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## Runaways in young adult fiction – a survey and annotated bibliography

Anna E. Edwards

*Rowan College of New Jersey*

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RUNAWAYS IN YOUNG ADULT FICTION - A  
SURVEY AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

by  
Anna E. Edwards

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
Rowan College  
May 1996

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_ Professor

Date Approved May 1996

1996

Anna E. Edwards

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## ABSTRACT

Edwards, Anna E. Runaways in Young Adult Literature,  
A Survey and Annotated Bibliography, 1996.  
Thesis Advisor: Ms. Regina Pauly  
School and Public Librarianship.

The purpose of this thesis is to compare causes and consequences for runaways in real life with those in young adult fiction, in order to ascertain whether any similarity exists between the two. The thesis also provides an annotated bibliography of young adult books about runaways.

Research was carried out to obtain information about what real runaways must face, and various guides to young adult literature were consulted in order to evaluate fictional runaway lifestyles.

With few exceptions, real lives of runaway children bear very little resemblance to those of their fictional counterparts. In fiction, happy endings (or at least resolution of the major conflicts) are the rule, even if the protagonist must face hard truths. But real runaways with few choice-making skills often face problems which offer equally harmful choices. For the most part, real runaways live lives of unspeakable distress and danger.

## Acknowledgments

With special thanks to Regina Pauly for her guidance, her humanity, and her belief that there are many paths to the truth.

With thanks also to my friends and family for their patience during the time I've worked on this degree.

In memory of my late husband, Gordon, whose love always taught me to grow, and who started me on this path.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Edwards, Anna E. Runaways in Young Adult Literature,  
A Survey and Annotated Bibliography, 1996.  
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School and Public Librarianship.

This thesis surveys the real world of runaways as well as the fictional world of runaways in young adult literature to ascertain how far fiction reflects real life. It provides an annotated bibliography of books about runaways.

Research obtained information about what real runaways must face, and various guides to literature were consulted in order to evaluate fictional runaway lifestyles.

With few exceptions, real lives of runaway children bear little resemblance to their fictional counterparts.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to survey the portrayal of runaways in young adult literature with the goal of understanding whether it reflects real life.

#### Procedure

In order to establish a background for comparison, research into the real, present-day phenomenon of runaways was required. An in-depth inquiry into young adult literature in the runaway genre was also required.

Young adult literature for the purposes of this thesis included literature for youths in middle and high school.

A set of criteria for comparison of young adult novels is as follows:

- a. What are the causes for the act of running away?
- b. Is the departure planned or spontaneous?
- c. If planned, what is the destination and what "equipment" is chosen to enable survival?
- d. How does spontaneity/planning effect consequences?
- e. Does the protagonist have skills that enable survival?
- f. What kind of growth occurs?

A survey and bibliography of young adult fiction about runaways might be helpful to school counselors, or any individual interested in bibliotherapy with potential



runaways. This thesis will also help in determining how realistic young adult literature is in portraying runaways.

## CHAPTER 2

## Runaways In Real Life, Literature, And Society

Real Life

In order to use facilities and services most effectively and efficiently, staff involved in shelters, drop-in centers, hotlines, street outreach, free clinics, and emergency rooms of hospitals gather information about runaways they see, talk to, and try to help. Since it is true that many runaways don't use any of these services, and possible that some who do use them lie during intake/exit interviews, exact statistics as to the number of runaways (and their reasons for running away) are not possible to obtain. Estimates based on available sources, however, range from 700,000<sup>1</sup> to two million annually.<sup>2</sup> Most estimates range around the one million mark.

Powers, Jaklitsch, and Eckenrode describe 75% as being fifteen to seventeen years old, 61% female, 56% white, 32% black and 10% Hispanic. Twenty-one percent are from welfare families, most are from working or lower class families.<sup>3</sup> "Girls in general tend to engage in victim-type behaviors which are more self-destructive in nature, while the behavior of boys is more anti-social."<sup>4</sup> Barrett and Fincher say girls and boys run away in equal numbers but girls are more likely to seek help.<sup>5</sup> In Langway's article, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is quoted as saying 70% of runaways are white and 56.7% are female.<sup>6</sup>

Three hundred thousand are considered by authorities to be "hardcore" street kids.<sup>7</sup>

Fifty-six percent of adolescents who run away stay within fifty miles of home, and 80% to 90% return home within two days.<sup>8</sup> They often go to a friend's house, and run mainly in order to get parents' attention, to make a point, because they feel there is no communication with caregivers, or because they are angry and want their own way. Some stay in touch and even continue with school and other activities. They may make the rounds staying with one friend after the other, if their stay away is longer, and even live on the street occasionally as needed. Only one in twenty is gone more than a year.<sup>9</sup> Some repeat this pattern many times and have other problems such as truancy, shoplifting, and drug use. These runaways are sometimes considered to be incorrigible. That these adolescents are deeply unhappy in their family homes is obvious. Whether they have "real" reasons to take so drastic an action as running away might be hard for an adult to support or even acknowledge.

These children don't report consistent physical abuse, but complain of severe communication problems and verbal abuse, and infrequent but severe physical "discipline."

One growing population of runaways is among Asian-Americans. According to Michele Ingrassia,<sup>10</sup> children of parents who were born in Southeast Asia are having serious

trouble integrating the less restrictive lifestyle of the United States with the mores and attitudes still valued by the their parents.

These youngsters also run away to friends. But these friends have built a system of their own to house the runaways. These children have set up a series of "safe houses" which are quite outside even traditional Asian family life, as well as having nothing to do with government or private agencies.

Large groups of Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, and Hmong adolescents pool their money to rent apartments or small houses where runaways can find shelter. Some move on after awhile to other "safe houses." Others go home for short periods of time and then run away again. Authorities think they support themselves by petty theft and other gang-related activities.

Some authorities estimate that 25-46% of "runaways" haven't left home voluntarily. Although lumped together statistically with runaways, these children (often called "throwaways" or "pushouts" in the media) are really youngsters who have been evicted by parents; sometimes because parents can no longer deal with problems caused by the adolescents, sometimes because of parental economic, marital, and drug abuse problems.

Powers, Jaklitsch, and Eckenrode say that these street kids may express more "depression, self-mutilation,

substance abuse, school dysfunction and truancy, and stealing and criminal behavior"<sup>11</sup> than actual runaways.

In many expert opinions, the major cause of flight among youngsters is abuse in the home, particularly physical and sexual abuse.

The lowest estimate of the percentage of children who are running from abuse is 36%.<sup>12</sup> Most other estimates range around 50%. Paul Chance suggested that 86% of runaways have endured some form of physical abuse.<sup>13</sup>

In the book Adolescent Runaways: Causes and Consequences, Mark-David Janus, et al, estimate that 1.7 million children per year are punched, kicked, and bitten by their parents/caretakers. Also, that 450,000 to 750,000 are beaten, 46,000 are assaulted with knives or guns, and that 27% of women, and 16% of men are sexually abused.<sup>14</sup> Ernie Allen in a 1994 article states that "...like rape, child molestation is one of the most underreported crimes, only 1 to 10% are ever disclosed."<sup>15</sup>

Just as not all children who run have been abused, not all children who are abused run. Much depends on who is the abuser, the strength of the family unit, other problems (i.e., economic or marital) affecting the family, and whether those problems enmesh the whole family. Where sexual abuse is not perpetrated by parents, children may feel loved and cared for (albeit misunderstood) at home and so not be tempted to run.

Families of runaways are often characterized by expectations of high achievement (Janus uses as an example the expectation that a child be potty trained by age six months).<sup>16</sup> The goal of this high achievement is to maintain the families' image to the rest of the world. Often the parents can't or won't model how success can be achieved, and success is not rewarded in such a way as to increase the achiever's self-esteem. Some children learn to use achievement to try to avoid the abusive rage of caregivers.

Another characteristic of runaways' families is a rule system that is inflexible and over-controlling. The goal is dependence. The children (and sometimes one parent) feel personally powerless. They are not encouraged to have positive, internal resources or strength of spirit.

Other factors in families of runaways are numerous. They often score low on tests of social skills, express all strong emotions as anger, make one child the scapegoat, are neglectful, and show profound lack of respect for each other.

