. Thinking of all that she and her sister have been through, Haven also begins to cry. She wants to say it all when Ashley looks at her, but as Ashley hugs Haven and whispers that she loves her, Haven realizes she does not need to say anything because her sister is wiser than she gives her credit for. She knows then that there is no time for Ashley and her to think back to that summer and the boy who disappointed them; there is only the future and plenty of time to start over.

Chapter 13 Analysis

When Haven goes home, Haven, Mom and Ashley reminisce about the past. It is a good place to start over, and Haven will look back to that night once Ashley is gone and she and Mom try to fill the house without her. Haven is now able to look forward to the future where there is plenty of time to start over. She will get a new job and make Mom go to Europe, and she will let Ashley go, knowing her sister will be happy with Lewis. Haven wants to explain all of this to Ashley, but she realizes Ashley understands because some things do not need to be spoken between sisters. Ashley may understand what happened to Haven during that summer of weddings and beginnings, and Ashley is right: the first boy is always the hardest. Haven is able to move forward with her life after facing and dealing with her emotions. Because Haven finally realizes that the past she looks back to had not been perfect, she can accept the imperfection of the present and begin to look forward to the future, knowing that the bad will be tempered with the good.



Characters

Haven McPhail

Haven McPhail is the main character and the narrator of *That Summer*. She is a fifteen-year-old girl who is trying to accept the major changes that have occurred in her life over the past few years which she has no control over. While attending Dad's second marriage to Lorna Queen, Haven dreads her sister Ashley's pending marriage to boring Lewis Warsher. She recalls the summer when Ashley dated Sumner Lee, their family went to Virginia Beach, and everything was perfect. Ashley cries at Dad's wedding because of the finality of the situation, but Haven never cries at weddings. While Ashley, Mom and Lydia stress over wedding plans, Haven laments her height, feeling gargantuan, and worries Mom will travel to Europe with Lydia after Ashley's wedding. Haven recalls how good things had been when Ashley dated Sumner, and she recollects seeing Ashley dump Sumner on the front lawn after their Halloween party.

When Haven goes to dinner with Dad on Thursday night, she runs into Sumner who is working as a waiter, among other jobs, since he moved back to town a few weeks ago. She also sees him at the mall where she works at a children's shoe store and he is a security guard. Haven feels fate has sent Sumner back into her life to fix or alter the past somehow. After the final fitting for the bridesmaids' dresses, Mom informs Haven that she is considering selling the house since it is too big and expensive for just the two of them, and Haven suddenly dislikes all of the changes in her life which she has no control over. Haven encourages Sumner to visit Ashley, hoping he can bring back the sister she liked. She is distraught when she learns that Lorna is pregnant, so she turns to Sumner as proof that the time she looks back to actually happened. Haven realizes how much she will miss Ashley once she is gone, and with wedding plans in an uproar the day before the wedding, Haven fights with a customer and gets fired. She is fed up with the changes in her life but feels she has finally grown into herself. When Ashley accuses her sister of being selfish for having a breakdown the day before her wedding, Haven runs off, but when she finds Sumner, he angers her by telling her that things are not how she remembers them when she blames Ashley for making him leave. Disappointed, Haven runs into the woods where Ashley finds her. When Haven asks about Sumner, Ashley explains she dumped him because she caught him cheating on her. He is the first boy to have broken Ashley's heart and the first boy to disappoint Haven. At Ashley's wedding, there is a lot that Haven wants to say to her sister, but when Ashley tells her that she loves her, Haven realizes some things do not need to be spoken between sisters. She finally acknowledges that the past does not matter and begins to look forward to the future where there is plenty of time to make new happy memories.



Ashley McPhail

Ashley McPhail is Haven's twenty-one-year-old older sister. Ashley is very dramatic, and she had been wild when she was younger. Ashley is engaged to Lewis Warsher whom she met shortly after Mom and Dad's divorce, needing the protective figure after Dad left. Ashley turns into a swooning belle as soon as she sees Lewis, but Ashley had not always been like this. None of her other boyfriends affected her like Lewis, and Haven can recall major events in her life by the boy Ashley had been dating at the time whose heart she eventually had broken.

