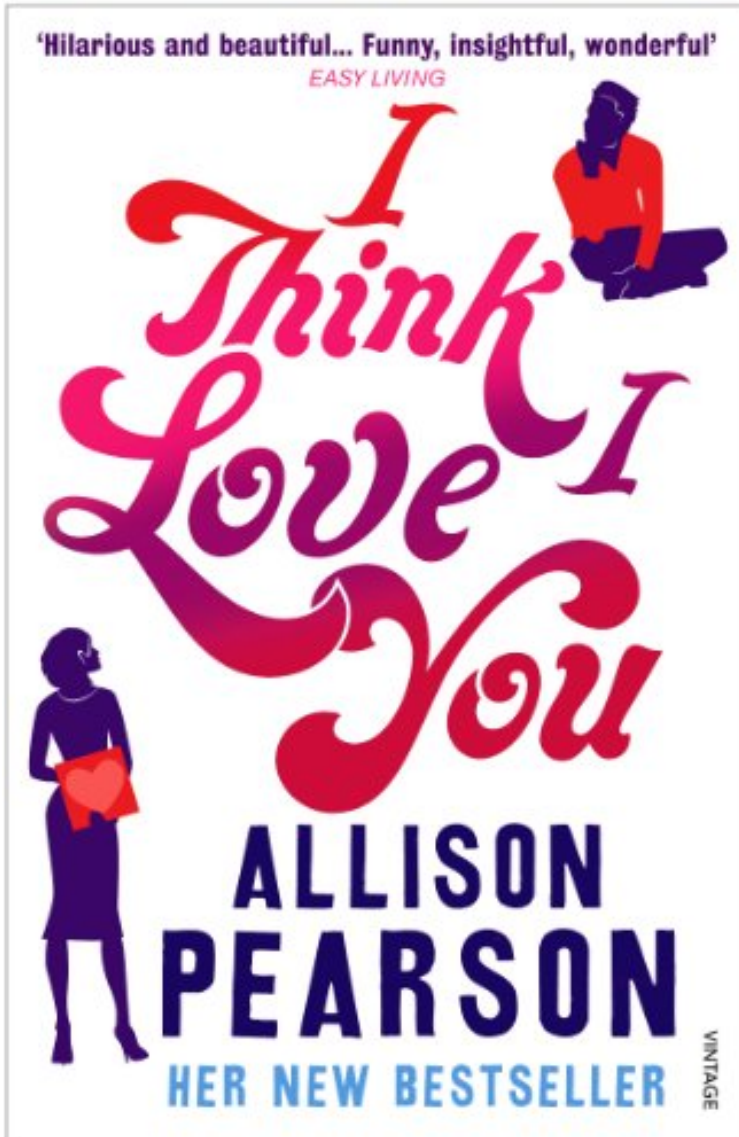


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I Think I Love You



Par Allison Pearson
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteur1974. Thirteen-year-old Petra and her best friend Sharon are desperate to win a competition to meet their teen idol. Meanwhile Bill is unhappy in his job, ghostwriting the fanzine of the man so adored by the girls - and slightly unnerved by the extreme emotions of some of the fans.Fast forward to 1998. Petra is pushing forty and on the brink of divorce. While cleaning out her mother's wardrobe she finds a letter declaring her the winner of the competition she and Sharon had agonised over decades ago. So, twenty-four years after entering the competition the girls claim their prize and are flown out for an all-expenses-paid trip to Las Vegas to meet their hero at last. Bill, now the magazine's publisher, flies out with them...Poignant, hilarious, joyful, profoundly moving and uplifting, I Think I Love You captures what we

learn about love, life and friendship through the universal experience of worshipping a teen dream. It will resonate with readers everywhere. Excerpt from Pearson: I THINK I LOVE YOU
His favorite color was brown. Brown was such a sophisticated color, a quiet and modest sort of color. Not like purple, which was Donny's favorite. I wouldn't be seen dead in purple. Or in a Donny cap. How much would you have to like a boy before you went out wearing a stupid purple peaked cap? Honest, it's amazing the things you can know about someone you don't know. I knew the date of his birth: April 12, 1950. He was a typical Aries, but without the Arians stubbornness. I knew his height and his weight and his favorite drink, 7Up. I knew the names of his parents and his stepmother, the Broadway musical star. I knew all about his love of horses, which made perfect sense to me because when you're that famous it must be comforting to be around someone who doesn't know or care what famous is. I knew the instrument he learned to play when he was lonely. Drums. I knew the name of the dog he left behind when he had to move away from New Jersey.

I knew that when he was a boy he was small for his age and he had a squint and had to wear an eye patch and corrective glasses, which must have been hard. Harder than for a girl even. I didn't wear my glasses if I could help it. Only in class for the blackboard, though I couldn't see well without them and it got me into trouble a few times when I smiled in the street at total strangers I mistook for members of my family. A few years later, when I got contact lenses, I was stunned by the trees. They had leaves, millions of leaves, with edges so sharp and defined they looked like God had made each one with a pastry cutter. Basically, before I was sixteen, the world was one big Impressionist painting, unless I screwed up my eyes really tight to bring it into focus. Some things, as I would discover, were best left a blur. Back then, I wasn't interested in the real world. Not really. I answered my parents' questions, I gave the appearance of doing homework, I lugged my cello into school on my back, I went downtown on Saturday afternoons with girls who sometimes felt like friends and sometimes didn't, but I was living for Him. Each night, I spread my long dark hair out on the pillow and made sure to sleep on my back so my face was ready to receive a kiss in case he came in the night. It wasn't that likely, obviously, because I lived in South Wales and he lived in California, which was five thousand miles away, and he didn't even have my address, although I had once sent a poem for him to a magazine. Choosing the right color paper took longer than writing the actual poem. I settled on yellow, because it seemed more mature than pink. I thought all the other girls would choose pink and part of loving him was finding better ways to please him so he would know how much more I cared. They didn't sell brown writing paper or I would have used brown, because that was his favorite color. Sometime later three weeks and four days if you're counting, and I definitely was a reply came in the post. It was seventeen words long, including my name. It didn't matter that the letter said they were sorry they couldn't publish my poem. In some crucial way, I felt as though I had made contact with him at long last. Someone important in London, someone who had been in the same room as him, had touched the yellow paper I had touched and then typed my name on an envelope and licked the stamp. No rejection slip has ever been more treasured. It took pride of place in my scrapbook. I knew exactly where he lived in California. In a canyon. A canyon was like one of our valleys, only much bigger. We said much bigger. David said way. Way bigger. Way was American for much. America was so big that Americans would drive one hundred miles just to have dinner with someone and they didn't think that was a long way to go. In America, way to go means you've done something well.

Way to go, baby! And they have gas instead of petrol. Other words I had learned were cool, mad and bathroom. You have to be careful because a bathroom is not a bathroom in America, it's a toilet. The Americans are a most polite people who are not standing for vulgarity, said my mother, who was German and beautiful and disapproved of many things. You might say that my mother's whole life was a battle to keep the vulgar and the ugly at bay. In our town, she had found the perfect enemy. I just liked knowing American words because they brought me closer to Him. When we met, it would be important to retain my individuality, which was one of the top things David looked for in a girl. In every interview I had read, David said that he preferred a girl to just be herself. But to be honest with you, I was unsure of who myself was, or even if I had one, although I still maintained a touching faith that this unknown and as yet undiscovered me would be deeply appealing to David when we eventually met. How could I be sure? The understanding in his eyes told me so. (Oh, those eyes. They were deep green pools you could pour all your longing into.) Still, I reckoned that meeting David would be awkward enough without any unnecessary confusion, so I did my best to pick up American. It would be tricky to go to a bathroom in his house in Los Angeles, for example, and find there was no bath, wouldn't it? Or imagine saying someone was mad. David would think that I meant they were angry. Crazy means mad in America. Back then, I couldn't imagine David ever being angry, he was so gentle and sensitive. Sorry, do I sound mad? Donny Osmonds a moron, Sharon