Marlene Webber says of runaways she interviewed for her book, "...not one ran from a family where the child felt loved, wanted, and safe."<sup>17</sup>

Although apparently few in number, there are still children who run away to indulge a desire for adventure or simply as a "rite of passage." Sometimes these children do come from unhappy backgrounds, and the dream of being a star

is enough to lure them into running. They flee to New York City, and especially to Los Angeles to try to make their fantasy of stardom come true. Jon Hull says, "For the Nation's runaways, Hollywood is like a huge electric bug zapper that can't be unplugged, attracting and then destroying thousands and thousands of children."<sup>18</sup>

### Real Life Consequences

For most children who do it, running away is an attempt to ameliorate an intolerable lifestyle. Flight might last a few days or forever, but most potential runaways have contemplated the act before doing it.

Short-term plans may involve finding out which friends or friends' parents will give shelter for a few days, and obtaining as much cash as possible. Although dreams of being "discovered" and eventually becoming a star may have to suffice for long-range plans, many runaways do really believe that they will find a job, finish school, and eventually lead a "normal" life.

Most high school graduates of seventeen or eighteen years of age have difficulty finding a job that pays enough to live independently. A seventeen or eighteen year old who has been living on the streets, and is not a high school graduate, has virtually no chance of finding a job without a lot of the kind of help that runaways have trouble finding and/or accepting. Younger runaways (from eleven years old) have no chance of self-support in any legitimate job.

No one dreams of being a prostitute, and few dream of being small-time thieves or drug dealers. But according to what one youngster told Marlene Webber, "You either got to steal, deal, or trick. There ain't no other way to survive, man."<sup>19</sup> And although many would-be runaways contemplate suicide, dying is not their primary goal. If it were, they would not try running away.

The truth is, most of these youngsters do end up being prostitutes and/or thieves of some description and/or involved with the drug trade, because there is simply nothing else they can do. Any many die every year as a result of these activities.

A runaway's "career" in prostitution usually comes first. Female or male - the most desirable prostitutes are the youngest, the least "used." Some are recruited by pimps and pornographers even as they arrive in a city. Some just start soliciting ("hooking" as it's sometimes called, or "hustling" as it's called when boys and young men are involved) when their small cache of money from home is gone. They might then be noticed and taken up by pimps later. Some young prostitutes work always on their own without a pimp. It seems to depend on the city, or area of a city, where a prostitute works.

In many ways this is the most dangerous of the illegal activities that runaways use for survival. There is no safe way for these children to practice this trade, and there are



no safe aspects to the job.

Prostitutes are always at risk of physical violence or death from the pimps as well as from their customers. Contrary to the image sometimes shown in movies and TV, pimps do not protect their prostitutes, only their profits. They want the most profit they can get, and send their "employees" to whomever will pay the most. In the opinion of some authorities, pimps are, for prostitutes, much more dangerous than the customers (often called "johns").

The psychological and emotional damages of spending puberty living on the streets and selling one's body are incalculable and fundamental, certainly as damaging and pervasive as physical consequences like AIDS.

Many of these runaways come from backgrounds which have bred distrust and low self-esteem. Continuous and intense family conflict seems to be a trait shared commonly in the families of youthful prostitutes. Living on the streets does not teach any runaway to love and trust, or develop a sense of self-worth or respect for themselves or others. Quite the contrary. Child prostitutes learn that their only intrinsic value is how much money they can earn by being a vessel for a man's (and it is virtually always a man's) lust.

Living on the street even without prostitution increases runaways' feelings of worthlessness, powerlessness, and hopelessness. Lack of trust and self-

esteem make relationships superficial, and teach runaways to manipulate and exploit to survive. Webber quotes one youth as saying "Friends are just dudes...who haven't hurt you yet."<sup>20</sup>

As one young prostitute named Matt said in an interview, "You learn to survive. But you learn not to care if you don't."<sup>21</sup> Street kids do what they have to do at the moment to survive.

Drugs pervade all of our society, and it is no less true that drug use and trade pervade life on the streets. Some runaways arrive on the street already drug-users. In fact, many of the things which might be factors in causing a child to flee are also predictors of drug-use: i.e., low self-esteem, problems at home and school, parental drug-use, a sense of powerlessness, lack of education and job prospects, poverty, abuse. Some children become addicted to drugs after running away. Pimps often use drugs to ease a youngster into prostitution. The street kids themselves introduce newcomers to drugs as solace and escape. "Crystal dates" are "johns" who pay with crack cocaine instead of money. Drugs can become more essential to users than shelter or food.

Being part of the drug trade (aside from usage) can start at a very young age, with very young children acting as "mules" or couriers. They're used because they are juveniles and penalties, if they are arrested, are milder

than for adults. The longer a child stays involved in these types of activities the more likely it is that she/he will become entangled with the law.

Kinds of stealing run from shoplifting, breaking and entering, and even assault, to stealing necessary food from tables in fast food restaurants. The longer a youngster stays on the street, the more likely he/she will have recourse to some kind of theft, especially if the runaway has never been a prostitute, or when she/he grows too old for prostitution. This is another activity which will eventually increase a youth's possible involvement with the criminal justice system.

The danger of sexually transmitted diseases (especially AIDS) is obvious. One would think this danger would be inhibiting to these young prostitutes, and to the many street kids who are not involved with prostitution but who are promiscuous. Many of them have the "It can't happen to me" attitude of most adolescents. Many simply don't care. Hersch says "...there are so many ways to die everyday on the street that they cannot focus on something that may kill them years from now."<sup>22</sup> When asked if johns request condom-use, one young hustler said, "If they wanted safe sex, do you think they would be out on 42nd Street?"<sup>23</sup>

Pregnancy is another health concern among street children, whether or not they are prostitutes. In a large number of cases, pregnant girls receive little or no

prenatal treatment or advice. Although food is probably the easiest of the necessities to obtain on the street (charities, soup kitchens, drop-in centers) the food can't be obtained in large enough quantities or variety, or not often enough to keep growing youngsters healthy, much less pregnant ones.

Drug use causes other health problems both with pregnancies, and in general. Sharing needles (often a deadly practice) is common among drug users who live on the street. When drugs become more important to an individual than food, malnutrition and self-neglect also result.

Runaways who do seek medical treatment do so only to relieve immediate symptoms. They make no follow-up visits for many reasons, including a disinclination to become involved with the welfare system and any authority figures, the need for parental permission for some medical treatments, and the fear of being sent home. Typical problems are skin rashes, upper respiratory disorders, gastroenterological problems, exposure, and other sexually transmitted diseases than the already mentioned AIDS.

Some experts say that the number and type of mental problems among street children are the same as those treated in psychiatric clinics. A study of individuals in New York City Youth centers in 1983 showed that 30% of street children are depressed, 18% are anti-social, 25% have attempted suicide, and 25% have contemplated suicide.<sup>24</sup>

The annual homicide rate for men ages fifteen to nineteen years jumped 154% from 1985 to 1991. Webber says suicide is second only to accidents in North America as cause of death in adolescents.<sup>25</sup>

Annually, 5,000 teenagers are buried in unmarked graves in the United States.<sup>26</sup>

Returning to any "normal" lifestyle becomes increasingly difficult the longer these kids stay on the street. Many helping professionals believe that if help doesn't get to these kids as soon as they "get off the bus," so to speak, before the pimps and pornographers pick them up, the chances of helping runaways really plummets. Pete Axthelm says "...one in three kids is lured into prostitution within forty-eight hours of leaving home."<sup>27</sup> Another article says that help must arrive in the half-hour before the pimps arrive.<sup>28</sup> So many runaways are crippled emotionally before they even hit the streets, that even a short time of surviving in this way bankrupts them emotionally. Living on the streets leads to or encourages the self-destructive use of drugs, and unprotected, indiscriminate sex with pimps, girl/boyfriends, and any man willing to give a street kid a place to sleep for a night in exchange for sex.

Some simply will not return home under any circumstances. Those who run away to Hollywood, for example, with the primary goal of becoming famous will often

not return home to hear friends and relatives say "I knew you couldn't make it." For many children, for many reasons, living on the streets under any circumstances is better than going home.

