## THE RUNNING DREAM

## BY WENDELIN VAN DRAANEN

## LOUISIANA YOUNG READERS’ CHOICE NOMINEE 2014

**GRADE 6-8**

Submitted by Debbie Henson, School Librarian,

Live Oak Middle School, Watson, LA

**Title: The Running Dream**

**Author: Wendelin Van Draanen**

**Publisher: Random House**

**Pages: 352**

**SUMMARY**

Jessica is a runner. It's all she's ever done and all she's ever known. Her life suddenly gets turned around after a tragic bus accident when she has to have her leg amputated below the knee. She struggles to regain some of her "normal" activity and to have people notice her for who she is, not because of her disability. Her track coach gives her a new reason to hope when he shows her a video of a man with a prosthetic limb that is specially made to run, not just walk. She begins to have night and day "dreams" of running again. This book will inspire all who read it to believe that if you can dream it, you can achieve it.

**AWARDS**

2012 Schneider Family Book Award

YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults

**AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY**

Wendelin Van Draanen began reading at an early age. Her mother taught her to read, and she and her brothers would gather around her father and listen to him read. Van Draanen began her writing career by first writing a screenplay and moved on to adult novels and then to young adult novels. She has won many awards for her young adult books. She lives in California with her husband and two sons. Her hobbies are "the three R's: Reading, Running and Rock 'n' Roll."

Sources of Author Information:

"D Is for Determined." *Wendelin Van Draanen*. Scholastic. Web. 20 Jan. 2013.

"Wendelin Van Draanen." *IMDb*. IMDb.com. Web. 20 Jan. 2013. <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2300000/bio>.

**OTHER TITLES BY AUTHOR**

Van Draanen, Wendelin. *Confessions of a Serial Kisser*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.

Van Draanen, Wendelin. *Flipped*. New York: Knopf, 2001.

Van Draanen, Wendelin. *How I Survived Being a Girl*. New York: HarperCollins, 1997.

Van Draanen, Wendelin. *Runaway*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.

Van Draanen, Wendelin. *Swear to Howdy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

Gecko and Sticky Series

Sammy Keyes Series

Shredderman Series

**RELATED TITLES** (Students may enjoy these as well.)

Fiction Titles

Bauer, Joan, and Nancy Brennan. *Close to Famous*. New York: Viking, 2011. Print.

Bauer, Joan. *Stand Tall*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2002. Print.

Rorby, Ginny. *The outside of a Horse: A Novel*. New York: Dial for Young Readers, 2010. Print.

Tinti, Hannah. *The Good Thief: A Novel*. New York: Dial, 2008. Print.

Williams, Michael. *Now Is the Time for Running*. New York: Little, Brown, 2011. Print.

Nonfiction Titles

Anderson, Jennifer Joline. *Wilma Rudolph: [track and Field Inspiration]*. Edina, MN: ABDO Pub., 2011. Print.

Benge, Janet, and Geoff Benge. *Eric Liddell: Something Greater than Gold*. Seattle, WA: YWAM Pub., 1998. Print.

Pistorius, Oscar, and Oscar Pistorius. *Blade Runner: My Story*. [London]: Virgin, 2012. Print.

Stout, Glenn. *Yes She Can!: Women's Sports Pioneers*. Boston: Sandpiper, 2011. Print.

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

**Art**

If your school reads The Running Dream as a class novel, collaborate with the art teacher on running a "campaign" during the reading of the book. Art students can create "Help Jessica Run" campaign posters for the bake sale, raffle, car wash, and community donations campaigns in the book. Collaborate with the Language Arts teachers for students to write press releases and news articles for the campaign.

**Health**

Showcase the abilities of disabled athletes by showing video clips or photographs of disabled runners like Oscar Pistorius. Discuss the strength and stamina needed to train and compete for disabled athletes and Special Olympians.

**Language Arts**

Introduce proper techniques for writing a friendly letter and a business letter. Have students write a letter from Jessica to her fellow classmates asking for help with the Run for Rosa. Instruct students not to use texting language or symbols. Have students write a letter from a representative of the track team to a business or corporation asking for community donations for the "Help Jessica Run" campaign.

Assign a vocabulary reading activity for the book. The author conveys emotion through different phases of Jessica's experience, such as despair regarding the medical bills, or the elation of seeing all the support. Keep a page of your notebook handy as you read the book and write down words that the author uses to show great emotion. Use these words in a five paragraph essay on how Jessica can continue to help others through their disability.

**Science**

6th Grade: As part of the unit on force and motion, show a video or a photograph of a runner using carbon fiber blades, such as Oscar Pistorius or Philip Sheridan.

7th Grade: As part of the unit on the body, discuss Jessica's process of having to learn to walk again, then run, and the baby steps needed in the process. If possible, have a person with a disability speak to the class on the process of learning basic activities again after an accident.

Discuss the importance of nutrition in Jessica's recovery. Discuss the process that her coach used in building muscle for the run for Rosa.

**Social Studies**

(Submitted by Matt Romaire, Social Studies Teacher, Live Oak Middle School). Assign a map activity where students create a map of the town and the course for the Run for Rosa. As part of the activity, students will also need to create a key for the map.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. The author states that Jessica had this thought:

"I wonder about the deep, wide abyss between good intentions and concrete actions, and how many of them leapt across it."

Use this quote as a prompt for writing or discussion.

Prompt: Name a situation that you have experienced where you meant to do something nice but didn't follow through. How did you feel when you first had the idea? How did you feel when you didn't follow through?

2. Besides losing her leg, how did the accident change Jessica in a permanent way, if it changed her at all?

3. The author states that Jessica had this thought:

"Her biggest wish isn't to cross a finish line or have people cheer for her. It's to have people see *her* instead of her condition. That's all anybody with a disability wants. Don't sum up the person based on what you see, or what you don't understand; get to know *them*."

Use this quote as a prompt for writing or discussion.

Prompt: Have you ever not seen a person with a disability or ignored them because you didn't know what to say? Describe how you should model appropriate behavior toward people with disabilities.

4. What is the definition of "disability"? If athletes like Oscar Pistorius are able to achieve so much, are they still considered disabled? Why or why not?

5. The last line in the book states: "This is my new starting line." Have you ever had a new starting line or do you know of someone who has experienced a new starting line?

**WEBSITES**

**Exercise the Right to Read**

http://exercisetherighttoread.org

This is the initiative by Wendelin Van Draanen and her husband, Mark Parsons, emphasizing running and raising funds for school libraries and disadvantaged children.

**The Running Dream Book Trailer**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAV5ActuNUU

This is a book trailer by Random House featuring Wendelin Van Draanen.

**Wendelin Van Draanen**

http://www.randomhouse.com/kids/vandraanen

This is the official website for Wendelin Van Draanen.