

# A prayer for owen meany by john wheelwright

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



In *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, John Wheelwright reflects on all the impactful memories he experienced throughout his childhood, highlighting the ones he shared with his best friend Owen Meany. During the course of this novel these characters enter a transition from childhood to adulthood, losing their innocence and gaining a sense of maturity through the events they are forced to endure. They are seen in a period of growth, overcoming the obstacles of adolescence, puberty, loss, discovering where they belong and who they should be. This coming-of-age novel depicts John Wheelwright's journey into becoming the best and better version of himself as he conquers the challenges of life.

*A Prayer for Owen Meany* ticks off all the boxes to be considered a coming-of-age novel. It follows John Wheelwright along in life from being a child to a full grown adult. He is thrust into this rollercoaster at an early age, particularly due to the killing of his mother, Tabby Wheelwright. A mother is the one lifeline a character can hold onto and allow themselves to be a child, no matter how grown a person is they will always be a baby in the mother's eyes. John was stripped of this before his teenage years which was the first factor that forced him to grow up, to lose the light in his eyes far earlier than the children his age. He was forced to endure the tragedies of life most experience in their middle ages. The first sign of his maturity is shown when he doesn't hold a grudge against Owen for his mother's death, an act many would not take. "God knows, Owen gave me more than he ever took from me – even when you consider that he took my mother". Having Owen as a friend was a kickstart in John's spiritual journey, the bond they shared helped him have faith and a connection with God. He was able to withstand

tragedies rather than escalating them and he didn't blame Meany for his mother's death. Instead he was emotionally mature enough to cope with the turn of events and allowed his friendship with Owen to strengthen as a result.

John Wheelwright reached a higher level of emotional and spiritual maturity than many of the children his age due to his friendship with Owen and the way his life turned before his teenage years, yet he struggled to mature sexually. Physically, he turned out like any other ordinary boy going through puberty, it was his mental approach that suffered a setback. At a young age, Wheelwright crushed on his cousin Hester Eastman and engaged in conversations with Owen regarding his mother's physical body. "...the game called " Last One Through the House of Hester"; maybe they realized, later, that I began to intentionally lose the game". Even later, during the first Christmas Eve without his mother, he develops lustrous feelings for one of the maids in his home. His sexuality was damaged after the events of his mother and when Hester didn't reciprocate his feelings for her. Wheelwright believes any bodily desires that sprung upon him were the results of his father's " evil" that was passed onto him. This proves he took more time to sexually mature as he blamed his lustrous feelings on his absent father rather than come to terms that it was his body's natural urges during puberty.

The reason for John's spiritual maturity rests solely on Owen Meany's shoulders. Meany was the cause of the rise and questioning of his faith in God, along with many of the other characters in the novel. Wheelwright is

proven to have gained a better sense of spiritual maturity throughout the book because he gains the courage to face the truth regarding himself and his past. In the midst of the novel he shows a burning interest in finding his father in a hope it'll answer his questions from his mother to his unexplained lustrous thoughts. In contrast to the beginning, where he appeared frustrated with Meany's attempts of saying God used him as an instrument to Tabitha's death, he accepts it near the ending. He eventually did believe God played a part when He created Owen Meany, claiming his voice was high-pitched and his height short so he wouldn't appear intimidating but rather safe to the Vietnamese children he would in time save.

John Irving wrote *A Prayer for Owen Meany* with the intent of it being perceived as a coming-of-age novel as highlighted by the recurring themes of emotional, sexual, and spiritual development. Through the audience's eyes, John Wheelwright is faced with obstacle after obstacle that chips at his innocence until there is nothing left. He is forced to grow up at a rapid pace following the events after his mother's death and finally nears the end of his adolescence when he loses the last lifeline to his childhood, Owen Meany. Every tragedy that occurs gives Wheelwright a new lesson to be learned in life, which he takes in stride and uses to become the best version of himself.