Jail is often a consequence of running away, not for status crimes anymore, but for the criminal activities kids have to engage in to survive on the streets. Once caught up in the criminal justice system, alternatives and real help virtually disappear for these children.

There are few examples in the research of any of the 300,000 "hardcore" runaway children emerging successfully from life on the streets. To do so requires a level of helping that most social service agencies are simply not equipped to give. Some street kids do succeed and become outreach workers themselves, or work their way through the child welfare system. It does happen.

#### Young Adult Literature

Youngsters in young adult literature run for some of the same reasons as real runaways. Most run because of poor communication with parents/caregivers and from situations they perceive as intolerable. Others run because of problems with peers and the feeling of being an outsider. The specter of abuse only rarely appears. "Push-outs" do not seem to exist in young adult literature.

In E. L. Konigsburg's book, From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, Claudia runs away because her

household chores seem to her unfair (her three younger brothers appear to have no chores), odious (she has to empty all the waste baskets on Saturdays), and her parents won't pay attention to her complaints. Julie Edwards Miyax Kapugin, in Jean Craighead George's Julie of the Wolves is thirteen years old and runs from an arranged marriage. Jerry Spinelli's Maniac Magee, is about an orphan being raised by an aunt and uncle. Although they are kind to him they never speak to each other, a situation he finds intolerable.

Several good books about living on the streets have been written by Felice Holman. Benno, in Secret City, U.S.A., doesn't actually run away from home and live elsewhere. Benno does often run away from his crowded apartment, but usually he only goes to the roof of his apartment building. On a walk one day, he discovers a part of the city so deteriorated that it is uninhabited. Here he slowly, with help from street kids and runaways, establishes a warm, self-sufficient haven.

When Clay's mother disappears from the transient hotel where they have been living (in Paula Fox's Monkey Island), Clay runs away before the youth authorities can be notified. While he searches for his mother, he lives on the street with two homeless men.

In Marion Dane Bauer's book Foster Child, a twelve-year-old girl runs away from a foster father who expresses a

sexual interest in her.

There are some young adult books that portray abusive or neglectful caregivers. In Bristle Face (Zachary Ball, pseud.), Jase runs away from an uncle who beats him. The children in Mavis Thorpe Clark's The Min Min and Aramis Slake in Slake's Limbo (another by Felice Holman) run away from neglectful homes. Bonnie runs away from her father's rigid rules in Drop-Out by Jeanette Eyerly.

In a few books, the protagonists' lives are threatened, but not in ways that reflect real life. Gilly finds that he must flee for his life from a foster parent in Julia Cunningham's Dorp Dead, a book with an almost fairy tale quality. And Tie-Dye Rainey in A Good Courage by Stephanie S. Tolan feels his life threatened in the cult his mother has joined, so he runs away. Even Huck Finn ran away from a father who beat him and left him locked in a shack without food and water.

Many books feature runaways whose goal is to have an adventure. The classic example is Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain. In this book, Tom and a few of his friends (including Huck Finn) decide to run away to become pirates. They do have skills needed to survive in some fashion, in that they can obtain food by fishing and build a fire to keep warm and cook the fish. Those are skills they use frequently anyway.

A protagonist who runs away to test himself, is Sam Gribbley in My Side of the Mountain by Jean Craighead George.



He knows his family owns some land in the Catskills, and is determined to prove he can survive a winter alone in the wilderness.

Mafatu, in Call It Courage by Armstrong Sperry runs away for a reason similar to that of many modern day runaways, the feeling that he doesn't fit in his milieu. In this book about a primitive society, Mafatu runs away because he is an object of scorn in his village.

#### Fictional Consequences

There are some protagonists who die as a result of their flight (the anonymously-written Go Ask Alice, for example, or A Wild Thing by Jean Renvoize, and The Runaway's Diary by Marilyn Harris), and the books about them seem to be trying to admonish children to think twice before running away from an unhappy home situation.

Some other protagonists do live with consequences that are somewhat similar to consequences faced by real life runaways. In Run, Shelley, Run! by Gertrude Samuels, Shelley survives but has to deal with imprisonment and lesbianism. In The Peter Pan Bag by Lee Kingman, there is some drug abuse by Wendy's acquaintances, but Wendy herself returns home voluntarily at the end of the summer.

Although Benno successfully establishes a haven in Secret City, U.S.A., he soon realizes it cannot be kept a secret. When he and the other boys carry an elderly, injured man to the hospital, Benno meets a young social

worker and has to make a choice about whether to trust her with his secret. He does, and she eventually confides "Secret City" to a reporter friend of hers because she feels the publicity will encourage the city to continue what Benno has started. Her hope is that the city will make further renovations in this uninhabited area to make many more havens for homeless people. The feeling at the end of the book is very positive, and leads the reader to believe that this is exactly what will happen. While it is true that when street kids are helped it is often because one individual social worker, teacher, etc., has been able to create a trusting relationship with the child, it is not likely that the bureaucracy of any city would, or could, so easily accommodate a group of children, a social worker, and a TV reporter, no matter how correct their vision.

Although the point of view of Monkey Island (Paula Fox) is somewhat different and Clay doesn't run from a "typical" runaway situation, the feelings he has in consequence may be realistic. Deserted by both parents Clay turns to Buddy, the one person who has stood by him in every extremity, from bitter cold to hunger to assault. Clay's feelings when he is reunited with his mother seem to be on hold until he can discuss them with Buddy. The blank emptiness Clay feels after his mother's desertion, his observation (as if from a great distance) of his foster parents' behavior toward him, his new ability to "read" adults' behavior, and his

inability to trust anyone but Buddy, seem believable consequences to his experiences.

Felice Holman's book Slake's Limbo has an open ending, but even Aramis Slake, whose existence has ever been one of the most piercing emptiness, loneliness, and neglect, emerges from his time of being a runaway stronger and more nearly whole than ever before in his life. The real consequence for a child like Slake would be life on the streets as a prostitute and/or drug abuser. It is impossible to believe, more over, that a child so beaten down by life could, within four months and virtually on his own, find the inner strength and self-esteem even to attempt to turn his life around.

#### Society's Preception of Runaways

The idea of human nature being stronger than fate and able to overcome every obstacle is very appealing. Perhaps that is one of the reasons that society in general tends to be sometimes cavalier, and sometimes cold in its view of runaways. It is easy to be judgmental, to say "Well, I haven't had it easy. I've had to work hard for what I have, and look what I've accomplished." Those who have never suffered real, life-threatening hunger, who have never had to endure the most essential violation of their sexual rights (the right to say "no"), who have never been assaulted physically and habitually by the persons who are supposed to give love and create safety, who haven't had

always to listen to parents telling them how stupid and useless they are, can have little idea what the life is like that causes children to run away.

Vivid images of 1960's Flower Children seeking to "find themselves," and Tom Sawyer observing his own funeral are the pictures of runaways that remain in many people's minds. Many others see runaways as troublemakers, juvenile delinquents, and drug addicts bent on stealing, rather than as children who need help. This idea of runaways is brought on, to some degree, by the tough, brazen attitude that runaways use to shield themselves on the streets. And the people who spend a great deal of time trying to avoid facing the consequences of their own actions often look at runaways as individuals who, having made the choice to flee, must now face the consequences of that choice, no matter what the consequences are.

There is also, for some, an inability to deal with the suffering of these children. Herman Melville describes it in his story Bartleby the Scrivener.

"So true it is, and so terrible too that up to a certain point the thought or sight of misery enlists our best affections; but, in certain special cases, beyond that point it does not. They err who would assert that invariably this is owing to the inherent selfishness of the human heart. It rather proceeds from a certain hopelessness of remedying excessive and organic ill. To a sensitive being, pity is not seldom pain. And when at last is perceived that such pity cannot lead to effective succor, common sense bids the soul be rid of it."<sup>29</sup>

## Notes

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## Notes

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## CHAPTER 3

## An Annotated Bibliography

This annotated bibliography is in alphabetical order by author. Each annotation is coded according to the source used, except when the annotation was not copied from any source. The bibliography includes books for middle and high school students.

