

The Power and Danger of Being a Geek

There is great power to being a geek.

Our *Star Wars* fandom, *Game of Thrones* viewing parties, *Wheel of Time* reading sprints, and *Lord of the Rings* rewatches aren't just weird passions. They're an important part of how we see the world.

Our passionate love of story gives us access to some of the best, richest characters and situations. Story gives us moral examples, great role models, life guidance, and creative imagination, all in the shape of specific and concrete and memorable images.

Story is powerful. It's how humans have learned who we are and where we come from and what we're supposed to be doing in the world. It helps us along with living life. In the words of Joseph Campbell:

“We have not even to risk the adventure alone for the heroes of all time have gone before us.”

But for all the strengths of geekdom, there is a danger to taking the power of story too far.

We've seen it. We may even have lived it. The stereotype of the socially awkward geek who still lives at home may be a generalization, but it can often come true enough.

We can spend so much time arguing the fine points of *Star Wars* lore that we forget that we all have our own dark sides to set right.

We can spend so much time dwelling on the fictional universe of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* that we forget we're surrounded by a beautiful, boundless, and perilous universe of our own.

We can put so much stock in the hero images given to us by *Game of Thrones* that we bark up the wrong trees, forsake the real things we love, and try to fit into the mold of heroes we're not.

Instead of creating new stories, we keep our beloved stories on shelves like collectibles gathering dust. **We live so much in the legends of others that we fail to create our own.**

Stories were always meant as starting points, not end points. We should hear the story from the storyteller, learn the lesson, and go out to create our own stories. One day we'll

be able to tell them, but first we've got to experience them.

So we geeks must honor our stories by taking action in the world. We can start by creating our own narratives (it helps to write and journal). Let's put aside the new books and movies for a while and pay attention to our lives and what they can teach us. Let's throw ourselves into some real adventures and see where our favorite heroes' lessons succeed and fail in real life. Let's test ourselves.

What we come out with on the other end will be something far better than geekdom: wisdom.