

Runner for the King



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Author:	Rowena Bastin Bennett
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I read this book in elementary school & was fascinated by the depiction of the Inca civilization. It made such an impression that years later I created a mathematics problem based on the quipu, knotted strings that was used by the Incas to create, store & transmit messages. Roca is a message runner. His role is to physically transport quipu from one point in the Inca Empire to another. This particular night the task is even more critical.

A foreign army marches against the empire. The message he carries is a warning. Ordinarily, he would only run a short leg of the journey & transfer the message to the next runner in the sequence. However, spies are trying to intercept the message & a puma attacks him. The next runner is attacked by the spies & injured, so he's unable to run his section of the route, which is the one that would take the message to the Emperor. Realizing the significance of his mission, Roca persists & is able to deliver the quipu to the court. A catastrophe is averted. This short story combines a tale of heroism with a history on. A short section on using quipu to store messages in the Inca language would be an excellent contribution to multicultural studies.--C. Ashbacher (edited)