The code is as follows:

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- . The Bookfinder. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service, Inc., 1985. (BKFNDR '85)
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- Gillespie, John T. with Naden, Corinne J. Juniorplots. New York: R. R. Bowker, 1987 (JrPLTS)
- Tway, Eileen, ed. Reading Ladders for Human Relations, 6th ed. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1981. (RLHR)
- Winkel, Lois, ed. The Elementary School Library Collection - A Guide to Books and Other Media, 14th ed. Williamsport, PA: Brodart, 1984. (ESLC)

Anonymous. Go Ask Alice. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971.

This factual, first-person narrative is written in the form of a diary. The book describes one girl's fascination and disgust with drug trips, her many types of sexual experiences, and her running away from home. The book contains explicit street terminology, descriptions of sexual experiences of various kinds, and detailed accounts of good and bad drug trips. An epilogue tells of the girl's death from an overdose of drugs. (BKFNR '77)

Aaron, Chester. Better than Laughter. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1972.

Allan and Sam Collins have everything. However, they are not given time, love, and understanding. The story of their protest about this is set against a narrative of materialism and waste. They make up their minds to run away but only get as far as the city dump. (RLHR)

Arrick, Fran. Steffie Can't Come Out to Play. Scarsdale, NY: Bradbury Press, 1978.

In this realistic story, a fourteen-year-old girl runs away from home to become a fashion model. What she becomes on the streets of New York is a prostitute. The lives of young women entrapped in the seedier side of life after unthought-out



ambitions fail is well portrayed. (RLHR)

Ashley, Bernard. Break in the Sun. Chatham, NY: S. G. Phillips, Inc., 1980.

A young girl runs away to escape an abusive stepfather. By the time he finds her, both have gained some insight into themselves and each other. Suspense builds gradually here, as scenes of Patsy's adventures alternate with scenes of her pursuers. (BKFNDRS '85)

Baker, Margaret Joyce. Home from the Hill. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1968.

This is a somewhat implausible English story about children who run away to find a home for their presently scattered family. Their feelings of desperation and their need for family unity are sympathetically portrayed. (BKFNDR '77)

Ball, Zachary, pseud. Bristle Face. New York: Holiday House, 1962.

Jase Landers, fourteen, runs away from a drunken uncle who beats him. The book describes the love of a boy for an unwanted dog and the love of a man for an unwanted boy. The man, Lute, eventually marries a widow and Jase is invited to make his home with them. (BKFNDR '77)

Bell, William. Crabbe's Journey. New York: Little Brown, 1986.

A young man at war with himself and his

surroundings, dependent on alcohol, learns under extreme conditions to be self-reliant and accountable after he runs away to live in the woods. (BKFNDR '89)

Bonham, Frank. Viva Chicano. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970.

Seventeen-year-old parolee Joaquin Doran feels trapped and desperate. He decides to run away after being accused of pushing his younger brother out of a window. He is helped by his gang, the Aztecs. He eventually decides to turn himself in, and with the help of an understanding parole officer, he is placed in a foster home. He feels that he has been given a chance to start a new life for himself without the handicap of being prejudged. (BKFNDR '77)

Brancato, Robin Fidler. Facing Up. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

After running away and after attempting suicide, a young man overcomes his feelings of guilt over his best friend's death and the secret relationship with the friend's girlfriend that preceded it. (BKFNDR '89)

Branscum, Robbie. The Saving of P.S. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977.

Priscilla Sue is the last of a large family and has had to work hard on the little farm. When her widowed father begins keeping company with an attractive widow, P.S. runs away. (ESLC)

Brown, Roy. Flight of Sparrows. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

Chance brings four runaways together in the cellar of a house condemned for demolition in London's bleak East End. Although very different in personality they become a kind of family, fending for each other by petty theft. Eventually the police and a friend bring about the inevitable breakup. (ESLC)

Bunting, Eve. If I Asked You, Would You Stay? New York: Harper, 1984.

"Crow," seventeen years old, has spent all of his life in foster homes. He finally gets his own apartment in an abandoned carousel place on a pier. He gets a summer job, but no one else knows about his apartment.

Staring out at the ocean one day, he discovers a drowning person and runs to save her. Her name is Valentine and this was an attempt at suicide after running away from home twice.

She stays with Crow for a while, but after they have a fight she runs away again. He is deeply conflicted about her staying, his own need for privacy, and having a place of his own.

He finds her and they come to understand that they have feelings for each other but decide she must go back to her mother, finish school, and sort out her

problems. (JrPLTS)

Butler, Beverly Kathleen. Captive Thunder. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1969.

Seventeen-year-old Nancy and her divorced mother have had arguments for as long as Nancy can remember. They seem to disagree about everything. A recurring quarrel concerns Nancy's boyfriend, Mitch. Nancy wants to elope, but Mitch makes excuses, so Nancy runs away to an aunt. Eventually she decides to return home and complete her education. She has decided that she really does not love Mitch. (BKFNDR '77)

Campbell, Hope, pseud. No More Trains to Tottenville. Upper Montclair, NJ: Saturday Review Press, 1971.

When sixteen-year-old Jane's older brother Dick runs away to California and Jane also attempts to run away, their mother decides that she has "had it," and disappears one day. Their father walks out in disgust just before Dick returns. Dick finds a job, and Jane tries to take care of the house. Eventually both parents return and all family members understand each other better. (BKFNDR '77)

Christopher, Matt. Earthquake. Boston: Little, Brown, 1975.

Jeff Belno, who realizes he is slower than the other children, feels that the camp counselor has hounded him. His one thought is to escape on his horse

Red. His journey through the Adirondack Mountains is adventurous and he manages fairly well until an unlikely earthquake hits. (ESLC)

Clark, Mavis Thorpe. The Sky is Free. New York: Macmillan, 1976.

This tale recounts the adventure of two boys both runaways, and each hunting for a place in the world. Exciting adventure in the Australian outback. (ESLC)

---. Iron Mountain. New York: Macmillan, 1969.

A teenager is haunted by the fear of going to jail. He feels that by changing his job and his surroundings by running away, he may be able to escape his fear and his problems. But by becoming a fugitive, the boy compounds his fear instead of escaping it. A contrast between Joey's slum-dwelling, apathetic family and the happier, more affluent Rose family is clearly drawn. (BKFNDR '77)

---. The Min Min. New York: Macmillan, 1969.

The children have been neglected by their parents, who are overwhelmed by their past experiences and their present environment. When Sylvie and Reg run away to the strict but loving care of the Tuckers, a different side of their characters emerges. (BKFNDR, '77)

Cole, Brock. The Goats. New York: Farrar/Straus/Giroux, 1987.

In a cruel attempt to humiliate an awkward girl

and boy who don't fit in, fellow campers maroon them on Goat Island with no clothes. The plan is to leave them only overnight.

In the short time it takes some counselors to return to the island with clothes to retrieve the adolescents, they are gone. They have decided to take their destiny in their own hands by running away. The goal is to walk into camp triumphantly two days later on Parents' Day having survived alone in the woods.

They have no plan other than the very general one described above, and they have no equipment or supplies for survival, not even clothing. They have no apparent knowledge or skills that will enable them to survive in the forest alone. They manage well by co-operating with each other (which is difficult for them at first), getting help from campers in a different camp, stealing, and unexpected resourcefulness.

As with so many other runaways in literature, it is this unsuspected inner strength and resourcefulness that not only enables survival, but also teaches the youngsters to trust in themselves, boosts self-esteem, and makes them more assertive and courageous.

Coles, Robert. Riding Free. Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1973.

This open-ended story deals with two girls who escape parental conflicts by running away. Initially

afraid, the girls gradually share their fears and philosophies and grow to rely on each other for support and protection. No special attempt is made to alert readers to the dangerous aspects of hitchhiking.

(BKFNDR '77)

Colman, Hila Crayder. Claudia, Where are You? New York: William Morrow, 1969.

Sixteen-year-old Claudia feels that her mother - the editor of a modern woman's magazine that urges understanding between mothers and daughters - does not understand her. So one afternoon she takes the money she has saved, boards a train to nearby New York City, and temporarily moves in with Myrna, a friend of a friend. That doesn't work out so she moves again. In the end, she does contact her parents, but only to tell them that she plans to stay in New York. Her parents reluctantly agree, knowing she will only leave again if she is taken home. (BKFNDR '77)

Cone, Molly Lamken. You Can't Make Me if I Don't Want to. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971.

