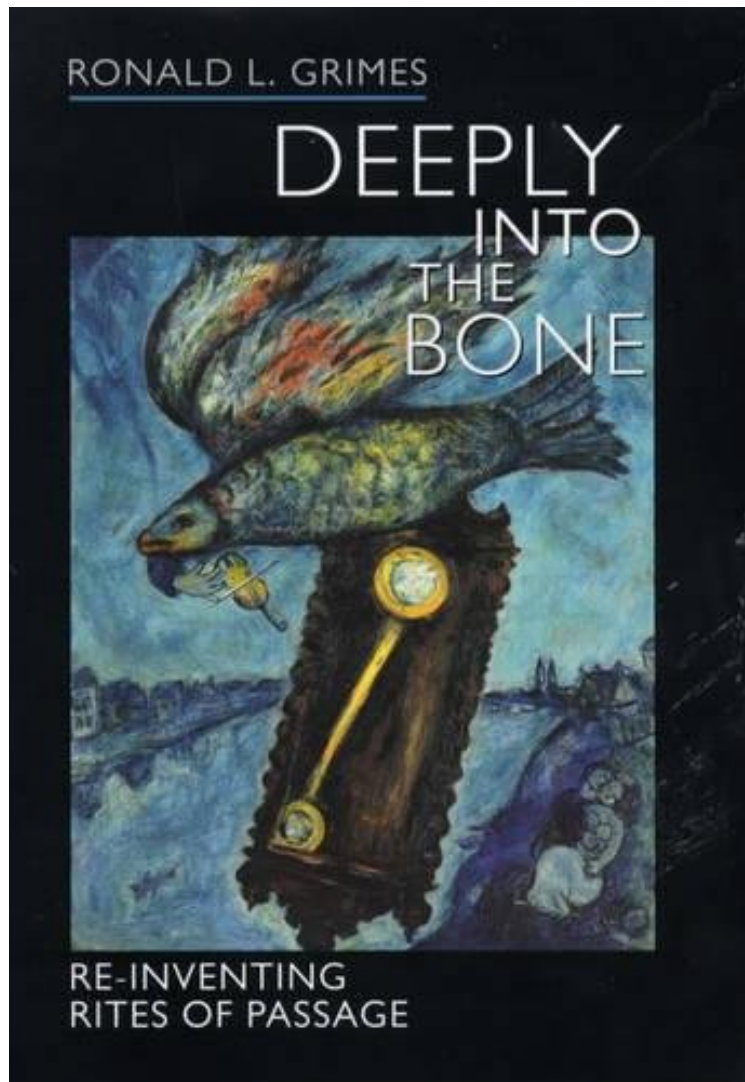


(Mobile book) Deeply into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage

## Deeply into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage

*Ronald L. Grimes*

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**Ronald L. Grimes : Deeply into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Deeply into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage:

58 of 60 people found the following review helpful. Many strengths, one yawning weaknessBy Christine Hoff KraemerThere are many good things to be said for \_Deeply Into the Bone.\_ As an overview of the rich possibilities that ritual presents for solidifying both abstract meaning and concrete community in our lives, it is excellent. In particular, the specific descriptions of rituals from many cultures illustrate the immense variety that ritual practice takes worldwide. The first-person accounts of ritual experiences, from birth to marriage to more problematic life passages such as abortion and divorce, are extremely well-chosen; I found several of them so affecting that I was

