



## Running on the Cracks

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## **Running on the Cracks** Julia Donaldson

Leo's running from her past. Finlay's running into trouble. Together, they stumble into a crazy new world of secrets, lies, and Chinese food.

But someone is on Leo's trail . . . Eccentric, unforgettable characters and genuine, heart-pounding suspense make for a stunning combination as celebrated author Julia Donaldson expands her talents in her first novel for young adults.

## **Running on the Cracks Details**

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Author : Julia Donaldson

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## From Reader Review Running on the Cracks for online ebook

### **Joshua Heng says**

This book is about a runaway girl, Leo, who visits Glasgow in search of her long lost grandfather, after her parents die. She originally gets sent to live with her aunt and uncle, but she doesn't get on with her cousins and her uncle becomes a pedophile. Once she reaches Glasgow, she finds a boy called Finlay and a kind but mentally ill woman called Mary, and they work together to try and find her relatives.

I would recommend this book to anyone - it is quite gripping, especially towards the end.

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### **Mstr. Pheh says**

My thoughts: I think this book is simply amazing to read. I would recommend to anyone who wants to know more about landscape in Scotland and Chinese culture maybe (?) My ratings: 8.6/10

\*\*LITTLE SPOILERS\*\* The story's about a Chinese born English girl, Leonora who ran away from her cousin's house to Glasgow, Scotland to find her grandfather. Since she never met her grans before, she have to find them with just a little information about them left for Leo from her dead parents. Later on, she met Finlay and weird old Mary, her new pals ... trying to figure out the location of her grandfather and at the same time, Leo have to keep a distance from her Uncle John- weird, like birds, likes to assault girls, who is trying to find her. She finally found her grandfather with the assist of her new found Chinese cousin in Glasgow, Jacqueline. Leo later found out Uncle John had been arrested for attempting assault of a hitchhiker. Lastly, Leo had live with Jacqueline and Finlay play in his favourite band with his electric guitar that Leo gave him to thank him.

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### **The Book Queen says**

More like **2.5 or 2.75** stars.

It was well-written enough, and the characters were (mostly) likeable enough, but it never really engaged me.

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### **Sesana says**

I've seen at least one other person say that this book would appeal more to actual young adult readers of YA than adult readers of YA. I liked it well enough to finish it, but I did find my attention wandering a bit. There is some suspense in the story, provided entirely by the intensely creepy Uncle John. But there's just so much else going on that it's easy to forget about him for dozens of pages at a time. And in a fairly short (around 200 pages) book that's meant to be suspenseful, that's not really a good thing. It just seems like there's a lot going on here: there's the main plotline of Leo running away from her aunt and uncle's house because of her creepmonster uncle, and that's the good part. But there's also a secondary plot, and entire secondary cast of characters, about dealing with someone with a degenerating mental illness. I feel like that was a separate book, and it didn't need to be in here. Like I said, it's a short book. I get the feeling that Mary was introduced

solely to get Leo safely off the streets, without her having to deal with some of the more traumatic aspects of being a homeless teenager. But that's solved in another way later on anyways, so there was no real need of her or her subplot. There's also a subplot about Leo's dual heritage (she's half Chinese) and her attempts to connect with the Chinese side of her family. Difficult, because her Chinese grandparents had disowned her father when he took up with her mother. Like the mental illness subplot, this probably wasn't really necessary, but I actually liked it being in the book. It filled out Leo's character for me and made her more real. I just feel like more time should have been spent building the suspense surrounding Uncle Creep and less on Mary.

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### **Briana says**

Full review here: <http://thebookpixie.blogspot.com/2009...>

I must say that this book really surprised me. When I got the email from Holt InGroup, I recognized the book, from where I can't remember, and it sounded good so I requested it. However, I didn't really have any expectataions for it. Especially considering Julia Donaldson wrote only children's books before this. So I was, of course, astonished by the immediate attachment I developed with this book.

Running on the Cracks was quirky and suspenseful but also heartfelt and touching. I definitely have to agree with the back of the book when it refers to the characters as eccentric and unforgettable. I just absolutely loved them. Leo was an intelligent and realistic character who was easy to relate to. Finlay was funny in a sweet innocent kind of way and a terrific friend to Leo. Then there is Mary, whom you can't help but have a soft spot for.