Fourteen-year-old Mitch does not want to leave his home, his friends, and his school to go to Israel and live on a kibbutz for a year with his family, so he runs away. He hitchhikes to a popular hiking and camping area, where he meets Charles, another runaway. When Mitch and Charles find the body of a dead man and

the police becomes involved, Mitch begins to realize how much he and his father agree on ethics. In the meantime, Mitch's parents have been thinking about his viewpoint, and they are ready to try harder to understand him. (BKFNDR '77)

Corcoran, Barbara. A Dance to Still Music. New York: Atheneum, 1974.

A fourteen-year-old, suddenly deaf, struggles to stay out of schools for the deaf. After running away from home, she finds her way to an experimental program of education. (RLHR)

---. The Watching Eyes. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1974.

When her mother goes to the mental hospital again, a young girl is left to the mercy of an uncle with a court order for her custody. She fears his abusive ways and manages to run away. She is given refuge by an old woman, her crippled son, and a grandson. (RLHR)

---. Don't Slam the Door When You Go. New York: Atheneum, 1972.

Judith, Lily, and Flower do not resolve their problems by running away, but they do mature to the point where they can overcome the burdens that were experienced at home.

(BKFNDR '77)

Cunningham, Julia. Dorp Dead. New York: Pantheon, 1965.



Taken from the orphanage into the home of the village ladder-maker, Gilly Ground eventually begins to feel that his life is threatened. When he runs away, he takes nothing with him and has time to plan only how he might escape from his watchful foster parent. He takes nothing with him and has no destination in mind beyond escaping from his immediate danger. He has help from a dog and an unnamed woodsman, and does not have to survive alone or by his own abilities. His experience, helps him grow in knowledge of what kind of life he really wants.

Dodson, Susan. Have You Seen this Girl? New York: Four Winds Press, 1982.

Sixteen-year-old Tom Carpenter feels deserted when Kathy, the only girl he has ever cared about, runs away and leaves him behind. They had often talked about fleeing together, Kathy from a mother who beats her and Tom from parents he feels do not understand him. So when Tom receives Kathy's postcard from New York City, he leaves Ann Arbor to find and join her. He goes first to his Aunt Maggie in New York, letting her think he plans to return home after the Easter break. Maggie, divorced and very busy, reluctantly agrees to take him in and help him search for Kathy, calling his parents first to reassure them. As they walk through the Times Square district, Tom is overwhelmed by the

open prostitution, pornography, and dope peddling. He begins to realize that the ten days Kathy has been gone is a long time for a defenseless, vulnerable girl to avoid the obvious snares of New York. He doesn't know that in another part of town, Kathy is being well cared for by a wealthy and benevolent widow named Jane Kent. Kathy has convinced Mrs. Kent she is an actress. She has also decided to get Brian, Mrs. Kent's son, to fall in love with her and keep her "safe forever and ever." One day, as she sits at a sidewalk cafe, a photographer named Teddy approaches her. He snaps several candid pictures and later invites her to his apartment for a real photo session. Gradually, Tom's aunt helps him see that many of his own family problems are self-induced. He has just about decided to return to the clean streets and fresh air of home when he accepts his aunt's and her boyfriend's invitation to go out on the town. In the middle of dinner at an exclusive restaurant, he looks up and sees Kathy preparing to leave with her elegant escort, Brian Kent. He rushes after them, but Kathy wants nothing to do with him. Two days later Tom leaves New York, knowing he can do nothing to help Kathy but determined to save himself.

(BKFNDR '85)

Dragonwagon, Crescent, and Zindel, Paul. To Take a Dare.

New York: Harper, 1982.

Chrissie's transformation from childhood to a flirtatious "swinger" goes unnoticed by her mother, but not by the boys in school. Her father screams at her and calls her names. When her father discovers she has gonorrhoea, just before she is fourteen, she runs away.

She wanders for a few months. In Southern California she meets a friend called Lissa and they decide to hitchhike to New Orleans. On the way, they stop in Arkansas in a town "Where the Misfits Fit." Chrissie decides to stay but Lissa continues on to New Orleans.

Chrissie settles in to learn to be a hotel cook, and begins building relationships. Eventually she requires an operation for the damage done by untreated gonorrhoea. She finds that she will never be able to have children. Her hospital bills are paid by her friends. She takes in a homeless boy and becomes manager of the hotel kitchen. She moves into her own small house.

The boy she has taken in has a quick temper and is often in trouble. He frequently runs away, beats up a younger child, and runs away for the final time at age thirteen.

Chrissie falls in love and has a stable relationship, and eventually contacts her parents.

(JrPLTS)

Dunne, Mary Collins. Hoby & Stub. New York: Atheneum, 1981.

A young, orphaned runaway and his dog encounter friends and enemies, generosity and suspicion, danger and last-minute rescues on their trek from Texas to Illinois. Finding a home at last with his only relative and her family, Hoby learns to be neither victim nor victimizer. (BKFNDR '85)

Eige, Lillian. The Kidnapping of Mister Huey. New York: Harper & Row, 1983.

A boy from a troubled family and an aging man form a close friendship and briefly run away together. (BKFNDR '89)

Elfman, Blossom. The Butterfly Girl. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980.

In this skillful first-person narrative, a flighty young girl, at odds with her parents, becomes an unwed mother (after running away) and struggles to find a place for herself and her child. (BKFNDR '85)

Eyerly, Jeannette Hyde. Drop-Out. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1963.

Bonnie and Mitch believe they are in love and elope across the state line. They plan to travel to a distant city, where Mitch has a job offer. However, when Mitch's car breaks down, he and Bonnie must try to find jobs. After they discover how few jobs are open

to dropouts, they re-evaluate their decision to leave school and marry. (BKFNDR '77)

---. The World of Ellen March. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1964.

Still unable to accept the reality of her parents' separation, Ellen schemes to reunite her mother and father by running away and taking her six-year-old sister with her. However, an automobile accident and other unexpected incidents nearly cause Ellen's death. When a friend visits Ellen in the hospital, he helps her realize that her parents' divorce is inevitable but in no way her fault. (BKFNDR '77)

Fenton, Edward. Duffy's Rocks. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974.

This is a moving story of a boy who runs away from his grandmother's house to search for his father and a different way of life. His grandmother's old-fashioned values and ideals seem dull to him, in contrast with the faster-moving life he sees in the richer sections of the cities. He is finally forced to realize that his father does not want him and that he will have to wait and work hard if he wants to have a better life.

(BKFNDR' 77)

Fleischman, Sid. The Whipping Boy. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1986.

Because the heir to the throne could not be

spanked, Jemmy, a young orphan, emerges from the streets to become the whipping boy to a spoiled and hateful Prince Brat. Both boys decide to run away and are kidnapped by a couple of rogues who seek ransom. The boys come to be mistaken for each other. (ABCE&YA)

Fox, Paula. Monkey Island. New York: Dell Publishing, 1991.

Unable to bear his "failure" (as he sees it) after losing his job and is unable to find another, Clay's father leaves the family. Clay and his pregnant mother struggle on for awhile, but end up making the rounds of welfare agencies and eventually living in one room in a transient hotel.

After a time, the mother finds this situation intolerable and she leaves eleven-year old Clay with all of her available cash, some cans of soup, and a box of doughnuts.

Clay waits for five days for her to return. After eating whatever food is in the room, he begins searching for food in the trash bags of the lady across the hall. It is she who discovers that Clay is alone, and decides to notify the authorities. Clay runs away before she can do this, and finds shelter in a city park in the protection of two homeless men - the elderly Calvin and younger Buddy, who is black. Clay has taken with him only the clothes he's wearing, a

light-weight corduroy jacket, and the money left by his mother. He has no resources, no job skills, no destination, no plan except the vague one of finding his mother.

Buddy and Calvin "foster" Clay and teach him some things he needs to know to survive on the street. They quickly come to care for him, especially Buddy, and to feed and protect him. Every day Clay watches the transient hotel from across the street to see if his mother returns.

Late one night a group of teenagers invade the park. They attack the homeless people with baseball bats. Calvin is hurt, but Buddy rescues Clay. He breaks into a church basement so Clay will have a warm, safe place to sleep. Calvin dies as a result of the assault.

When Clay becomes seriously ill with pneumonia, Buddy takes him to the hospital. Because of this, and when he is well enough, Clay is taken into foster care. Eventually he is reunited with his mother and new baby sister, and they are able to make a home together again.

Clay does change, at a very fundamental level. His ability to trust has been damaged and even when he returns to his mother, he wonders to himself how she could possibly have abandoned him. He has, in some

ways, learned to think like an adult. He has his own thoughts and seems more aware of what adults (especially his foster parents) are thinking, and what are their expectations of him.

Although he goes to school and makes friends, he returns regularly to the park. He realizes he is looking for Buddy. He needs help in untangling the feelings (happiness, anger, resentment) he feels toward his mother, and life in general. One day he finds Buddy doing the same thing, just looking at the park and thinking. Buddy has a job and is no longer living on the street. We are left with the idea that their friendship will continue.

Friis-Baastad, Babbis Ellinor. Don't Take Teddy. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967.

Thirteen-year-old Mikkel often takes care of his fifteen-year-old retarded brother, Teddy, for his mother. One day while Mikkel is watching his brother, Teddy accidentally injures another boy with a rock. Mikkel is afraid Teddy will be considered dangerous and be institutionalized. Mikkel packs some clothes for Teddy and himself in a knapsack and takes his brother to the train station. He goes to his uncle's mountain cabin.

After an arduous hike with the reluctant Teddy, and after becoming caught in a downpour, both boys



become ill with pneumonia. Eventually a lady they met on the train realizes that the boys are runaways, and notifies the parents. Both boys are rescued and taken to the hospital for treatment. It is decided that Teddy will go to school to learn to take care of himself, but that he will be a day student. (BKFNDR '77)

George, Jean Craighead. Julie of the Wolves. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1973.

Although thirteen-year-old Julie flees in a panic from an arranged marriage and has no time to plan any details of her flight, she is cool-headed enough to take with her some basic utensils for survival. As she gathers these tools, she plans her walk across the tundra to the nearest port. Her plan is to travel by boat to her pen pal's house in San Francisco, but she becomes lost on the featureless tundra.

Julie survives through a combination of her ability to remember her father's words about survival in the "old days," and her ability to observe patiently and to use intelligently the ways of nature.

Eventually Julie must make a bitter choice between continuing life on the wild and demanding tundra, or going back to the civilization which she sees as the instrument for the destruction of the wilderness. She knows now she can survive as her ancestors did. But

again her father's words come back to her, "The seals are scarce and the whales are almost gone." She realizes then "...that the hour of the wolf and the Eskimo is over." In her decision to return to civilization and all its complexity, Julie swallows a hard truth about life.

---. My Side of the Mountain. New York: Dutton, 1959.

After reading everything he can about wild plants and wilderness survival, Sam Gribbley decides to run away. His family owns land in the Catskills and Sam convinces himself he knows enough to survive a winter there by himself. Part of his plan is to encourage his family to move out of their tiny, cramped, city apartment and build a house on the land they own.

The book is in the form of a diary written on bits of bark. It describes Sam's problems, accomplishments, encounters with other humans, and trips to the library in the nearest village. It also describes his feelings as, first, he works through the summer to prepare for winter, and second, as he settles in for the winter.

He has prepared as much as possible for his adventure. He takes with him flint, and ax, a penknife, a ball of cord, and \$40, and his careful planning does help him survive a particularly difficult winter. After visiting the library again to learn about falconry, he even tames a falcon to help him

obtain food.

Sam's father comes to check on him after a time, and finds him so cozy and snug that eventually Sam's objective is met. In spring his father comes back with the whole family with the purpose of making a home on their land.

Sam grows in the predictable way that children grow in young adult literature about runaways. As his list of successes and achievements grows, so does his confidence. The reader might question whether a city child could succeed so overwhelmingly for nearly a year in the wilderness with reading as his only preparation, but Sam's growth in confidence, coming as he does from a stable and loving home, is believable.

Gibbons, Faye. Mighty Close To Heaven. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1985.

A motherless boy longing for a relationship with his absent father, chafing also at his grandparents' old-fashioned sense of discipline and hard work, discovers after running away that it is on the farm with them that he truly belongs. (BKFWDR '89)

Guest, Elissa Haden. Over the Moon. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1986.

A girl's unresolved feelings about her runaway older sister cause her to run away to Nova Scotia to find out what has become of her. She is helped by a

young man when her money is stolen, and does join her sister to stay for a time. Eventually, they both come home. (BKFNDR '89)

Hall, Lynn. The Something-Special Horse. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985.

An animal-loving boy defies his father by running away to save a horse from being killed for meat. He encounters problems in his flight, but is able to overcome them to discover that the horse is stolen and a reward is offered. (BKFNDR '89)

Hallman, Ruth. Breakaway. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press 1981.

An overprotective mother, both domineering and dependent, keeps a teenage boy from accepting his hearing loss and getting on with his life. The boy's determined girlfriend, a sympathetic landlady, and Rob's own will to recover help him learn the skills he needs to cope successfully with his disability. No judgment is made on Rob and Kate's decision to run away, but the successful outcome could be read as an endorsement. (BKFNDR '85)

Harris, Marilyn, The Runaway's Diary. New York: Four Winds, 1971.

Because her parents constantly fight, fifteen-year-old Cat Toven decides to run away hoping to establish "a sense of identity." She fills her

backpack, takes about forty dollars, and begins hitchhiking. She comes into contact with many different kinds of people, including an escapee from a mental institution who nurses her back to health in a cave. Some of the time she camps, sometimes stays without helpful strangers, and sometimes gets a job and supports herself. She decides to go home to face her parents and make the best of their arguments and plans for a divorce. But on her way home, Cat is struck by a car while hitchhiking and dies two days later of massive head injuries. This book is written as a diary. (BKFNDR '77)

Hill, Margaret. Turn the Page, Wendy. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1981.

Abandoned by her parents, left with abusive foster parents, Wendy is a girl of impulsive actions and repressed emotions. She runs away from an institution and a fruitless search for birth mother leads to her discovery that she has herself abandoned people who care about her. Wendy learns that she need not always be rootless: she can make her own roots. (BKFNDR '85)

Holman, Felice. Slake's Limbo. New York: Macmillan, 1974.

Slake is a contemporary, urban child living in a dysfunctional home. His primary care-giver, an aunt, doesn't bother with him. He eats whatever he can find in the refrigerator (never enough) and wears the same

clothes because he has no others (none warm enough). In short, there is no one at home to care for him or about him.

At school and in the neighborhood he also has problems. He can't fit into a gang, and he is tormented and often beaten by his peers. His teacher has no patience with him, and in fact, seems to dislike him outright.

One day he runs into the subway to escape some bullying boys. This isn't unusual for Slake, who often escapes from his most pressing problems by riding subways back and forth for hours. He keeps a token in his pocket for just such emergencies. What is unusual is that this time Slake stays underground for four months.

Slake learns a hard truth, but it is more sweet than bitter. The truth he learns is not that survival is difficult. For Slake, survival has only been under conditions of the most degrading and inhumane circumstances. The sweet truth is that he can survive by his own choices and by his own hard work.

---. Secret City, U.S.A. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990.

Benno often finds himself running away from his crowded apartment in a city ghetto. Usually he only goes to the roof of his apartment building, but after

his grandfather dies, Benno finds the roof is not far enough.

On a walk with his friend, Moon, Benno discovers a no-man's-land part of the city. Buildings are not just decrepit but generally fragmentary and uninhabitable, except by a pack of wild dogs. Moon is frightened, but Benno is drawn to a place so quiet and peaceful. Eventually they find an intact house which must have been some rich person's stately home. They creep in to investigate.

After a few more visits, Benno begins to work on making the house a livable haven. Moon, swept along by Benno's vision, contributes ideas as do the other street kids and runaways who are gradually drawn into this "home making."

In his "flight" from his overcrowded home, Benno learns much about himself, leadership, and trust. He has been able to obtain the equipment he needs to survive in this new environment by scrounging, trash hunting, and the trusting, albeit unknowing help of Moon's uncle.

Hunt, Irene. The Everlasting Hills. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985.

