

The Runner's Literary Companion: Great Stories and Poems About Running

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The RUNNER'S *Literary Companion*



"Animates the spirit of running better than any other book." —*Runner's World*



GREAT STORIES AND POEMS ABOUT RUNNING

Edited by Garth Battista

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From Breakaway Books : The Runner's Literary Companion: Great Stories and Poems About Running before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Runner's Literary Companion: Great Stories and Poems About Running:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great collection of stories and poems about runningBy ChadI posted this review originally at fourtrails.com.What it is: A collection of short stories and poems about running, featuring

works by authors you've heard of (Joyce Carol Oates) and some you probably haven't (Eddy Orcutt). What it isn't: A uniform collection of descriptions of lungs bursting, chests heaving, legs flying, and so on. Though there are plenty of those descriptions as well. Why I read it: I once wanted to get a degree even less lucrative than a PhD in Philosophy—an MFA in Creative Writing. These stories let me imagine life as a real athlete and a real writer. Description: If the syllabi of a PE teacher and an English teacher had a love-child, the first text on this love-child syllabus would be this book. It contains examples of truly spectacular writing from canonical writers such as Joyce Carol Oates, W. H. Auden, and Walt Whitman, as well as many stories and poems that have been mostly forgotten. There are stories about athletes and coaches, predators and prey, heroes and villains. There are several stories that would justify the price of the book all on their own. Harry Sylvester's "Going to Run All Night" is a story about a young soldier who must run an impossible distance in order to bring a message to a support unit. It's a twentieth-century version of the story of Pheidippides, but much more visceral. George Ewart Evans' "The Medal," a story of a young white man trying to return an ill-won medal to an older black man, is an examination of white privilege in the 1950s. James Tabor's "The Runner" haunts me in ways reminiscent of some of the short stories of James Tate, and might be the best story in the lot. Another contender for the best short story is Joyce Carol Oates's "Running." The entire story consists of four sentences—three short and one long. It's masterful. I can hardly pass a woman on a trail now without wondering whether she has the same fears as the main character in Oates's story. Oates's story isn't the only one to sit outside the archetype of macho dramatizations of competition and conquering (though I happen to enjoy those macho dramatizations). Sara Maitland's "The Loveliness of the Long-Distance Runner" is a story about a lesbian non-runner and her running partner. Toni Cade Bambara's "Raymond's Run" is the story of a young female sprinter and her younger brother, Raymond. The collection of poems is also very enjoyable. Ron Rash's "Running the Mile Relay" painfully captures the reality of young men facing the military draft, moving from the "easy courage" of facing pain on the track toward the concluding verse: Tight as the baton, we gripped our certain knowledge: this running in circles meant more than anything coming. The blurb on the back cover by Runner's Gazette is accurate: "This book is a must for any runner who thinks and experiences." If you like your running-related-reading to go advice on training and nutrition, this book is for you. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great collection of stories and poems. By Shawndol highly recommend this book. I read 1 or 2 stories every day while commuting on the train. I am extremely happy with the decision to buy this book. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A classic collection of running stories. By Michael A. McNamara The Runner's Literary Companion is possibly the greatest fiction book of running I have ever read. Stories include excerpts from "Once a Runner", 1920 Olympic Champion Jackson Sholtz' "The Winning Bug", Edie Orcutt's 1934 story "Wheelbarrow" among many others, including running poetry. Some of the more modern stories include the dark "Runner", an account of a murder during a run. There is such a variety of stories everyone should be happy taking the time to browse through the book.

Extremely popular collection of running literature.

From Publishers Weekly Among the 24 stories and 25 poems in this fictional overview of a popular sport are surprises from such illustrious names as Evelyn Waugh, Joyce Carol Oates and Walt Whitman—though the more turgid, macho prose of such genre giants as Alan Sillitoe and John L. Parker sets the book's overall emotional tone. The better stories break away from the repetitious variations on the theme of competition: Sara Maitland's "The Loveliness of the Long-Distance Runner," for instance, explores the oppositional thoughts of a woman runner about to enter a marathon and her female, non-athletic lover, who is both attracted and repelled by the nature of her partner's hobby. Oates's "Running" is an unusual, stream-of-consciousness narrative about a nameless woman who, while running in the woods with her lover, perceives a physical threat from a group of men. On the darker side, the title character in James Tabor's "The Runner" is attacked by rednecks in a remote area and decides to fight back, with startling results. This collection should prove indispensable for hard-core road warriors and of significant interest to sports fiction fans in general—and may even contain enough surprises to gratify readers in the mainstream. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Recreational runners have no trouble finding articles and books on how to increase their speed, carbo-load before a marathon, or handle interval training. But try to find a nice short story or poem about running. To answer this running void, so to speak, in sports literature, editor Battista presents more than 20 fictional stories and novel excerpts (of course, there's an extract from Alan Sillitoe's *Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*) about running as well as 24 verse selections on the subject. The writers range from the nearly unknown to the well-known and include such moderns as Joyce Carol Oates and Toni Cade Bambara and such classicists as Homer, represented by a selection from *The Iliad*, and A. E. Housman, with his elegiac "To an Athlete Dying Young." Whether runners will sit still long enough to muse over Rudyard Kipling's or Walt Whitman's verse remains to be seen, but to requests for running stories, this book provides suitable if not always riveting responses. Sue-Ellen Beauregard About the Author Garth Battista is the editor of *The Runner's Literary Companion* and *How Running Changed My Life*.