

Ars Magica

# Apprentices



by Matt Ryan  
with Erik Dahl

## Apprentices

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**Matt Ryan** lives and works in the Finger Lakes region of New York State. When not working at his desk, he enjoys camping, hiking, and fishing. Apprentices have been a regular feature in most of his sagas, and he hopes that this supplement will help players find the same enjoyment in their sagas. He would like to thank the many, many people who helped see this project through to fruition, especially his co-author and the *ArM5* line editor, Erik and David.

### SPECIAL DEDICATION

The authors and developer dedicate this book to their children: August, Eleanor, and Mayuki.



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## Apprentices

# Contents

<b>I. Introduction</b> .....	5	<i>Bastard</i> .....	9	<i>Know-It-All</i> .....	11
STORIES ABOUT CHILDREN .....	5	<i>Orphan</i> .....	9	<i>Late Bloomer</i> .....	12
AGES OF MAN .....	5	Virtues That Grant		<i>Protection from Diseases</i> .....	12
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK.....	6	Experience Points.....	10	<i>Turbulence Prone</i> .....	12
<b>II. Creating</b>		Virtues & Flaws		New Flaws .....	12
<b>Young Characters</b>	7	That Affect Size .....	10	<i>Abandoned Apprentice</i> .....	12
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS .....	7	Inherited Virtues & Flaws... 10		<i>Frail</i> .....	12
Age .....	7	Child Virtues & Flaws .....	11	<i>Low Tolerance</i> .....	13
Characteristics and Size .....	8	<i>Boundless Energy</i> .....	11	<i>Short of Breath</i> .....	13
VIRTUES & FLAWS.....	9	<i>Bully</i> .....	11	<i>Slow Reflexes</i> .....	13
Social Status		<i>Deft Characteristic</i> .....	11	<i>Suppressed Gift</i> .....	13
Virtues & Flaws .....	9	<i>Dependence</i> .....	11	ABILITIES.....	13
<i>Apprentice</i> .....	9	<i>Grows Quickly</i> .....	11	TRANSITIONS OF MATURATION ..14	
		<i>Inconspicuous</i> .....	11	A STANDARD APPRENTICESHIP...15	
		<i>Infatuation</i> .....	11		

## List of Inserts

Aging Chart.....	7	Story Seeds: Finding a Parents.....	32	Story Seed:	
Example Childhoods .....	8	Detecting the Gift.....	33	Against the Master's Wishes ...	50
Changing Social Status .....	9	Apprentice of House Bonisagus...34		Story Seed: The Thrills of Love...50	
Optional Rule:		Story Seed:		More Marriage Story Seeds.....	51
Abilities for Infants .....	13	I'm Not Going Anywhere!.....	35	Story Seed: Time to Die .....	53
More Powerful than Normal .....	14	Hermetic Terminology.....	36	Story Seed:	
Companion: Noble Child .....	19	Teaching Schedule .....	37	Where's the Money?.....	53
Apprentice: Foundling Child ....	20	Story Seed: Midnight Rescue....	38	New Laboratory Flaw:	
Story Seed:		Story Seed:		Shared Lab.....	55
An Introductory Adventure....	21	A Temporary Reprieve.....	38	Story Seed:	
Story Seed: Fetch the Baby .....	21	Story Seed: The Inheritance .....	39	Where Did the Cat Go?.....	55
Turbulences and the		Story Seed:		Story Seed:	
Aegis of the Hearth.....	24	A Convenient Suspect.....	39	Visiting a Colleague .....	55
Grog: Blacksmith's Son.....	26	Apprentice of House Verditius... 40		Story Seed:	
Story Seed: A Toddler's Tale.....	27	Story Seed:		Where Are My Bat Wings?....	57
Story Seed:		The Unlicensed Loan .....	44	Story Seed: Investigating Evil ...	57
Who Stole the Baby?.....	27	Tales of Wondrous		Story Seed: Missing Mail .....	57
Story Seed: The Curious Cleric...28		Enchantments .....	44	New Spell: Ager Belli .....	58
Grog: Urchin.....	30	Optional Rule:		Story Seed: Trial by Fire.....	60
Story Seed: An Unlikely Ghost.. 30		Learning Cantations in Play ...	46	Houses of	
Companion: Merchant's Son.....	31	The Dream Witches.....	48	Hermes Gauntlets.....	62 & 63



