



Runaway

Wendelin Van Draanen

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"It's a cold, hard, cruel fact that my mother loved heroin more than she loved me."

Holly is in her fifth foster home in two years and she's had enough. She's run away before and always been caught quickly. But she's older and wiser now--she's twelve--and this time she gets away clean.

Through tough and tender and angry and funny journal entries, Holly spills out her story. We travel with her across the country--hopping trains, scamming food, sleeping in parks or homeless encampments. And we also travel with her across the gaping holes in her heart--as she finally comes to terms with her mother's addiction and death.

Runaway is a remarkably uplifting portrait of a girl still young and stubborn and naive enough to hold out hope for finding a better place in the world, and within herself, to *be*.

Runaway Details

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Author : Wendelin Van Draanen

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From Reader Review Runaway for online ebook

Jackie says

Holly has been in 6 foster homes in 2 years. All the other times she has ran away, she's gotten caught. But not this time. She keeps a diary of the days she runs away. she goes from jumping on trains to sleeping in the park. She's happy to escape but struggles to survive every day being low on money and food. She can't go back to her foster home, but living like this, she'll die soon. Runaway is a great book about finding where you belong in the world. I liked this book because it made me realize that being homeless is really a problem even for 12 year olds which made me interested in reading it. Overall Runaway was a really good book and if you read it you are sure to enjoy it.

Winifred says

I really liked this book because the reader was able to get into the mind of character. The author does this well by using 1st person narrative. I also like that the book was written in diary form because it made me feel closer to the character. I found it interesting how the character referred to herself as a sea gypsy(sp?) instead of a homeless girl. In the book the character also says how much she hates doing certain things when she really likes them such as writing poetry. The character also seems to lie to herself a lot in order to hide her true feelings.

Kaitlyn Roberts says

Runaway was a very inspiring book to me because it showed me that anything is possible and if you try you have a chance of making something happen. This book was also very moving with her diary entries and I loved that about this book. I would recommend this book to anyone.

Ayanna Finn says

Runaway By Wendelin Van Draanen is a book I would recommend to 6th - 8th graders. I would recommend this book because some people can relate to this. Runaway by Wendelin Van Draanen is about a girl she is in a foster home and then she is thinking about running away because her foster parents are mean and she just doesn't like them. What at first feels like an escape soon becomes a daily struggle for survival. Holly is smart and resourceful, but how long can this go on for her? This book made me feel sad and happy for her because she gets away from this really bad foster home but she also has to deal with missing her mom and wondering where her parents are. I can not relate to Holly because she is really brave to go and be by herself, but she also lost her mom and she can be at a home but she chooses to leave. I wanted this book because when I read the summary I was shocked and I already fell in love after reading it. I would want you guys to read this book.

Oriana Rice says

I felt like this was a really good. This book reminds me of myself because I've been through the things Holly went through when the owner that she had to live with did things to her. When I was about 4 years young, my mom would drop me off at this older lady's house so she could get to work. The older lady used to lock me in her closet just like Holly would get locked in the laundry room. In my opinion this book was very emotional because Holly listed her my and she was sad and depressed that she run away.

I remember in the middle of the book she met this homeless person that would steal holly a journals... And also Holly wrote a snow storm story but, at the same time she didn't feel like people would believe it. Holly didn't too much like her mom's boyfriend. Holly was always called a their because she would steal people's things and she was also very rude to people. Her attitude was full of sarcasm she was always in her own world and was a very unique little 12 year old girl.

Joe B. says

Joe Bricker
Romaniuk/Moyer
Reading/L.A. Book Review 8
28 January 2011

Runaway:

Follow The Yellow Brick Road

“It’s never too late- in fiction or in life- to revise.” This quote from Nancy Thayer describes this book. In Runaway, by Wendelin Van Draanen, Holly Janquel is a runaway. A minor who has left the care of an adult. In the beginning of this realistic fiction book, Holly receives a journal from her teacher, Ms. Leone, who instructs her to write down her feelings. Holly’s mother and father have died, and in her foster home, she can’t take the terrible treatment she is given. Holly views it as the last straw. Holly lives in an urban suburb near Indianapolis, but is headed for the Pacific Ocean. Throughout her adventures on a train, a bus, a wagon, the reader is captivated by reading her journal. Holly is in search of a “revision” of her devastating life, and she searches for it by way of the sea. The setting uniquely affects Holly’s character because of the utilities, the people, and the environment.

