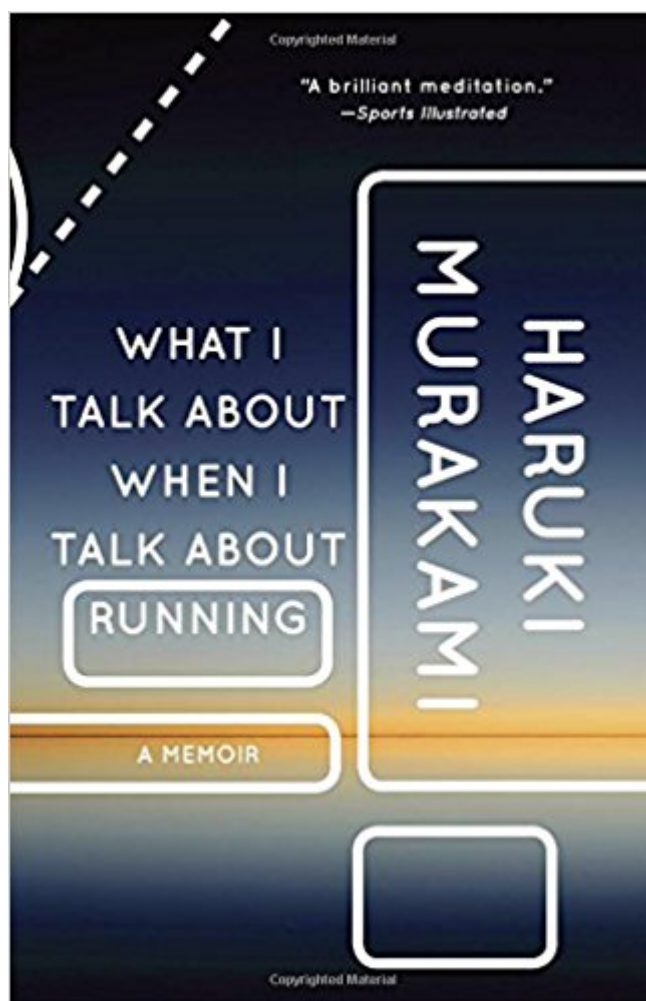


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# What I Talk About When I Talk About Running: A Memoir (Vintage International)



## Synopsis

An intimate look at writing, running, and the incredible way they intersect, from the incomparable, bestselling author Haruki Murakami. While simply training for New York City Marathon would be enough for most people, Haruki Murakami's decided to write about it as well. The result is a beautiful memoir about his intertwined obsessions with running and writing, full of vivid memories and insights, including the eureka moment when he decided to become a writer. By turns funny and sobering, playful and philosophical, *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* is rich and revelatory, both for fans of this masterful yet guardedly private writer and for the exploding population of athletes who find similar satisfaction in athletic pursuit.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Murakami's latest is a nonfiction work mostly concerned with his thoughts on the long-distance running he has engaged in for much of his adult life. Through a mix of adapted diary entries, old essays, reminiscences and life advice, Murakami crafts a charming little volume notable for its good-natured and intimate tone. While the subject matter is radically different from the fabulous and surreal fiction that Murakami (*The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*) most often produces, longtime readers will recognize the source of the isolated, journeying protagonists of the author's novels in the formative running experiences recounted. Murakami's insistence on focusing almost exclusively on running can grow somewhat tedious over the course of the book, but discrete, absorbing episodes, such as a will-breaking 62-mile ultramarathon and a solo re-creation of the historic first marathon in

Greece serve as dynamic and well-rendered highlights. Murakami offers precious little insight into much of his life as a writer, but what he does provide should be of value to those trying to understand the author's long and fruitful career. An early section recounting Murakami's transition from nightclub owner to novelist offers a particularly vivid picture of an artist soaring into flight for the first time. (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

Haruki Murakami has established himself as one of the most interesting and innovative novelists of the last two decades, combining pop culture with a magic-realistic sensibility that has garnered the author a faithful following. *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* couldn't differ more from the rest of Murakami's work. This slender volume catalogs the author's love for that most solitary of athletic endeavors, though even Murakami's prodigious talent as a writer can't quite bridge the gap between the cultish world of hard-core running and a broader audience. This hit-and-miss effort will be welcomed by a small (probably athletic) audience, but may not reach readers who aren't already on board with Murakami or running. Copyright 2008 Bookmarks Publishing LLC --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

