

# call it courage armstrong sperry

Call It Courage Armstrong Sperry: Exploring the Classic Tale of Bravery and Growth

**call it courage armstrong sperry** stands as a timeless piece of children's literature that has inspired generations with its profound themes of courage, self-discovery, and resilience. Written by Armstrong Sperry, this novel delves into the journey of a young boy's transformation from fear to bravery, set against the vivid backdrop of the South Pacific islands. If you're curious about why *Call It Courage* remains a beloved classic, or if you're seeking an engaging read that combines adventure with meaningful life lessons, this article will offer a comprehensive insight into the story, its author, and its enduring impact.

## Understanding Call It Courage Armstrong Sperry

At its core, *Call It Courage* is the story of Mafatu, a young Polynesian boy who is terrified of the sea—a fear that isolates him from his tribe and family. This fear is especially significant given that his people are seafarers by tradition. Armstrong Sperry masterfully crafts a narrative that is both an adventure tale and a coming-of-age story as Mafatu sets out alone to conquer his fears. The book was first published in 1940 and was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1941, recognizing its excellence in American children's literature.

## The Plot and Themes

Mafatu's journey is one of courage in the face of adversity. He leaves his home island and ventures into the open ocean, determined to prove his bravery to himself and others. Throughout his voyage, he encounters natural challenges such as storms, hunger, and loneliness, but he also learns to appreciate the strength within himself and the world around him.

Key themes woven into the story include:

- **Courage and Fear:** The novel explores how true courage isn't the absence of fear but the will to face it.
- **Self-Reliance:** Mafatu's journey emphasizes independence and personal growth.
- **Man and Nature:** There's a deep respect for the natural environment, highlighting both its dangers and beauty.
- **Cultural Heritage:** The story honors Polynesian traditions and the importance of identity.

# About Armstrong Sperry: The Mind Behind the Story

Armstrong Sperry was an American author and illustrator known for his adventure books for young readers. Born in 1897, Sperry's fascination with the South Pacific stemmed from his own travels and experiences, which heavily influenced his storytelling style. His ability to vividly depict exotic locations and cultures helped bring *Call It Courage* to life in a way that resonated with readers.

## Sperry's Writing Style and Impact

Sperry's writing is characterized by its straightforward, engaging prose that appeals to children while offering depth and nuance. His detailed descriptions of the natural world create immersive settings that transport readers to the islands and ocean alongside Mafatu. Moreover, his respectful portrayal of Polynesian culture was notable at a time when many authors overlooked authentic representation.

Beyond *Call It Courage*, Sperry authored and illustrated several other books, but this particular novel remains his most celebrated work, continuing to be a staple in school curricula and libraries.

## Why Call It Courage Remains Relevant Today

Despite being written over 80 years ago, *Call It Courage* still holds relevance in today's literary landscape. Its universal themes of bravery and self-discovery resonate with readers of all ages. Whether you're a parent looking for meaningful books for your child or an educator seeking literature that promotes character development, this novel offers timeless lessons.

## Educational Value and Life Lessons

The story encourages young readers to confront their fears and challenges with determination. It also fosters an appreciation for diverse cultures and environments, making it a useful tool for discussions about geography, history, and social studies.

Some insights into why educators and parents value this book include:

- **Promotes Emotional Intelligence:** Mafatu's internal struggles encourage readers to understand and manage their emotions.
- **Encourages Resilience:** The narrative models perseverance through

hardships.

- **\*\*Stimulates Curiosity About the World:\*\*** Readers gain insights into Polynesian culture and the oceanic environment.
- **\*\*Supports Literacy and Critical Thinking:\*\*** The engaging plot and descriptive language invite analysis and discussion.

## Exploring the Symbolism and Metaphors in Call It Courage

A deeper dive into the novel reveals rich symbolism that enhances its message. Mafatu's fear of the sea represents universal human anxieties, while his journey is a metaphor for personal growth. The natural elements—storms, animals, and landscapes—serve as both obstacles and teachers.

### Key Symbols in the Novel

- **\*\*The Sea:\*\*** Symbolizes the unknown and the fears that must be faced.
- **\*\*The Albatross:\*\*** Represents freedom and hope.
- **\*\*The Island:\*\*** A place of refuge and self-discovery.
- **\*\*Fire:\*\*** Symbolizes life, warmth, and Mafatu's inner strength.

By interpreting these symbols, readers can gain a richer understanding of the narrative's layers and the author's intent.

## Tips for Reading and Teaching Call It Courage Armstrong Sperry

Whether you're tackling the book for the first time or guiding others through it, here are some helpful tips to enhance the experience:

- **Contextualize the Setting:** Before reading, explore the geography and culture of the South Pacific with supplementary materials to build background knowledge.
- **Discuss Themes Early:** Introduce the concepts of courage and fear to prepare readers for Mafatu's emotional journey.
- **Encourage Personal Reflection:** Ask readers to relate Mafatu's challenges to their own experiences with fear or uncertainty.
- **Use Visuals:** Incorporate maps, illustrations, or even videos about Polynesian culture and ocean life to create a multi-sensory learning

environment.

- **Analyze Symbolism:** Engage in discussions about the metaphors and symbols to deepen comprehension.

These strategies can make reading *Call It Courage* a more engaging and meaningful adventure.

## **The Legacy of Call It Courage in Literature**

Over the decades, *Call It Courage* has influenced not only readers but also other authors and educators. Its blend of adventure and emotional depth set a standard for children's literature that respects young readers' intelligence and emotional complexity.

The novel's continued popularity is reflected in its presence in school reading lists worldwide and its adaptation into various formats, including audiobooks and stage plays. It remains a testament to the power of storytelling to inspire courage and growth.

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For anyone interested in exploring themes of bravery, cultural heritage, and the human spirit, *Call It Courage* by Armstrong Sperry offers a journey that is both thrilling and heartwarming. Its rich narrative and timeless messages ensure it remains a cherished classic, inviting readers to call their own courage into being.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the main theme of 'Call It Courage' by Armstrong Sperry?**

The main theme of 'Call It Courage' is overcoming fear and gaining courage through personal growth and self-discovery.

### **Who is the protagonist in 'Call It Courage' and what challenge does he face?**

The protagonist is Mafatu, a young Polynesian boy who is afraid of the sea, and he faces the challenge of conquering his fear and proving his bravery.

## **When was 'Call It Courage' by Armstrong Sperry first published?**

'Call It Courage' was first published in 1940.

## **What awards has 'Call It Courage' received?**

'Call It Courage' won the Newbery Medal in 1941, an award for distinguished contributions to American literature for children.

## **How does Armstrong Sperry portray Polynesian culture in 'Call It Courage'?**

Armstrong Sperry portrays Polynesian culture with respect and detail, incorporating traditional beliefs, customs, and the importance of the sea in island life.

## **What role does the sea play in the story of 'Call It Courage'?**

The sea is both a source of fear and a symbol of courage and freedom, representing the protagonist's internal struggle and eventual triumph.

## **Is 'Call It Courage' suitable for children and what age group is it recommended for?**

'Call It Courage' is suitable for children, typically recommended for ages 8 to 12, as it contains themes of bravery and self-reliance presented in an accessible narrative.

## **Additional Resources**

Call It Courage by Armstrong Sperry: A Timeless Tale of Courage and Survival

**call it courage armstrong sperry** is a phrase that immediately brings to mind a classic work of children's literature that has resonated with readers for decades. Published in 1940, Armstrong Sperry's "Call It Courage" is a compelling narrative that explores themes of bravery, self-discovery, and the human spirit's resilience in the face of adversity. This novel, which won the prestigious Newbery Medal, remains a significant work in the canon of young adult literature and continues to be studied and appreciated for its storytelling, character development, and cultural insights.

# Exploring the Themes and Narrative of Call It Courage

At its core, "Call It Courage" follows the journey of Mafatu, a young Polynesian boy burdened by an intense fear of the sea—a paradox given his islander heritage. The novel's exploration of courage is nuanced and deeply human; it portrays bravery not as the absence of fear but as the triumph over it. Armstrong Sperry crafts a narrative that is both an adventure and a psychological portrait, making the story accessible and meaningful to readers of all ages.

The narrative is set against the vivid backdrop of the South Pacific, a setting that Sperry renders with authentic detail. His experience as an artist and adventurer who traveled extensively in the Pacific Islands informs the novel's rich descriptions and cultural context. This grounding in real-world geography and indigenous life adds layers of depth to the story, allowing readers to immerse themselves in Mafatu's world as he confronts his fears.

## Character Development and Psychological Depth

Mafatu's character arc is central to the novel's impact. Initially characterized by his debilitating fear and sense of inadequacy, Mafatu embarks on a journey that is both physical and emotional. His decision to leave his village to prove his courage is a classic hero's quest motif, yet Sperry's treatment of this journey is refreshingly introspective. Mafatu's growth is marked by small victories and setbacks, realistic in their portrayal of personal development.

