

Vocabulary

- 1 **blurt**: to say without thinking
- 2 **bouffant**: puffed out
- 3 **churn**: mix
- 4 **creep**: to sneak
- 5 **deadpan**: expressionless
- 6 **drone**: hum or buzz
- 7 **fawn**: to flatter
- 8 **flaunt**: show off
- 9 **floozy**: immoral woman
- 10 **gnaw**: chew
- 11 **overbearing**: bossy
- 12 **prank**: practical joke
- 13 **prattle**: meaningless talk
- 14 **ramshackle**: broken down
- 15 **reputation**: status or standing in the community
- 16 **ruckus**: commotion
- 17 **runaround**: a deceptive person
- 18 **sarcastic**: mocking
- 19 **swig**: to drink
- 20 **wad**: clump

Helen Hemphill was born and raised in Texas. She learned to read at an early age by looking at the daily newspaper when she was a child. “My mom and dad were always newspaper readers, so it came naturally.”

She began reading romance magazines when she was eleven—the same age as Sassy. “My grandmother lived on a farm with my naturally quiet grandfather and four sons (one of which was my father), and there wasn’t much opportunity for girlfriends or socializing. When I was eleven, my sisters and I found a stash of romance magazines in a back bedroom of her house. We read every one of those magazines!”

“A few years later, I found the Brontë sisters and Jane Austen, which I read as romance novels. It took me some time to figure out there was a lot more going on in those books than just love. But they were great stories either way.”

Helen Hemphill is a former corporate communications writer and middle-grade teacher. She holds an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College and currently lives with her family in Nashville and Austin.

Born: Bridgeport, Texas, on a hot summer afternoon

Hobbies: Reading, playing golf, cooking, knitting

Inspiration from childhood: Learning something new

Favorite books: Elizabeth George Speare’s *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*, Carson McCullers’s *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, *The Member of the Wedding*.

Educator’s Guide



★ “The story is laugh-out-loud funny, but it is also a timeless tale of anger, grief, and love, with surprising twists in plot and character that will break your heart. The sisters’ realistic relationship challenges formula.”

—*Booklist*

STARRED REVIEW

“Deft comic pacing and snappy dialogue make this a gem of Southern storytelling. Hemphill is a strong new voice in children’s literature. A fine follow-up to her excellent debut, *Long Gone Daddy*.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Hemphill creates another Southern storytelling gem with attention to regional voice and vivid period details. ... The author also manages to capture the immediacy of ’tween emotions, as Sassy vacillates between acting grown-up and feeling frustrated. Through it all, readers will want to give Sassy a big ol’ hug.”

—*BookPage*



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About *Runaround*

Daddy didn't let her finish. "Scat, girl! I'm taking every one of those romance magazines in your room and throwing them right in the trash! We ain't having this conversation."

Sassy spoke louder than she meant to. "I just want to know about boys! I don't have a mama to talk to! How else am I going to find out things if nobody tells me?"

Everything eleven-year-old Sassy knows about love comes from romance magazines. But now that she has her eye on her handsome neighbor, Boon, she wants more details. Only nobody will talk to her, not her widowed father or her never-married housekeeper or, worst of all, her gorgeous sister, Lula, who has more boyfriends than she can shake a stick at. When Lula sets up Sassy for an embarrassing moment, Sassy vows revenge: she will make Boon her boyfriend and show Lula a thing or two in the process.

Prereading

ACTIVITY ONE Sassy tries to figure out love by reading romance magazines. Here's some of the advice she gets from *Love Confessions*.

A good girl never calls a boy on the telephone or goes over to his house. She doesn't date until she turns sixteen and doesn't go steady without her parents' permission. She's not flirty. And she's never forward.

Always play hard to get. Keep him guessing. And never tell him what you're really feeling. That's how to snag a man.

My advice is to get that first love right out of the way. Go ahead and jump in head over heels. But end it the first excuse you get. The real stuff comes later—with experience.

Nobody gets jailed for breaking hearts. No

one even gets a parking ticket. But that doesn't mean you have to be cupid's victim. You can throw love a punch or two of your own.

Select one of the quotes above and write a short journal entry stating why you agree or disagree with the quote. Then write your own advice about love for Sassy.

ACTIVITY TWO *Runaround* takes place in Falls of Rough, Kentucky, during 1964. Ask students to research that year and make a timeline of at least five important events. Compare events to make a comprehensive timeline.

Although *Runaround* takes place in 1964, the plot does not focus on the major historical events of that year. Instead, the novel hints at world events as part of the background and texture of the setting, making *Runaround* more of a novel set in history than a historical novel. Discuss the differences between these ideas with your class. Ask them to note the historical references and see how they compare with the students' timeline.

Questions for Comprehension

- What question does Sassy want to ask Miss Dallas, Daddy, and Lula?
- How does Sassy's first kiss become an embarrassing situation? What is Sassy's plan for revenge?
- What does Sassy do to get Mr. Frankie to sell her groceries for Boon?
- How does Boon initially react to Sassy's buying the groceries for him?
- How does Sassy bully Lula into talking about her boyfriends?
- What idea does Sassy steal from Lula's story about Elgin?

- Why did Sassy call Mrs. Chisholm by the name Mrs. Tipps?
- How does Boon react to Sassy's note?
- How did Sassy's parents meet?
- What two questions about love does Sassy ask Miss Dallas?
- What does Lula do when she finds out that Sassy bought two Cokes at the Cheap Cash?
- How does Daddy react when Sassy tattles on Lula?
- In what ways are Sassy and Lula alike?
- What family secret does Daddy reveal to the girls after he catches Lula with Boon?
- Why is Lula upset about a phone call from her mother?
- Where is Lula going when she runs away from home?

Questions for Discussion

FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS

- Why do Sassy and Lula fight for their father's attention?
- Describe Miss Dallas's relationship with Sassy and Lula. Does she give equal treatment to both girls? Why or why not?
- Is Mrs. Chisholm a good mother to her children?
- Daddy doesn't want the girls to tell lies, but he ends up lying to them. How might Daddy justify his actions?

SOCIETY AND ROMANCE

- Sassy reads romance magazines to find out about love. How good is the quality of her information? Why?
- How have modern notions of love changed since 1964?

- Miss Dallas tells Sassy to act like a young lady. How valid is that advice in today's world?
- Beyond protecting the girls, why might Daddy lie about his marriage?

CHARACTER AND CONSCIENCE

- Is Sassy justified in her behavior toward Mr. Frankie?
- Why does Sassy keep a photo album of her mother's pictures?
- Is Boon a runaround or a Prince Charming? Why?
- Compare Lula's treatment of her long list of boyfriends with her feelings for Boon. What kind of girl is Lula?

Further Reading

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë
Jacob Have I Loved by Katherine Paterson
A Season of Comebacks by Kathy Mackel
Little Women by Louisa May Alcott
Sisters by Carol Saline and Sharon J. Wohlmuth

Internet Resources

Visit Helen Hemphill on the Web.
www.helenhemphill.com

Make your own 1964 timeline.
www.readwritethink.org/materials/timeline/

Look up the location of Falls of Rough, Kentucky. www.maps.google.com

Check the statistics and information on smoking and the tobacco industry since the Surgeon General's report of 1964.
www.newsbatch.com/tobacco.htm