At Dad's wedding, Ashley cries at the finality of things and the realization that things will never go back to how they were. The summer after tenth grade, Ashley had dated Sumner Lee, the only boy for whom Haven ever really had cared. Normally, Ashley had not liked hanging out with Haven, but Sumner had made her loosen up and enjoy things she normally would not, like hanging out with her baby sister. Ashley had never laughed like she did with Sumner. She had always been pouty and quiet, but Sumner had made her warm and easygoing like summer itself. Ashley has Lewis drive her around the block several times before the reception to give her time to regain her composure, and she assures Dad that she is happy for him.

Haven is upset because Ashley is ready to become someone else. When Ashley is upset about Carol backing out of the wedding again, Haven wants to comfort her sister but does not know how. She tries to reassure Ashley that the Warshers will like her before her dinner with her fiance's parents, but Ashley insists Haven does not understand because she is too young to worry about impressing anyone. Since Ashley sounds impatient and tired when Haven mentions running into Sumner, Haven lets it go like she does all things that irritate her sister because it is still important to her to stay in Ashley's good graces. Mom chides Ashley for commenting on Haven's height and for taking her wedding stress out on her younger sister, so Ashley apologizes.

Ashley's bedroom is next to Haven's so she knows when her sister cries herself to sleep or has nightmares, forming a strange, unintentional bond between them. After Ashley's bachelorette party, Haven tends to her drunken older sister, thinking about how much she will miss Ashley after she is married and lives somewhere else. She causes an argument between Ashley and Lewis the next day when she mentions that Ashley had come home wearing men's underwear around her neck. Ashley is furious at Haven, but Haven does not feel badly because she is sure she owes Ashley for something nasty, so instead she savors her last act of revenge against her sister. On the day before Ashley's wedding, Ashley and Haven argue when Ashley accuses Haven of being selfish and trying to ruin her big day out of spite. Haven runs off, and when she finds Sumner, she admits she is mad at Ashley, reminding him that she has had problems with her sister long before the wedding. Later, Ashley finds Haven in the woods, and she tells Haven that she had broken up with Sumner because he had cheated on her. He had been the first boy to break her heart, and Ashley tells her younger sister that the first boy is always the hardest. At Ashley's wedding, Ashley hugs Haven and whispers that she loves her, causing Haven to realize she does not need to say anything because



her sister is wiser than she gives her credit for. There is no time for Ashley and Haven to think back to that summer and the boy who disappointed them; there is only the future and plenty of time to start over.

Sumner Lee

Sumner Lee is Ashley's ex-boyfriend from the summer after tenth grade. He constantly stumbles into adventures, and Haven remembers him because she liked her sister while Ashley had been dating Sumner. When he reappears, Haven looks to Sumner to somehow fix the past because she blames her family's problems on Ashley dumping Sumner. When Haven finally learns that Ashley broke up with Sumner because he cheated on her, she is disappointed in him. Sumner is the first boy to break Ashley's heart and the first boy to disappoint Haven.

Mac McPhail

Mac McPhail is Haven and Ashley's dad who cheated on Mom with Lorna Queen, the Channel 5 weather girl. He is a sports anchor for Channel 5. Dad marries Lorna at the beginning of the novel, and they announce they are pregnant near the end. He takes Haven to dinner every Thursday night, tries to push his daughters to like Lorna and offers them money constantly to make up for his daily absence.

Mom

Mom is Haven and Ashley's mother who Mac cheated on. She tries to make the divorce as easy as possible on her children. Haven feels protective of Mom at first, but eventually the tether snaps because she grows tired of the life changes which she has no control over.

Lorna Queen

Lorna Queen is Dad's second wife whom he marries at the beginning of the book. She is the weather girl for Channel 5. Pretty and perky, Lorna is only five years older than Ashley, but she wants to be a family with her step-daughters. She announces her pregnancy on the news near the end of the novel.

Gwendolyn Rogers

Gwendolyn Rogers is the famous former Lakeview Mall model who returns home when she suffers a nervous breakdown because she is badly hurt by a man and the modeling industry. Haven associates with Gwendolyn and thinks about her incessantly.



Casey Melvin

Casey Melvin is Haven's best friend who spends the summer at 4-H camp and comes home very different. Her long-distance boyfriend, Rick, breaks her heart when he dumps her.

Lydia Catrell

Lydia Catrell is the McPhails' widowed neighbor who helps Mom come into her own spotlight after the divorce and helps plan Ashley's wedding.

Lewis Warsher

Lewis Warsher is Ashley's boring fiance.



Objects/Places

Lakeview

Lakeview is the main setting of this novel. It is the small town where Haven lives and where the narrative takes place.

