



Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-05

ONE DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

DISABILITY, REPRESENTATION AND LITERATURE

held on 03 October 2019 and Organised by P.G. & Research Department
of English

S. T. HINDU COLLEGE, NAGERCOIL-2, Tamilnadu, India



Overcoming the trauma of blindness through friendship: A study of Kody

Keplinger's *Run*

Batric Vinnarasi V.T

M.Phil English Literature

S.T. Hindu College, Nagercoil

Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University

Abstract

Disability can be defined as impairment of normal physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional and developmental growth. The term visual impairment is used to indicate an individual's complete or decreased loss of vision. In this novel the author explains the trauma that blindness imposes on an individual. The two female protagonists want more freedom from their respective disabilities of blindness and madness. So they run away from society and get their freedom through friendship. The finding of this paper is that disabled people have the energy to overcome their struggles but most often they are forced to behave as an impaired. Through true and deep friendship, not only ordinary people but also disabled people can get their freedom.

Key words: Blindness, Disability, Friendship

Disability can be defined as impairment of normal physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional and developmental growth. It is the effect of negative connections between a person with an impairment and their social environment. A disabled person faces the loss of opportunities in society on an equal level with others due to social and environmental barriers.

In a theoretical perspective the causes of disability are medical conditions, environmental factors, social structures or individual or collective behaviors and attitudes. It affects people in different way. Some disabilities which are hidden are called as invisible disability. There are many types of disability such as impairment in vision, hearing, thinking,



Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-05

ONE DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

DISABILITY, REPRESENTATION AND LITERATURE

held on 03 October 2019 and Organised by P.G. & Research Department
of English

S. T. HINDU COLLEGE, NAGERCOIL-2, Tamilnadu, India



learning, movement, mental health, remembering, communicating, and social relationship. In Kody Keplinger's novel *Run*, Agnes vision problem. Visual impairment is defined as a reduced ability to see.

Kody Keplinger was born and raised in a small-town western Kentucky, where she began her writing career. At the age of 17 she wrote her first novel, *The DUFF* which means Designated Ugly Fat Friend, during her senior year of high school. She now lives with her German shepherd, Corey, in New York City, as a full time writer and takes care of the occasional writing workshop. When she is not writing, she enjoys going to the theatre, hanging out in bookstores, and eating Thai food. Kody has written other books for both young adult and middle grade readers. She is also the co-founder of disability in KidLit and teacher at the Gotham Writer Workshops in NYC. Her famous works are *Lying Out Loud*, a companion to *The DUFF*, *Shut Out*, and *A Midsummer's Nightmare*, as well as the middle-grade novel *The Swift Boys & Me*.

Bo Dickinson is a girl with a soft character, whose voice narrates the story going forward from the night they steal Agnes's sister's car to run away from society. Her family members are drunk and in jail. Her father takes off and then her mother gets addicted. Everyone in town think that the Dickinsons are a bad lot but Bo does not care about society's criticism. Agnes is Bo's friend. The story is narrated in flashback by Agnes who describes the beginning of her friendship with Bo who is legally blind from birth. Agnes Atwood has never gone on a date, never even stayed out past ten, and never broken any of her parents' arrogant rules. The rules are to protect their legally blind daughter. But Agnes does not favor their rules. The two narratives come at each other from a distance, and then cross each other in a way. It cases some of the tension out of the conflict by the time. Despite everything, Bo and Agnes become best friends. And it is the kind of friendship that runs truer and deeper than anything else. No one in the tiny town of Mursey would expect legally blind Agnes Atwood to run off with bad girl Bo Dickinson. Everyone in Mursey knows the Dickinsons are nothing but white waste. For Bo's part, she thinks she is only for Agnes. Maybe it is due to Agnes' aching desire for freedom, or maybe Bo is a little in love with Agnes. In any event, the two



Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-05

ONE DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

DISABILITY, REPRESENTATION AND LITERATURE

held on 03 October 2019 and Organised by P.G. & Research Department
of English

S. T. HINDU COLLEGE, NAGERCOIL-2, Tamilnadu, India



decide to steal Agnes' sister's car and run away. Bo describes the events on the road, and Agnes fills in the back story. At first look, the girls seem to be models of small-town Southern personalities. Bo is considered druggie and a whore, but she conceals sensitivity beneath her brokenness. Church-going Agnes is obedient and docile, but she desires escape from society. So when Bo shows up in the middle of the night, with police sirens wailing in the distance, desperate to get out of town, Agnes does not hesitate to take off with her. They run away without getting caught. But running away and not getting caught will require stealing a car, tracking down Bo's dad, staying ahead of the authorities, and-worst of all-confronting some ugly secrets.

