

Shine Bright LLCE Cycle Terminal

File 16 Coming-of-age stories

All children grow up p. 184

All children, except one, grow up. They soon know that they will grow up, and the way Wendy knew was this. One day when she was two years old she was playing in a garden, and she plucked another flower and ran with it to her mother. I suppose she must have looked rather delightful, for Mrs. Darling put her hand to her heart and cried, "Oh, why can't you remain like this for ever!" This was all that passed between them on the subject, but henceforth¹ Wendy knew that she must grow up. You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end.

J.M. Barrie, *Peter and Wendy*, 1911

1. from then on

The end of the quest p. 184

Christopher is a teenager with Asperger syndrome. At the end of the novel, he has finally reconciled with his father.

And I called the dog Sandy. And Father bought him a collar and I was allowed to take him for walks to the shop and back. And I played with him with a rubber bone.

And Mother got flu and I had to spend three days with Father and stay in his house. But it was OK because Sandy slept on my bed so he would bark if anyone came into the room during the night. And Father made a vegetable patch in the garden and I helped him. And we planted carrots and peas and spinach and I'm going to pick them and eat them when they're ready.

And I went to a bookshop with Mother and I bought a book called Further Maths for A Level and Father told Mrs. Gascoyne that I was going to take A level Further Maths next year and she said "OK."

And I am going to pass it and get an A grade. And in two years' time I am going to take A level Physics and get an A grade.

And then, when I've done that, I am going to go to university in another town. And it doesn't have to be in London because I don't like London and there are universities in lots of places and not all of them are in big cities. And I can live in a flat with a garden and a proper toilet. And I can take Sandy and my books and my computer.

And then I will get a First Class Honours Degree¹ and I will become a scientist.

And I know I can do this because I went to London on my own, and because I solved the mystery of Who Killed Wellington? and I found my mother and I was brave and I wrote a book and that means I can do anything.

Mark Haddon, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, 2003

1. the top level of undergraduate degree

No boys here! p. 186

David is a young orphan. After many adventures, he arrives at his aunt's.

“Go away!” said Miss Betsey, shaking her head, and making a distant chop¹ in the air with her knife. “Go along! No boys here!” [...]

“If you please, aunt.”

“EH?” exclaimed Miss Betsey, in a tone of amazement I have never heard approached.

“If you please, aunt, I am your nephew.”

“Oh, Lord!” said my aunt. And sat flat down in the garden-path.

“I am David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk—where you came, on the night when I was born, and saw my dear mama. I have been very unhappy since she died. I have been slighted², and taught nothing, and thrown upon myself, and put to work not fit for me. It made me run away to you. I was robbed at first setting out, and have walked all the way, and have never slept in a bed since I began the journey.” Here my self-support gave way all at once; and with a movement of my hands, intended to show her my ragged state, and call it to witness that I had suffered something, I broke into a passion of crying, which I suppose had been pent up³ within me all the week. [...]

“Mr. Dick,” said my aunt, “you have heard me mention David Copperfield? Now don't pretend not to have a memory, because you and I know better.”

“David Copperfield?” said Mr. Dick, who did not appear to me to remember much about it. “David Copperfield? Oh yes, to be sure. David, certainly.”

“Well,” said my aunt, “this is his boy—his son. He would be as like his father as it's possible to be, if he was not so like his mother, too.”

“His son?” said Mr. Dick. “David's son? Indeed!”

“Yes,” pursued my aunt, “and he has done a pretty piece of business. He has run away. Ah! His sister, Betsey Trotwood, never would have run away.” My aunt

shook her head firmly, confident in the character and behaviour of the girl who never was born.

“Oh! you think she wouldn’t have run away?” said Mr. Dick.

“Bless and save the man,” exclaimed my aunt, sharply, “how he talks! Don’t I know she wouldn’t? She would have lived with her god-mother⁴, and we should have been devoted to one another. Where, in the name of wonder, should his sister, Betsey Trotwood, have run from, or to?”

“Nowhere,” said Mr. Dick.

Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 1850

1. act of cutting 2. treat as unimportant 3. repressed 4. *marraine*

An unlady-like girl p. 187

“You said the other day you thought we were a deal happier than the King children, for they were fighting and fretting all the time, in spite of their money.”

“So I did, Beth. Well, I think we are. For though we do have to work, we make fun for ourselves, and are a jolly set, as Jo would say.”

“Jo does use such slang words,” observed Amy, with a reproofing look at the long figure stretched on the rug. Jo immediately sat up, put her hands in her pockets, and began to whistle.

“Don’t, Jo. It’s so boyish!”

“That’s why I do it.”

“I detest rude, unlady-like girls!”

“I hate affected niminy-piminy chits¹!”

“Birds in their little nests agree,” sang Beth, the peacemaker, with such a funny face that both sharp voices softened to a laugh, and the “pecking” ended for that time.

“Really, girls, you are both to be blamed,” said Meg, beginning to lecture² in her elder-sisterly fashion. “You are old enough to leave off boyish tricks, and to behave better, Josephine. It didn’t matter so much when you were a little girl, but now you are so tall, and turn up your hair, you should remember that you are a young lady.”

“I’m not! And if turning my hair up makes me one, I’ll wear it in two tails till I’m twenty,” cried Jo, pulling off her net, and shaking down a chestnut mane³. “I hate to think I’ve got to grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim⁴ as a China Aster⁵! It’s bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boys’ games and work and manners! I can’t get over my disappointment in not being a boy. And it’s worse than ever now, for I’m dying to go and fight with Papa. And I can only stay home and knit, like a poky⁶ old woman!”

And Jo shook the blue army sock till the needles rattled like castanets, and her ball bounded across the room.

“Poor Jo! It’s too bad but it can’t be helped. So you must try to be contented with making your name boyish, and playing brother to us girls,” said Beth, stroking the rough head with a hand that all the dish washing and dusting in the world could not make ungentle in its touch.

“As for you, Amy,” continued Meg, “you are altogether too particular and prim. Your airs are funny now, but you’ll grow up an affected little goose, if you don’t take care. I like your nice manners and refined ways of speaking when you don’t try to be elegant, but your absurd words are as bad as Jo’s slang.”

“If Jo is a tomboy⁷ and Amy a goose, what am I, please?” asked Beth, ready to share the lecture.

“You’re a dear, and nothing else,” answered Meg warmly, and no one contradicted her, for the “Mouse” was the pet of the family.

Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, 1868

1. gossipy girls 2. reproach 3. hair 4. raide 5. type of flower 6. boring 7. *garçon manqué*

A life lesson p. 188

“Mother, can I come into your room?” Laura turned the big glass door-knob.

“Of course, child. Why, what’s the matter? What’s given you such a colour?” And Mrs. Sheridan turned round from her dressing table. She was trying on a new hat.

“Mother, a man’s been killed,” began Laura.

“Not in the garden?” interrupted her mother.

“No, no!”

“Oh, what a fright you gave me!” Mrs. Sheridan sighed with relief and took off the big hat and held it on her knees.

“But listen, mother,” said Laura. Breathless, half-choking, she told the dreadful story. “Of course, we can’t have our party, can we?” she pleaded.

“The band and everybody arriving. They’d hear us, mother; they’re nearly neighbours!”

To Laura’s astonishment, her mother behaved just like Jose, it was harder to bear because she seemed amused. She refused to take Laura seriously.

“But, my dear child, use your common sense. It’s only by accident we’ve heard of it. If someone had died there normally—and I can’t understand how they keep alive in those poky¹ little holes—we should still be having our party, shouldn’t we?”
[...]

“Mother, isn’t it really terribly heartless of us?” she asked.

“Darling!” Mrs. Sheridan got up and came over to her, carrying the hat. Before Laura could stop her she had popped it on. “My child!” said her mother, “the hat is yours. It’s made for you. It’s much too young for me. I have never seen you look such a picture. Look at yourself !” [...]

Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. [...] A low hum came from the mean² little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light,

and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. Laura bent her head and hurried on. She wished now she had put on a coat. How her frock³ shone! And the big hat with the velvet streamer⁴—if only it was another hat! Were the people looking at her? They must be. It was a mistake to have come; she knew all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now?

No, too late. This was the house. It must be. [...]

There lay a young man, fast asleep—sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. [...] He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy... happy... All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.

But all the same you had to cry, and she couldn't go out of the room without saying something to him. Laura gave a loud, childish sob.

"Forgive my hat," she said.

Katherine Mansfield, "The Garden Party", 1922

1. uncomfortably small 2. poor and dirty 3. dress 4. ribbon

Outcasts p. 189

The God of Small Things is set in India in the 1960s. It relates the impossible love story between Velutha, a young Untouchable, and the daughter of his employers (Mammachi and Pappachi) who live on the other side of the river.

Velutha wasn't supposed to be a carpenter¹.

He was called Velutha – which means White in Malayalam – because he was so black. His father, Vellya Paapen, was a Paravan². [...]

As a young boy, Velutha would come with Vellya Paapen to the back entrance of the Ayemenem House to deliver the coconuts they had plucked from the trees in the compound. Pappachi would not allow Paravans into the house. Nobody would. They were not allowed to touch anything that Touchables touched. [...] In Mammachi's time, Paravans, like other Untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed. [...]

Much to his mother's dismay³, Velutha began to avoid going home. He worked late. He caught fish in the river and cooked it on an open fire. He slept outdoors, on the banks of the river.

Then one day he disappeared. For four years nobody knew where he was. [...]

When he returned to Ayemenem after his years away from home, Velutha still had about him the same quickness. The sureness. And Vellya Paapen feared for him now more than ever. But this time he held his peace. He said nothing.

At least not until the Terror took hold of him. Not until he saw, night after night, a little boat being rowed across the river. Not until he saw it return at dawn. Not until he saw what his Untouchable son had touched. More than touched. [...]

Loved.

When the Terror took hold of him, Vellya Paapen went to Mammachi. [...]

Vellya Paapen told Mammachi what he had seen. He asked God's forgiveness for having spawned⁴ a monster. He offered to kill his son with his own bare hands.

Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*, 1997

1. *menuisier* 2. Untouchable 3. despair 4. give life to

Hip-hop star coming up p. 190

Aunt Pooh knocks on the side door. Feet shuffle and someone hollers out, “Who is it?”

“P” is all Aunt Pooh says.

Several locks click, and when the door opens, it’s like that moment in *Black Panther* when they go through the hologram and enter the real Wakanda. It’s like we just stepped through a hologram that showed everyone else a trap house and into a studio.

It’s not the fanciest, but it’s better than I expected. The walls are covered in those cardboard cup holders that restaurants give when you have multiple drinks to carry. Soundproofing. There are several computer monitors at a table, with drum pads, keyboards, and speakers nearby. A mic sits on a stand over in a corner.

A potbellied¹ bearded guy in a wife-beater² sits at the table. “Whaddup, P?” he says with a mouthful of gold. His words come out slow, like somebody turned down the tempo on his voice.

“Whaddup, Doc?” Aunt Pooh slaps palms with him and the other guys. There are about six or seven of them. “Bri, this is Doc, the producer,” Aunt Pooh says. Doc nods at me. “Doc, this is Bri, my niece. She ’bout to murder this beat you got for her.”

“Hold up, you made that for this li’l girl?” some guy on the couch asks. “What she gon’ do, spit some nursery rhymes?”

There go the smirks³ and snickers⁴.

This is that stale⁵ and predictable shit Aunt Pooh warned me about when I first told her I wanted to be a rapper. She said I’d have to do double the work to get half the respect. On top of that, I gotta be just as cutthroat, and I better not show weakness. Basically, I gotta be one of the guys and then some in order to survive.

I look the dude⁶ on the couch dead in his eyes.

“Nah. I’ll leave the nursery rhymes to you, Father Goose⁷.”

Angie Thomas, *On the Come Up*, 2019

1. with a round stomach 2. white vest with no sleeves 3. mocking smiles 4. silly unkind laughter 5. no longer fresh 6. man 7. Mother Goose is the imaginary author of nursery rhymes.

The British Dream p. 191

This passage is at the very end of the memoir.

When I was young I used to fantasise about renouncing my British passport and moving to the United States. I was fascinated by the idea of the American Dream, the suggestion that everyone had an equal chance to make something of their lives and to be considered equally American. Bruce Springsteen seemed to be the very embodiment¹ of that dream: someone who had been born to a working-class immigrant family and who had, through his talent and tenacity, reached the very peak of his profession. Bruce Springsteen changed my life because in his music I saw the promise of hope and escape and self-improvement, but where once I longed to escape to the United States, these days I'm convinced my father did the right thing coming to Britain.

It has taken me three decades to realise that there is only one country which is truly mine. The life my father had built, the family he raised and the life I have fashioned² are all due to living in Britain. Every opportunity, every job and every chance to pursue my dreams has been offered by this country, not by America, and not by Pakistan. My father used to tell me he regretted coming to Britain, but in truth it was the greatest gift he gave his children. I was born in Pakistan but made in England; it is Britain which is my land of hope and dreams.

Sarfraz Manzoor, *Greetings from Bury Park*, 2007

1. personification 2. create