

Should Boys be Encouraged to Live Dangerously?

When I was a child, my father regaled me with tales of how he and his friends once formed “The Boys Army” and spent their days creating original inventions and stockpiling weapons in their homemade fort in the woods. As with many forms of play, the thrill came not so much from fighting the “enemy,” but from creating something useful out of nothing and imagining its many uses.

Unfortunately, even in my growing up days, little boys – and girls, for that matter – were rarely seen running around outside and putting their creative energies to use. Instead, they sat indoors playing video games, messing with electronic gadgets, or being shuttled back and forth to one sports event or another.

Which leads me to wonder: is it possible that the current generation of children is increasingly void of knowledge when it comes to creating things for themselves?

Perhaps sensing such a problem, authors Conn and Hall Iggulden created [*The Dangerous Book for Boys*](#) and its travel-size companion [*The Pocket Dangerous Book for Boys*](#).

As the titles imply, these books are not for boys with overcautious helicopter parents ready to shield their sons from a stubbed toe. In all likelihood, the directions for making timers and tripwires, water bombs, bows and arrows, and fireproof cloth are likely to make boys, well... dangerous.

But there’s another danger in these books that is likely to balance out the physical danger they may promote. That danger is in the mental realm.

According to the authors, today’s boys have a lack of

knowledge not only in the creative and inventive departments, but also in the cultural, moral, and historical departments of life. For that reason, the Igguldens intersperse their books with lessons on honor, historical figures, and other foundational elements of western civilization, such as phrases from Shakespeare and the Latin language. The authors counter the idea that such subjects may be out of date by saying:

“Is it old-fashioned? Well, that depends. Men and boys today are the same as they always were, and interested in the same things. They may conquer different worlds when they grow up, but they’ll still want these stories for themselves and for their sons. We hope in years to come that this will be a book to dig out of the attic and give to a couple of kids staring at a pile of wood and wondering what to do with it.”

Do more American parents and teachers need to allow their sons to approach life with this kind of attitude?