Wherever Holly went, the utilities and resources available to her were very crucial. One specific spot that a reader can see this is: “I’d seen a horse trailer hitched to a truck in the gas lanes, and Shooting Star sure sounded like a horse name to me. Plus, the guy was wearing cowboy boots” (27). This quote took place when Holly was in Aaronville, which is near Utah, a state that is prone to being a spot for transporters up to Wyoming for rodeos. This shows how Holly used being in Utah to her advantage, and built up her idea for how to spare her resources. Another instance when I saw this took place when Holly was located on a farm: “I’m on the world’s biggest farm! Yesterday I filled up on broccoli, now I’ve found a field of strawberries! They were yummy with a capital YUM!” (190). This quote portrays how when Holly found herself on a farm, she wouldn’t spend her few dollars, she would use the vegetables as a valuable food source. Her resources quickly and effectively changed her because it allowed her to discover new traits and things that she would have to do to survive as a runaway. A third reason why the reader can infer that she is using her resources to her advantage is when she is found at the “manor”: “She did get a free ride on the ferris wheel, though. I’d say the view was breathtaking but I’m not in the mood” (141). In this quote a reader can view how she used Venus’ already present resources and skills to “go along for the ride”. Throughout the many settings of the book, Holly used her quick thinking to get resources to her own advantage.

A second way that the setting uniquely affects Holly's character is because of the people. In each place she goes, there are many different types of people that she runs into. These types of people make her think on her toes on how to interact which changes her character. One way that a reader can see this is in the shelter with "Lady Louise": "I wanted to spend the day at the park, but Louise K. Palmer didn't. And since I haven't figured out a travel plan yet, I didn't want to blow it by leaving the shelter without her and not being able to get back inside" (59). In this quote, the reader can see how Holly is building a relationship but also using Louise to scheme off of. Another reason where a reader can see Holly building off of people is this: "It worked. The cop threw her hands in the air, made some grumbling sounds, and got back in her cruiser. Inside, I felt really good. Like both my mother and Louise were watching over me" (108). This quote portrays how even in past references she builds off of to encounter new situations that make her stronger. She used Lady Louise's french to outwit the guard, and her Mother's poise to stand up and respect her. A third reason how Holly was affected by the types of people was in this instance: "It's funny to hear priests and nuns argue with each other. It's not just something you'd expect, but these do it a lot, and because of that I've even picked up a few of their names" (234). This excerpt gives the reader information on how she builds off the people that are in the church to occupy her time, instead of just writing in the journal. Holly's character builds upon the people around her.

A third way that I saw Holly's character changing from setting to setting was due to the environment around her. This had a very supreme affect because it determined how she lived, or if she lived. This was crucial to the book because it took Holly through several plot twists and mishaps. One way that a reader can see this is in this moment: "Have you ever been twenty feet in the air over railroad tracks? You'd mess your pants bad, Ms. Leone" (46). This quote displays how she found the branch to get over the tracks, and used the railroad as her way of getting west. By knowing her goal, Holly used the environment around her and it affected her. When Holly jumped onto the train, she gained the feeling that nothing could stop her. However, in this second instance, Holly lost that feeling: "I wonder if they'll check the corners of the town. The beaches. Under porches" (178). This moment in time shows how Holly realized that when the police were doing street sweeps, she needed to leave, right then and there, after she had found a good chance of living. That moment rid her of that great feeling. A third way that Holly was affected was by the weather in Los Angeles, "So up in the sky where they've got that temperature sign that says it may be 101 degrees, down here on the street with the fire breathing air-conditioners and asphalt, it's more like 120 degrees. WHERE'S THE OCEAN" (107). This shows how Holly entered a state of somewhat rage and created a grudge against the weather. She didn't want to burn up, she wanted to go and frolic in the ocean. These instances all affected Holly because of the environment around her.

