



## Run

By Ann Patchett  
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### Introduction

Since their mother's death, Tip and Teddy Doyle have been raised by their loving, possessive, and ambitious father. As the former mayor of Boston, Bernard Doyle wants to see his sons in politics, a dream the boys have never shared. But when an argument in a blinding New England snowstorm inadvertently causes an accident that involves a stranger and her young child, all Bernard Doyle cares about is his ability to keep his children—all of his children—safe.

Set over a period of twenty-four hours, *Run* takes us from the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard to a home for retired Catholic priests in downtown Boston. It shows us how worlds of privilege and poverty can coexist only blocks apart from each other, and how family can include people you've never even met. Suspenseful and stunningly executed, *Run* is ultimately a novel about secrets, duty, responsibility, and the lengths we will go to protect our children.

### Questions for Discussion

1. How would you characterize Teddy and Tip's relationship as siblings? How does it compare to their relationship with their brother, Sullivan?
2. At the Jesse Jackson lecture, Doyle reviews the personalities of his three sons and thinks about which of them would be most able to lead. Which of the boys do you think would make the best politician? Do you think Doyle's assessments of their characters are accurate or biased?
3. Discuss the concept of nature versus nurture. Do you think that Sullivan, Tip, and Teddy are who they are, or would they have turned out differently had Bernadette lived? How would those differences manifest themselves?
4. Discuss the different meanings of the title. How many different ways does the word Run work for you?
5. *Run* includes several incidences of doubling—two brothers who get adopted, two mothers who die, two men named Sullivan, two Tennessee Alice Mosers, two accidents involving hospital stays. What is the effect for you as a reader of seeing similar characters and events repeated over the course of the book? Can you think of any other examples of doubling in literature?
6. Why is Kenya the one subject that Sullivan and his father can agree on? How does her adoption into the family help Teddy and Tip understand Sullivan and what he went through growing up?
7. Towards the end of the story we see images of four mothers (including the Virgin Mary) on Kenya's dresser. What is the author saying about women and mothers to have them all there together?
8. Why does Kenya's mother conceal her true identity from her daughter? Do you think that she imagines the conversation in the hospital with Tennessee Alice Moser after surgery or do you think it really happened?
9. What does Father Sullivan's encounter with Tennessee in the hospital suggest about his ability to heal?
10. Doyle is very invested in politics on both local and national levels, but he falters at the idea of taking home a stray child. What does this book say to you about social responsibility?
11. Of the many characters in *Run*, which did you feel most connected to on an emotional level? How do you explain that connection?
12. How did you react to Bernard Doyle's decision to bestow the heirloom statue on Kenya, a daughter who has literally shared nothing with his former wife, Bernadette? Do you think he made the same decision his wife would have made?

### About the Author

Ann Patchett is the author of five novels, including *Bel Canto* (winner of the PEN/Faulkner Award and the Orange Prize), and the bestselling nonfiction book, *Truth & Beauty*. She has written for *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *Gourmet*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Vogue*, and the *Washington Post*. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee.