

Mason Royal

11/18/16

Biology

Born To Run Essay

The book, *Born To Run*, follows a man who is seeking to improve his skills in running by trying to find a lost tribe in the desert. They have been known to be the best runners ever lived. He finds them at some point in the book and tries to learn from the tribe named Tarahumara. He then sets off to find a man called Caballo Blanco a.k.a The White Horse. When he finds him, he acts more like a shadow to him in following him around and doing everything he does. The man listens to all of Blanco's stories and tries to be as good of a runner as he is. I have noticed 3 main themes and how they relate to our project "How We Endure"; Perseverance, resistance, and mentality are the 3 main themes from the book so far.

Ultrarunning is a big factor in the book in how groups like the Tarahumara and individuals like Caballo Blanco who do it persistently. To get your body to the physical capability it needs to be to do that takes a lot of self mentality. These ultra runners constantly have to resist the urge to give up and stop running. They run 50 mile marathons through the desert non-stop, most people's bodies aren't even close to where they would need to be to do something like that. Most people would just give up or simply not even try, but for ultrarunners it's all they know and they are very good at it. The whole book is about endurance and running and how it affects the body, but I hardly notice it talk about diet and what to eat. In some parts it

shows Caballo Blanco eating beans and drinking a beer, but I'm sure that for him, he can not constantly keep eating. You have to maintain a healthy diet to be a successful ultra runner and not have your body shut down. When doing that much running, it must improve your muscular system a high amount in your legs, but only if you are eating what you should so that it would not be burning carbs that aren't even there. Any muscle in the human body will get stronger if worked out and taken care of, that's how these Tarahumara runners are so good. Running is their whole life and their muscles are so used to it, that running is just like walking to them.

For groups like the Tarahumara, evolution has been very kind to them. Evolution had given the Tarahumara a better chance for being an ultrarunner which is passed down from generation to generation. It is in their genes that they have strong leg muscles and are very good runners. The proof is in the children of the tribe and seeing how they run. Their running has evolutionized for as long as the tribe has been around. The narrator of the story was born a regular person that then tried to get into serious running, he broke bones and pulled muscles. Where the Tarahumara do desert marathons like it was nothing. Evolution has different time spans for when it'll occur and who it's occurring with. The Tarahumara people typically use slow twitch muscles, which help them endure things like long distance runs and marathons. Where fast twitch muscles fatigue faster and are used in powerful burst of movement like sprinting. In the future, it is possible that they may even get better at running by pushing themselves in the most insane ways. Then there is always the theory that running is all in the mind and that if you can control it then you can run for a very long time. I do not think that is correct, the body has to snap at some point no matter what your mind believes. The mind does play a big role in ultrarunning because it is constantly telling you too stop, but if oneself body can not physically

do the run then the mind serves no purpose. It's better to work out your body rather than the mind for running.

Every character in the book has persevered through something. Whether it's getting over that wall when finishing a marathon or trying to learn to become an ultrarunner. The muscle system compared of a normal runner to someone who's an ultra runner probably looks different in the size and how much it is able to endure. Caballo Blanco runs for days which is his training and for some people they struggle to do an entire marathon. So, his organs and muscles are probably very strong compared to an average person. Especially his mindset as well, to be in the mindset of "I'm going to run 50 or 100 miles today" must be insane. The way your mind works is that once it thinks that it has reached to point of having no energy that you must stop. What ultrarunners do though is they keep going and push themselves past believing that. Convincing yourself that that is who you are and what you are supposed to do must take work. In the book he is described as a myth and that very few people have seen him because he is always so fast and never stays in one place for too long. Getting a name for yourself like that takes a lot more than just being a normal marathon runner. Another system that you have to strengthen to do something like is your respiratory system. Ultrarunning will exhaust your lungs and possibly cause them to stop working if pushed too hard. So most ultrarunners have to build up to where they are now, because if you were too try and go for it all at once, you could damage some inner organs. Another overall persona we see in the book that matches up with Caballo Blanco's physique is the Tarahumara. They understand and know how to be good runners and Caballo Blanco even got help from them when becoming a better runner.

The Tarahumara look at running as more of a way of life for them, not so much as a

hobby. They decided to stay away from modern society and resist all the things that are apart of it. I think that is one of the biggest reasons why they have such happiness when it comes to looking at life. It takes a lot of resistance to be able to stay away from modern society and the culture of it, but because they do it helps their running. Being able to do their own thing and be the way they want to be probably helps immensely in the way they run. Tarahumara are not tempted by the things we say are normal today. Some people say that the medicine, drugs, protein drinks that we have today will help boost running, but if you look the Tarahumara, they use none of that and they are better runners than anyone. I think that is why the author or narrator went to go track them down to figure out how they do it and what is the best solution.

Before I started reading *Born To Run*, I did not see running as such a serious thing. More of something people do as a hobby because it makes them either lose weight or feel good. This book has opened my eyes to how serious and physical and how it really affects your body. There still are runners that do it because they think it's fun and such, but then there are those who run 50 or 100 mile marathons non-stop which blows my mind. I personally struggle immensely to run 1 mile as it is. To think that the human body can take that much running and have that much endurance is crazy. Learning the biology behind it has made it more clearer on how this is possible and what people do to achieve becoming an ultra runner. I have a new respect for how long and exhausting it must be for people like Caballo Blanco or the Tarahumara. Even the author who wanted to become one of these ultra runners, so he went into the desert to find out how. Just things I'd never think to do or were even possible.