

ketchup clouds

Curriculum connections

- ❖ Death
- ❖ Sexuality
- ❖ Law & Crime

Ages: 12 & Up



by
**ANNABEL
PITCHER**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In your opinion, what is it about Stuart Harris that makes him the ideal audience for Zoe's story? Why do you believe she chooses to change her identity in her correspondences to him, and what does her willingness to finally reveal her real identity signify?
 2. How would you describe Zoe's family? Are they in any way similar to your own? If so, in what ways?
 3. In *Ketchup Clouds*, guilt both motivates and incapacitates Zoe. Consider how she deals with her guilt. What is unusual about the manner in which she does so? Why do you believe writing letters to Mr. Harris is cathartic for her?
 4. What are your earliest impressions of Max? Do you find him to be a good boyfriend to Zoe? Using textual examples, support your position.
 5. Why does Zoe's grandfather's illness cause additional stress and tension in her parent's marriage? Do you think her mother's desire to keep her daughters away from their grandfather is the right one? Why or why not?
 6. In your opinion, why do you think Sandra, Max, and Aaron's mother continue to attempt to stay connected with Zoe?
 7. How would you characterize the relationship between Zoe and Aaron, and how does it change over the course of the novel?
 8. Explain the significance of the title, *Ketchup Clouds*. In what ways does it accurately describe the events and relationships portrayed in the novel?
 9. Compare the parent/child relationships in the story: Zoe & her mother and father, and Max & Aaron and their mother. To what extent are the relationships of these characters shaped by the world around them? To what extent do their relationships shape that world?
 10. Describe Zoe. What makes her a dynamic character? Is she the type of person you would want to befriend? Why or why not?
 11. Think about Zoe's parents' strong opposition with each other regarding surgery for Dot; why do each of them feel as strongly as they do? Do you think one of them is right? If so, why?
 12. Describe Zoe's relationships with Max and Aaron; in what ways are her relationships with these two brothers different? Are there any ways they are similar?
 13. Consider the ways in which Zoe addresses her pen pal; at the beginning of the novel, she refers to him as Mr. Harris, but in her last letters to him she calls him, "My dear Stu." What can be inferred about the evolution of titles by which Zoe addresses him?
 14. Consider the novel's cover. In what ways is the image represented symbolic for the events that transpire throughout the course of the book?
 15. Using the phrase, "This is a story about..." supply five words to describe *Ketchup Clouds*. Explain your choices.
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about the book



KETCHUP CLOUDS
978-0-316-24676-7

Zoe has an unconventional pen pal—Mr. Stuart Harris, a Texas Death Row inmate and convicted murderer. But then again, Zoe has an unconventional story to tell. A story about how she fell for two boys, betrayed one of them, and killed the other.

Praise for Ketchup Clouds

★ “A novel that is by turns heartbreaking and hilarious.”
—Booklist

★ “Bittersweet.”
—Kirkus

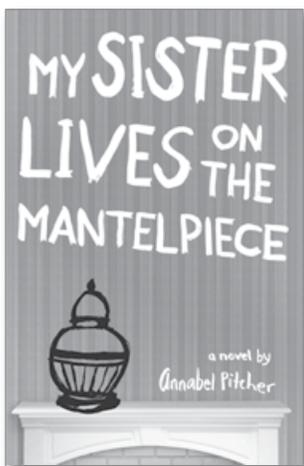
★ “Introspective and humorous.”
—PW

about the author

Annabel Pitcher is the award-winning author of *My Sister Lives on the Mantelpiece*. She graduated from Oxford University with a degree in English Literature. She lives in Yorkshire with her husband.



also by Annabel Pitcher



MY SISTER LIVES ON THE MANTELPIECE
978-0-316-17690-3

To 10-year-old Jamie, his family has fallen apart because of the loss of someone he barely remembers: his sister Rose, who died five years ago in a terrorist bombing. To his father, life is impossible to make sense of when he lives in a world that could so cruelly take away a 10-year-old girl. To Rose’s surviving 15-year-old twin, Jas, there’s no escape from Rose’s ever-present shadow; she’s forever the living twin of a dead girl.

With Jaime’s mother staying behind in London, Dad moves Jamie and Jas to the countryside for a “fresh start.” But when Rose’s ashes are placed back up on the mantelpiece, Jaime and Jas realize that the past will continue to haunt them wherever they go. Until, that is, Jamie meets someone who seems to understand his pain—the one person whom his father would never allow him to befriend. Armed with his new friend and a keen understanding of the world around him, Jaime tries to make sense of the loss that has torn his family apart, and endeavors to bring them back together.