



Dead Run

Sean Rodman

Reading Level: 3.0

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Book Summary

Sam loves the feeling of riding his bike as fast as he can, pushing himself to his physical limits. His desire is to become a world class racer, but to achieve that goal he will need a coach and intensive training. After contacting a former gold-medal Olympic racer to be his coach, Sam begins serious training and a new job. Since his coach owns a bike courier service, Sam becomes his newest employee. All goes well until the coach begins requiring Sam to make secret deliveries to back alleys. When Sam is late on a delivery, he discovers his boss beaten and one of the other bikers kidnapped. Sam's attempts to set the wrong right could cost him his life—and the life of the kidnapped victim.

Prereading Idea

Ask students to name and discuss gifted athletes and coaches who have had their dreams derailed by the choices they have made. What were the consequences for themselves and others? What efforts, if any, were made at restitution and/or restoring the “right”? (This could include everything from Paterno/Sandusky to Michael Vick to Tonya Harding and to all the players on steroids and schools disregarding UIL rules.) Have students work with a partner to write a mini-history of a particular situation. Post them on a classroom bulletin board and refer to the situations for comparisons upon completion of the novel.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- Ask students to select a well known bike race or professional biker to research. After gathering the information, students can present their knowledge to the class in a creative way such as an interview, news report or video documentary.
- Sam and the other bikers depend on their adrenaline to help them complete a race or a delivery. Ask students to research how adrenaline functions in the body and then to prepare a visual representation of the reaction in the body along with supporting textual information. Display the final products in the classroom or the school gym.
- Money laundering is often in the news, but what it means and how it is accomplished is not clear. Ask students to work with a partner to investigate money laundering and to present to the class what they discover about who is involved and the steps the criminals (or the money launderers) take to accomplish their goal. Each set of partners should also generate at least one possible means to bring a halt to illegal money laundering.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel

Characterization

Ask students to form small groups and to create a poster size graphic organizer such as a web to organize what they know about Sam's character: his personality, his ambitions, his faults, his relationships and his moral character. Each person in the group can take one or more aspects of the character web to flesh out and to find textual evidence from the novel to illustrate his/her point-of-view about Sam. Have students use Post-it notes or other means to attach their evidence directly to the graphic organizer. Display posters in a gallery walk for the class.

Plot

The sequence of events in a story is the *plot*, and it is generally built around the *conflict*. The story's plot includes four stages: *exposition*, *rising action*, *conflict*, and *falling action*. Divide students into groups of three and ask them to identify what occurs in each stage. Students can then complete a storyboard of twelve sections on a legal size sheet of paper. For each section, have students draw a visual representing a major event, include a caption explaining the action, and identify which stage of the plot is involved. Use the plot storyboard as a tool for students to pre-write their own narratives.

Setting

The setting is the place and time the story takes place. As a class, identify the setting of *Dead Run* by making a T-chart listing the major events on one side and the locations and times associated with each on the other side. Then ask students working in pairs to select one of the listed events and to rewrite that event using a different, unique setting. Have students read their rewritten selections to the class. Finish by having students discuss in writing which settings most impacted the events in the rewrites.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Why do Sam and Hayden dislike one another? Is Hayden justified in kicking Sam off the team? Why or why not?
2. What are Sam's dreams about racing? What steps does he take to make his dreams a reality?
3. How does Sam's relationship with his dad affect his life? What happens to improve their relationship? How do they begin to mend the hurt they have caused one another?
4. What is a dead run? How does the title *Dead Run* relate to the story?
5. Why is it so important to Sam that he impress Robin? What does Sam do to attempt to impress her? How does Robin respond to Sam's attempts?
6. What are Sam's misgivings about the special deliveries Viktor asks him to make? Why does he continue to make them even after Robin's warning and his own sense of right and wrong?
7. In chapter 17, Viktor says to Sam, "You trade away your honor. Your Freedom." What does Viktor mean by this? What have Viktor and Sam received in exchange for their honor and freedom?

Writer's Craft**Imagery**

The author uses metaphors and similes to help the reader visualize the action of the story. For example:

Chapter 5 "The street is a river" and "herds of business suits"

Chapter 6 "Canyons of buildings" and "streams of multicolored cars"

Chapter 7 "I'm a jet fighter"

Chapter 10 "like a bomb went off..."

After briefly reviewing the definitions of simile and metaphor, ask students to identify each in the above examples and to find additional examples in the book. Then have students select an action example from the novel and rewrite it using a simile and/or metaphor. Have students write their similes and metaphors and accompanying text on card stock to post in the classroom.

Author Biography

Sean Rodman lives and works in Victoria, British Columbia. He is the child of two anthropologists, who gave him a keen eye for observation and a bad case of wanderlust. His interest in writing for teenagers came out of working at some unique schools around the world. In the snowy mountains of Australia he taught ancient history to future Olympic athletes. Closer to home, he worked with students from over one hundred countries at a non-profit international school. He currently works at the Royal BC Museum.

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