



Girls On the Run

©2010 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

The author of more than fifteen books of poetry, John Ashbery won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1976 for his collection *SELF- PORTRAIT IN A CONVEX MIRROR* (1975). Taking much of his inspiration from Surrealism, Ashbery's poetry tends to be playful and confusing at the same time. Some critics who value clarity above all else in poetry have found little to admire in Ashbery's approach. Always challenging, Ashbery has made a career out of writing some of the most amusing and/or irritating (depending on the reader's poetic bent) poetry in the twentieth century. As with his other poems, *GIRLS ON THE RUN* does not contain any obvious logic or overt meaning. The poem grew out of Ashbery's study of the eccentric and reclusive artist Henry Darger. Darger had worked on a massively illustrated novel that detailed the adventures of a group of young girls. Known as the "Vivian Girls," the group braved the wrath of the environment, the supernatural, and some very wicked people.

In his typically disjointed manner, Ashbery has created a childlike world where nothing is what it seems to be. The landscapes may resemble dreams, but there is always dread close at hand. The colorful cast of characters includes a Rags the Dog, a Tidbit, a Mr. McPlaster, a Persnickety, and a Dimples. The playfulness of *GIRLS ON THE RUN* compares favorably to the inspired works of Lewis Carroll. For a reader willing to forgo conventional storytelling, Ashbery's poem is an inventive romp and opens up a mysterious world full of rascals who are never boring.

Copyright Notice

©2010 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:
<http://www.enotes.com/girls-run-salem>