

Exploring Rites of Passage

Writing Assignment

The term **rites of passage** refers to meaningful life experiences that mark the transition from one stage of life to the next. Some rites of passage, such as baptism, are associated with religious and cultural traditions. Others – such as graduating from high school and getting married – coincide with changes in responsibility or life circumstances. In all cases, rites of passage are major events that signify important personal transitions.

The transition from childhood to adulthood is often referred to as **coming of age**. Coming of age is celebrated or acknowledged in many ways, both religious and secular. Different cultures, families, and religious groups have unique ways of marking the physical and emotional transformation of a child maturing into an adult.

Write an essay in which you compare and contrast two different coming-of-age traditions. Use examples from the reading and your own experience to discuss what each event signifies and why it is important. Remember to use precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose.


Says-Means-Matters Note Taker

What does the text ... SAY? (Choose a direct quote)	What does the author ... MEAN? (Paraphrase – say it in your own words)	Why does it ... MATTER? (Explain why it is important – Who cares? So what?)	
The author further explains by adding that <i>"rites of passage involve community recognition and participation."</i>	The quote is saying that <i>rites of passage</i> are an established part of life in a particular community, like baptism or communion.	This point is important because it clarifies that rites of passage aren't individual activities we make up. They are rituals that are being repeated.	Paragraph 5: further definition of key concept
As stated by the author,	The author is explaining that	This quote presents the idea that	Paragraph 6: issue restated and thesis made clear
The author reinforces the main idea when he says,	In this statement, the author states again	These ideas make me wonder	Paragraph 7: reinforces importance of key concepts
The author reminds us that	In this statement, the author strongly suggests	This assertion helps me understand that	Paragraph 8: returns to and reflects on thesis

Rites of Passage in a Changing World

By James Moran

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- 1 For many of us, life in the United States is comfortable and convenient. We heat and cool our homes automatically, eat ready-made food at any time of the day or night, and download our favorite TV shows and songs instantly. We have everything we need when we need it. Yet – despite all this – a large number of us remain depressed and alienated from our communities and from each other. How can this be?
 - 2 We can begin to comprehend our present predicament by understanding how our lives differ from the lives of our predecessors. In 1909, anthropologist Arnold van Gennep coined the phrase “rites of passage” to refer to the ceremonies of traditional cultures and native civilizations that observe the **transition** from one stage of life to the next. Such **transitions** commonly include birth, adolescence, marriage, and death. More recently, Dr. Ronald Grimes, in his 2002 book “Deeply into the Bone: Re-inventing Rites of Passage,” defined a rite of **passage** as “a **symbolic** action intended to mark a **transition** in the human life cycle.”
 - 3 All over the world, many different cultures continue to observe rites of **passage**. In Japan, a newborn is ceremonially taken to visit a temple, given gifts – including a toy dog – and fed a ritual “first meal.” In Jewish culture, a Bar Mitzvah is a rite of **passage** observed for young boys when they turn 13 years old. In Yemen, a bride is decorated with long earrings and woolen braids in a **ceremony** involving the women of both families. Catholic Christians confess their sins and are anointed with consecrated oil when they are near death.
 - 4 Rites of **passage**, however, are not always positive. They can even be associated with negative experiences such as surviving an episode of bullying or getting initiated into a neighborhood gang. Also, rites of **passage** do not have to be religious. They can be secular as well. For instance, in the United States, graduating from high school or acquiring a driver’s license can be viewed as an adolescent’s **symbolic transition** to adulthood.
 - 5 The purpose of a rite of **passage** is not only to mark the critical **transitions** and status changes in one’s life, but also to honor the wisdom of the elders and to create a sense of one’s role in the community. For this reason, many rites of **passage** involve community recognition and participation.