Lakeview Mall

Lakeview Mall is the local shopping mall where Haven, Ashley and Sumner all work. This is where the Lakeview Mall Models hold their Fall Fashion show where Gwendolyn Rogers has a nervous breakdown.

Rock Ridge Apartments

Rock Ridge Apartments is where Ashley plans to move with Lewis after their wedding.

Little Feet

Little Feet is the children's shoe store at the mall where Haven works. She is fired the day before Ashley's wedding after a confrontation with a customer where she hits the woman in the forehead with a shoe.

Ranzino's

Ranzino's is the bar at Holiday Inn where Mom goes every Thursday night with Lydia.

Virginia Beach

Virginia Beach is where the McPhails had gone on vacation the summer that Ashley had dated Sumner. Haven looks back to this perfect week after things get bad between her and her sister.

McPhails' House

The McPhails' house is Haven's home where she lives with Mom and Ashley. Dad used to live with them, but since he left Mom for Lorna, he does not even cross the imaginary boundary at the driveway. Soon, Ashley will move out to live with Lewis after their wedding, and Mom considers selling the house because it is too big and expensive for just her and Haven.



Melvins' House

The Melvins' house is Casey's family's home which is down the street from Haven's house. There is always some sort of excitement going on, and Haven spends a lot of time at the Melvin's house during her parents' divorce.

Dad's Wedding

Dad's wedding occurs at the beginning of the novel. His second marriage to Lorna Queen is a lavish affair, and Haven is uncomfortable and sad because it indicates the finality of things, proving her family will never go back to how it was.

Ashley's Wedding

Ashley's wedding occurs at the end of the novel, and the narrative is consumed by the tumultuous wedding plans. Haven dreads losing her sister, but she finally comes to terms with everything and is happy for her sister. This is the first wedding that Haven ever cries during.



Themes

Changes in Haven's Life

The most important theme in *That Summer* is that of the changes in Haven's life and how she feels about them. The novel begins with Haven's father's second marriage to Lorna Queen during which Haven recalls the traumatic effects that his infidelity and the divorce have had on her family. Additionally, Haven thinks about the fact that her older sister, Ashley, is marrying Lewis at the end of summer, and this leads to her comparing Ashley as a wild teenager to Ashley as a twenty-one-year-old engaged to boring Lewis Warsher. As Dad and Lorna say their vows, Ashley cries because of the finality of this and the fact that things will never go back to the way they were. In contrast to the current instability of her family, Haven recalls the summer that Ashley dated Sumner and how happy her family had been during their vacation to Virginia Beach that year. On the way home from Dad's wedding, Haven laments the fact that Ashley is ready to become someone else and will soon leave Haven and Mom to remember what they can as they pass her empty room. Another major change in Haven's life that has occurred recently is her height. She has grown four inches since April, and she feels gawky and uncomfortable at 5'11". Haven also fears Mom going to Europe after Ashley's wedding because she will be left alone for a month in a house that once belonged to a family of four, now reduced to only two. When her best friend, Casey Melvin, returns from 4-H camp, Haven is disturbed by how much Casey has changed during the summer.

When Haven runs into Sumner during dinner with Dad, she feels he has come back into her life to fix or change something. When Mom discusses the possibility of selling their house because it is too big and expensive for only her and Haven, Haven objects, suddenly disliking all of these changes in her life that she has no control over; "a marriage, a sister, a house, each an elemental part of me, now gone" (page 107). Haven tries to encourage Sumner to visit Ashley, thinking that perhaps he can bring back the version of her sister that she once liked. When Lorna announces she is pregnant on the news, Haven is distraught. Realizing that Dad's new life is progressing as she walks home, Haven gets the feeling that indicates another change in her life is about to take place and she must prepare for the aftermath, but she is tired of hanging on. She wants to cry because everything seems out of control, but she needs to be somewhere else. Three days before Ashley's wedding, Haven resents everyone lately and feels things are coming to a head. She also feels like she is finally growing into herself which is both amazing and scary simultaneously. The day before the wedding, she gets into a fight with a customer and is fired from her job, and then, she fights with Ashley later that day. Haven is tired of protecting Mom from Dad, forgiving Dad for leaving them and letting Ashley hurt her just because she is the bride. Haven runs off, thinking only about putting distance between herself and what she left behind. After having her breakdown and learning that Ashley dumped Sumner because he cheated on her, Haven is finally able to move forward. She realizes that the past had not been as perfect as she remembers which helps her accept the imperfect present, and in turn, she is able to look forward to the future. She knows then that there is no time for Ashley



and her to think back to that summer and the boy who disappointed them; there is only the future and plenty of time to start over.

