The Running Dream

By: Wendelin Van Draanen  
Publisher: Knopf  
Copyright: 2011  
Genre: sports stories  
Setting: present day, high-school, small town

SUMMARY: (must be original-not copied)  
Jessica, 16, an all-star runner, faces personal tragedy when she loses a lower leg in a car accident. She travels through the tough mental, physical, and emotional journey back from this event to see that life is still full of opportunity and hope. Great lessons about friendship, loyalty, determination, and teamwork.

AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:  
Wendelin Van Draanen was born in 1965 in Chicago, the daughter of chemists who emigrated from Holland. She now lives in California with her husband and two sons. She has written several books from young people, but before she was a writer she taught high school math and computer science.

Other books written by the author:  
How I Survived Being a Girl, Flipped; the Sammy Keyes series; the Shredderman series.

SIMILAR BOOKS/BOOKS WITH A SIMILAR THEME:  
After Ever After, by Jordan Sonnenblick; Hidden, by Helen Frost; Crazy Beautiful by Baratz-Logsted, Lauren;

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: (If question is related to a specific chapter, chapter is in parenthesis following question)

1. How does the accident change Jessica as a person on the inside, in addition to her physical changes?

2. Who do you think Jessica considers her best friend? Who do you think is her best friend?

3. Which physical limitations would be harder for you to handle – Jessica’s or Rosa’s?

4. When Jess was in the hospital should she have talked to Gavin and told him more about how she was or about the accident? Why are some pros and cons of her talking about it?
5. After the discussion and interaction from Vanessa Steele’s mother at the track meet, what do you think was going through Jess’s mind? What went through your mind?

6. What are some other things that Jess and her friends could do for Rosa?

LITERARY LINKS or ACTIVITIES:

Language Arts (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):

- Have students keep a list of the specific terms relating to Jessica’s amputation and prosthesis. Find a realistic diagram or ideally, an actual prosthesis, to study and understand how it fits on an amputated limb to best understand the fittings and difficulties that Jessica experiences.

RL.7.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

Science (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):

- Have students keep a list of the specific terms relating to Jessica’s amputation and prosthesis. Find a realistic diagram or ideally, an actual prosthesis, to study and understand how it fits on an amputated limb to best understand the fittings and difficulties that Jessica experiences.

RST.6-8.9. Compare and contrast the information gained from experiments, simulations, video, or multimedia sources with that gained from reading a text on the same topic.

Other (List activity and Common Core Standards Grades 6-8 addressed by each):

- Have students simulate the weight of Rosa in the wheel chair that Jessica trains to push through the entire marathon.

(Physical Education standards)

Challenging Words (pronunciation, spelling, defining) (include chapter and/or page #): Daunting (p. 84); caliper (p. 129); funk (p. 175)

Battle of the Book questions are available from a link on the Young Hoosier Book Award page.

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