

## ***The Running Dream* by Wendelin Van Draanen**

Jessica Carlisle is the star of her track team: competitive and talented to the nth degree. But her dreams of running and winning are suddenly derailed when their team bus is struck by a drunk driver and her leg has to be amputated. She can't race. She can't run. She can't even walk. What will her life be like now?

This is one of my favorite realistic fiction novels! I have to confess, my guilty pleasure is books where tragedy is everywhere for the main character's life, but they conquer it through the power of friendship and community (i.e. anything written by Joan Bauer). And while that is, in a sense, what seems to happen in *The Running Dream*, this book goes so much deeper than that. If I pick up this book, I can't set it down- I have to read it all the way through.

*The Running Dream* explores the special needs community, tragedy, growth, and being a teenager in a messy world with wit, grace, and a triumphant spirit that will have you cheering for Jessica and supporting cast Fiona, Rosa, Gavin, and Jessica's family 'til the very end. At its core, the *Running Dream* is a book about fighting and thriving: the type of book everyone should read, though you might love it if you run, are passionate about accessibility, like human interest stories, or admire the human spirit.

Although this book is an easier read, readers should be aware of some intense scenes and themes at the beginning. (We receive a chilling description of the car accident, and, while loosely stated, Jessica is depressed, suicidal, and prescription addicted at one point.)

Katie Kruger