

Traits of a Bildungsroman ("formation novel")

1. The story focuses on the **psychological and moral growth** of the protagonist from youth to adulthood.
2. The protagonist is often a **sensitive person** who is **looking for answers and experience**.
3. The **goal is maturity**, and the protagonist **achieves it gradually and with difficulty** (a "hard-won" maturity)
4. The protagonist is then able to **reach out and help others after having achieved maturity**.
5. The plot must follow a certain course. The **protagonist grows from child to adult** in the novel
6. **Often involves a separation from family**. The protagonist desires to **leave home and become "his own man."**
7. **Often in autobiographical form**.
8. The protagonist **often seeks to gain an identity of his own**
9. He is **usually from a small, provincial place, venturing into a much more complex place**.
10. **Education is crucial** to the protagonist, in that it is part of the child's maturation and preparation for impending adulthood.

11. Often, the **protagonist becomes disillusioned (disappointed)**. The new world does not match his shining hopes and dreams.
12. He must **come to terms with or accept, after painful soul-searching, the sort of world he lives in**.
13. In other words the inner development and maturity of the protagonist takes place after his "education" in the new place. It is this **newfound self-knowledge that signals the ultimate maturity of the hero**.
14. **Often ends with a display of pride** in his accomplishment (maturity)
15. Often, the protagonist **returns to the place he wanted so desperately to escape to achieve this maturity**.
16. It is with this **return home**, where the reader is **reminded of who the protagonist was** and where he came from, that **his development can most clearly be seen**.
17. Although he has come full circle, the memories of the boy that was are perfectly suited to emphasize **the man that he has become**.
18. The protagonist is NOT superior to others

Film Examples

<i>Stand by Me</i>	R
<i>Rushmore</i>	R
<i>Almost Famous</i>	R
<i>Big</i>	PG
<i>Good Will Hunting</i>	R
<i>The Graduate</i>	PG
<i>An Education</i>	PG-13
<i>Persepolis</i>	PG-13
<i>A River Runs Through It</i>	PG
<i>Lost in Translation</i>	R
<i>Dead Poets Society</i>	PG

Novel Examples

The Catcher in the Rye, by JD Salinger
To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee