

This is an extract from a Victorian newspaper article of the 1800s. The writer explores how she feels now that her son has grown up.

### Boy Lost

He had black eyes, with long lashes, red cheeks, and hair almost black and almost curly. He wore a crimson plaid jacket, with full trousers buttoned on, had a habit of whistling, and liked to ask questions. He was accompanied by a small black dog.

It is a long while now since he disappeared.

5 I have a very pleasant house and much company. My guests say, 'Ah, it is pleasant to be here! Everything has such an orderly, put-away look – nothing about under foot, no dirt!' But my eyes are aching for the sight of cut paper upon the floor; of tumbled-down card-houses; of wooden sheep and cattle; of pop-guns, bows and arrows, whips, tops and go-carts. I want to see  
10 crumbs on the carpet, and paste spilt on the kitchen table. I want to see the chairs and tables turned the wrong way about; yet these things used to fret me once.

They say, 'How quiet you are here; ah, one here may be at peace.' But my ears are aching for the pattering of little feet; for a hearty shout, a shrill whistle, for the crack of little whips, for the noise of drums and tin trumpets; yet these things made me nervous once.

15 They say – 'Ah, you are not tied at home. How delightful to be always at liberty for concerts, lectures, and parties! No responsibilities for you.' But I want responsibilities; I want to listen for the school bell of mornings; to give the last hasty wash and brush, and then to watch from the window nimble feet bounding away to school. I want to replace lost buttons and obliterate mud stains, fruit stains, treacle stains, and paints of all colours. I want to be sitting by a little crib of  
20 evenings, when weary little feet are at rest, and prattling voices are hushed, that mothers may sing their lullabies. They don't know their happiness then – those mothers. I didn't. All these things I called responsibilities once.

A manly figure stands before me now. He is taller than I, has thick black whiskers, and wears a frock coat, billowy shirt, and cravat. He has just come from college. He calls me mother, but I  
25 am rather unwilling to own him. He stoutly declares that he is my boy, and says he will prove it. He brings me his little boat to show the red stripe on the sail, and the name on the stern – 'Lucy Lowe' – our neighbour's little girl who, because of her long curls, and pretty round face, was the chosen favourite of my little boy. How the red comes to his face when he shows me the name on the boat!

30 And I see it all as plain as if it were written in a book. My little boy is lost, and my big boy will soon be. I wish he were still a little boy in a long white night gown, lying in his crib, with me sitting by, holding his hand in mine, pushing the curls back from his forehead, watching his eyelids droop, and listening to his deep breathing. If I only had my little boy again, how patient I would be! How much I would bear, and how little I would fret and scold! I can never have him

Source A

This is an article published in The Guardian newspaper in 2016. The writer, Stuart Heritage, explores how he feels now that his son is a year old.

## How can my son be a year old already?

He's growing up fast, leaving milestones in his wake – and tiny parts of me along with them

1 My son turned one last week. The day marked the  
end of what has been both the longest and  
shortest year of my life. From the instant he was  
born, it's felt as if my son has always been part of  
5 this family. I don't mean that in an obnoxious,  
heart-eyed, this-was-always-meant-to-be way.  
I simply mean that I haven't slept for a year and I  
don't really know how time works any more. Whole  
years have passed in some of the afternoons I've  
10 spent with him lately. Entire galaxies have been  
born and thrived and withered and died in the time  
it's taken him to eat a mouthful of porridge.



How is he one already? First he was born, and then I blinked, and now in his place is a  
15 little boy who can walk and has teeth and knows how to switch off the television at  
precisely the most important moment of anything I ever try to watch. It's not exactly the  
most unprecedented development in all of human history – child gradually gets older – but  
17 it's the first time I've seen it close up. It's honestly quite hard to grasp.

18 A year ago, he was a sleepy ball of scrunched-up flesh, but is now determinedly his own  
person. I can see everyone in him – me, my wife, my parents – yet he's already separate  
20 from all of us. He's giddy and silly. He's a show-off, albeit one who's irrationally terrified of  
my dad. He loves running up to people and waiting for them to twang his lips like a ruler on  
a table. When he gets tired and barks gibberish in the middle of the room, he throws his  
entire body into it, like he's trying to shove the noise up a hill.

25 With every tiny development – every new step he takes, every new tooth and sound and  
reaction that comes along to ambush us – we're confronted with a slightly different child.

28 Photos of him taken in the summer seem like dispatches from a million years ago. Photos of  
him taken last week seem like a different boy. He's blasting ahead as far as he can. He's  
leaving milestone after milestone in his wake and tiny parts of me along with them.

30 He'll never again be the tiny baby who nestled in the crook of my arm, sucking on my little  
finger in the middle of the night while his mum slept. Nor will he be the baby amazed by the  
taste and texture of solid food. Soon enough he'll stop being the baby who totters over and  
rests his head on my shoulder whenever he gets tired, or laughs uncontrollably whenever I  
say the word 'teeth' for reasons I don't think I'll ever work out.

35 But I've had a year of this and it's ok. He's never going to stop changing, and I don't want  
him to. This sadness, this constant sense of loss, of time slipping just beyond your grasp, is

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an important part of this process. He won't realise this, of course. He's got years of  
unbroken progress ahead of him, where everything will always be new and he'll keep  
obliviously brushing away all of the silly old fools who tell him how much he's grown.

40 One day it'll creep up on him. Years of his life will pass in a moment and he won't be able to  
understand where they've gone.

But it's ok. You can't hoard time. You just have to make the most of what you have.