This book was very well written and I felt pulled in from the very first page. I loved the alternating perspectives and found it interesting how Julia wrote Leo in first person and Finlay in third person. The funny thing is that I didn't even notice this until I was well into the book.

The ending was excellent. I had an idea of how things would probably end but Julia still had one more surprise for me.

Running on the Cracks is a very unique and memorable book. A gripping plot, intriguing characters, and well crafted writing make this book a stunning debut YA novel from Julia Donaldson. This is definitely a favorite and I hope to see more YA books from her in the future. I would recommend this to anyone and everyone. So if you haven't read it, I highly suggest that you do.

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### **Hannah says**

'Running on the Cracks' is an enthralling and humorous read which I would gladly recommend to those with an adventurous streak. It is set in the Scottish town of Glasgow and the setting, plot and general characters are perfectly believable which is the reason I am rating this book 3/5. I wasn't too keen on some of the characters as they actually make the reader feel quite uncomfortable in parts. But I'm glad to have read it and I don't think it was a waste of my time. Basically, I've read worse.

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## **Adrienne says**

Running on the Cracks was altogether just an okay book. One of the best parts is probably the cover. I think it draws you into the book, and goes very well with the story line. The most compelling part of the book would be the unforgettable characters and cover. The book was a little boring at times, but the characters made things interesting and were very funny. I finally finished the book after reading it for about two weeks (yikes!). It took me so long to finish because I would often get very bored and distracted while reading it. I wish it was a little faster paced and more fun to read. Also the author and the characters are British, so at times I didn't really know what they were talking about. I don't know if I would recommend it to a friend because of it being a little uninteresting. The end of the book is really good because it picked up the pace, and wrapped up all the loose ends. Running on the Cracks sounded good in theory, but it just didn't cut it for me.

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## **Zoe Mann says**

'Running on the Cracks' is the Academy award nominee, Julia Donaldson's first novel for teenagers.

When Leo's parents tragically die in a plane crash and things aren't going well at her new home with her auntie and uncle, Leo runs away to discover her long lost family in Glasgow. Through her discovery she is not only reunited with family members but makes very special friends who she soon considers her new family.

This is a perfect novel for teenagers as it covers such important subjects such as death, mental illness, sexual abuse, neglect, friendship, family and child safety.

The part that resonates most with me and I hope it does with teenagers too, is when Leo is encouraged to let her family know she is safe. Leo is so scared she will be made to go back to live with her aunt and uncle, where it is unsafe. There is an anonymous number she can call to explain her circumstances and to state she is safe which enables steps to be put in place to protect her and promote her care.

Julia Donaldson also mentions Aberlour Child Care Trust in her novel. They are Scotland's largest children's charity and the only charity providing a refuge for young runaways in Scotland. This is what I love about 'Running on the Cracks', not only is it a thrilling, well executed and heart warming novel it has such important messages running throughout that are vital to our children's future and wellbeing.

Thank you to Netgalley and the publisher for a free ARC in return for an honest review.

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## **Mehdi says**

I really liked this book. Leo did many stuff in the past, he may have done some bad and some good actions. Finlay is running where no-one wants to run to; trouble! What they both love to eat is Chinese food! They just love the taste and the smell. I actually love Chinese food too! What Leo doesn't know, is that someone is on his trail and this he will find out very soon. I think that Julia Donaldson did a splendid job,

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## **Gaby says**

Ahem. Crap.  
Sorry favourite author. YA is not your scene.

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## **Shaun says**

This is an absorbing book from the writer of 'The Gruffalo'.

It is about an orphan girl (Leo) who goes on the run from her uncle in an attempt to find her grandparents, who she has never met.

The story is told from mainly two perspectives (Leo and, schoolboy, Finlay) who's paths come together to show stories of human kindness.

While reading this book, I came to care about the characters and found it quite engaging. It's a good read for good to high ability year 5 and 6 readers.

