



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

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

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

A collection of all the best fiction and poetry about runners and running.

An inspiring book, brimming with courage, exaltation, fear, pain, sweat, hope, and elation.

"Animates the spirit of running better than any other book."

—Runner's World

"Battista has gathered all the memorable (and widely scattered) jewels of running literature and melded them into a single glorious volume. I enjoyed it immensely and will keep it close at hand for many years."

—John L. Parker, author of *Once a Runner*

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For anyone who loves reading as much as running, *The Runner's Literary Companion* is the ultimate pleasure. It contains all the greatest appearances of runners in literature: indelible scenes from classic running novels, and unforgettable short stories and poems. Whether you are a weekend jogger or an Olympic contender, whether a sprinter or a marathoner, or anything in between, if you are a thinking runner, this book has something that will set your heart racing, or send you out the door in running shoes, or simply bring a smile of recognition to your face—the recognition of kindred souls.

These twenty-four stories and twenty-four poems are told in a splendid mix of voices and literary styles. They include a love story, two war stories, and a horror story; several murders and a surreal comedy. But they all are teeming with runners. They feature characters who are present in the lives of many runners already: Quenton Cassidy, the young miler in John L. Parker's cult novel, *Once a Runner*, Smith, the fierce rebel of *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*, and Archie Hamilton, the ill-fated sprinter from Gallipoli. New heroes (and some villains) abound, ranging from the shy, persistent high school runner, John Sobieski, to James Tabor's nameless avenging drifter, who acts out every runner's darkest violent impulse. Not to mention Pete Nilson and Brad Townes, two marathoners who (for different reasons) run themselves near to death, and find there strange bliss and redemption. And Hazel Elizabeth Deborah Parker (Squeaky), a girl in Harlem whose sprinting brings her joy and strength.

Besides the extraordinary characters, and some plots which could adrenalize the dead, these stories and poems offer beautiful, inspiring descriptions of the physical act of running. *The Runner's Literary Companion* contains running as every runner dreams of it—fluid, powerful, and graceful. It anatomizes the vast complexity of this seemingly simple act. And it finds equal nobility in champions and unknowns. Each story and poem pulses with courage, fear, pain, hope, and elation.

Fiction and poetry share with running an exhilaration and an intensity; they concentrate and magnify real life. *The Runner's Literary Companion*, by gathering these stories and poems, offers a glimpse of running as the transcendent thing it can be. And above all, this book will bring hours of reading pleasure to anyone who runs, or who once ran, or who hopes to run someday.

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