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# Runaway



## Synopsis

"It's a cold, hard, cruel fact that my mother loved heroin more than she loved me." Holly is in her fifth foster home in two years and she's had enough. She's run away before and always been caught quickly. But she's older and wiser now--she's twelve--and this time she gets away clean. Through tough and tender and angry and funny journal entries, Holly spills out her story. We travel with her across the country--hopping trains, scamming food, sleeping in parks or homeless encampments. And we also travel with her across the gaping holes in her heart--as she finally comes to terms with her mother's addiction and death. Runaway is a remarkably uplifting portrait of a girl still young and stubborn and naive enough to hold out hope for finding a better place in the world, and within herself, to be.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 740L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 256 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (67 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #975,534 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #130 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Runaways](#) #152 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Dysfunctional Relationships](#) #187 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Runaways](#)

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Twelve-year-old Holly has had enough of "the system." She is not going to let another foster dad touch her, or allow another foster mom to hit her. If she runs away, she knows she will have to fend for herself, but at least she won't have to worry about being locked in a utility room without food, or having her head shoved in a toilet as punishment for refusing to be touched. And, most appealing of all, she will not have to face being called a liar by the adults in "the system." Holly believes that

trusting adults can only result in trouble for her, and she cannot bring herself to take a leap of faith with her teacher, Ms. Leone. However, when she gives Holly a journal and suggests she explore writing as a source of comfort, Holly decides to give it a try, even though she is certain it is a waste of time: "Giving me this journal was a totally lame thing to do. You think writing will get me out of here? You think words will make me forget about the past? Get real, Ms. Leone!" (p. 1). However, over the next several months, Holly finds that the journal is the only friend she can trust, the only one that is always there for her and, ultimately, the only guide that keeps her on track to something better. *RUNAWAY*, presented entirely as journal entries, follows Holly from May 17th until December 1st, as she chronicles her life on the streets and her constant search for food, a bath, and a warm place to sleep. Some of the poems seem a bit much to have come from the pen of a twelve-year-old, until one considers that Holly's life as a "gypsy"--inspired by a way of life one would hope is a bit much to actually exist in the real world, but, unfortunately, is neither farfetched nor unrealistic--makes her mature expression of ideas more than plausible.

When Holly's teacher, Mrs. Leone, gives her a blank journal, Holly is disgusted. Writing in a journal can't make her forget that she's a 12-year-old orphan and that her mother died of a heroin overdose, or that the foster parents she's living with abuse her, locking her in the laundry room for days and sticking her head in the toilet when she tries to defend herself. Mrs. Leone could never understand Holly and, in Holly's opinion, probably doesn't care to. No one knows what she faces each day because she tells no one. But when boredom threatens to drive her crazy one night in the laundry room, Holly starts to write. And despite her scorn at the mere idea of keeping a journal, she continues writing. When Holly can no longer take the abuse, she runs away. Unlike her previous attempts, this time she succeeds, making it out of town and heading west. She takes only the essentials...and her journal, filling long hours of fear and boredom by updating Mrs. Leone, despite the fact that her teacher will never see her or the journal again. We follow Holly through her struggles, victories and worst nightmares as she heads toward the Pacific Ocean and does whatever it takes to stay alive and free from her biggest fear --- Social Services. No stranger to the streets, Holly sleeps out in the cold, steals food and supplies, hides in the hot, dark cargo hold of a cross-country bus, and lies to everyone but her journal. She enjoys reading (and eventually writing), loves dogs and plans to become a vet someday by learning math and science with stolen textbooks (though she feels guilty about stealing anything but food), and somehow manages to hold herself and her dreams together in the face of constant and life-threatening dangers.

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