

**“When Caleb lost control, I had to get away. I really didn’t have much choice but to run, and I had to run far. . . . Sometimes I felt like I could run forever.”**

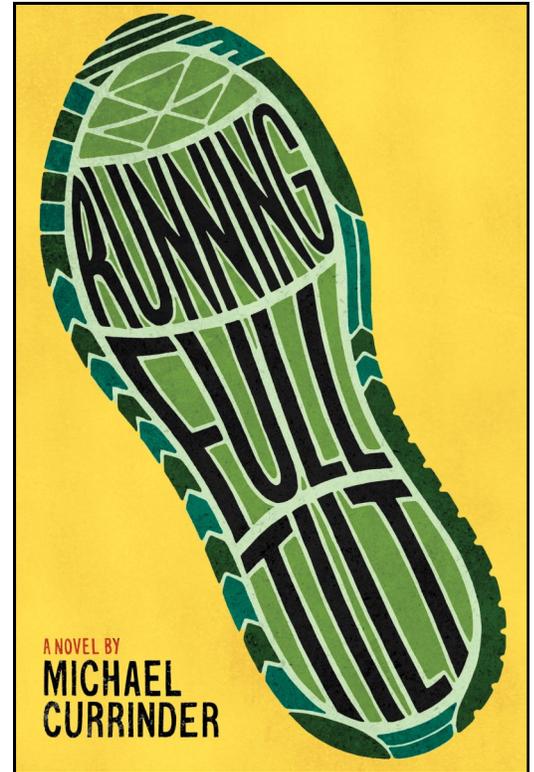
## About the Book

Michael Currinder’s debut novel “is both tender and unabashedly honest. . . .” —*Publishers Weekly*

In many ways, Leo’s relationship with his older brother Caleb is typical. But Caleb’s also autistic and cognitively disabled, which makes life more complicated.

When Caleb’s erratic behavior forces Leo’s family to a new neighborhood, it means a new school for the high school junior. He mostly takes the changes in stride, watching out for his older brother at home and keeping peace between his stressed parents. But when Caleb starts to take out his frustration on his younger brother, Leo starts running—and when he runs, he goes far, far away.

The survival tactic becomes talent when Leo tries out for cross-country team. He befriends track star Curtis and even works up the nerve to hand out with pretty and artistic Mary. But when a family trauma interrupts the precarious calm, Leo has to hold it all together. He can’t run away this time.



978-1-58089-802-7  
E-book editions available

## About the Author



In high school, Mike Currinder ran cross-country and track and earned a college athletic scholarship. This debut novel is a hybrid of his collective experiences as a competitive runner and as an adolescent with a disabled sibling. He is currently a teacher and track and cross-country coach at the American School in Japan.

## CharlesbridgeTEEN Readers' Group Guide

1. How would the story be different if it was from Caleb's point of view?
2. Leo uses running as an escape not only from his brother, but also as a mental escape. Do you take part in sports or other activities that give you a sense of escape?
3. Do you think Leo's character deals with his family issues in a healthy manner? What about his reaction whenever Mary tries to talk about it?
4. As a semi-autobiographical novel, which parts especially struck you as truth and which did you believe were purely fiction? Why?
5. Do you have any personal relationship with autism? A family member or friend who may be on the spectrum? If so, how has that affected your feelings about Leo and Caleb's relationship?
6. Leo believes that Caleb hates him and becomes a long distance runner when he sees how much attention that gets Leo. Do you believe this assumption is correct? Why?
7. How do you think the relationship between Leo and Curtis drives the plot of the novel?
8. What do you think about Leo's relationship with his parents? Do you feel it's realistic? Discuss Leo's reaction when he finds his mother with another man and their confrontation about the situation later.
9. Which character could you relate to most and why?
10. What role did the hunters and deer bring to the story? What do you think the author wanted to tell the reader by adding that scene.
11. What do you think Mary did with the second picture she had of Caleb and Leo on the roller coaster?
12. Arthur Fletcher was introduced as a secondary character late in the book. Do you think he played an important role in Leo's development toward the end?
13. Do you believe the author accurately portrayed Caleb as a teenage boy with autism through actions, dialogue and description? Was there anything that bothered you or that you thought was done very well?
14. How do you feel about the way Leo's parents broke the news of Caleb's death to him?
15. How do you feel about the way the book ended? Was there anything you would change or want to know more about?
16. What were some of the major themes in this book? How are these relevant in your life?
17. How did the story make you feel throughout? Did your feelings about a character change over the course of the novel?
18. Is this book similar to any other books you've recently read? What makes it stand out from the others?
19. What will be your lasting impression of the book?
20. Do you think runners would enjoy this book more, or can nonrunners also relate to the themes?
21. Do you feel this book is geared toward a specific gender audience?