

YA Book Review

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# A RELATABLE SEASON

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*No Ordinary Season* by James V. Jacobs (2017) is an enjoyable, realistic depiction of the life of a devoted high school cross country runner. As a cross country athlete who now competes at the collegiate level, I was ecstatic to read a book about the challenges and tribulations the main character, Cassie Garnet, faces in her senior year of cross country competition. I loved the details that the author included about the day leading up to the race and the race itself. For example, Cassie had to adapt and make quick decisions during her races with the intention of beating highly competitive runners. It brought back all the feelings of mental and physical pain that I have had to deal with before and during races.

Additionally, I am a big romance fan, so reading about the small-town Indiana romance between Cassie and River Bend High's star basketball player Jake Nader added a spicy subplot to the story.

This book would appeal to secondary school readers because the characters face many of the same challenges that students face today such as bullying, competition, family conflict, and relationship issues.

This book could be included in a course curriculum to teach or encourage students to stand up for what they believe in or who they believe in as well as to argue that everyone deserves to be treated equally. Specifically, the new coach, Charna Rothstein Simon—or C.R. Simon—had to overcome prejudice because she is Jewish and therefore is an outcast in this small town. She overcomes adversity, building her relationship with Cassie, as well as the rest of her team, ultimately showing readers the positive, life-altering impact a coach-athlete relationship can have on both a team and individuals.

If readers are uncomfortable about the issues of discrimination, an alternative would be to read the history of Jessie Owen's triumph in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, when he proved to the Nazis that they are not the master race.

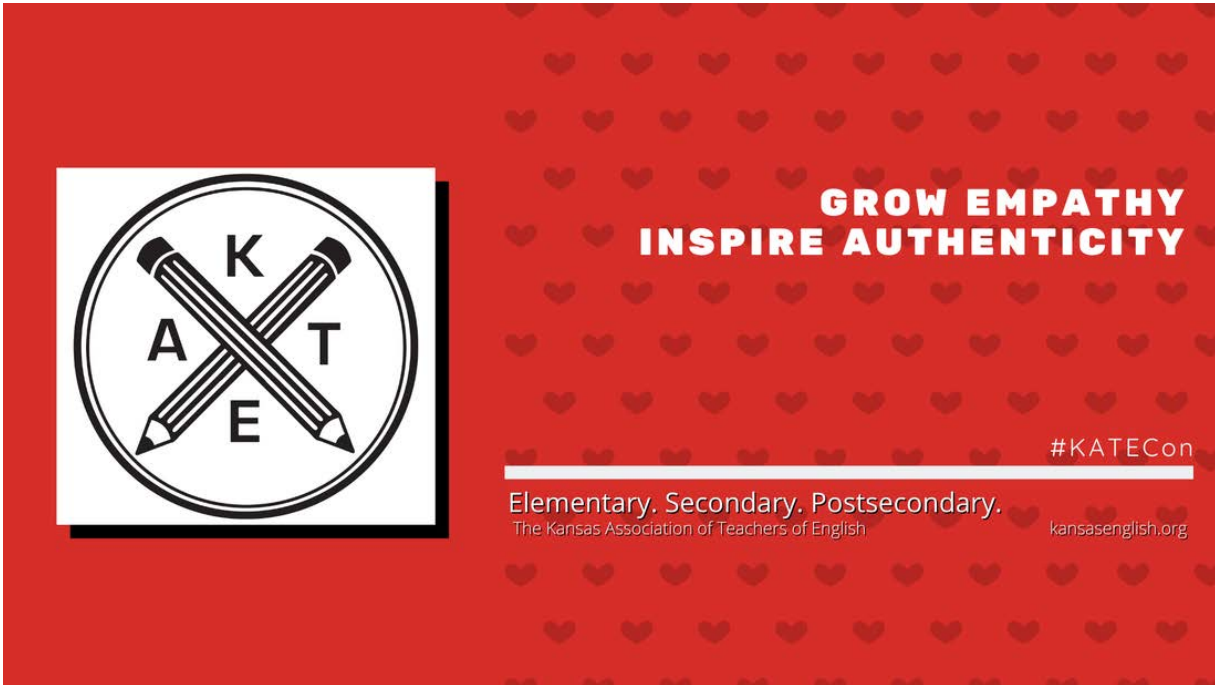
My favorite thing about this book, besides the competition aspect, is the connections made on the team. Initially, the girls lacked a coach who could motivate them to care for their sport or the team. Coach Simon sees their potential and makes them work to realize it. Additionally, besides my need for competition, I love the family I have created with my coaches and teammates. Likewise, Coach Simon creates a family with Cassie and her teammates.

While *No Ordinary Season* is particularly relatable to any person who has ever run cross country, I definitely recommend this book to anyone, not just runners, because it ranges across diverse topics such as athletic competition, and coach-athlete relationships and high school romances that would appeal to many young adult readers.

## **Author Biography**

Marissa Dick is from Peculiar, MO, and went to Raymore-Peculiar High School. She was awarded a scholarship to run cross country and track at Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, KS. She is

currently a sophomore majoring in communication with an emphasis in media production. She could see herself potentially working in social media production and doing videography on the side. She can be reached at [mdick@gus.pittstate.edu](mailto:mdick@gus.pittstate.edu).



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