

Adolescent rites of passage

Religion



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Bridging the Gap: Adolescent Rites of Passage General Purpose: To inform.

Specific Purpose: At the end of my speech, my audience will understand how cultures use adolescent rites of passage to help people mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. Central Idea: Adolescent rites of passage have marked the passage of children into adulthood around the world, and elements of those rituals are being used in modern American society.

INTRODUCTION How did you celebrate your eighteenth birthday? Do you recall your graduation ceremony?

If you're like most Americans, such events marked the moment you became an adult. It may have been the day you walked off a lighted stage, clutching your diploma to your chest. Yet if you were an Arunta from Australia, it might be the moment you rose off of the smoking tree branches you were lying upon and were proclaimed an adult. Regardless of which are the most personally significant, we all have moments in our life that we would consider "rites of passage"—moments that carry us across the threshold between two lives.

In societies around the world, collective rites of passage have been seen as ways to initiate young people into adult life. In researching on this topic, I have discovered the important role rites of passage play for youth around the world, and I would like to share this with you this afternoon. Today we will look at the ways in which cultures throughout the world have used rites of passage to mark the transition to adulthood for both boys and girls, and how elements of those rituals are being used today in American society. Transition) To begin, let's look at some of the different rites of passage from around the world that show traditional coming-of-age ceremonies in other cultures that are the basis for new American rituals. BODY I. Rites of Passage

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in Cultures: Puberty is often a signal in most cultures that a boy or girl is ready to become an adult.

A. The Navajo of the American Southwest celebrate this milestone with the vision quest. 1. The ritual begins when a fifteen to sixteen-year-old boy is taken into a sweat lodge, where he will be purified in both body and soul before he begins his quest. . During the period before he leaves he will also be advised by a medicine man regarding his coming quest. 3. Finally, he ventures into the wilderness or desert on his own, fasting until he receives a vision that will determine his new name and the direction of his life. 4. When he receives his vision, the community welcomes him back as a man (Transition) Like their male counterparts in the Navajo, females also have special coming of age rituals. B. The Okrika of Nigeria celebrate coming of age with the Iria ceremony for seventeen-year-old girls. 1.

The highlight of this ritual is when the girls enter the “ Fattening Room. ” 2. Only leaving to travel to the river, the girls stay in the rooms to gain the weight that the tribe considers attractive. Girls are forced to eat large quantities of food. 3. Female friends and family teach the girls how a woman should act. 4. When a girl leaves the Fattening Room, she is considered a woman. (Transition) These examples of the rites of passage for Navajo males and Okrika females show us how different cultures mark the transition from childhood to adult status in the community.

Now let’s look at the increasing popularity of traditional rites of passage in the United States. II. Increase in Rites of Passage in United States: The United States is an ethnic melting pot of cultures and traditions. A. Yet our diversity prevents us from having a single experience, common to all, that <https://assignbuster.com/adolescent-rites-of-passage/>

celebrates our entrance into the adult community. 1. Some ceremonies are religion specific, such as Jewish Bar and Bat Mitzvahs or Christian baptisms and confirmations. 2. Many children, without religious or ethnic heritage, have no sort of recognition outside of high school graduations—if they choose to graduate.

Yet Cassandra Delaney writes about graduates, “ They often are not equipped with the necessary components of a stable adult personality such as a well-reasoned moral code, a faith or world view which sustains them during crisis, and perhaps most importantly, a positive and cohesive self image. ” B. With this problem in mind, many Americans are turning to tribal traditions like the ones described earlier to help their children have a positive rite of passage. 1. The African-American community is turning back to its cultural roots to aid social ills among young males. a.

The MAAT Program attempts to instruct at-risk African-American males on social behavior through sessions with older mentors that incorporate African tribal tradition. b. Program sessions begin by prayer and an offering of a drink to the ancestors. c. At the end of the program, writes Aminifu Harvey and Julia Rauch of *Health and Social Work* magazine, the boys “ mark their passage to manhood by giving themselves another African name, based on their personality, at the final retreat. ” d. In this way, African-Americans use the rite of passage concept to develop a positive sense of identity for youth. . Even in Washington State, rites of passage are growing. a. An article in the *Spokane Spokesman-Review* by Jeanette White tells of Stan Crow, who runs a three-week program called “ The Coming of Age Journey. ” b. Here activities include challenging hikes and “ vision quest” style nights alone in the

wilderness in an attempt to promote self-reliance. c. Rites of passage like these, says psychologist Michael Gurian in the Spokesman-Review article, promote positive self-image because they force children to develop skills to meet challenges, to reflect on goals, and to learn leadership. . In Washington and the entire United States, rites of passage are becoming more popular as a way to fulfill the spiritual and moral needs of youth while identifying them to a community. CONCLUSION In conclusion, adolescent rites of passage mark the transition to adulthood. In the United States, questions have been raised as to whether rites of passage like those used by Africans, Native Americans, or others might be useful in helping with social problems. Some programs have attempted to experiment with the positive potential impact of rites of passage in modern American society.

Though coming-of-age ceremonies do not automatically make us adults, they are the milestones of a maturing process we are all on. Think again about what you consider to be your “rite of passage.” Did the license, the diploma, or the keys to your dorm or apartment make you an adult? Perhaps some are yet mired in that no-man’s land called adolescence. Yet one day might be different. Your child might one day swelter in a Western-style sweat lodge or eat in the Fattening Room; your child might depart on a vision quest.

Regardless of the method, bridging the gap between childhood and adulthood is , and will always be , one of the most universal and important milestones of human life. BIBLIOGRAPHY “Coming of Age as an Australian Aruntas.” Michigan Jewish Online Education. 1999. Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. 9 October 2000 . “Coming of Age in the Navajo Nation.

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