**III. Infantia:**  
**Birth to Age 7** 17

THE FIRST YEARS ..... 17  
 Birth and Blessing ..... 17  
     *Childbearing* ..... 17  
     *Birth Apparitions*..... 17  
     *Religious Rites for New Babies* ..... 18  
     *Illegitimate and Orphaned Children*..... 18  
 Early Childhood..... 19  
 BORN WITH THE GIFT ..... 19  
     *Gifted Babies*..... 20  
     *The Gift Revealed*..... 21  
 TURBULENCE ..... 22  
     *Incurring a Turbulence* ..... 22  
     *Controlling Turbulences* ... 23  
     *Effects of Turbulence*..... 23  
 INFANT CHARACTERS AND STORIES ..... 24  
     *Character Design Notes*... 24  
     *Infant Stories*..... 25  
     *Children and Animals* ..... 26  
     *Story Ideas*..... 26

**IV. Pueritia:**  
**Ages 8 to 14** 29

GROWING UP ..... 29  
 HERMETIC APPRENTICESHIP ..... 32  
     *Finding an Apprentice*..... 32  
     *Becoming an Apprentice*... 33  
     *Opening the Arts* ..... 34  
         *Opening Arts with Supernatural Abilities* ..... 35  
         *After the Arts Are Opened*... 36  
         *Delaying Opening the Arts* ..... 37  
     *Legal Issues*..... 38  
     *Teaching*  
         *Hermetic Virtues*..... 40  
             *Acquiring House Virtues*.... 42  
             *Gaining Hermetic Flaws* .... 42  
         *Study* ..... 43  
             *Teachers* ..... 43  
             *Book Learning* ..... 43  
             *Training*..... 44  
         *Cantations*..... 44  
             *The Apprentice's Delight* .... 45  
             *The Appropriate Attire*..... 45

*The Chameleon Cat* ..... 45  
*The Cleric's Pate*..... 45  
*The Cook's Revenge* ..... 45  
*The Curse of Diana* ..... 45  
*Curse of the Baby's Bladder*.. 46  
*Closing the Campfire*..... 46  
*The Dancer's Dame* ..... 46  
*Ears of the Hare*..... 46  
*An Evening's Illumination* ... 46  
*Hurling the Droplet of Lye*... 46  
*Hypnotic Gaze*..... 46  
*The Jongleur's Steps*..... 46  
*Jupiter's Tears* ..... 47  
*The Laundress' Clothesline*... 47  
*Mimic the Christ's Miracle*... 47  
*A Pestilence of Fleas*..... 47  
*Physician's Sense*..... 47  
 The Poor  
     *Performer's Reward* ..... 47  
     *The Racing Rot* ..... 47  
     *The Reward Delivered* ..... 47  
     *Sense the Sleeping Hound*... 47  
     *Shattering Touch* ..... 47  
     *Slap of Awakening* ..... 47  
     *The Smokeless Campfire* ..... 47  
     *The Studious*  
         *Doppelganger* ..... 47  
         *The Unruffled Traveler*..... 48  
         *Whispering Fingers*..... 48

**V. Adolescentia:**  
**Ages 15 to 21** 49

COMING OF AGE ..... 49  
     *Marriage* ..... 51  
     *Supernatural Interests*..... 52  
 LIFE IN THE COVENANT ..... 53  
     *Life in the Laboratory* ..... 54  
         *Laboratory Turbulences* ..... 56  
         *Laboratory Adventures* ..... 56  
     *Bellum*..... 57  
     *Failing an Apprentice* ..... 58  
         *Losing the Gift*..... 59  
 Apprenticeship's End:  
     *The Gauntlet*..... 59  
         *Learning Parma Magica*... 61  
     *Post-Apprenticeship*..... 61  
 SCHOLAE MAGICAE ..... 63

# Introduction

Welcome to *Apprentices*, a supplement for *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*. Every magus, regardless of House, begins his magical career as an apprentice, and this supplement focuses on that time in a character's life. While power and prestige may await him, an apprentice's life can also be tiring and unglamorous. He is surrounded by his studies — reading, writing, the seven liberal arts, the practice of spellcasting, and the intricacies of enchantments — and is regularly subjected to noisome work and tedious labor. Living within a covenant, an apprentice also plays with his friends, explores the wondrous magical and medieval world of Mythic Europe, and unavoidably gets into trouble.

*Apprentices* also includes guidelines and stories for other child characters as well — unGifted boys and girls with different backgrounds. The sons and daughters of the covenant's inhabitants, children are a natural manifestation of any long-running saga. Grog and companion-level child characters are the playmates, friends, enemies, and antagonists of apprentices, and can be as important as they are. Descriptions of childhood during the medieval period provide the stage for these characters, who await your troupe's imagination to scamper through their own adventures.

## Stories About Children

The legends of Mythic Europe include many stories about children. As a child, Merlin saw the underground battling dragons that were preventing King Vortigern from building his castle, thereby saving his own life and preparing the way for Uther Pendragon. King Arthur, Herakles, and Cú Chulainn are other famous examples. The stories of their childhood are every bit as dangerous and exciting as those told about their adult lives. *Apprentices* will help you craft similar stories for your players' characters' childhoods.

Remember that your group is telling stories about children, not for children. As a storyguide, you do not have to make a huge shift from the type of adventures you create for adult characters. Like any adventure, you need protagonists, antagonists, dramatic tension, conflict, and resolution. Adventures designed for child characters require the same elements as adventures designed for regular characters: a setting, a hook, a trigger, resolution, consequences, and NPCs. If you are using child and adult characters, you need few or no alterations to your regular stories.

You could, for example, allow a team of grogs led by two adolescent apprentices to stumble upon *The Broken Covenant of Calebais*. They may not get to the depths of the adventure before seeking help from their masters, but they could have many successes in the first half of the story.

If your adventure is for child characters exclusively, you need to think about the consequences of the players failing. It is much easier to fail as a child than as an adult character. Child characters have low Ability scores and suffer an aging modifier to their Characteristics. Keep this in mind when you design adventures. Be aware that your players' child characters will fail. That is part of childhood. While you may want grim consequences, you might also want less severe results. Such failures naturally lead to more roleplaying adventures. For example, rather than a dragon incinerating a helpless child, the beast commands the child to clean its cave. Who knows what he will find in the fiend's lair?

## Ages of Man

Medieval thinkers like to classify things, and the human life cycle or "the ages of man," is included in the

vast repertoire of categorized items. Originating from the pens of pagan writers, Aesop expressed a threefold division, and Hesiod mentions four ages of man. But the most popular division was by Hippocrates, whose seven ages of man were later validated by Christian writers, most notably St Augustine and St Ambrose. The first three ages of man, each seven years in length, are infancy (*infantia*), childhood (*pueritia*) and adolescence (*adolescentia*).

The ages of man are apt titles for the different stages of life. Younger characters are more accurately identified by their age of man category: an infant character is between birth and seven years old, a child character between eight and 14, and an adolescent character between 15 and 21. Between each stage of life is a liminal period, when a character can change, transitioning from one stage to the next. The transformational period allows a player to modifier his character, changing Virtues and Flaws that no longer accurately describe the character.

## How to Use This Book

*Apprentices* focuses on child characters by providing opportunities for them in play, showing how infants, children, and adolescents can have important roles in the daily functions of your covenant. New rules are kept to a minimum and are

used to cover specific events and opportunities found when playing a young character. Because there are several nuances to creating a younger character, chapter two is devoted entirely to that task. **Inherited** and **Child Virtues and Flaws** are new types of Virtue and Flaw allowed only to young characters.

The rest of the book is divided into three main sections mirroring the formative years of a character. Chapter Three: *Infantia* details infants, both as characters and story elements. Birth and baptism are included, as are the difficulties and blessings of being born with The Gift. Infants with The Gift can experience **Turbulences**, magical outbursts spawned by a temper tantrum, paralyzing fear, or other emotional trauma.

Chapter 4: *Pueritia* describes life between ages 8 and 14, a very good range in which to start a child character. Most apprentices are found and accepted at this stage, and the chapter covers finding an apprentice and opening the child's Arts. Various teaching methods are covered, including rules for teaching Hermetic Virtues. **Cantations**, low-level formulaic spells, give child apprentices the opportunity to cast formulaic spells in addition to their attempts at spontaneous magic.

Chapter 5: *Adolescentia* describes ages 15 through 21, the core of Hermetic apprenticeship. Laboratory life is explored, from the mind-numbing daily chores to the opportunities for adventure within a season of lab activity. Some unfor-

tunates fail apprenticeship, losing their Gift but still remaining useful in the Order. **Bellum** is magical game that adolescent apprentices and young magi play to practice their Arcane Abilities. An Hermetic apprenticeship closes with the Gauntlet, a test to determine if an apprentice is ready to swear the Oath of Hermes and join the ranks of magi as a true magus. Other aspects of adolescence are included, those that affect both Gifted and unGifted boys and girls: growing up, getting married, and navigating the supernatural forces that await every adolescent in Mythic Europe with interest.

One final caveat: situations will occur in which you and your troupe must decide how to apply the information contained in this supplement to rules found in other **Ars Magica Fifth Edition** products. Every character has had a childhood and the childhood rules can be used for every character in Mythic Europe, but how that specifically happens depends on the character, her location, and her role in your stories. Learned Magicians, Muspelli, diabolists, spirit votaries, and faerie doctors all had childhoods, but a volume of this size cannot address all of the issues that arise when addressing specific concerns with the panoply of non-Hermetic traditions that exist in Mythic Europe. Use *Apprentices* as a guide to further the enjoyment of your adventures in Mythic Europe.