

"A History of Messy Rooms"

A companion play to the children's book

"Why Do I Have to Make My Bed?"

By Wade Bradford

About the Original Story: The children's book, *Why Do I Have to Make My Bed? Or, a History of Messy Rooms* was published in February 2011 by Random House/Tricycle Press. It is written by Wade Bradford and illustrated by Johanna van der Sterre. The book is currently available at bookstores, libraries, and online retail stores.

Scene: A boy's bedroom. The story will begin in modern times. Through the magic of theater, we will be going back through the ages.

Jamie: Mom, I put the dishes in the dish washer. Just like you asked. I'm going outside to play.

Mom: Jamie, have you finished your chores?

Jamie: Most of them.

Mom: Most of them?

Jamie: I already told you.

Mom: You put the dishes in the dish washer?

Jamie: Yes, and it was exhausting. Can I go outside a play now?

Mom: Did you clean your room?

Jamie: I cleaned it last Saturday!

Mom: You are supposed to clean it every Saturday.

Please do it now, Jamie. It won't take long. Then when all of your chores are out of the way, you can have the rest of the weekend to enjoy yourself.

Jamie: All right.

Mom: That's my boy.

The Mom walks away. Jamie walks to his room, where other actors pretend to be toys scattered all over his floor. His bed (which might just be a pile of blankets and pillows) is very messy.

Jamie: Oh no. My room is a mess! Mom, this is going to take forever!

Mom: Then you better get started.

Jamie: Fine. First, I better pick up my Army Men. March, two three four.

(Two or three kids playing the role of army men stand up and march away.)

Army Men: Hup two three four!

Jamie: And now my toy dinosaur collection. You guys better climb back on the shelf, back to where you belong.

(Two or three kids playing the role of dinosaurs growl like as they crawl to their proper places.)

Jamie: Oh, and I almost forgot. My robot monkey action figures. Time to go back to you box.

(Two or three kids act like robot monkeys and climb into a cardboard box.)

Jamie: Hey, that didn't take too long. Mom! I cleaned my room!

Mom: Well, now. It looks much better. (She notices his bed.) Uh-oh.

Jamie: What?

Mom: You forgot to make your bed.

Jamie: Oh, Mom! Why do I have to make my bed? I already did the dishes. I picked up my army men, my dinosaurs, and my robot monkey action figures. So why do I have to make my bed? It's just going to get messed up again?

Mom: Hmm... That reminds me a of story about your grandmother when she was a little girl.

Jamie: Grandma used to be a little kid? Like me?

Mom: Of course. Why wouldn't she?

Jamie: I just figured she started out old. Like you.

Mom: No, we were all little kids once. See down the hallway? That black and white picture hanging on the wall? That's your grandmother when she was your age.

(A little girl from the [1950s](#) sits still as if she is in a photograph.)

Jamie: When was this?

Mom: It's from the 1950s

Jamie: Wow. She looks grumpy.

Mom: Oh yes, on that day, I bet she was as grumpy as a groundhog because her mother said, "Make your bed."

1950s Girl: But I already washed and dried the dishes. I dusted my rock n roll records. I even picked up my slinky, my Hula Hoops, and my roller skates.

Jamie: Hey, I have roller skates.

Mom: Yes you do.

Jamie: Did Grandma have robot monkey action figures?

Mom: I don't think so.

1950s Girl: Gee whiz, Mom, why do I have to make my bed?

Mom: Her mother just tapped her foot and said, that reminds me of a story about your grand father, when he was a little boy.

(A kid from the early [1900s](#) steps into the scene.)

Mom: And that little boy was as mad as a wet cat, and he said..,

Jamie: Wait, why is he dressed like that?

Mom: Well, the clothes were pretty different back then.

Jamie: Back when?

Mom: Let's see, your great-great grandfather would have been a little boy around 1910.

Jamie: Whoa.

Mom: And that little boy said...

(The 1910 Kid can pantomime each chore as he mentions it.)

1910 Kid: I already fetched water from the pump, and I dusted the [phonograph](#).

Jamie: Wait, what's a phonograph?

Mom: It's like a record player.

Jamie: Oh. Wait, what's a record player.

Mom: Let's get back to the story.

1910 Kid: I even picked up my spinning tops, my toy train, and my [tin soldiers](#). Pray tell, mother, why do I have to make my bed?

Mom: His mother just smirked and said, "That reminds me of a story about your great-grandmother when she was a little girl..."

(A cowgirl from the 1800s steps out onto the stage.)

Jamie: What decade is she from?

Mom: The 1800s. The [Old West](#).

Jamie: Cool!

Cowgirl: We don't say cool in the Old West. We say "Yeee-haw!!!"

Mom: But that little cowgirl was as bothersome as a badger and she said...

Cowgirl: I already drew water from the well. I dusted off pa's fiddle. I even picked up my lasso, my marbles and my rag dolly. Land sake's, Ma. Why do I have to make my bed?

Mom: Her mother just scrubbed the wood floors of the cabin and said, "That reminds me of a story about your great-grand father, when he was a little boy..."

Jamie: How far does this story go back?

Mom: Well, right now it's going back to the 1700s, to the time of George Washington, [Ben Franklin](#), and the American Revolution. But in the middle of all that there was a boy who felt as ruffled as a hen, and he said..."

1700s Kid: I already hung my britches to dry. I dusted father's printing press. I even picked up the eggs in the hen house and the tomatoes in the garden.

Jamie: Yikes, you have to do all those chores. That sounds like a lot.

1700s Kid: It certainly is. So why do I have to make my bed?

Mom: His mother just fluttered her fan and said, "That reminds me of a story great-great-great-grandmother, when she was a little girl.

(A 1600s girl steps out onto the stage. She sways from side to side.)

Jamie: Where is she from?

Mom: The 1600s.

Jamie: Why is she swaying back and forth in her bedroom?

Mom: She's not in her bedroom. She's a pilgrim, and she's on a boat, traveling across the Atlantic Ocean.

1600s Kid: get on with the story, please. I am getting sea sick.

Mom: And that little girl was as cantankerous as an old sea dog. And she said...

1600s Kid: I already swabbed the deck. I dusted off the captain's spy scope. I even picked out the rats that were hiding in the pickle barrel.

Jamie: Gross!

1600s Kid: So why do I have to make my bed?

Mom: Her mother clucked her tongue and said, "That reminds me of a story about your double-great-great-great-grandfather, when he was a little boy.

Jamie: Now how far back are we going?

Mom: Hundreds and hundreds of years, to the middle ages.

Jamie: Like with kings and queens? Was our ancestor a knight?

(A little Medieval Kid stands heroically center stage. He holds up a small broom as if it was a sword.)

Mom: No. He was a peasant. But he was very adventurous, and loved to frolic and play outside. Sound familiar? But on this day, he was as wicked as a warlock, and he said...

Medieval Kid: I already sheared the sheep and milked the yak. I dusted off sister's loom. I even planted the wheat and picked up all of the pig droppings.

Jamie: That's even grosser than the rats in the pickle barrel.

Medieval Kid: We use the animal droppings to help stoke our fire. But it is kind of gross. So tell me, ma-ma, why do I have to make my bed?

Mom: His mother just put her hands on her hips and said, "That reminds me of a story about your double-great-great-double-double-great-great-grandmother, when she was a little girl. And that little girl was more thunderous than [Thor](#), and she said..."

(A girl with a viking helmet struts onto the stage.)

Jamie: (Trying to guess the era.) Oh, I know, I know. We're back in [Viking Times](#).

Viking Girl: Silence, scrawny boy! This is my scene! I already stoked the fire for the sword maker. I dusted off the sacred blowing horn. I even picked up the broken spears and patched up father's war wounds.

Jamie: No toys to put away?

Viking Girl: Toys? What are toys?

Jamie: I guess not.

Viking Girl: So tell me Mama Viking, after all of this work, why do I have to make my bed?

(A viking mother, looking very gruff, enters.)

Mother: Her mother just burped---

Viking Mother: Burp!

Mother: And said...

Viking Mother: I shall tell you, my obnoxious viking daughter, that all of your grumbling reminds me of a story about your triple-great-triple-great-triple-great-grandfather, when he was a little boy. And that little boy was as ill-tempered as a caged lion, and he said...

(The viking family makes way as a Boy from Ancient Rome enters.)

Roman Boy: Make way, make way! Gladiators coming through!

(Two gladiators battle their way across the stage.)

Jamie: Gladiators! We must be in ancient Rome!

Mom: 121 A.D. Almost two thousand years ago.

Roman Boy: No time to talk. I've got so much to do. (He pantomimes his chores as he talks.) I've got to unclog the aqueducts.

Jamie: What are aqueducts?

Roman Boy: It's how we get our water. And after that I dusted off the statues in the courtyard. (Several actors can pose as statues.) And I even picked up after the gladiators. (One or two gladiators can fall over, or just drop a sword -- the Roman Boy then carries them away.)

Jamie: That sounds hard.

Roman Boy: It is. Especially when lions are involved. So, after all of this, why do I have to make my bed?

Mom: His mother just brushed her golden hair and said, "That reminds me of a story about your triple-great-great-triple-triple-great-great-great grandmother, when she was a little girl. And that little girl was as cranky as a crocodile. And she said..."

Jamie: Just how far back does this story go?

Egyptian Girl: Welcome to Egypt!

Mom: One thousand B.C.

Jamie: It's hot and dry.

Egyptian Girl: That's because we live on the edge of the [SSahara Desert](#), close to the Nile River.

Jamie: Where are the pyramids?

Egyptian Girl: We're still working on them. It is my job to give water to the pyramid builders, which I have already done this morning. Then I dusted off father's papyrus scroll. I even gathered up the plague of frogs Big Brother snuck into our tent. So, tell me, O Wise Mother, why do I have to make my bed? Isn't it just going to get messed up again?

Mom: Her mother just brushed a toad from her tunic and said, "That reminds me of a story about one of your ancestors, when he was a little boy. And that little boy was as sour as a saber-toothed tiger, and he said..."

Jamie: Where are we going now?

Mom: Back to the days of the Stone Age... 30,000 B.C.

Jamie: Wow. Were there dinosaurs back then?

Mom: No. The dinosaurs were already extinct. But humans had to deal with all sorts of unruly creatures. (Kids can make some wild animal noises.) [Woolly Mammoths](#)... Cave Bears...

Cave Mom: Children! While I am gathering and father is hunting, these children won't stop asking me questions.

Cave Boy: Me already clean cave! Me hunt mammoth! Me dust stalagmites! Me make fire! Why me have to make bed? It just get messed up again! Why? Why? Why?

Mom: And that Cave Mom looked at her Cave Son, and she was the first person in the history of the world to utter this phrase:

Cave Mom: (Staring very seriously at her son.) Because I said so.

Cave Boy: Oh!

Mom: Said the cave boy, who straightened his bed of sticks and fur.

Egyptian Girl: Oh.

Mom: Said the Egyptian Girl, who fluffed up her bed of flax and linen.

Roman" Oh.

Mom: Said the Roman boy, who smoothed the wrinkles out of his wool blanket.

Viking Girl: Oh.

Mom: Said the Viking girl who shook fleas from her caribou hide.

Medieval Kid: Oh.

Mom: Said the Medieval boy, who stuffed more goose feathers into his pillow.

1600s Kid: Oh.

Mom: Said the pilgrim girl, who neatly folded her mother's quilt.

1700s Kid: Oh.

Mom: Said the Virginian boy. who pulled up his sheets nice and straight.

Cow Girl: Oh.

Mom: Said the country girl, who heaped handfuls of hay into her mattress.

1910 Kid: Oh.

Mom: Said the city boy, who tucked his sheets under the corners.

1950s Girl: Oh.

Mom: Said your grandmother, who made everything tidy and neat.

(Jamie has been watching as each child pantomimes making his/her bed.)

Mom: And that, my dear son of mine, is the end of the story.

Jamie: Oh.

Mom: My son said...

Jamie: I guess I'll make my bed.

The Entire Cast: The End! Optional: Mom, Jamie, and the others can pretend to make a bed.