A mentally disabled boy with a great capacity for affection and growth is helped (after running away) by a kind old man to be reconciled with his bitter,

uncaring father in this richly textured story.

(BKFNDRS '89)

Konigsburg, E. L. From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler. New York: Atheneum, 1985. Newberry Award

Claudia Kincaid's reasons for running away may seem specious to an adult reader. She initially runs away because her household chores seem to her unfair (her three younger brothers appear to have no household chores), and odious (she has to empty all the wastebaskets on Saturdays).

Her escape is planned most carefully, with an eye to as many details as she can anticipate, and she does have a destination, the Metropolitan Museum of Art. After she and her oldest brother, (she has no money and he has so she invites him along) run away, however, she begins to feel that the most important thing that should result from her flight is not necessarily attention for unfair conditions at home, but that she change in some, not necessarily visible, way.

The way she chooses, is to become involved in solving the mysterious origins of a beautiful statue. When she solves the mystery this inner change is accomplished and her self-confidence, which had been beaten at home, is bolstered.

Kropp, Paul Stephan. Take Off. St. Paul, MN: EMC



Publishing, 1986.

A young man experienced in the pitfalls of running away serves as mentor for a younger friend in this colorful and appealing first-person story. It should be noted that although Dan and Jimmy encounter all the classic dangers they escape virtually unscathed.

(BKFNDR '89)

Lasky, Kathryn. Pageant. New York: Four Winds, 1986.

This book is set in the early 1960's. Sarah Benjamin runs away from a stuffy rule-ridden, exclusive, girls' school.

Little thought is involved in her flight, although she does think to "cover her tracks." She vaguely plans to go to an older sister living in New York City. When she arrives at her sister's, she finds she can't stay there because her sister has a live-in boyfriend. Sarah's second choice (an aunt living in New York City) is also not feasible because the aunt is traveling in Europe.

When eventually her parents find her (with her third choice, a friend), she decides she can't go back to school, so she stays in New York with her aunt. She plans to finish school and do a stint in the Peace Corps. (JrPLTS)

MacPherson, Margaret McLean. The Rough Road. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1965.

Thirteen-year-old Jim Smith lives with his foster parents on the Isle of Skye in the 1930s. The boy is very unhappy. His foster parents forbid any type of pleasurable activity, and they beat him for every infraction of their very strict rules. After they beat him for skipping school, Jim runs away to a friend's house. His foster mother accuses Jim of using physical violence against her, and the friend turns him in. A judge decides to place the boy in a new foster home.

McGraw, Eloise Jarvis. Hideaway. New York: Atheneum, 1983.

A neglected, runaway boy and a girl who's lived in many foster homes learn from each other to trust other people to give them a chance. Chapters alternate viewpoints, allowing the reader to share both Jerry's and Hanna's perspectives. (BKFNDR '89)

Mendonca, Susan. Tough Choices. New York: The Dial Press, 1980.

A young teenager caught in a custody battle struggles to make the right choices in a world of conflicting loyalties. She runs away from her father and his new family because she believes she is causing too much trouble. (BKFNDR '85)

Morgenroth, Barbara. Tramps Like Us. New York: Atheneum, 1979.

In this first-person story of rebellion and self-

discovery, many readers will recognize the familiar confrontations between teenagers and authority figures. Daryl and Vanessa run away when their friendship is forbidden. (BKFNDR '85)

Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds. Making It Happen. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1970.

John Jacobs and M. L. Gifford are very clever at organizing protest in their school against educational curricula. When they are seen turning in a fire alarm and are consequently expelled from school for the rest of the week, they decide to run away. They gather supplies at John's house and they hide in the garage loft of a blind man that Lee know. They remain there for five days until Lee's older brother Paul finds them and talks them into going home. The boys begin to realize that knowing how to make a disturbance is not as important as knowing why you are protesting something. (BKFNDR '77)

Paterson, Katherine. The Great Gilly Hopkins. New York: Crowell, 1978.

Though bright and fiercely independent, Gilly realizes too late that her compulsion to be with her natural mother made her overlook the real love in her foster home (from which she flees) with Trotter, Mr. Robinson, and William Ernest. (RLHR)

Petersen, Peter James. The Boll Weevil Express. New York:

Delacourt Press, 1983.

A farm boy who runs away with a delinquent friend and the friend's sister finds that there are worse things than coming to terms with his strict father.

(BKFNDR '89)

Pfeffer, Susan. The Year Without Michael. New York: Bantam, 1987

This is a runaway story from the point of view of the family left behind.

Renvoize, Jean. A Wild Thing. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970.

This is a haunting story about a girl who feels rejected and unloved almost all of her life. It describes her thoughts and emotions as she spends more than six months alone on a wild moor. Morag believes that her independence will make her happy but she comes to realize that she can never be totally self-reliant. Her encounter with Arthur helps her recognize her need for human companionship - a need she hopes to satisfy with her coming baby. Her death comes as a shock to the reader. (BKFNDR '77)

Rich, Louise Dickinson. Star Island Boy. Danbury, CO: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1968.

Larry deals with emotional pain by trying to avoid situations that might cause it. He develops a cynical attitude which causes him to distrust those around him.

Larry's desire to be needed and his jealousy over a threat to his new-found security cause him to run away. He becomes lost in a terrible fog in the rowboat he has taken to return to the mainland. He is rescued by his foster father, who tells Larry that he has become an islander and will live permanently with the Chandlers (BKFNDR '77)

Rylant, Cynthia. A Fine White Dust. New York: Bradbury, 1986.

A thirteen-year-boy with religious proclivities against all odds (non-church-going-parents and an atheist best friend) is saved by the charismatic, revival sermons of an itinerant preacher.

After meeting and talking to the preacher a few times during the day in town, the boy decides he has been called by God to travel with the minister and become a preacher too. The "Preacher Man" encourages Pete in this idea because he's lonely in his travels and believes having a young disciple will help.

Pete packs and goes after the last night of the revival to wait for the preacher at the gas station. The preacher never comes, and Pete later finds out he has left town with the waitress from the drug store lunch counter (who returns three weeks later refusing to discuss her adventure).

Pete has a definite plan for running away, and

although his destination is not definite, the action is well thought-out. He takes with him one bag filled with clothes and a family photo. Although Pete does not yet know if he has the skills which will enable survival, it is not vital since he will have an adult companion to earn money while he explores the "preacher" part of his personality.

Pete's growth is traumatic and painful even though he never actually leaves town. It is not the hard truths of the streets that Pete learns, but the consequence of trusting the wrong person for the wrong reasons.

Samuels, Gertrude. Run, Shelly, Run! New York: New American Library, 1975.

Shelly's life is characterized by running. Initially she flees from foster homes, only to be neglected by her alcoholic mother. Sent to a detention center, she flees to escape the brutality of the other inmates. Shelly is mercilessly entangled in the bureaucracy of the juvenile justice system until she escapes the vicious cycle with the help of a humane judge. Psychologically, however, Shelly does not gain the freedom she so desperately desires until she decides not to return to her mother, but to build a life on her own strength and will. (RLHR)

Shortwell, Louisa Rossiter. Adam Bookout. New York:

Viking Press, 1967.

Adam avoids accepting the deaths of his parents by pretending they are still alive. In his grief, he runs away from well-meaning guardians. When he reaches his destination and meets a number of people from different backgrounds, he realizes that he is not the only one with problems. He learns, too, that problems never are left behind when people run away. (BKFNDR '77)

Somerlott, Robert. Blaze. New York: The Viking Press, 1981.

David has been living with his aunt and uncle in California since his parents died a year earlier. He is well cared for, but receives little affection. A brief visit from his grandfather gives David the opportunity to run away. A boy, his grandfather, and a dog, all starved for affection, help each other create a loving home together. (BKFNDR '85)

Sperry, Armstrong. Call It Courage. New York: Macmillan, 1940. Newberry Award Winner

Mafatu runs away in a moment of desperation because he can no longer endure his life. He's held in little regard and is openly mocked by his peers because he's afraid of the sea. The fact that the cause of this fear has an understandable basis doesn't matter to people who live on an island and survive by fishing.

Mafatu has no plan and no destination in mind, but

his very first act in running away is the beginning of his testing, since the only escape from the island is in a canoe over the open sea.

