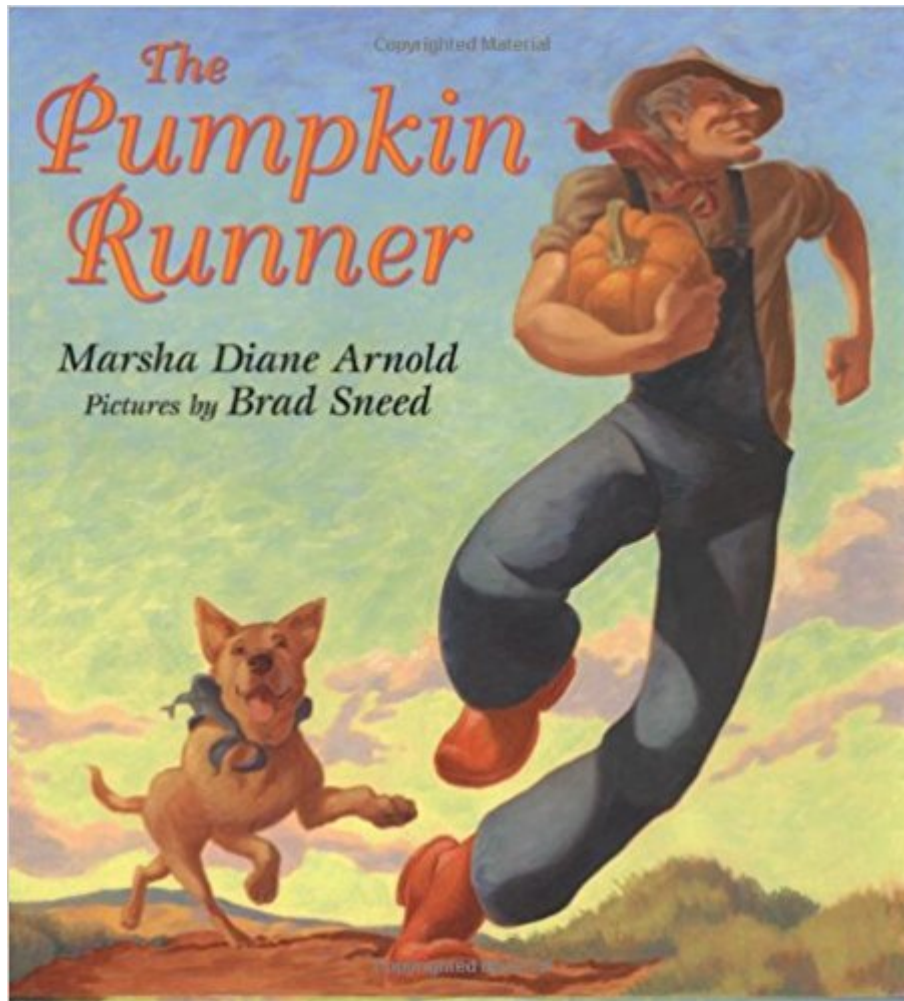




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# The Pumpkin Runner



## Synopsis

"Nearly all the sheep ranchers in Blue Gum Valley rode horses or drove jeeps to check on their sheep. But Joshua Summerhayes liked to run...with Yellow Dog trailing behind him." So it's no surprise when Joshua decides to enter a race from Melbourne to Sydney. People laugh when old Joshua shows up in his overalls and gumboots, calmly nibbling a slice of pumpkin for energy. But then he pulls into the lead, and folks are forced to sit up and take notice. Inspired by a true event (and just in time for fall's pumpkin harvest!) a talented team introduces a humble and generous hero who knows that winning isn't always the reason to run a race. Marsha Diane Arnold made "an impressive debut" (School Library Journal) with the multi-award-winning *Heart of a Tiger* (Dial). Brad Sneed most recently illustrated *Smoky Mountain Rose* (Dial), an American Bookseller Pick of the Lists that Publishers Weekly said will "make readers 'happy as a pig in a peanut patch.' " Marsha Diane Arnold lives in Sebastopol, California. Brad Sneed lives in Prairie Village, Kansas.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 760L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Dial Books; 1st edition (September 1, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0803721242

ISBN-13: 978-0803721241

Product Dimensions: 9.7 x 0.3 x 10.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #183,101 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in [Books > Children's Books > Sports & Outdoors > Track & Field](#) #43 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Australia & Oceania](#) #1246 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies](#)

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

Though he may have the appearance of a tall tale hero, Arnold's (*Heart of a Tiger*) protagonist is inspired by a real 61-year-old Australian farmer who won a 542-mile race in 1983. Joshua Summerhayes, an eccentric sheep farmer from Blue Gum Creek, and his sidekick, Yellow Dog,

enter the 12th annual Koala-K Race from Melbourne to Sydney. With the help of energizing slices of pumpkins that grow "round as a wombat's belly," they finish first together and share the \$10,000 prize money with the other runners. Arnold's loquacious storyteller style and the farmer's aw-shucks humility lend a hardy, ageless humor to the somewhat meandering plot. Sneed (Smoky Mountain Rose) revels in the contrasts between the farmer's sense of generosity and his workaday attire, set against depictions of the single-mindedness and swaggering bravado of the other runners in their fancy shoes and shorts. When the villain, Damien Dodgerelle, brags that he has "run two hundred kilometers a week for three months training for this race," Joshua says simply, "I just check my herds, from sunup to sundown." As the other runners lift 300-pound weights, perform one-handed push-ups and drink power fluids, Joshua stands in his blue bib overalls and orange gum boots and eats pumpkin stewAand runs for the love of it. Sneed's cleverly skewed perspectives and Arnold's engaging style make this book, like its star, an easy winner. Ages 4-8. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Kindergarten-Grade 3-With a Woolly Boolly Barbecue, wombats, eucalyptus trees, Platypus Pond, and a famous Koala-K Race in evidence, readers know that this picture book takes place in Australia. A curious mix of tall tale and morality lesson, the plot is pegged on a true incident of a race run and won by a 61-year-old farmer who outdistanced much younger and supposedly better-trained opponents. Long-legged, overall-clad Joshua Summerhayes trains by herding sheep on his ranch, runs in gumboots, gulps down all manner of pumpkin concoctions as fuel, and splits his \$10,000 winnings with his competitors. The oils-on-canvas paintings, awash in warm oranges and dappled pastels, shine through wide-open spaces. The rancher's "Ah, shucks" nature combines with his large, almost disproportionate body to create a Paul Bunyan-like figure. Although there are moments of tension in the race and positive feelings for the underdog, the text is not as strong as the artwork. The story ambles along with more or less simple declarative sentences that do not engage readers or sustain the tall-tale quality of the events described. All in all, a pedestrian effort.Harriett Fagnoli, Great Neck Library, NYCcopyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book was in excellent condition and arrived in good time. I absolutely love this cute story, based on a real event. The artwork might not appeal to some, but I think it is very appropriate to the story. One of my favorites!

This book came new. It was packed well so the corners were still stiff. It exceeded my expectation.

Thank you for a quality book to share with my students!

Arrived promptly. This is my favorite book!

Great book for opening your school year, teachers there is so much to pull from this book you have a weeks worth of lessons!

My granddaughter told me about this story; her teacher had read it in her classroom. She's not a book lover, so I knew it made an impression on her. Nice tale, great illustrations, perfect for an elementary school classroom--or a read aloud book at home.

This is a great book to start teaching 4th grade with. It fits in perfectly with the Houghton Mifflin series.

I love this book and was glad to learn that it was based on a true story. it was inspiring.

What a good one on one read this one is...as a matter of fact, it makes a very nice group read too!As noted by the author, this children's book is based on the true story and was inspired by a fellow in Australia, Cliff Young, who at the age of 61 meandered through the famous (infamous race...depending on how you look at it) from Sydney to Melbourne, a total of 542 miles, and actually won; beating all of the younger contenders! Like the hero of the story featured in this book, Cliff shared the \$10,000.00 winnings with the other participants of the race. Our book hero, like Cliff, is around 61 years old.This is the story of an old sheep rancher, Joshua Summerhayes and his dog, which goes by the name of Yellow Dog. From a small lad, Joshua ran; he ran everywhere, but for the most part ran after his sheep and back and forth from the family pumpkin patch. He and the great-great-great grandparent of Yellow Dog ran after the sheep, taking care of the flock on into the current times when others used trucks, jeeps, planes, motorcycles and such. No, Joshua and Yellow dog did it my foot and a goodly run, with Joshua wearing only his gumboots as foot wear.Joshua was for the most part fueled by Pumpkins. He simply could not get enough of the wonderful pumpkins his family raised in their own patch. One day, when Joshua, now an old man, and Yellow Dog, no longer a puppy himself, were setting on the porch after a long run over to Bandicoot Creek, Joshua read a flyer advertising the 12 Annual Koalo-K Race. He and Yellow Dog decide to run.What follows is a story of that race; of Joshua and Yellow Dog, of gum boots and

slices of pumpkin to keep him going. A story of an older, sort of laid back guy, dressed in overall, gumboots and with a common looking yellow dog, and how they defeated the younger, better conditioned (or so they thought) and much better dressed runners. The discussion between training methods and clothing between the younger runners and the old guy for the Outback is absolutely hilarious. This is a very well told tale. A central theme of pumpkins runs throughout and the author refers to them constantly in a lighthearted way. If you enjoy running, you will love this one. If you are not a runner, you will enjoy it anyway. Kids seem to love this one. It is told in a very "homey" laidback manner, much like the main character of the book. The art work in this book is by Brad Sneed who is one of my favorite. Mr. Sneed has obviously been strongly influenced by Thomas Hart Benton, who happens to be one of my favorite American painters. His illustrations of a previous book, Smoky Mountain Rose by Alan Schroeder hooked me on this artist. This book of course has an extremely strong Australian flavor, as it should have, and the kids will be introduced to some wonderful names and sayings which could only be thought up by an Australian. I like this. It would be extremely difficult to find any fault what-so-ever with this work and I do suggest you get a copy for your child's library. It will be one that they will want read over and over again.

Don Blankenship  
The Ozarks

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