

# The Runaway's Diary

AUTHORS

**JAMES PATTERSON AND EMILY RAYMOND**

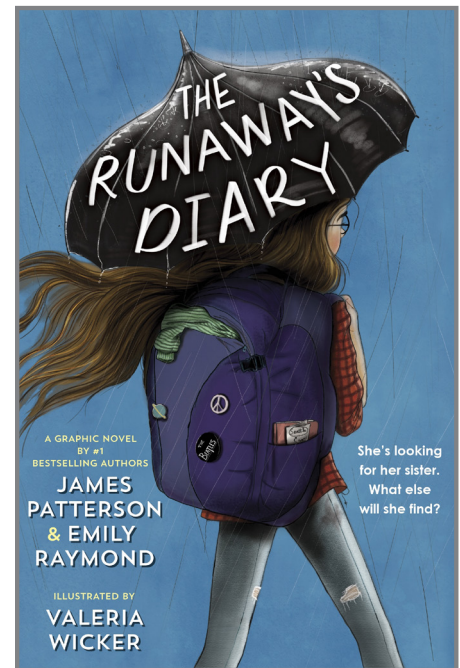
ILLUSTRATOR

**VALERIA WICKER**

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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Mid to Upper Secondary



## SYNOPSIS

*I'm running away. Not to a place—to a person.*

Eleanor is happiest when she's left alone to dream up elaborate stories. Sam is outgoing, fun and popular. Despite their differences, the sisters have always been there for each other—until everything changes.

Now Sam is somewhere in Seattle, and Eleanor runs after her. Nothing is easy in the big, unforgiving city. As Eleanor faces setbacks, she also makes new friends and tells new stories.

Eleanor can rewrite her life in so many ways . . . but can she make a happy ending her reality?

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JAMES PATTERSON is one of the best-known and biggest-selling writers of all time. His books have sold in excess of 375 million copies worldwide. He is the author of some of the most popular series of the past two decades—the Alex Cross, Women's Murder Club, Detective Michael Bennett and Private novels—and he has written many other number one bestsellers including romance novels and stand-alone thrillers. James is passionate about encouraging children to read. Inspired by his own son who was a reluctant reader, he also writes a range of books for young readers, including the Middle School, I Funny, Treasure Hunters, House of Robots, Confessions, and Maximum Ride series. James has donated millions in grants to independent bookshops and has been the most borrowed author of adult fiction in UK libraries for the past eleven years in a row. He lives in Florida with his wife and son.

Emily Raymond is the author of *Hello Goodbye* and is the ghostwriter of several young adult novels, including a #1 *New York Times* bestseller. She lives with her family in Portland, Oregon.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Valeria Wicker is an Italian Art School Graduate passionate about all types of Art. When she's not drawing, she can be found in her shop working on projects such as carving wood sculptures, restoring antique trunks, and refinishing furniture. Valeria resides in eastern Pennsylvania with her husband Mike, their five beautiful children, a bunny and an adorable teddy-bear-like Labrador named Mia.

**STUDY NOTES**

- Before reading the story, as a class discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
  - What genre do you think this book might be, and why?
  - What age group is this book likely aimed at?
  - What age do you think the protagonist of this novel is likely to be?
  - What can you tell about the girl shown on the cover from the illustration and front cover notes alone? (Hint: look carefully at the details of her backpack.)
  - What do you hypothesise might happen within this story? Why do you think this?
- After reading up to the end of p 20, in small groups, make a list of everything you have learnt about the protagonist so far. Include in the list both the things you know for sure, as well as any hypotheses you have about events and motives which have only been hinted at. Also include any inferences you can make from statements or from looking closely at the illustrations.
- Eleanor says that she knows who Leo Tolstoy is. Who is Leo Tolstoy, and why might she be expected to know/not know who he is?
- On p 27, Eleanor makes a list of things to do to help her find Sam. How helpful do you think her list is? Create your own list of things you think would be useful to do if you were trying to locate someone in a big city where you had never been before.
- On p 97, Eleanor decides one thing she is good at is making things up, that she will tell stories and hope people give her money in appreciation. Reread pp 96 and 97 and then as a class or in small groups discuss the difference between a lie and a story.
- Choose one of the storyline starters that Eleanor tells in the story, and expand it into a graphic short story of your own. Use the illustrations and panel-layout in the novel for inspiration to help you plan the visual narrative component of your story. You may want to tell your story in the third person, or you might prefer to use the first person viewpoint which Eleanor favours.
- When Eleanor feels hopeless and upset, Jesse takes Eleanor to a beach and encourages her to just sit and watch the sunset. As a class, discuss the importance and usefulness of taking a moment to just appreciate what you have, and not thinking about your worries, when things get overwhelming. What are some other places and activities that might help bring a similar sense of calm as watching a beach sunset? In small groups, brainstorm and come up with a list of places and acts that everyone can use to help ourselves just be in the moment when we are finding life overwhelming. Use your list to help you create a poster sharing your insights. Place your poster in the school hallways or classroom walls for everyone to use as inspiration.
- When Sam ran away from home, her parents didn't report it to the police or search for her. But when they were contacted saying Eleanor was safe they caught the first bus to Seattle to bring her home. Why do you think they behaved differently with their two children?
- Why did Sam choose to leave home? Why did Eleanor think that she had left? In small groups, or as a class, discuss how people can often have two completely different ideas about what causes someone to do or say something. What are some of the things we can do or say in our daily lives to help minimise this sort of major misunderstanding?
- Do you think that running away was the right decision for Sam? Why/why not? What might have happened differently for everyone if she had talked to her parents instead of running off?
- What are some of the decisions that you think Eleanor should have chosen to do differently? What are some of the risks that she took that in retrospect are an incredibly bad idea?
- When Eleanor asks to go home with a stranger from the bus, she is extremely lucky that the worst that happens is that she is asked to clean and to pay rent. As a class, discuss just how risky her behaviour was, and brainstorm some alternate and safer choices she might have made in this situation.
- At the end of the novel, Jesse tells Eleanor that when he first met her she was the 'scaredest, loneliest girl' he'd ever seen. Reread the scene where they meet, and try to pinpoint the specific behaviours that might have led to him thinking this.
- Jesse tells Eleanor that she has made him 'realise how important it is to . . . to keep track of people. To look out for

each other.' How important a life lesson for everyone do you think this really is? Why and in what way? Write a brief summary of at least three different incidents in the novel where people helping each other and looking out for each other makes a real difference in someone life.

- As a class, discuss the last page in the novel. Do you like how the story ended? What is your personal interpretation of the last page? What do you think is likely to happen next, and why do you think this?