

Ten Guides for Turning Boys Into Men

Many young men are puzzled these days about the meaning of manhood, perplexed by what they hear in a classroom, learn online, or see in their friends. They want to work, to love, to do good in the world, to emulate other men. Unfortunately, maps for these destinations seem in short supply.

Help is at hand. Literally. Put a book in his hand, the right book, and you provide him with a guide.

Below are ten books that might help him on his way.

1. Charles Murray's [*The Curmudgeon's Guide to Getting Ahead: Dos and Don'ts of Right Behavior, Tough Thinking, Clear Writing, and Living a Good Life*](#). Murray's short book offers advice on manners, marriage, handling a bad boss, leaving home, joining the military, getting a real job, and much more. The book is a concise, valuable guide to life beyond high school or university.

2. A book of quotations. Winston Churchill believed that "it is a good thing for an uneducated man to read books of quotations." A worthy compilation of quotations offers inspiration, ideas for writing, and the sheer pleasure of browsing. On my desk are several such books, including [*Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*](#), inscribed and given to me by my mother forty years ago. Recommended as well are Nicholas Phillips' [*What They Said*](#) and [*The Oxford Book of Quotations*](#). For amusement, try Robert Byrne's [*The 2,548 Best Things Anybody Ever Said*](#).

3. Brett and Kate McKay's [*Manvotionals: Timeless Wisdom And Advice On Living The 7 Manly Virtues*](#). Ranging from Xenophon to Jack London, *Manvotionals* is a collection of great writing about manhood. More practical is their book, [*The Art of*](#)

Manliness: Classic Skills and Manners for the Modern Man.

4. David Joachim's *A Man, A Can, A Plan: 50 Great Guy Meals Even You Can Make*. The guy has to eat. If he hasn't learned to cook, get him a copy of this book from the editors of *Men's Health*. It's sturdy—the pages are thick, glossy cardboard, made to take all manner of culinary abuse—and the recipes are easy, straightforward, delicious, and healthy.

5. Matt Burriesci's *Dead White Guys: A Father, His Daughter, and the Great Books of the Western World*. Though Burriesci wrote this guide for his daughter, *Dead White Guys* is a storehouse of wisdom for young men, as well. Burriesci combines his thoughts on such figures as Aristotle, Christ, Montaigne, and Locke with his own experiences for a splendid introduction to the Great Books.

6. James Mustich's *1,000 Books to Read Before You Die: A Life-Changing List*. This one is a keeper. Mustich, who once edited the superb mail-order catalogue, *A Common Reader*, reviews a thousand classic novels, histories, biographies, books of science and philosophy, as well as pointing the reader to several thousand other titles. This text is a literary extravaganza guaranteed to delight and guide its readers.

7. Mark Helprin's *A Soldier of the Great War*. This 792-page novel tells the story of Alessandro Giuliani, an Italian fighting the Austrians and Germans in the First World War. A priest recommended this book to one of my sons, and after my own reading, I place it on my top ten list of fiction written in my lifetime. Over the years, I have given away a dozen copies or more to students and friends. The prose is beautiful, the story uplifting, and the dialogues between Alessandro and a much younger man entertain models of wisdom. Alessandro's humanity and goodness make him a role model for men young and old.

8. Jordan Peterson's *12 Rules For Life: An Antidote to Chaos*.

There's a reason why Jordan Peterson, author, professor, and YouTube sensation, so strongly appeals to young men. He teaches life lessons they hunger for: pursue the meaningful, tell the truth, set your house in order, seek the path of virtue. And the foremost rule, as Norman Dodge tells us in his foreword, is "that you must take responsibility for your own life. Period."

9. F. Washington Jarvis's [*With Love and Prayers: A Headmaster Speaks to the Next Generation*](#). I especially recommend this one for high school students. *With Love And Prayers* is a collection of addresses which Jarvis, an Anglican priest, gave to the young men at Boston's Roxbury Latin School during his thirty years as headmaster. I used this fine book in the classroom for two decades, where students and parents alike praised it.

10. [*Movies Make the Man: The Hollywood Guide to Life, Love, and Faith for Young Men*](#). As a long-time teacher and a parent to three sons, I witnessed first-hand the struggles of young men in a world that often seems bent on abolishing manhood. *Movies Make the Man* was my attempt to help them. Using various films as examples, *Movies Make the Man* addresses such topics as the codes men live by, work, faith, friendship, love, and marriage.

A young man needs guides, equipment, and maps for his journey. These books, and dozens of others, can serve him as a compass.

Readers, what books would you recommend for young men? Let us know in the comments!

—

Image Credit:

pxhere, CC0 Public Domain