To conclude, the setting uniquely affects Holly's character because of the utilities, the people, and the environment. The book Runaway is an outgoing book. It has a lot of character that takes a lot of risks that may help the plot or take away. I thought that all of the twists took away from the plot and dragged me away from the book. I give this book an honest two out of five stars because of all of the risks that the author took. If you like a book that is completely all over the place, then read this. However, if you like a more solid, to the point book, don't read this. This book was so completely off my life and what I am interested in, I didn't have any personal connections. I didn't know the feelings that she was going through. From being enraged at the sun, or angry at a friend in such a way, I couldn't relate to her problems or situations. The closest to a connection with this book that I have is that in an episode of one of my favorite television programs, Psych, there is a case that involves a runaway homeless girl who is found dead in a field of strawberries. I looked up this episode, and it came to my attention that the episode was modeled after the book. The problems that Holly came across are not your average thirteen year old male's problems, so I couldn't find a connection with a depth that is profound. Runaway is a very unrealistic book that has trouble keeping the readers' focus, and it is hard to relate to in a predictable way.

Sara says

I just happened to randomly start reading this book a few months ago. After reading about 60 pages into it, I knew I would HAVE to finish it. Holly, the main character, has a powerful voice and instantly makes you pay attention. She's twelve years old, but I initially thought she was at least sixteen. This makes sense though since Holly has been through mountains of problems and has had to mature quickly. She's been in and out of foster homes for years ever since her mother died of a drug overdose. She's got a hard shell. Often rejecting help from those who are genuinely kind because she's used to the evil that she's encountered. At the start of the novel she's living with the Benders who's cruelty is heart-wrenching. In less than 25 pages, I was floored by the wickedness of them and rooting for Holly to leave. Which she does, all the way across America. Holly's extremely intelligent about what to do and how to do it to truly escape and stay hidden. And the reader is privileged to see the three-dimensional Holly because the entire story is also her journal that she faithfully keeps along the way. She's writing it to the teacher who gave it to her as a class assignment before she ran away, which adds another layer of depth to the plot. Along Holly's journey she has to come to terms with what she has lost and what she really wants-- to be loved, protected, and to have a family. What fascinated me is that, unlike other books, I had NO idea where this story would take me. I couldn't even speculate on how it would end. When I did get to the end, it seemed a little rushed and lackluster. Since the entire book she's running from Child Protection Services, I thought it would have been more climactic for her to have had to deal with them in the end. But otherwise, it was a satisfying read that I would recommend because, in spite of the ending, it was the journey that mattered the most.

Lisa says

I picked up Wendelin Van Draanen's *Runaway* because it's a spin-off from her *Sammy Keyes* mystery series. (I may have mentioned the *Sammy Keyes* series once or twice on Goodreads--or 5,000 times. *Runaway* tells the backstory of a homeless girl named Holly that Sammy meets in Book #3, *Sammy Keyes and the Sisters of Mercy*. After Book #3, Holly becomes a regular character in the series.)

At first the writing in *Runaway* didn't appeal to me. The story is told in diary form, with Holly writing entries in a journal assigned by her English teacher. Her first dozen entries are angry and defensive, and I felt like I was reading a rewrite of *Don't You Dare Read This, Mrs. Dunphrey* as Holly railed against school and hinted at the abuse she experienced in foster care. But around page 20, Holly forms a plan to run away and the tone of the story changes dramatically. From then on, the book tracks Holly's experience living as a "gypsy"--the word she uses to avoid admitting to herself that she is homeless--from May to November.

Holly's only twelve, so she faces unique challenges in surviving as a homeless person. She has to avoid being picked up by cops or well-meaning social workers who will put her back in a system that she's come to associate with abuse and molestation. On top of that, she has to avoid being preyed upon by other homeless kids and adults. Along the way Holly jumps trains (which made me shiver since I'd just finished reading *Enrique's Journey*, which describes just how dangerous train-hopping can be), steals, sleeps in bushes, stows away on busses and trucks, lives in various abandoned buildings, and, through continuing to write, finally makes some kind of peace with her past.

Even though Van Draanen tries to bring out how scary and uncomfortable being homeless is, there were times when I think she could have gone even farther. For example, when Holly stows away in a Greyhound bus cargo hold. Wouldn't it have been pitch black in there? And very cramped? I think that would be way

scarier than the book made it sound! But then again, judging from the author's note, Van Draanen *actually stowed away in a Greyhound bus cargo hold* while researching this book, so I have to defer to her authority on the subject. In general, I thought Van Draanen made the dangers and misery of being a homeless kid very vivid in a way that was appropriate to her audience (uh, which was probably intended to be people at least ten years younger than me. But whatever.)

At least one reviewer on Goodreads has said that they felt that the positive ending was unrealistic, and that may be so--but I thought it was hopeful and, after all, it's a story. I thought the ending was really nice, and I didn't think that the happiness of the ending took away from the important points of the book--that being homeless completely, totally, absolutely sucks in every way, and that writing can be an incredible way to make peace with one's past.

One last thing--my biggest question in picking up this book was how Van Draanen would make Holly's truly traumatic background dovetail with the *Sammy Keyes* series which, while it has some issues of neglect in it, is basically light-hearted. I thought she did an amazing job making space for traumatic experiences in the fictional world of a young adult mystery series.

Viviana Perez says

For everyone who hasn't read the book, "Runaway", you're really missing out. This book of sadness and misery is written by "Wendelin Van Draanen". Holly Janquell (the main character) goes through so much throughout this book, between living in the Benders terrible foster home, and running away having to scavenge for food everyday and night. This book is written from the perspective of what Holly writes inside her journal. She (Holly) writes in her journal very frequently, pretending there is someone else reading on the other end. As she writes, the reader can truly understand what Holly has been through, learning new things about her past and present each page. As hard as the life Holly has to live is, she still manages to organize herself by setting goals and finding ways to accomplish them. This 12-year-old girl was inspiring to me, so I recommend "Runaway" to girls from ages 9 (if they're high readers) to 14. If you enjoy watching a person never give up and seeing how they survive societies twisted world, then I recommend this book to you too. Not only will this book entertain you, but it will impact your life! This book will make whoever reads it more aware of who you can trust, and more considerate about those who do not have as much as you.

Shane M says

Imagine living your entire life without a house or someone to trust. That is how 12 year old Holly lives her life on the road.

The genre of Runaway is realistic fiction.

I liked this book a lot because it talks about an adventure & a amazing journey.

The setting of my book is wherever Holly decides to travel, like LA and Nevada. It takes place in the present. This is important because it makes the story less fictional because people can relate. All Holly really wanted was just a family and a place to be. But that always seemed like to much to ask for because her real dad never showed up and her mom loved heroine more than her own daughter. So after her mother died of overdose, Holly is sent to many foster homes, runs away, but never is free for very long. Then she feels something is different this time and man, is she right. The type of conflict is person vs society, person vs

person, and person vs self, because Holly has issues with the society because people are always bugging her about her life, asking why she doesn't have good clothes or shoes. The other type of conflict is Person vs Person, Holly has always had problems with people. Cops trying to arrest her, guys hitting on her, fights, etc. I think it is Person vs Self as well because Holly has many problems mentally. Wishing she had a mother, food on the table, a coat and even more. The theme of my book is everyone is equal. Holly meets many people, rich, poor, drunk, but they all seem equal to her in some way.

The first person point of view affects this story by making it more personal. The title, "Runaway" relates to the book because the entire time, Holly is always running away from something or someone. The narrator is reliable because she proves that she really isn't crazy. Her teacher is who she is writing to in this story, and her teacher always believed she was normal when all the other kids called her weird. A major event in the story that changes the character is when she explains how her mother died. She seems stronger and more daring after she tells the heartless facts of how exactly her mother passed away. "It always seemed like everything I had ever done vanished when mom passed away." Holly says after telling how her mother died.

I liked how realistic the author made everything so interesting, even the small things. Say if she plans to steal a coat, she will plan it out how she'll do it, where she will run, etc. I was satisfied when I finished this book because after everything Holly has went through in the story, it's good to see that she is rewarded. It was also really realistic because when she stole a cabbage a lady that owned the store grabbed her hair and cursed at her in Spanish. I'd compare this author to Rick Riordan because both write about kids who are "different" and haven't had things their way. They also both write about an amazing adventure.

I would give this book 5 out of 5 stars because I loved where Holly traveled and how many things she had to do for survival. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes survival or adventure books because Runaway features a whole lot of survival and adventure. "Maybe mom would be happy to see me where I am now, just maybe."