said firmly. She was kneeling on the floor, picking at the staples in a centerfold with her thumbnail, trying to free a male torso. The slender, headless body was naked to the waist and practically hairless, except for a fine golden down just above the belt, which boasted a heavy bronze buckle. It looked like the door knocker to an Aztec temple. Sharon eased the poster off the frail metal pins until it rested on her hands, trembling a little in the hot air blowing from the small heater beside her. Sharon's bedroom was small, painted a sickly shade of ointment pink and reeked of burned hair, a bad cotton-candy smell that got in your nostrils and stayed there. Sharon had dried her hair in front of the heater and a few strands had gotten sucked into the back, but we didn't really notice the smell, so absorbed were we in our work. I don't think Donny's a moron, to be honest with you, I said carefully. All the Osmonds are morons. I read it in a mag, she insisted, without looking up from the poster. Sharon was an expert restorer. The best artist in our class. When she grew up she could probably get a job in a museum or an art gallery. I loved to watch her work. The way she rolled her tongue into a little tunnel when she was concentrating and applied her attention to the tiny puncture holes in David's stomach, soothing the torn paper with her fingertips until the flesh appeared to seal up. There you go, lovely boy, she said, and placed a noisy smack?ing kiss on his belly button before adding the poster to the pile. There was a prickle in my throat like a piece of trapped wool. I badly wanted to correct Sharon about the Osmonds being morons, but our friendship was still too new to risk disagreement. We liked each other because we agreed. We agreed because we both thought David Cassidy was the most wonderful boy currently alive and maybe in all of human history. At thirteen years of age, I couldn't imagine the luxury of having a friend you could disagree with. If you disagreed with her, you could fall out. Then, before you knew it, you'd be back out there in the playground by yourself, sighing and checking your watch every couple of seconds to indicate that you did have an arrangement to meet someone and were not, in fact, the kind of sad, friendless person who had to pretend they were waiting for friends who did not exist. Even worse, you could find yourself entering into anxious negotiations with some other borderline outcast to be your partner in PE so you didn't have to be in a pair with Susan Davies Susan Smell, who had a disease of the skin no one could spell. Her face, her arms and her legs were all cratered, like the surface of the moon, only some days the holes were filled in with the chalky dust of calamine lotion. We knew exactly what it was because our mothers dabbed the lotion on us when we got chicken pox. The angry, itchy spots were like tiny volcanoes around which the soothing pink liquid hardened into a tempting lava crust. Mustn't pick it, mind, or it would leave a scar. The worst thing about Susan Davies, apart from the way you felt really sorry for her but still didn't do anything to help her, was the stink. Honest to God, Susan smelled so bad it made you retch in the corridor when she went past, even though she always walked on the side with the windows. Donny's a Mormon. I think it's a religion they founded in Utah, I said cautiously, trying the sounds in my mouth. Ooh. Ta. I knew exactly what Mormons were. Donny Studies were part of my deep background research on David. I knew everything about the other Osmonds, too, just in case, even Wayne. At a pinch, I could have given you the star sign of every member of the Jackson 5, and details of their difficult upbringing, which was in such contrast to their carefree, joyful music. Twiddly diddly dee, twiddly diddly dee. Twiddly diddly dee. Dee dee! You know, I can never hear the opening chorus of Rockin Robin without a spasm of regret for what became of that remarkable little boy and all his sweetness. Even as a child, I had this overdeveloped taste for tragic biographical information, a sort of twitching inner radar for distress. I may have been the only one not to be in the least bit surprised when Michael Jackson began to take leave of his adorable black face in painful cosmetic stages. You see, I understood all about hating the way you looked and wanting to magic away the child who made a parent feel angry or disap?ointed. When you grow up, they call this empathy. When you're thirteen, it just makes you feel like you're not so horribly alone. Dyou reckon Mormons all have to wear purple because it's Donny's favorite color? I asked. Sharon giggled. Get away with you, Petra, you're a case, you are! We thought we were hysterically funny. We laughed at anything, but lately boys had become a particular target for our witticisms. We laughed at them before they could laugh at us, or ignore us, which curiously felt even more wounding than being teased or insulted. You know, I always liked Sharon's laugh better than mine. My laugh sounded like a nervous cough that only starts to let itself go too late, when the joke has passed. Sharon made that happy, hiccupy sound you hear when you pull a cord in a doll's back. She looked a bit like a doll, did my new maybe friend. She was round and dimpled and her eyes were an astonishing bluebell blue beneath the palest barely there lashes. Her hair was that bone-dry flaxen kind that bursts out of a person's head like a dandelion clock. When we sat next to each other in Chemistry, her hair would float sideways on an invisible current of hot air from the Bunsen burner and stick to my jumper. If I tried to sweep it off, the static gave me a shock that made my arm swarm. Sharon was pretty in a way

