
BACK ON TRACK: ACADEMIC AND ATHLETIC ADVENTURES IN *GROWING SEASON* BY JAMES V. JACOBS

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Abstract

The author reviews the young adult novel *Growing Season* (2023) by James V. Jacobs, providing a brief summary, teaching ideas, and a list of similarly-themed texts.

Keywords: young adult novel, *Growing Season*, James V. Jacobs, sports, distance running, college, mental health

In this welcome sequel to *No Ordinary Season* distance runner and protagonist Cassie Garnet endures two tyrannical coaches: one her final semester of high school, and one her first semester of college.

As she transitions from her senior year to her freshman year, she is beset by bewildering, frustrating, rewarding situations: deciding whether to have sex with her boyfriend Jake (she abstains); attending a different college from him; leaving high school teammates behind; making friends with college teammates; searching for an adult as sympathetic as her beloved Coach Simon.

In this 2023 publication, Jacobs realistically depicts the regimen of a college student athlete balancing academic and athletic demands as Cassie teeters on the verge of a nervous breakdown, all the while suffering severe homesickness and the threat of losing her scholarship.

Luckily, a diverse group of supportive teammates including her Jewish roommate, athletes from Kenya and Mexico, and a jaded senior help her get counseling, where she finds the supportive adult she so desperately needs. Mr. Teverbaugh and teammates help her confront the coach they call T-Rex as well as a sexual predator from her past. And, as she matures academically as well as personally, Cassie learns to meet the expectations of her college professors.

I could easily see this book being read in a high school class the focus of which is looking ahead to college. While Cassie is an athlete, many of her predicaments apply to many first-year female college students.

For those looking to emphasize the importance of sports in adolescent lives, the novels of Kwame Alexander and Chris Crutcher belong alongside Jacobs. For those who want to read more about women in sports, make room for two nonfiction goodies: Abby Wambach's *Wolfpack: How Young People Will find their Voice, Unite the Pack, and Change the World*; and Andrew Maraniss's *Inaugural Ballers: The True Story of the First Women's Olympic Basketball Team*.

Author Biography

John Franklin (BA Rice, MA Miami of Ohio, PhD Florida; certified to teach English and economics) began his career at Jones High School in Houston. During that time, he combined his love for literature with a love of travel, spending 12-week summers biking or backpacking to visit the settings of the drama, fiction and poetry he loved to teach: Scotland for *Macbeth*; London for Dickens; Canterbury for Chaucer; and the Lake District for Wordsworth. One Fourth of July he ventured further abroad, discovering himself atop the Acropolis in Athens, thinking, “Here I am at the birthplace of democracy on the birthday of the greatest democracy that has ever existed.” He has spent his life since then appreciating and sharing his good fortune. John Franklin (pronoun he) is a Professor of English and Director of English Education at Pittsburg State University in Southeast Kansas where he teaches Literature for Middle and Secondary Schools. He may be reached at jfranklin@pittstate.edu.

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