Ubalstech says

Twelve year-old's Holly's life is horrific, to say the least. Her father died before she was born. Her mother was a drug addict who OD'd. Her current set of step parents routinely lock her in the basement and flush her head in the toilet. And she can deal with all of that, but when her stepfather refuses to stop touching her, she decides to runaway, this time for good. She travels across the country, stowing away in bus cargo holds and trains, sleeping in parks, libraries and shelters, hoping to somehow start a better life.

This book weaves journaling and poetry together in a first person narrative that both breaks your heart and inspires you. We follow Holly as she takes food from dumpsters, steals from church donation boxes and flees the violence that exists with life on the streets. Author Van Draanen should be commended for the complexity and emotion in Holly's tale. Holly's anger at the unfairness of life pours out of the pages of the book, and we the reader, understand why she would be so angry.

Great book. A must for a middle school library.

MEREDITH :) says

Runaway By: Wenddelin Van Draanen.

This story is about a foster girl, she lives with her foster parents who make her sleep in the laundry room when shes a "bad girl"

After her foster dad shoves her head in the toilet and flushes several times, shes had enough.

She runaway.

Read this book to find out the type of horror and fear she faces.

All she wants is a good family and house to love and live in.

Is that too much to ask?

I guess it is when your mother died bc of heroin.

Read this book to find out if she ever does find her love?

And watch how she survives living on the streets.

I mean come on... Shes already made it all the way across the country with no problem... well maybe few.

A MUST READ!

:)

♥

Harold Ogle says

Runaway is another book picked for me at random at the library by my daughter. More often than not, she comes up with good stuff. That's probably a testament as much to the librarians as it is to my daughter, but still...

Runaway is a sequel, of sorts, to another book that Van Draanen wrote (*Sammy Keyes and the Sisters of Mercy*), but in no way is it necessary to have read that first. In fact, I'd recommend against reading *Sammy Keyes* first, as knowing what happens in that book would be spoilers for this one; the two plots overlap.

Runaway is the story of a preteen orphan named Holly who is put into foster care after living on the streets and experiences some of the awful things that happen in the foster care system. Convinced that there's no other way out of the situation, and that no one genuinely wants to help her, Holly enacts a scheme to escape and live on her own. Her situation gradually degenerates from there, though she develops considerable resourcefulness and there are occasionally people who show her compassion. But she is unable to trust anyone for a long time and usually flees before anyone can really help her - she's absolutely and sensibly terrified of getting put back into the foster care system. The book is very much touch and go, and there is a lot of tension, because there are often situations where it could develop even worse for her.

The book is an interesting read, and it seems to be part cautionary tale (you don't ever want to be homeless!), part indictment of the foster care system, and part Dickensian-style evocation of sympathy for the downtrodden. The story is told in the form of journal entries - Holly starts to process her feelings in a journal as part of an English class assignment, resentfully at first, and then finds herself really attached to the process. It becomes something of a lifeline for her, and she goes through a number of scrapes in the story just to NOT lose her beloved journal. Holly is a pretty vivid character, and her development over the course of the book is as touching as her circumstances are horrifying. It does end well - another way in which it resembles a Dickens novel - but it is through no particular effort or virtue on her part. She's powerless over her own fate, aside from choosing to trust someone else to help her. In that respect, the ending is a good one and well-executed. But the climax of the book is in stark contrast with the rest of it, because it is resolved very abruptly and without any pre- or post-explanation of that resolution. I'm convinced this is because the events are explained more in the other book, and Van Draanen approached it with the idea that anyone reading *Runaway* would be intimately familiar with the events in *Sammy Keyes* and so she glosses over them

("Everyone knows what happens here" seems to be the attitude). That was my one frustration with the writing of this book. Other frustrations arise from the fact that I liked the character so much, and was bothered by stuff left out. For instance, Holly doesn't acknowledge her birthday in her journal. That's believable, but I still regret that we didn't get to see her process that the way she processes the other holidays without a home or family.

While the book is well-done, I caution parents to consider carefully before recommending this to their children. Make sure that your kids are ready to handle emotional, physical and sexual abuse (the sexual abuse is implicit and sexual violence is often hinted at as a concern by Holly), the others are explicit), abandonment, paranoia, homelessness and mental illness before they read this. In many ways I would say that the reader should have a comparable maturity as needed for reading *The Lord of the Flies* before reading this book.