moved to tears. Grimes's book, however, falls short of the promise of its subtitle, "Re-inventing Rites of Passage." The author attacks those who exploit other cultures by borrowing their rituals out of context, but also points out that ritual experimentation can lead to rites that ring emotionally false or seem awkward to the participants. Grimes presents this conundrum without offering any clear advice on how to negotiate it. While he gives a number of examples of innovative rituals that he sees as effective, he fails to explain why these rites are effective while others fall flat; his commentary each time is specific to the ritual described, rarely stepping back to give a larger perspective. Additionally, he muddies the issue by praising ritual groups that seem to violate his rules about taking other cultures' rituals out of context, as when he spends several admiring pages on Paul Hill, the founder of the National Rites of Passage Institute, while never addressing the fact that Hill has evidently conflated the diverse initiation rites of several African cultures into one unified "African-centered" rite. As an aspiring creator of rituals, I am thankful for the rich context that Grimes provides the question of how Westerners might re-invent ritual. Ultimately, however, the book fails to speak to the question itself. At the end of the book, rather than feeling inspired, I was left frozen between the desire not to take others' rituals out of context and the fear of failing to create effective ritual. Though Grimes ostensibly wrote this book in order to help others imagine their own rituals, his harsh criticisms of the sincere mistakes that seekers make tend to discourage rather than encourage innovation.

Over the past two decades, North Americans have become increasingly interested in understanding and reclaiming the rites that mark significant life passages. In the absence of meaningful rites of passage, we speed through the dangerous intersections of life and often come to regret missing an opportunity to contemplate a child's birth, mark the arrival of maturity, or meditate on the loss of a loved one. Providing a highly personal, thoroughly informed, and cross-cultural perspective on rites of passage for general readers, this book illustrates the power of rites to help us navigate life's troublesome transitions. The work of a major scholar who has spent years writing and teaching about ritual, *Deeply into the Bone* instigates a conversation in which readers can fruitfully reflect on their own experiences of passage. Covering the significant life events of birth, initiation, marriage, and death, chapters include first-person stories told by individuals who have undergone rites of passage, accounts of practices from around the world, brief histories of selected ritual traditions, and critical reflections probing popular assumptions about ritual. The book also explores innovative rites for other important events such as beginning school, same-sex commitment ceremonies, abortion, serious illness, divorce, and retirement. Taking us confidently into the abyss separating the spiritual from the social scientific, the personal from the scholarly, and the narrative from the analytical, Grimes synthesizes an impressive amount of information to help us find more insightful ways of comprehending life's great transitions. As we face our increasingly complex society, *Deeply into the Bone* will help us reclaim the power of rites and understand their effect on our lives.

From Library Journal With examples drawn from a wide variety of world cultures, Grimes (religion and culture, Wilfrid Laurier Univ., Ontario) provides a thoughtful, insightful examination of the significance of rites of passage. Specific rituals can make such life transitions as birth, coming of age, marriage, and death more meaningful and can unify a community or society through their continued practice. Grimes emphasizes that rites of passage do not merely involve change. They involve transformation—a process through which an individual's life is permanently and irrevocably altered in some manner. First-person accounts of life-passage transitions enrich Grimes's scholarly but accessible text. He has successfully created a deeply evocative portrait of life-passage rituals and their meaning in a variety of human contexts while demonstrating the need for such rituals in modern technological societies as well as in traditional cultures. This work will be a valuable addition to religion and anthropology collections in academic libraries. DElizabeth Salt, Otterbein Coll. Lib., Westerville, OH Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. "A thoughtful, insightful examination . . . a deeply evocative portrait of life-passage rituals and their meaning in a variety of human contexts." -- Library Journal From the Inside Flap "There is no other book even remotely like this. *Deeply into the Bone* is an exceptional, imaginative book on the topic of rites and the shaping of human life. Grimes is one of the few people who ably combines scholarly disciplines and perspectives with firsthand narratives, literary essays, films and observations of general culture. He is unquestionably a first-rate author and thinker, and this is an unquestionably magnificent book." Lawrence Hoffman, author of *Covenant of Blood* "Deeply into the Bone is guaranteed to change our minds about ritual. Using a global and ethnic array of rites new and old, Grimes shows that contrary to popular belief, the ritual marking of life passages is anything but universal. By teaching us how to think comparatively we see that rites of passage are enduring rituals not for their uniformity, but because they serve as cornerstones for cultural and spiritual creativity and innovation." Madeline Duntley, College of Wooster