

Family Activity to Spark Creativity

By T.A. Barron

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As a writer and a father of five great kids—I've decided that my favorite job ever is simply being a dad. My only complaint about having children is that they grow up too fast—but there's nothing I can do about that.

There is, however, something every parent can do to help our young people grow into the mature, decent, helpful, caring, honest, brave, and happy people they can become—and that is to help them develop their imaginations.

A child's imagination is a wondrous thing—like a small seed that can grow into a mighty oak tree. But like any seed, it needs lots of sunlight and water and nutrients. Those come in many forms. Being read aloud to when they are young, discussing books and films when they are older—that is essential. Turning off the television and computer is also hugely important! Otherwise, how will kids ever learn to develop their own imaginations, expand their minds, improve their vocabulary, and discover the sheer joy of creating their own worlds and characters and magical places?

Here is one activity I have done often with my kids that always spurs their creativity (as well as our laughter): At your next meal, turn off any distracting technologies, and then go around the table with everyone taking a turn making up part of a story. I call this **“Story Circle”**. Each person speaks for up to one minute—no longer. The more wildly imaginative (and even bizarre), the better. And don't forget to **end each turn with a terrific cliff-hanger!** No one can predict where the story will end up ... but it will be a long way from where you started. All this adds up to a lot of fun ... and also a reminder of how joyful the creative process can be.

Finally, I would like to say that I've put lots of resources for parents and teachers on my website: www.TABarron.com. Hope it's helpful to you all!

BIO: T.A. Barron has written over twenty highly acclaimed novels, children's books, and nature books, many of which are international best sellers. He has won the Nautilus Award, given to books that inspire a better world, along with many honors from the American Library Association and the International Reading Association. His books, now in twelve languages, include *The Lost Years of Merlin* (currently being developed into a feature film), *The Great Tree of Avalon* (a New York Times best-selling series), *The Ancient One* (the tale of a brave girl and a magical tree), and *The Hero's Trail* (nonfiction stories of courageous kids).



***Melissa's Note:** I've been a HUGE fan of T.A.'s since my school librarian suggested I read aloud The Merlin Effect for my Ocean unit — my students and I loved it! (I wrote my first fan letter to him even.) Then, I eagerly awaited every book in his Young Merlin series — and now, I'm loving his new Merlin's Dragon series. Read my review of Merlin's Dragon on Bookmarkable here and an interview with T.A. here. THANK YOU, T.A. for guest writing for ImaginationSoup — I love the Story Circle idea!*