Olivia Gonzales says

Olivia Gonzales
p.1 Waxman

Goodreads Review no. 2 - *Runaway*

Runaway by Wendelin Van Draanen is the powerful story of a young girl named Holly Janquell who has been deemed “unadoptable” and constantly runs away from her foster homes. When she faces some cruel events in one of them, she runs away to the western beaches, calling herself a “sea gypsy” as she dislikes the word homeless.

Throughout all of her experiences Holly keeps a journal that her teacher told her to write in at the beginning of the year to “express her feelings”. Her teacher is also extremely fond of poetry, some of which Holly writes. Holly finds the premise extremely cheesy, but still continues to write about what she faces, where she’s headed, and most importantly, where her past has led her.

The first time I read this book, I found it very moving, which personally very hard for me to do with books. Runaway deals with some “adult” topics, which makes Holly talk about how alone she feels after everything that’s happened. I feel like the flow between Holly’s emotions and actions makes her a very credible character.

One of the other characters Holly meets is Venus. Venus is at first her friend, but then turns out to be a bratty girl trying to expose Holly as a runaway and get the police involved. One of the reasons Holly ran away was because of a girl named Camille at her school, and Venus resembles Camille, making Holly re-evaluate her position and whether or not she can really run away from her problems.

As a runaway, Holly becomes hungry and shelterless at points, facing danger and some minor crimes, as well as the police who are searching for her. Besides the initial foster home cruelty at the beginning, these are all huge obstacles in her way. However, Holly finds some relief, such as when she lives in a homeless shelter, a church, a library, or steals books because she enjoys reading. She also meets some helpful people along the way, who truly want nothing but the best for her.

I think this book is actually extremely informative on foster kids and runaways in society and what is portrayed as “the system”, as well as the other topic in the books like Holly’s mother’s drug use and her struggle behind that.

I would give this book 5/5 stars, more if I could. Van Draanen does the best job possible portraying Holly as the girl she’s supposed to be and the girl she is. I would recommend this book to anyone of any age who likes any genre. It is a versatile read that has a little bit of advanced vocabulary here and there and some

deep, engaging topics and storyline.

Runaway is also the companion book to Sammy Keyes and The Sisters of Mercy, as the plots intertwine at the end.

Sierra Webber says

The runaway by wendelin van draanen starts off with holly janquel a foster child. Her foster parents are abusive and treat her badly. She gets bullied at school and feels stupid. So her teacher feels she needs to pay extra attention to holly. And has her write in it to get her feelings out. At first holly hates the idea but soon she finds herself writing in it. After being locked up in her room (the laundry room) because she was “bad” she decides it’s time to leave. holly being adventurous runs away. At first she’s happy she made it a different state. But soon problems start to appear like hunger, thirst, shelter, loneliness, education etc. months pass by and holly hasn’t really achieved anything but freedom. Holly goes to homeless shelters to get food but it’s not enough. And here she is 12 years old alone hungry cold. Holly gets an idea to fix her warmth and shelter. So Holly decides to be a sea gypsy. So she sneaks on a bus to California. Finally after a terrible bus ride holly makes it, she loves the hotness and she sleeps in an abandoned house and she gets sandwiches from a shelter she finds a friend. All her problems seemed fixed but not for long it turns out her so called friend is actually really nosy and whiney. And the sandwich lady gets arrested for helping people without a license. So all holly’s problems are back and suddenly she feels unsafe with all the weirdo bums following her around. So holly travels once more she finds herself in a small town and holly learns to steal things she desperately needs. Holly finds a homeless shelter and she steals a bag of food. And she finds cardboard to build a house. But after a while all her plans fail. It rains and her house falls apart. And holly gets followed by a creepy guy named martin. She’s about to be attacked by him. when sammie a girl who works at the soup kitchen. Wacks martin on the head and takes holly to her grandmother’s home. With some deciding they decide to take her in. and vera the grandma just learns to love holly she adopts her and eventually trust each other so much that they read each other’s pasts. They each learn a lot about each other and they are like family in the end.

I loved this book it taught me to really never judge people and that I am lucky for what I have. Some things I disliked were how it was in a journal perspective I didn’t really get it and it confused me.