Haven's Insecurities

Throughout this novel, Haven is very insecure about her height. While talking to Mom, Haven folds herself into a kitchen chair to seem as small as possible; she is very self-conscious about the fact that she has grown four inches since April and is now 5'11". At the wedding, Aunt Ree and many other guests comment on Haven's height, making her uncomfortable. At the reception, she finds it disconcerting to realize she is taller than Dad now. When a little boy at work comments on her height, his mother chides him for being impolite; however, Haven is used to it because "kids are dead honest, no way around it" (page 45). A few weeks earlier, Casey Melvin, Haven's best friend, signed them both up to try out as Lakeview Mall Models, claiming Haven had the best chance because of her height, but Haven hid at home on the day of tryouts because the thought of walking alone in front of so many people terrified her. While watching the newly chosen models rehearse, Haven imagines herself dwarfing the other girls. When Haven runs into Sumner, Sumner tells Haven that she should be grateful that she is tall, and when Haven claims she just wants to be normal, Sumner tells her that no one is normal.

Two weeks before the wedding, Mom chides Ashley for commenting that Haven has probably outgrown her dress because she knows Haven is sensitive about her height. Mom also lectures Ashley about her attitude concerning the wedding. When Ashley apologizes to Haven for her attitude, she also insists Haven will be grateful to be tall someday. Haven doubts it but thanks Ashley for trying. At the final fitting for the bridesmaid dresses, Mrs. Bella Tungsten, the seamstress, says Haven's dress will be shorter than the others because she cannot let it down anymore. Haven is embarrassed and feels gargantuan. When Ashley asks Haven not to grow anymore for two weeks as a personal favor, Mom yells at her. As Ashley's wedding approaches, Haven begins to resent everyone, but she feels like she is finally growing into herself which is both amazing and terrifying. Though she has hated her body since she grew, she draws herself up and thinks of the power in height as she showers, seeing herself differently. At the senior center during her nervous breakdown, Haven hears a woman commenting on how beautiful she is. By Ashley's wedding at the end of the novel, Haven has finally come to terms with the changes in her life, including her height. She no longer feels insecure or out of control; now, she knows that she can look forward to the future where there is plenty of time to start over.

Haven and Ashley's Relationship

Haven and Ashley's relationship plays a large role in *That Summer* as Haven often argues with her sister and compares their present relationship to the relationship they had when Ashley had been dating Sumner years earlier. Before Dad's wedding, Ashley scowls at Haven when she enters the kitchen, and at the wedding, Haven comments on how Ashley acts around Lewis, noting that she does not like how her sister has



changed. With ten minutes left before Dad's wedding begins, Ashley helps Haven with her makeup, and this is the Ashley that Haven loved, away from Lewis and wedding plans. Unfortunately, neither of them can cross the five year impasse between them. As Dad says his vows, Ashley begins to cry, but Haven knows she is crying not because of the happiness of weddings but because of the finality of this and the fact that things will never go back to the way they were; she knows this because of the connection between her and her sister. Haven recalls how different Ashley had been when she dated Sumner Lee. Sumner had forced Ashley to loosen up and even enjoy hanging out with her baby sister. Haven looks back to that time as when things were alright over the next few years when things got bad between her and her sister. When Ashley is upset about Carol backing out of the wedding again, Haven wants to comfort her sister but does not know how. She tries to reassure Ashley that the Warshers will like her before her dinner with her fiance's parents, but Ashley insists Haven does not understand because she is too young to worry about impressing anyone. Since Ashley sounds impatient and tired when Haven mentions running into Sumner, Haven lets it go like she does all things that irritate her sister because it is still important to her to stay in Ashley's good graces. Mom chides Ashley for commenting on Haven's height and for taking her wedding stress out on her younger sister, so Ashley apologizes.