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## **Lyrical says**

When I was a kid, I always thought that running away would be a really glamorous and exciting thing to do so I have a strange attraction to runaway stories that still lingers into my adult years. Of course, the truth is, it's not glamorous and exciting at all. It's incredibly dangerous and as such is an extremely desperate act, especially when performed by a child, and Julia Donaldson has really excelled in capturing the dark side of running away while painting wonderful silver linings onto Leo's plight. It's hard to imagine someone who writes brilliant picture books could turn her hand to something much more threatening but clearly Julia's story toolbox is well stocked.

From the first instant I met her, I fell in love with Leo. She's one of those heroines who takes action at every turn and is courageous in the true sense that she knows there are things that are more important than fear. She's a real survivor and that is what I really love in a lead character. I think it's probably best to describe the other characters in this book as "a motley crew". Julia Donaldson has written a rainbow of characters that you know you would find if you took a slice out of society in any large city. It's almost as if her research consisted of going and sitting in a park one day and copying down every character she found walking by.

It's not just great characters that make this book, however, there's a real intelligence in the writing. A teen or older reader would probably recognise quite soon that underneath all the colours of the characters and the bright spots of hope, something very sinister is lurking. Uncle John is not just any old bad guy, he is the worst kind of predator and his short chapters dotted throughout the book are a real anchor to the story. If you were feeling uplifted at the end of the preceding chapter it won't last long as you feel even your internal organs repelling against this man and the worst kind of dread runs down your spine. A bad guy rarely truly gives me the creeps – mostly because I love a good baddy! – but here is one that had my toes curling in revulsion. Mary makes for another sinister element in this story. Although she starts the story well and takes

Leo in, she becomes increasingly unbalanced and spirals into an unpredictable and unstable character that threatens Leo's safety and success.

I think what really makes this story is that it is so realistic – nothing is hard to believe and it has its foundation in a shocking truth that haunts too many children and teens today. That's what I think young adult books should be all about: telling the truth, helping growing minds to explore and deal with both the good and bad forces in life. The characters are colourful, the writing clever and there's a beautiful circularity to the story that goes a long way towards healing the wounds that the plot opens in your mind. A really worthwhile read!

Lyrical Reviews

@LyricalReviews

Goodreads Group: No Dark Romance Allowed

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### Haley Mathiot says

Rating: 3-ish/5

**My Summary:** Leo is scared. She's not quite sure what to think of her kooky uncle anymore, and she doesn't want to take chances. What if he does something to her... Leo runs away. She goes in search of her grandparents, her only living relatives. She accidentally gets her photo in the newspaper, and had to hide. She meets a boy named Finlay, who seems to be the one who's going to put an end to her new freedom... at first anyway. But then Finlay becomes a friend to Leo, and he becomes her key to staying away from her uncle. Leo will do anything to keep from being found and being sent back there. She ends up staying with a crazy lady who is hospitable enough, but refuses to take her medication and whose friends aren't much better. Then she realizes that her Uncle is on her tail. How will she stay away?

**What I thought:** Running on the Cracks was an enjoyable read. When I first saw the cover, I imagined an action filled YA novel with a lot of suspense. Although there was suspense, it wasn't anything that got your blood racing. I thoroughly enjoyed this book when I sat down to read it, but I had to be in the right mood to do it.

**The Writing:** The format of writing was different than I'd read before, but it was very engaging. It switched viewpoints, had pieces of the story in written-story form (meaning a whole chapter was just a letter or a newspaper article or an e-mail), had whole sections where it was just dialogue (those were my favorite sections—mostly it was when characters were on the phone, and they were all very funny) and even had a few chapters from the "crazy" person's perspective (it's always interesting being inside the head of a madman...). Also, the writer has written the book in an accent, meaning that some of the words are spelled wrong so that you can hear it pronounced with an accent in your head—quite engaging and welcoming. The writing was good, but as it was foreign it was a little odd (i.e. "lead" instead of "leash" etc), but not in a bad way.

**The Characters:** The characters were pretty relatable. I felt scared for Leo when she was running from her Uncle, and sorry for Finlay when we was stressed about lying to his mom. The characters were really cool, well developed, and some of them were kooky. I really liked Leo and Finlay. They had such cool names! I loved the "President", but the "Godfather" was my favorite. He was just so... weirdly cool... (I don't know, maybe that's because I'm a little insane myself). Not too much, I rather enjoyed it actually. It's always fun to

read something a little different.

**The Plot:** The plot was pretty believable, and I know that (sadly) there are true stories like this all the time. I don't know how the police are over in Scotland but I doubt very seriously that Leo would have gotten away with hiding from the American police for as long as she did from the Scottish police (but that's my opinion as a police and spy novel writer). Although there was suggestion of the Uncle trying to sexually abuse women in the book, it never actually happened, and it was very age appropriate.

**My Recommendation:** I would recommend it to a friend ages 11-15, maybe even a little younger, but not older than that. Again, I enjoyed it when I sat down to read it, but it wasn't quite my personal attention level (I'm 18). All in all, I enjoyed this book a lot.

*Thank you to Henry Holt In Group for supplying my review copy of this book!*

For more reviews and giveaways,, please visit [haleymathiot.blogspot.com](http://haleymathiot.blogspot.com)

~Haleyknitz

PS- don't forget—enter my giveaway for LOCKDOWN before October 20!

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### **Caren says**

I really like the picture books of Julia Donaldson, so I thought I'd like to try her YA novel. I was not disappointed. Leo (short for Leonora) has been sent to live with her mother's sister in Bristol (England) after her parents (who both played in an orchestra) have been killed in an accident. Her two cousins resent her and her uncle is very creepy. She knows she has some grandparents whom she has never met (due to a family feud) in Glasgow, so one morning, rather than going to school, she instead boards a train for Glasgow and thus her adventures begin. Her father was Chinese and she must search for his parents based on her slender thread of knowledge that they owned a Chinese restaurant in Glasgow and that their name was Chan. When she arrives in Glasgow, with very little money, and finds that there are lots of Chans in the phone book and lots of Chinese restaurants, her prospects for success seem dim. Fortunately, she is befriended by a motley cast of characters. Unfortunately, she has been pursued by her creepy, predatory uncle. The fast-paced plot moves right along, with Leo and gang managing to stay one step ahead of her uncle. This was an engaging read with a satisfying ending.

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### **Shannon (Giraffe Days) says**

Leonora's parents, gifted musicians, died in a plane crash and Leo, their only child, is sent to live with her Aunt Sarah and Uncle John and their two girls, Flo and Caitlin. Sarah and Leo's mother were never close sisters, and the cousins are mean to Leo. But it is Uncle John and his creepy bedside manner that has Leo fleeing Bristol on the day she was meant to start school for the first time, after years of home schooling.

She has one chance left, one hope to run towards: her father's parents. All she knows about them is that they had a Chinese restaurant in Glasgow, and that they never spoke to or saw her dad again after he met Leo's

mother. With a surname like Chan, however, and no other clues to go on, Leo knows it won't be easy to find them. And with her picture appearing in the paper and the *Big Issue*, she has to keep her head down.

A friendly woman called Mary takes her in, as she takes in many strays, and a local boy, Finlay, helps Leo track down her grandparents. But as Mary stops taking her pills and gets more and more unstable, and with Uncle John close on Leo's heels, it's only a matter of time before her hopeful new existence unravels.

This is an engaging story, simply told and well written. It would appeal more to the age group it's marketed at than adult lovers of YA: it was a bit *too* simple for me, a bit lacking in depth. The characters existed only in the vaguest of ways prior to the beginning of the narrative - we get only glimpses of Leo's parents, for instance, and know very little about them or Leo herself, for that matter. Same with all the other characters, with perhaps the exception of Kim, a relative Leo discovers with Finlay's help, who gets to tell the story of how she came to live in Glasgow from China.

The characters' personalities come through in more subtle ways, but it still had the feeling of existing in a bit of a bubble. When you are genuinely interested and want to know more, this can be disappointing.

The reference to "running on the cracks" is mentioned briefly, or rather implied, and if I understand it correctly it refers to an old story Leo's dad told her of a dragon hiding in the cracks - a metaphor for Uncle John, I assume, but it's a rather haphazard connection. To be honest, I was never really clear about the title.

I did like learning a little bit about the Scottish Aberlour Child Care Trust, which helps runaway children and teens without forcing them back to the life they were escaping from. It came up at the very end but it sounds like a good system to have.

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