Friendship involves helping one another, being true and understanding, sharing feelings freely, sparing a shoulder to cry on, laugh with them and tease in being friends and maintaining friendship. When it comes to girls, if they are like a family, friendship remains strong. It acts like an open door where anyone can enter. It shelters people and their abandoned hearts. It leaves none empty but always fills them with much love to pour to others. One has to be grateful to get a good friend. Though two friends are far away in distance and born in different places but there is some bond of love and care that is friendship. A real love and care is like motherly love. When we cannot get something from our parents, we hope to achieve them through friends. Likewise Agnes gets complete happiness through her friend Bo. As she says,

Bo Dickinson changed my life. She made it beautiful and messy. She made me happy, she scared me, she showed me I could be tough, and she showed me how it felt to live. She ruined my reputation and I loved every second of it. Because she was the best friend I'd ever had. And I would have followed her off the edge of the earth if I had to. (326)

Bo narrates the present and Agnes narrates the past about their great friendship. Through all their differences, they grow close, forming a tight bond based on respect, support, kindness, and true friendship. We see their friendship explored through Agnes's narration. Meanwhile, in Bo's narration we know the girls are on the run for their freedom. It appears



Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-05

ONE DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

DISABILITY, REPRESENTATION AND LITERATURE

held on 03 October 2019 and Organised by P.G. & Research Department
of English

S. T. HINDU COLLEGE, NAGERCOIL-2, Tamilnadu, India



that they are headed to make a new start somewhere if the police do not catch them. Also, this book is notable because it features a blind main character. Agnes uses a cane. In her whole life, people treat her like she is some kind of a special angel because she is blind. Agnes longs for more freedom. Bo knows that Agnes does not need her help to do her basic stuff, but is always there for her. It shows Bo's and Agnes's friendship rings true and strong. The two protagonists try to find independence Agnes's burning desire is to escape from under her strict parents' thumbs.

Keplinger tells Agnes and Bo's story through both their points of view. The narratives begin with their friendship and where their friendship modifies them; a clear "before" and "after" form their character arcs. *Run* explains itself best through their emphasis on friendship and dynamic characters. The two protagonists try to find freedom. Bo wants freedom from society relationship. Agnes wants freedom from her strict parents' rules. Finally both get the freedom through their friendship.

Run can also be called a road trip novel. This road trip explores the boundaries of friendship and truth. This book is not the dream road trip with a best friend. Rather, this is the reality of a road trip that includes the way you and your best friend kill each other with the intensity of friendship. One of the main problems in the narration is that it is often so hard to tell the characters apart. Keplinger does a great job of making Bo and Agnes sound very different both in the things they say and how they say them. From this the audience comes to know that Bo is not as dangerous as she seems and Agnes is not as humble as people believe her to be. This is an easy recommendation for anyone who likes a road trip book, an adventure or a friendship story. The novel *Run* is friendship driven in a more serious and darker tone. The most favorite thing about *Run* is definitely Bo and Agnes's friendship.

I shift the car into gear, and Agnes's hand reaches out to cover mine.

'Love you, Bo,' she says.

'Love you, too.' (5)

The novel looks at the strong female friendship of the two protagonists. Both girls were basically suffocating for different reasons in the town they are living in and they are



Think India (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-05

ONE DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

DISABILITY, REPRESENTATION AND LITERATURE

held on 03 October 2019 and Organised by P.G. & Research Department
of English

S. T. HINDU COLLEGE, NAGERCOIL-2, Tamilnadu, India



each other's breath of fresh air. The other elements of the novel include excellent double narration, the multifaceted, varied characters, how it is distributed with the issues and strong female friendship.

The finding of this paper is that friendship has the power to change people and their perception of life. It sails in the ocean of life carrying people and bonding them together. Friendship is like a family and acts like an open door where anyone can enter. Disabled people have the energy to overcome their struggles but most often they are forced to behave as an impaired individual. Through true and deep friendship, not only ordinary people but also the disabled people can get their freedom.

References

Keplinger, Kody. *Run*. Hodder Children's Books, 2016.

Vadivoo, Kulasekara s., and M. Kanmani Esther. *Creating An Inclusive School*. Shanlax, 2016.