He washes up on a deserted island, and his surviving the journey gives him the courage to begin the chores which will insure his survival. These chores are accomplished using the same skills the people on his home island would use to survive, so in this case the protagonist does have the skills necessary for survival. What Mafatu learns is that "courageous" and "fearless" are not necessarily synonymous. He learns that real courage is not the absence of fear, but fear faced and overcome.

Spinelli, Jerry. Maniac Magee. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1990. Newberry Award Winner

Jeffrey Magee is orphaned at the age of three and sent to live with an aunt and uncle. Although very kind to him, the aunt and uncle never speak to each other, a situation Jeffrey cannot tolerate. At age eleven, he runs screaming from a school concert. He has certainly made no plans and carries nothing with him.

He travels some distance alone back to the Pennsylvania town he lived in with his parents. He takes up residence in a buffalo shed at the zoo. His skills for survival are not severely tested because he



finds a family to love him almost immediately on his return to his hometown (and a black family at that).

While it cannot really be said that Jeffrey does a lot of growing during this story, those around him definitely do. He emerges as the hero in bringing together a racially divided town.

Thompson, Paul. The Hitchhikers. Danbury, CT: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1980.

Two lonely teenagers meet while hitchhiking to California in search of love, Shawn from his father and Val from the father of her unborn child. Both find what they are looking for, but the consequences are not happy so they begin hitchhiking again. (BKFNDR '85)

Twain, Mark. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Tom Sawyer's Comrade). New York: Harper, 1923.

This classic runaway tale resembles, in some ways, today's runaways. Huck Finn runs from an alcoholic and abusive father who has removed him from his foster home. He takes with him everything he will need to survive for an extended period (a sack of cornmeal, coffee, sugar, bacon, and other sundries), plus various skills (building a fire, catching and cooking fish, and helping himself to other necessities) that will help him. He decides he will run not back to the restraints of the foster home - but to freedom.

Very early in his journey, he crosses paths with Jim, a slave who is running away from Huck's foster home too, and Huck and Jim decide to flee together.

Huck grows a great deal during his flight with Jim, especially in coming to terms with his own bigotry.

---. The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. New York: The Heritage Press, 1936.

Although Tom Sawyer does grow, running away is only one of the incidents that brings about his growth. This is the quintessential tale of running away as a form of adventure.

Tom and some of his friends decide to become pirates so they "borrow" a skiff and row to an island in the Mississippi River. While they wait for ships to come by that they can plunder, they settle down to fishing and planning what to do with the loot. They take nothing with them, but they have skills enough to enable them to survive until their first quarry passes the island. It is a warm and humorous picture of youthful indolence and the eventual homesickness which drives the boys home.

Walsh, Jill Paton. Fireweed. New York: Avon, 1972.

In London, during the blitz of 1940, a fifteen-year-old runaway who calls himself Bill meets Julie, another runaway. They cast their lot together and are

so jubilant about being on their own that their friendship is a happy one, nearly untouched by the grim details of war around them. To escape detection, they move into a bombed-out cellar, where Julie is buried alive in fallen rubble. She survives, and Bill finally sees her reunited with her family. He realizes that their special feeling for one another, born of crisis, must inevitably end. (RLHR)

Wier, Ester Alberti. The Long Year. New York: David McKay Co., 1969.

The boy in this novel tries to preserve things as they are. Failing to understand the changes in himself and those he sees in his father, he rebels and runs away. Through his experiences with a wolf he begins to understand his father and to accept change as inevitable.

Wolitzer, Hilma. Wish You Were Here. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984.

A boy resolves his confused feelings about his father's death and his mother's imminent remarriage. When his determined plan to run away to his grandfather backfires, Bernie finds in himself a maturity and ability to cope he didn't know he had. (BKFNDR '89)

#### CHAPTER 4

#### CONCLUSIONS

The most common and pervasive cause for running away in real life is abuse. These children are trying to save themselves. "They hit the road because... any life looks better than the life they lead at home."<sup>1</sup>

While it is true that real life runaways and fictional runaways flee for some of the same reasons (most obviously lack of communication in the family), fictional runaways have two main causes of flight. They want to prove themselves and/or have an adventure, or they need to gain recognition of and attention for, home situations they perceive as intolerable. These home situations are rarely portrayed as abusive except in a veiled or euphemistic way.

In real life, youngsters often plan their flight, think about it, for many months before doing it. The immediate plans may involve making arrangements to stay with a friend, or acquiring as much money as possible before departure, deciding what items to take, and choosing a final destination. Long range plans may involve getting a job, finishing school, even going to college. Some real runaways' plans involve helping others like themselves. Some plan to get "discovered" and be big stars. But plans about how such goals are to be reached are vague, and quickly get lost in the struggle just to survive on the streets.

In fiction, some protagonists plan for their flight, but many also run after contemplating this action only briefly. In novels, planning seems to depend on the needs of the plot, more than anything else.

In real life, planning seems to make no difference. The pitfalls and dangers are there for all runaways, and few seem able to avoid them no matter how much planning is done before flight. Even when children know something about these dangers, they run. Perhaps they feel forearmed rather than frightened by what they see on TV and in movies about life on the streets.

In young adult literature, planning seems to have less of an effect on the survival of runaways than luck, the "kindness of strangers," and previously unknown strengths. Except in specific cases (like My Side of the Mountain), fictional runaways seem often to flee spontaneously.

Many real life runaways believe they have skills which will help them survive. Some believe they have talents which will make them big stars. Many believe they have "street-smarts" or extremely good persuasive skills which will help them get whatever they want, and which will defend them from the dangers of the street. The fact is that many have "...nothing to exchange for food, shelter, and clothing, but their bodies."<sup>2</sup> It is not likely that business people would hire underage employees even if they did have skills without proper identification and parental

permission to work.

These children (one half or more from dysfunctional homes) are trapped into an unspeakable lifestyle of prostitution, drug abuse and dealing, and stealing to provide for life's barest necessities. Many are also in desperate need for approval and a sense of belonging, which pimps and others who prey on them seem to provide, at least at first.

In fiction, survival seems to depend more on the runaways' previously undiscovered internal resources, some latent spiritual strength. Most fictional runaways emerge from their experience with egos intact, and physically and emotionally stronger.

In runaway stories which are historical or have a primitive setting, the successful possess the necessary skills for survival, because such skills are endemic, and necessary for everyday life for everyone.

It is very rare to find instances of growth or success of any kind in stories of real life runaways. Many of these children have virtually no self-esteem or spiritual strength when they flee. "Family life has prepared them to become a particular kind of victim in a particular subculture."<sup>3</sup> Once they hit the streets the things they have to do to survive quickly drain them of all inner resources and leave them spiritually bankrupt. They are simply physical shells which have only physical needs. The secondary needs for

acceptance, love, and intellectual challenge become too bruised and stunted to accept fulfillment, even if such fulfillment were offered. It is hard to imagine the possibility that any of these children survive at all, much less emerge with any degree of psychological wholeness from life on the streets.

Most fictional runaways grow in spirit and confidence. The confidence brings about a growth in self-esteem which in turn facilitates survival and enables the protagonist to face painful truths and make hard decisions about the future. Fictional runaways who return home (be it natural or foster) do so disillusioned but wiser, and with a new will toward compromise and communication.

Although more recently written young adult novels make an attempt to describe more realistically a runaway's life, most stop just short of showing the real degradation, squalor, and spiritual emptiness of a real runaway's life.

Young adult books about runaways in general leave the reader with the feeling that anything can happen: that runaways can triumph over the pain and lack of self-esteem, and bring success out of the distress and misery of their lives. It makes for great reading, it's uplifting and motivational, but it is not realistic.

Notes

1. K. Barrett and J. Fincher, "Teenage Runaways," Ladies Home Journal, August, 1982, 128.
2. Barrett and Fincher, 128.
3. Marlene Webber, Street Kids: The Tragedy of Canada's Runaways. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 81.



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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Name: ANNA ELIZABETH EDWARDS

Date and Place of Birth: JULY 17, 1947  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

High School: KENSINGTON HIGH SCHOOL  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

College: WEST CHESTER STATE  
WEST CHESTER, PENNSYLVANIA

Present Occupation: TEACHER  
GLOUCESTER TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY