

Humans

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**Why Your Child Loves
—and Needs
—Coming of Age Stories.**

Mountains of
Glaedaan

Elves

Riverhome

Footie Pitch

Troll Village

Valley of the Trolls

The Sword in the stone

Waterfalls

The Portal

Clygon's
Stronghold

Tim Wright

Why Your Child Loves —and Needs —Coming of Age Stories

Hey, Parents:

Imagine standing on a mountain top overlooking the valley below. Next to you stands your middle-school-aged son or daughter. The view represents the life ahead of her. His whole life is before him.

As you stand there together, what are your hopes and dreams for his life? What kind of life do you want her to live? What values, beliefs, passions do you hope to instill in her to help her live to her potential? What kind of man do you want him to grow up to be? What kind of woman do you want her to grow up to be?

In your mind you picture him turning his bright, smiling face to you as he says, “School sucks! Why do I have to study math anyway? I’ll never use it.”

In your mind you picture her turning her radiant, inquisitive face to you as she says, “Why am I so ugly? The other girls make fun of my braces all the time.”

As you come crashing back down to earth you realize again how sacred and how challenging it is to raise a child into an adult in the 21st Century:

Pimples. Bullying. Social media. Screen time. Sports. Homework. Menstruation. Sibling rivalries. Romance. Breakups. Success. Failure. Wet dreams. Facial hair.

How any child makes it into adulthood is a miracle!
(How any parent survives their child moving into adulthood is a miracle!)

On top of the challenges our children face as they move through the teen years, they also begin to wrestle with the big questions of life:

Why am I here?

What's my purpose in life?

Am I worth loving?

They may not use those words. Their questions may come out more practically:

What am I good at? Math? Science? Acting? Singing?

How can I make more friends?

Why do I have such a hard time making friends?

What's happening to my body?

Thankfully, as all wise parents know, you aren't on your own. For those willing to look, there are a variety of parent-helping, kid-shaping assets most parents can tap into:

Grandparents.

Teachers.

Coaches.

Religious leaders and communities.

Podcasts (like [The Wonder of Parenting Podcast: A Brain-Science Approach to Parenting](#))

And... books!

Specifically, Coming-of-Age stories.

Think *Harry Potter*. *Percy Jackson*. *The Chronicles of Narnia*. *The Hobbit*.

These books, and books like them, take our middle-school-aged children on an adventure into adulthood. Characters, about the same age as our children, find themselves, like our children, trying to figure out how to navigate the pre-teen and early teen years.

The best Coming-of-Age stories draw our kids into magical worlds from the opening lines and keeps them turning the page:

Mr. and Mrs. Dursley of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. (Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Sword)

When Mr Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would shortly be celebrating his eleventyfirst birthday with a party of special magnificence, there was much talk and excitement in Hobbiton. (The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring)

Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy. This story is about something that happened to them when they were sent away from London during the war because of the air-raids. (The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe)

Look, I didn't want to be a half-blood. If you're reading this because you think you might be one, my advice is: close this book right now. Believe whatever lie your mom or dad told you about your birth, and try to lead a normal life. Being a half-blood is dangerous. It's scary. Most of the time, it gets you killed in painful, nasty ways. If you're a normal kid, reading this because you think it's fiction, great. Read on. I envy you for being able

to believe that none of this ever happened. But if you recognize yourself in these pages—if you feel something stirring inside—stop reading immediately. You might be one of us. And once you know that, it's only a matter of time before they sense it too, and they'll come for you. Don't say I didn't warn you. My name is Percy Jackson. I'm twelve years old. Until a few months ago, I was a boarding student at Yancy Academy, a private school for troubled kids in upstate New York. (Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief)

Through the power of these stories our kids begin to learn important lessons about the adventure of life.

Author [Jen Petro-Joy](#) says it this way:

Middle schoolers aren't just toddlers with a few more inches on them. They're not mini adults, either. Kids in middle school are unique beings, caught in that utterly amazing and uncomfortable space between carefree childhood and responsibility-laden adulthood. They're starting to question their beliefs and their place in the world. They're developing and refining their personalities and pushing back against their parents. They're figuring out where they stand in their peer groups.

And often, even with people all around them, they feel utterly alone. That's why books are so important. In books, readers can find people just like them. They can see how others navigated struggles and solved problems. They can brainstorm what might work for them and what might be a bad idea altogether. They can see that growing up may be hard—that it may seem almost intolerable at times—but that they can get through it. It might be messy and the process might not be wrapped up in a pretty bow with a perfectly crafted ending—but growing up without falling apart is possible.

That they can do it, too.

In a world shaped far too much by agitation-and-anxiety-inducing social media, hooking our children on engaging, compelling books will serve them well for the rest of their lives.

These Coming-of-Age stories grow out of the ancient tradition of Rites-of-Passage. For most of our history, rites-of-passage focused on training boys to be men. Boys don't have the built in biological monthly reminder that girls have signaling to our daughters that they are becoming women. Cultures and tribes recognized that boys need men to call them into—and shape them for—manhood. A rite of passage, then, is a strategic period of time in which a boy is mentored by men, through tasks, performance, and ceremonies, in order to instill in and empower the boy with a vision for good, noble, manhood.

For the last 100 years or more we have come to the obvious recognition that our girls, in addition to menstruation, need strategic rites-of-passage as well, to help them navigate their way into womanhood.

Unfortunately for our children and our society, intentional rites-of-passage have become a lost art. Certainly sports or theater or the chess club or youth groups can play a role in training our children for adulthood. But that strategic, focused, time-honored process of pouring healthy masculine energy into our boys and healthy feminine energy into our girls is lacking in the lives of most our kids today.

Coming-of-Age books, while not replacing rites-of-passage, are rites-of-passage stories. They take our kids into the heart of what it means to be a pre-teen or an early teen and begin to sear into their imaginations values, passions and dreams that help them navigate adulthood.

The best part of these Coming-of-Age books is that they are meant to be read together: child and parents.

Since 2006 I have been working with Dr. Michael Gurian (New York Times Best-Selling Author: *Saving our Sons; The Minds of Girls; Boys and Girls Learn Differently; The Purpose of Boys*). For over 35 years Michael, using brain-science research and best practices, has been inspiring and equipping parents and educators with tools to help them raise boys and girls into wise, honorable men and women.

Together, we have created several [rites-of-passage](#) for boys, girls, and their parents, both secular and faith-based.

Being a fan of these great Coming-of-Age books, I decided to try my hand at it, writing a story for our sons and daughters using Michael's research into the power of rites-of-passage and his outline for raising our children into noble, good adults: HERO.

Toby Baxter is a just-turned thirteen-year-old boy who loves Marvel Super Heroes. On the night of his birthday, he is called into a strange world by a River Elf. The River Elves believe Toby is the Hero who will save them from the trolls. Like most thirteen-year-old boys, Toby doesn't see how he can possibly be a hero. He has no real gifts. He doesn't have a lot of courage. He lives in fear of the school bully. And, as he discovers in *RiverHome*, when he does meet a crisis, his anger gets in the way.

Surrounded by strong male and female mentors in *RiverHome*, Toby begins to discover what it means to be a HERO: Honorable. Enterprising. Responsible. Original.

My hope, as your child reads *The Adventures of Toby Baxter: The River Elf, The Giant, and the Closet*, is that it will inspire the HERO in your daughter or son. I also hope, as you read along with your child, that the story will provide opportunities to instill in your child the values, beliefs, passions, and morals you believe will shape him or her into a wise, compassionate, strong, honorable adult.

For more on Toby Baxter and his adventures go to
www.TimWrightbooks.com