Ashley's bedroom is next to Haven's so she knows when her sister cries herself to sleep or has nightmares, forming a strange, unintentional bond between them. Haven will be sad to see her sister leave in only two weeks. Haven repeatedly encourages Sumner to visit Ashley, and she suggests that this is so important to her because maybe she thinks Sumner can bring back the Ashley that she liked. Haven is comforted by Sumner's presence because he is proof that the time she looks back to actually happened. After Ashley's bachelorette party, Haven tends to her drunken older sister, thinking about how much she will miss Ashley after she is married and lives somewhere else. She causes an argument between Ashley and Lewis the next day when she mentions that Ashley had come home wearing men's underwear around her neck. Ashley is furious at Haven, but Haven does not feel badly because she is sure she owes Ashley for something nasty, so instead she savors her last act of revenge against her sister. On the day before Ashley's wedding, Ashley and Haven argue when Ashley accuses Haven of being selfish and trying to ruin her big day out of spite. Haven runs off, and when she finds Sumner, she admits she is mad at Ashley, reminding him that she has had problems with her sister long before the wedding. Later, Ashley finds Haven in the woods, and Haven learns why Ashley had broken up with Sumner. Haven thinks about Sumner, that summer and how he had affected her and Ashley both, though differently. Sumner is the first boy to have broken Ashley's heart, and he is the first boy to let Haven down when he takes the myth away. Haven wants to tell Ashley that she is right, the first boy is always the hardest, but some things are understood between sisters without needing to be said. At Ashley's wedding, Haven wants to tell her sister all of the things she has realized. She wants to apologize to Ashley for yesterday and explain that now she understands about Sumner and "how he had brought us back together and given us something in common again" (page 197). Thinking of all that she and her sister have been through, Haven also begins to cry. She wants to say it all when Ashley looks at her, but as Ashley hugs Haven and whispers that she loves her, Haven realizes she does not need to say anything because her sister is wiser than she gives her credit for.

She knows then that there is no time for Ashley and her to think back to that summer and the boy who disappointed them; there is only the future and plenty of time to start over.



Style

Point of View

The point of view in *That Summer* is first person, limited and reliable. This is proven by the fact that Haven, the narrator, knows only her own thoughts and feelings in addition to what she witnesses or is told. She is not privy to others' thoughts and feelings. This point of view is important to the narrative since it focuses on Haven's feelings about the major changes in her life over which she has no control. It also plays a large role in her feelings regarding Sumner since she does not learn that he cheated on her sister until nearly the end of the novel.

This novel is written using mostly exposition with a minimal amount of dialogue which allows the focus to remain on Haven as she analyzes her relationships and her life. The small amount of dialogue serves to support her analyses for the most part with the exception of the revelation concerning Ashley and Sumner's break-up which occurs toward the end of the novel. The viewpoint of the novel is solely seen through Haven's eyes.

Setting

This novel is set in the real world, in Lakeview, a small American town. The characters are locals of the small town, primarily Haven, her family and friends. Dad is the sports anchor for the local news channel which is how he met Lorna, the Weather Pet for whom he left Mom.

Lakeview is the main setting of this novel. It is the small town where Haven lives and where the narrative takes place. Lakeview Mall is the local shopping mall where Haven, Ashley and Sumner all work. This is where the Lakeview Mall Models hold their Fall Fashion show where Gwendolyn Rogers has a nervous breakdown. Rock Ridge Apartments is where Ashley plans to move with Lewis after their wedding. Little Feet is the children's shoe store at the mall where Haven works. She is fired the day before Ashley's wedding after a confrontation with a customer during which she hits the woman in the forehead with a shoe. Ranzino's is the bar at Holiday Inn where Mom goes every Thursday night with Lydia. Virginia Beach is where the McPhails had gone on vacation the summer that Ashley dated Sumner. Haven looks back to this perfect week after things get bad between her and her sister. The McPhails' house is Haven's home where she lives with Mom and Ashley. Dad used to live with them, but since he left Mom for Lorna, he does not even cross the imaginary boundary at the driveway. Soon, Ashley will move out to live with Lewis after their wedding, and Mom considers selling the house because it is too big and expensive for just her and Haven. The Melvins' house is Casey's family's home which is down the street from Haven's house. There is always some sort of excitement going on, and Haven spent a lot of time at the Melvins' house during her parents' divorce.



Language and Meaning

The language used in *That Summer* is quite casual and informal. The sentences and syntax are fairly proper without being overly complex. This style of writing is beneficial since the novel is written for teenagers and young adults. The language is appropriate since it mimics how they speak, allowing readers to associate with the characters in the novel, thus inspiring empathy with Haven's feelings about the major changes that have occurred in her life without her having any control over them. The familiarity of the language is also useful because it encourages readers to feel like they are listening to a peer confide in them.

The language utilized in this novel tends to characterize the characters, modern American teenagers, as well as the society in which they live. This novel is written using mostly exposition with a minimal amount of dialogue which allows the focus to remain on Haven as she analyzes her relationships and her life. The small amount of dialogue serves to support her analyses for the most part with the exception of the revelation concerning Ashley and Sumner's break-up which occurs toward the end of the novel. The language aids the writing style because it allows readers to empathize with Haven and her feelings about her parents' divorce and her sister getting married. Overall, the language is easy to understand, and Haven's feelings are understandable and well-conveyed.

Structure

That Summer consists of one hundred, ninety-eight pages divided into thirteen chapters. The chapters average fifteen pages in length and are numbered rather than titled. They are fairly short but detailed as Haven analyzes the major changes in her life in great detail and reminisces about the past. The entire novel occurs over one summer so each chapter spans several days or weeks, often summarizing longer periods of time while focusing on a specific day or shorter period.

That Summer by Sarah Dessen portrays the struggles of a fifteen-year-old trying to accept the major changes in her life over which she has no control. With her parents' divorce, her father's second marriage and her sister's upcoming wedding, Haven feels she has no control over her life, so she dwells on memories of the summer that Ashley had dated Sumner Lee and her family life had seemed perfect. When Sumner Lee returns to Lakeview, Haven believes fate has sent him to remedy the past in some way, but she soon learns her memory does not mirror the actuality of the past. *That Summer* is a novel that explores the mindset of a teenage girl coming to terms with the past, accepting the present and looking forward to the future.

The novel is slow-paced but fairly easy to read, though Haven's tangents sometimes distract from the narrative's action. It is also filled with flashbacks as Haven recalls the happy summer that Ashley dated Sumner when her family went to Virginia Beach. Overall, the novel is interesting and inspirational as it deals with a teenaged girl

accepting the changes in her life and realizing she can choose to turn the negatives into positives.



Quotes

"Not that I didn't like Lorna Queen. She was nice enough for someone who broke up my parents' marriage. My mother, in all fairness, always blamed my father and limited her hostility to the nickname Weather Pet."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 1, pages 3-4

"I want you girls to know how much I love your father. I'm going to make him just as happy as I can, and I'm so glad we're all going to be a family."

Lorna Queen, Chapter 1, page 14

"It wasn't that Sumner went looking for adventure on purpose, more that it just stumbled across him. And for Ashley and me and my entire family, it was fun just to be along for the ride."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 2, page 25

"[Ashley] was ready to become someone else. She would take her dramatics and her tattoo and her legends of boyfriends to a new home, and we would be left to remember what we could as we passed by her empty room."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 2, page 32

"I hate all of this. I don't need her. I don't need anyone but Lewis and we're going to elope, I swear to God we are... Call the wedding off. Just cancel it all."

Ashley, Chapter 3, page 39

"I was only able to share my mother's concerns from a distance, unknown to her at all."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 4, page 54

"I knew that tone, that finality in her voice. By the next morning he'd be gone from conversation, wiped from our collective memories. There would be somebody new-
soon, probably within the week. My sister, chameleonlike, would change her voice or her hair overnight to match the mannerisms of whoever was next. Sumner, like so many before him, would drop from sight and join the ranks of the brokenhearted, dismissed with a wave of my sister's impatient hand."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 4, page 62

"My father is a local celebrity and he has his public... I have always known to be prepared to share him with the rest of the world."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 5, page 64

"You should be grateful you're tall, Haven. Tall people are revered and respected in this world. If you're short and stubby, no one will give you the time of day."

Sumner, Chapter 5, pages 68-69

"You don't understand. You don't have anyone you have to impress now. It's different when you're older. What your family does reflects on you a lot more, especially when it's



as twisted as ours is."

Ashley, Chapter 5, page 77

"Sometimes love can be an ugly thing."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 6, page 82

"I almost wanted to tell him, to ask him if he knew how it felt to be suddenly tempted to go wild. But we were flying along, the engine drowning all other sounds, and I let it go, for now."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 6, page 94

"I thought it must be fate that I kept bumping into [Sumner], some strange sign that he was meant to come back into my life and fix or change something, a voice from the past arriving in the present with the answers to everything. I knew this was silly, but it was hard to dismiss Sumner's timing."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 7, pages 95-96

"I knew a lot more about Ashley than she would have allowed me to if she could have controlled such things. There was a strange bond between us, however unintentional: the divorce, the wall, the years that separated us or didn't. My sister was leaving the house, and me, in just two weeks. And regardless of it all, good and bad, I would be sad to see her go."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 7, page 101

"I didn't like any of it, suddenly, the changes and reorganizations and alterations to my life that were all in the control of other people and outside forces... A marriage, a sister, a house, each an elemental part of me, now gone."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 7, page 107

"Love is love is love. We women know."

