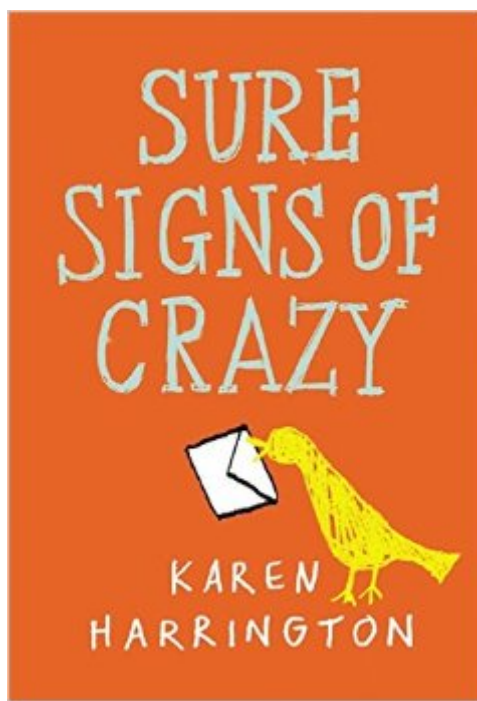


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# Sure Signs Of Crazy



## Synopsis

Love can be a trouble word for some people. Crazy is also a trouble word. I should know. You've never met anyone exactly like twelve-year-old Sarah Nelson. While most of her friends obsess over Harry Potter, she spends her time writing letters to Atticus Finch. She collects trouble words in her diary. Her best friend is a plant. And she's never known her mother, who left when Sarah was two. Since then, Sarah and her dad have moved from one small Texas town to another, and not one has felt like home. Everything changes when Sarah launches an investigation into her family's Big Secret. She makes unexpected new friends and has her first real crush, and instead of a "typical boring Sarah Nelson summer," this one might just turn out to be extraordinary.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 750 (What's this?)

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (May 20, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0316210498

ISBN-13: 978-0316210492

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 1.2 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (46 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #440,763 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #71 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Drugs](#) #317 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Illness](#) #377 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Books & Libraries](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

Dear Sarah Nelson, I'm writing to tell you how much I enjoyed the story you share in your own words called *Sure Signs of Crazy* (by Karen Harrington, who helped you write it down). It makes me so sad that your mom tried to drown you when you were only two years old. How hard it must have been for you to grow up without your mom, since she was confined to a mental health facility. On top of that, when your dad drinks too much and forgets to take you out for your twelfth birthday, and the only best friend you have to confide in is a plant you've taken from one rental home to another as

you and your dad try to stay one step ahead of the awful media that is always digging up your family's past--well, it sounds to me like you're in a really depressing situation. But your buoyancy amazes and inspires me. You find joy in the little things, like collecting your favorite words, writing letters to Atticus Finch (the beloved father of Jem and Scout in your favorite book, *To Kill A Mockingbird*), and learning how to make King Ranch casserole. It's not easy to have fun when you're stuck in a small Texas town during the long, hot summer. You manage splendidly, though, and you even meet your first big crush. Of course, you still think about your mom a lot. You wonder if you're like her at all. You worry that maybe you'll grow up to be crazy like her, and you keep watching for signs. When you receive a generic birthday card from her, you confess, "I ache to know more about my mother, while at the same time I wish she'd never send me any cards at all. Feeling two things at once must be one of the first signs of going crazy." Sarah, while I read your story you became as real to me as Atticus Finch is to you.

This book is not at all well served by the professional reviews on the page that suggest this is a dreary tale of trauma, kitchen sink conflict, dread and survival. It sounds so grim and heavy handed. It isn't. The over-the-top framing story is an attention grabber, but the exaggerated premise mainly allows for all sorts of creative variations on the coming-of-age theme, and allows the author to lead the character Sarah through wildly imaginative, clever, witty and touching emotions, insights and predicaments that just wouldn't be possible with a more mundane approach. Her Mom's crazy, her Dad's an alcoholic, her brother was drowned at age two by crazy Mom, she was almost drowned, her best friend is a plant she talks to, and she is on guard to see if she's going crazy. That sounds to me like a normal twelve year old's head, just amped up a bit for effect. And that's what you get. Do me a favor and scroll up and read the sample chapter. I'll wait.... Good. If you liked that you'll like the book. Sarah is flinty, romantic, observant, articulate and good hearted. Before Atticus Finch showed up in the book I had already seen Sarah as a modern, more sophisticated and more articulate Scout character. The letters to Finch just sort of confirm that the reader and the author and Sarah are all on the same page and understand what's going on. The two greatest joys of this book are getting to spend time with Sarah, who is easily one of the most appealing characters I've encountered in quite a while, and in enjoying the remarkably accomplished and yet restrained writing. On any page you can find a sentence that is just right - spare, delicate, and balanced, with arresting and appropriate word choices, phrasing and tone.

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