

# Runt

Recommended for Grades 4-6

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## **Book Summary: Runt**

Runt is born and he is the smallest of his litter. At first he is quite content with his place in the world, but when he realizes what 'runt' means, he starts to worry. He struggles to find his place in the pack and always wants to find a way to impress his father, the pack leader. Unfortunately, most of the things he does to try and impress his father end up backfiring. Life is good, but tough at times. Brothers and sisters die, they are hungry at times, and other wolves want to rule the pack. Runt just has to figure out how he can be something other than just a 'runt'.

**[SPOILER]** Runt ends up going off with the wolf who wants to take over as pack leader. The wolf is eating a cow he killed. He brought back the meat to Runt's father but he refused to eat it. Now Runt has followed him and is going to take what his father wouldn't. It is only because Raven warns him that he doesn't eat the meat which has been poisoned by humans. While roaming, Runt finds a moose and howls for his family. It is then he is given his new name of Singer because he has stories and things to tell.

## **Author Biography: Marion Dane Bauer**

Marion Dane Bauer was born in 1938 in Oglesby, Illinois, a small prairie town. She describes her childhood as having been idyllic. She attended community college in her hometown before going on to the University of Missouri to study journalism. She later switched her focus to English and then to teaching. She didn't begin writing until her own two children were in elementary school. Since then, she hasn't stopped. She now lives in a small town near Minneapolis, Minnesota. Marion is also a professor of writing at Vermont College

Marion Dane Bauer is well known for writing a wide variety of books. She has written fiction, nonfiction, picture books, chapter books, young adult novels, and writing guides. She has won many awards, including a Jane Addams Peace Association Award for her novel *Rain of Fire*. An American Library Association Newbery Honor Award for *On My Honor*. And the Kerlan Award from the University of Minnesota for the body of her work. Her picture book *My Mother is Mine* was a New York Times bestseller.



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## Discussion Questions: Runt

1. In this story, the name of the animals can change depending on what gift they bring to the pack. (p.5) In Runt's case, is this a good or bad thing? Would this work for humans? Why or why not?
2. How important is someone's name? Would you grow up to be the same person no matter what your name was? Why or why not? Does Runt get into trouble trying to prove he's not just the runt, or is that just his character?
3. Is there a reason for Runt to question whether his father may or may not be a coward? Is this something Runt wants to be true? Why do you think so? (p. 50)
4. Is the fact that dogs are pets a horrible and unnatural thing? Are the wolves right to be horrified? Would it be better if they were free and wild or are they better off as pets? Why do you think so? (p. 73)
5. Is it Runt's fault when Thinker dies? Why or why not? (p. 54 & p. 70)
6. Is King right to refuse to consider having the humans help Thinker? Why?
7. Do humans contaminate everything they touch? (p. 123) Is Runt right to think they might not be so bad or are the others right? Is this a fair way of looking at humans? Why or why not?
8. Has Runt been tainted by his contact with humans? Does this contact cause him to behave dangerously later in the book?
9. Why did the humans poison the meat? Is this right or wrong?
10. Is Bider right to go after the cows and to try to take King's spot in the pack? Is he a jerk or is this just the nature of wolves and other animals?
11. At the end, Runt learns something about himself and the wolf pack. It is only then that he gets his new name. (p.129) Do we have to understand certain truths before we can become who we are meant to be?



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