Casey, Chapter 8, page 118

"You should see her waltz. She's incredible. Of course, she always wanted to lead.

She's not much of a follower, you know."

Sumner, Chapter 8, page 127

"I like to think I'm more than just one among the crowd of Ashley's ex-boyfriends. I want to believe I made my mark."

Sumner, Chapter 9, page 139

"Me and Sumner- that was ridiculous. He was Ashley's old boyfriend, for godsakes. And Casey didn't understand because she couldn't. She hadn't seen her whole life change in the last few years, hadn't had everything taken away. His reappearing was proof that the time I looked back to had actually happened. This summer, Sumner was just what I needed."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 9, page 141



"I left the underwear, just out of spite for all the times she'd been nasty to me in the last few months. Some things are deserved, between sisters."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 10, pages 144-145

"Mom and Dad and everything, it's all gonna be okay. And Lorna. And me and Lewis. We can't be sad about it forever, you know? We've got to think back to the good times, Haven, and just remember them; that's all we can do. We can't worry about the past or what happened at the end, anymore. I can't and you can't."

Ashley, Chapter 10, page 146

"I've never been in love, never felt that surge of feeling or that fall from its graces. I'd only watched as others weathered it; my mother in her garden, Sumner on the front lawn all those years ago, Ashley sobbing from the other side of a wall. I sat curbside with my best friend, Casey Melvin, and held her, trying to shoulder some of the hurt. There's only so much you can do, in these situations."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 10, page 153

"I felt strong, as if every muscle in my body was taut and lean, not creaky and bony anymore. As if I was suddenly growing into myself, finally... It was both scary and exhilarating, unsettling and amazing."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 11, page 155

"I wished I could go back somehow and start it all over again, with me and Ashley by the curb waiting and listening for the putt-putt of the Bug to come around the corner. I'd live each one of those days the exact same way, when I was no bigger than a minute. When my parents were still in love and Sumner held us all together, laughing, until the day Ashley sent him away without even thinking of what would happen once he was gone. No more laughing, no more drawing together from the opposite sides of the house, all coming together to Sumner's voice, his laugh. I missed who we all were then. One summer and one boy, and suddenly things weren't the same."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 11, page 162

"There was something special about Sumner, something that spread across rooms and years and memories, and for the length of a song I'd been part of it once again."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 12, page 182

"When you left- when she sent you away- it was like that started it all. When you were there, remember, everything was still good. We were all happy, and then Ashley was such a bitch and she sent you away and everything fell apart, just like that. God, it was just like that."

Haven, Chapter 12, page 185

"It is true. I loved Sumner and he hurt me badly. It's not always so simple, Haven. Sometimes there isn't a good guy and a bad guy. Sometimes even the ones you want to believe turn out to be liars."

Ashley, Chapter 12, pages 191-192



"You can't love anyone that way more than once in a lifetime. It's too hard and it hurts too much when it ends. The first boy is always the hardest to get over, Haven. It's just the way the world works."

Ashley, Chapter 12, pages 192-193

"I knew it then. For me and Ashley, there wasn't any time left to think back to that summer and the beach and a boy who charmed us and disappointed us. There was only what stretched out ahead, years full of new summers and promise, with all the time in the world left to start again. My sister, who never understood most of the things I wanted her to, might have been able to understand what had happened to me in this summer of weddings and beginnings. And she was right. The first boy was always the hardest."

Haven as narrator, Chapter 13, page 198



Topics for Discussion

Describe Haven's complex family situation.

Who is Sumner Lee, and what does Haven think about his return to her life?

How does Haven feel about the changes occurring in her life?

What does Haven think about her height, and how do these feelings change throughout the novel?

Compare and contrast Haven and Ashley.

Why does Haven have a breakdown the day before Ashley's wedding?

What changes for Haven during this summer of weddings and beginnings?

How does Sumner disappoint Haven?