The psychological realism Sperry injects into Mafatu's character is notable for a children's book of its time. Rather than presenting courage as a simple, heroic attribute, the author delves into the complexities of fear, shame, and determination. This approach offers readers a relatable protagonist whose struggles mirror real human experiences, enhancing the novel's lasting appeal.

## Literary Style and Narrative Techniques

Armstrong Sperry's writing style in "Call It Courage" is succinct yet evocative, balancing straightforward storytelling with poetic descriptions of nature. The prose is accessible to younger readers while still engaging older audiences with its vivid imagery and emotional resonance. Sperry's background as an illustrator also influences the text, as many editions of the book feature his own detailed illustrations that complement the narrative.

The novel's structure follows a linear progression, allowing readers to easily follow Mafatu's journey. However, Sperry employs flashbacks and internal monologues that deepen character insight without disrupting the flow. This narrative technique enriches the storytelling by providing context for Mafatu's fears and motivations.

## Comparison with Contemporary Adventure Literature

When compared to other adventure stories from the early 20th century, "Call It Courage" stands out for its focus on internal conflict alongside external challenges. While contemporaries often emphasized physical feats and exotic locales, Sperry's novel weaves psychological growth seamlessly into the adventure genre. This duality enhances the story's educational value, making it a favorite in school curricula.

Furthermore, "Call It Courage" differs from many adventure tales in its respectful depiction of Polynesian culture. Rather than exoticizing the setting, Sperry presents it with authenticity and empathy, attributing cultural significance to Mafatu's journey. This cultural sensitivity adds to the book's depth and distinguishes it from more sensationalized narratives of the era.

## Impact and Legacy of Call It Courage

Since its publication, "Call It Courage" has enjoyed enduring popularity and critical acclaim. Winning the Newbery Medal in 1941 positioned the book as an exemplar of children's literature, recognized for its literary merit and positive values. Its themes of courage, perseverance, and self-reliance continue to resonate with readers and educators.

The novel's influence extends beyond literature into educational discussions about fear, resilience, and cultural understanding. Mafatu's story is frequently used as a teaching tool to encourage young readers to confront their own challenges and develop emotional strength. The book also serves as an entry point to discussions about island cultures and environmental awareness, given its detailed natural settings.

## Strengths and Limitations

- **Strengths:**

- Rich, authentic portrayal of Polynesian culture and environment
- Complex character development with psychological depth

- Engaging and accessible prose suitable for a wide age range
- Incorporation of universal themes promoting courage and self-growth

- **Limitations:**

- Some modern readers may find the pacing slow compared to contemporary adventure novels
- Cultural representations, while respectful, reflect the period's limited perspective and may lack the nuance expected today
- Character perspectives are limited primarily to Mafatu, potentially narrowing the narrative scope

## **Why Call It Courage by Armstrong Sperry Remains Relevant**

In an era where children's literature often grapples with fast-paced storytelling and complex multimedia adaptations, "Call It Courage" stands as a testament to the power of simple, honest storytelling. Its enduring relevance is tied to the universal nature of its themes: fear, courage, and the journey to self-acceptance. These are experiences that transcend time and culture, allowing new generations of readers to find value in Mafatu's journey.

Additionally, the book offers an early example of cross-cultural storytelling that respects its subject matter. As diversity and representation become increasingly important in literature, Sperry's attempt—imperfect though it may be—to depict Polynesian life with dignity is noteworthy.

For educators, parents, and readers seeking a meaningful exploration of bravery and personal growth, "Call It Courage" continues to be a valuable resource. Its blend of adventure, psychological insight, and cultural appreciation makes it more than just a story; it is a meaningful lesson in human perseverance.

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Armstrong Sperry's "Call It Courage" thus retains a unique place in literary history. Its exploration of courage is neither simplistic nor purely heroic but a realistic portrayal that invites readers to understand bravery from



within. As such, the novel endures as a significant work that continues to inspire and educate, proving that true courage is, indeed, something one can learn to call by name.

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**call it courage armstrong sperry:** *Call it Courage* Armstrong Sperry, 1940

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quite subtle ways—to contemporaneous concerns around race, class, gender, disability, nationalism, and globalism.

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**call it courage armstrong sperry: Call it Courage by Armstrong Sperry, Scholastic Edition, Grade 6** Irene Kidd, 1978\*

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