I've never read a Murakami novel before so I had no idea what to expect from his running memoir. I'd seen it on the bookshelf of a number of runners so as I started training for my first marathon a few weeks ago, I picked up the book as well. I loved most of it. I found his philosophy with both running and writing to be similar to mine. There are many things that someone who's not an endurance athlete can't understand so maybe this book speaks to a narrow audience. But I'm glad to be a member of that audience. I found myself nodding along. I'd read a free sample on my Kindle, then found a used paperback to buy so I could underline passages and make notes in the margin. I loved this book so much I penciled it up. Now that I've seen this glimpse into his mind I want to try his novels, too. I would not say this is an equal parts training log, travelogue, and reminiscence, as the book description does. It's a series of essays that he wrote, mostly during his training for the 2005 New York City Marathon, but the memories take him to other races and other periods of his life, and on a whirlwind tour of his stomping grounds across Hawaii, Boston, Greece, and Japan.

I almost could have written this book... if I were as talented a writer as Mr Murakami, of course. As a runner, I related to this book very much, often finding myself nodding or chuckling to myself because I totally understand what the author is talking about as he talks (writes) about running and his experience in participating in the sport over many years. I admit I was unsure that I would like this book based on some of the reviews, but so many fellow runners had recommended it that I finally picked it up, and I am so glad I did. It was a relatively quick read, too. At a few points I even found myself tearing up because I've had some similar experiences as the author. I won't spoil the book by listing them here, but if you are a relatively competitive age-group runner/triathlete, you will likely find much in common with Mr Murakami's experiences and thoughts as described in this book. I wouldn't say that it gave me any more or less motivation to run, but it did help remind me of why I love running, and why so many other people do, too.

I really liked this book. It didn't blow me out of the water with inspiration like I kind of expected, but that's ok. It's a memoir, not a manifesto. As a runner and writer myself, it was nice to see how the two mesh together for the author. I am anxious to read one of his novels now after getting a glimpse of his writing style. Aside from the joy of gaining insight from his decades of experience, I found the author to be respectable, humble, and generally just a likable guy. I'd love to have coffee with him and pick his brain some more. I found his humility and honesty refreshing and rare in a field where I am accustomed to sensationalized, horn-tooting tales of superathletes. I liked that he opened up about limits that come with aging, (though he's still faster than I may ever be) and how the love of running can wax and wane over time. Humility is an aspect often left out when people talk about running, but I find that at times I leave for a run expecting to feel a great sense of accomplishment, and return humbled instead, and those runs are every bit as important. I am grateful that he touched on those feelings. Running is such a metaphor for life, it only makes sense that a writer may be an avid runner. I often write in my head while I run, and I enjoyed this account of someone who has been doing both for decades.

It happens just once or twice in a year (in a fortunate year) that a reader finds an author and thinks, "Oh man, I got to read everything this person ever wrote." This year, my discovery is Haruki Murakami. It's funny (considering my personality not that funny) that I read his non-fiction book first. But I have to read Murakami. He is a writer who writes, straight, simple, no bullshit.

As a long-time fan of his fiction (*A Wild Sheep Chase* came out when I was in college and blew me

away!), I found this oh-so personal book to be an absolute delight. I even started running again- not far, not fast, but in a way that, as Murakami puts it, "suits" me.

So weird...this of course was real life vs Murakami's imagination. I absolutely love how this man can stump me on one single sentence for minutes at a time...I just read them over and over again....this book was not like that....it was pretty straight and to the point....with most of his books I give them 4 stars right off the bat and then go back a month later and bump it up to 5 because, honestly, it sometimes takes me that long to fully appreciate him....yes, a month later, I still often think of the latest Murakami book I have read. It's true...for me, his words become part of me...they seep into my very bone marrow...but for whatever reason, this one got 5 stars right off the bat....why? I am not sure...I just know it deserves it....stupid reason, but there you have it...and really, who knew he could run 60 plus miles in a single day? Who knew he has more albums than I have books? But most of all, I felt a real connection to him after reading this book. I don't write. When I write down my thoughts they start to consume me. I loose control. It is a very scary thing for me. It's why I avoid it when I can...Murakami spends some time in this book explaining why he must run to offset the unhealthiness of his imagination...How you have to go deep inside you to be able to tap your creative vein...if you don't stay healthy on the outside, the inside will take over....me? I just have never learned how to do that...I fear one day I would just bleed out....

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