everyone in our group could agree was pretty without feeling bad about it. It was a mystery. Her weight seemed to act as a sort of protective jacket against jealousy. When she lost her puppy fat I think we all sensed it might be a different story. In the meantime, Sharon posed no threat to Gillian, who had gotten the two of us together in the first place and who was the star of our group. No, that's not right. Gillian was our sun. We all revolved around her and you would do anything, anything at all, really humiliating and shameful things, just in the hope she might shine on you for a few minutes because the warmth of Gillian's attention made you instantly prettier and more fascinating. As for me, the jury was still out on my looks. I was so skinny that next to Sharon I looked like a Victorian matchgirl. And don't go thinking, Oh, get her, she's proud of her figure. Skinny is not the same as slim, no way. Skinny is the last-girl-but-one-to-get-a-training-bra because you've got nothing up top. God, I hate that expression. Up top. Hasn't got much up top, has she? Where we lived, girls had Up Top and Down There. You don't want to let a boy go Down There, but sometimes he was allowed Up Top, if you'd got anything there, like. Skinny is always being late for hockey and being made to run five times round the games field because you keep your blouse on until the others have left the changing room so they don't see your sad little girl's vest. A vest with a single shaming rosebud on the front. The magazines told us to identify our good points. Mine was eyes. Large and gray-blue, but sometimes green-blue flecked with amber, like a rock pool when the sun is shining on it. But my eyes also had these liver-colored smudges under them that no cucumber slices or beauty sleep could ever cure. I never stopped trying though. Petra's dark circles are so bad she could go to a masked ball and she wouldn't need a mask, Gillian said, and everyone laughed, even me. Especially me. Be careful not to show her what really hurts or she'll know exactly where to put the knife in next time. My worst feature was everything else, really. I hated my knees, my nose and my ears basically anything that stuck out. And I had pale skin that seemed even paler because of my dark hair. On a good day, I looked like Snow White in her glass coffin. Expertly, my mother took my face in one hand, chin pinched between thumb and forefinger and tilted it sharply toward the bathroom light. She squeezed so tight my jaw ached. You are not unattractive, Petra, my mother said coolly. Bones really quite good. If you pluck the brows when you are older, here and here, like so, revealing the eyes more. You know, you are really not so bad. It's too bad, Mum, not so bad. I don't look too bad. That is exactly what I am saying to you, Petra. Relax, please. You are not so bad for a girl at her age. From the Hardcover edition. *Revue de presse* "Allison Pearson is one of the stars of her generation" (Evening Standard) "If you had forgotten what it's like to be fourteen - or, indeed, are the parent of somebody who is - this is a novel not to be missed" (Daily Mail) "Hilarious and beautiful... Funny, insightful, wonderful" (Easy Living) "Anyone who can make me laugh and cry in equal measure gets my vote" (Grazia) "Pearson's knack for observing the ups and downs of ordinary folk (and all our faults and foibles) is pitch-perfect and as funny as it is poignant" (Glamour)