

J. K. ROWLING'S HARRY POTTER:
14 WAYS OF LOOKING AT GENIUS

ED. TOBY WIDDICOMBE

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This is the book *J. K. Rowling: 14 Ways of Looking at Genius*. It was compiled and edited by Toby Widdicombe, Ph.D., Department of English, University of Alaska Anchorage in June and July 2021.



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Abbreviations

CS	<i>Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets</i>
DH	<i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows</i>
GF	<i>Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire</i>
HBP	<i>Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince</i>
OP	<i>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix</i>
PA	<i>Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban</i>
SS	<i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i>

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Preface

The history of this collection of essays is a simple one. I taught a Harry Potter course at the University of Alaska Anchorage in Spring semester 2021. As part of that course, I required students to submit a portfolio of essays on J. K. Rowling's famous septet of novels. They had to choose from nearly a score of possible prompts. I was impressed by the overall quality of the assignments just as I was puzzled by the absence of an OER collection of essays on J. K. Rowling—by students or, for that matter, professional scholars. It is my hope that this collection will go some way towards closing that gap in scholarship. In part because the cost of textbooks is, frankly, absurdly high. Someone's making money (and it isn't professors).

What I have chosen to publish here are what I consider the best or most interesting approaches to Rowling's work as presented by my students. As a percentage of the total portfolio work submitted in Spring semester 2021, this selection of essays represents less than 20 percent of what I read. The sequence of material in this collection is, frankly, not entirely arbitrary. As I recall, the sequence mirrors the order of grading, and that order followed the order of electronic submission to Blackboard.

I hope you find these essays as interesting and helpful as I did.

Toby Widdicombe, Ph. D.
English Department
University of Alaska Anchorage
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What Muggles and Magic Can Teach Us about Tolerance

Elsa Snodderly

Acceptance is a uniting force; intolerance is something that isolates a person or a group of people. The relationship between Muggles and magic is complicated in the Harry Potter series--as it is in the real world. Hopefully, one day we can all live in a world of tolerance. Magic or no.

Before the age of eleven Harry Potter, also known as The Boy Who Lived, did not know what a Muggle was. In fact, before 1995 most people were unfamiliar with the word. Some might have argued it was a piece of gibberish they heard their toddler say while rubbing oatmeal in their hair. Nonetheless, the word “Muggle” was not invented in 1995 as some might think. If one were to look up the definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, one would find “Muggle” has multiple definitions. The first definition says it comes from the Latin “mugil” and refers to something resembling a fish’s tail (Muggle n.1). The second defines it as originating from the Italian word “moglie” and seems to refer to a “young woman” or a “sweetheart” (Muggle n.2). The last identifies the word as American slang for cannabis from the mid-1920s to the mid-1980s (Muggle n.3). After 1995, the word started to grow in popularity again, yet this time it had nothing to do with fish, sweethearts, or cannabis. This time around the word had been reinvented by J. K. Rowling in her first installment of the wildly successful children’s series about a young bespectacled wizard

named Harry Potter and his adventures in the Wizarding world and struggle against the evil Lord Voldemort who despises both Harry and Muggles.

But what is a Muggle? According to a friendly half-giant named Hagrid, “‘it’s what [witches and wizards] call nonmagic folk.’” (SS 53). In J. K. Rowling’s fantasy series, most Muggles unknowingly live alongside magic folk, but as the septet progresses so does the division between Muggles and magic. To put it bluntly, the relations between the magical world and the Muggle world are strained for many reasons. Despite the fact that some witches and wizards admire Muggles, others see them as pests to subjugate. On the other hand, not all Muggles aware of the Wizarding world are accepting; some even fear it and turn to a medieval ideology that separated the worlds in the first place. In examining the septet as a whole, especially the struggle between Muggles and magic folk, one observes how J. K. Rowling uses the addition of Muggles in her books to provide a place for her audience to exist in her magical world as well as a conflict in the series which offers multiple perspectives that illustrate the destructive nature of intolerance.

The Wizarding world was not always hidden from Muggles. There was a time when wizards and Muggles lived together, but in the Middle Ages Muggles became fearful of the potential of magic, sending magic into hiding to protect itself from mobs, pitchforks, and burning pyres. At least that is what happened in the Harry Potter universe. Rowling’s decision to have the Wizarding world separated from the Muggle world gives the feeling of realism to the story. In the series, most Muggles live in blissful ignorance of the Wizarding world and those who do know about it are either

authority figures or closely affiliated with someone magical through a familial relationship or marriage. This secrecy is promoted and enforced by the Ministry of Magic under the International Statute of Secrecy (*DH 318*). To ensure their world is not discovered, the Minister of Magic corresponds with higher authorities in the Muggle government. For example, Cornelius Fudge explains the function of the Ministry of Magic to the Muggle Prime Minister as shown in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. Fudge mentions that the Ministry of Magic runs and conceals the Wizarding world from Muggles and only contacts the Muggle Prime Minister when necessary (5). This decision illustrates the divide between the two worlds and the kind of work required to keep witches and wizards safe from Muggles. For example, Professor Binns in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* explains in a lecture that “Hogwarts was founded over a thousand years ago--the precise date is uncertain--by the four greatest witches and wizards of the age. . . . They built this castle together far from Muggle eyes, for it was an age when magic was feared by most common people” (150). Considering the series is set in the 1990s, the construction of Hogwarts would be dated to around 990 A. D. although, as Professor Binns notes, this is not an exact date. Adding historical details, such as the fear of magic in the early Middle Ages, as a reason for witches and wizards to go into hiding is an excellent way to make the story more realistic for the audience. This quality in turn makes the struggles in the world more real. Also, the fact Rowling makes a point early on in the series to emphasize the ancient struggle between magic and Muggles shows the importance it has as a plot point in the story. Its importance becomes more apparent with the introduction of blood purists or pure-blood

supremacists and their animosity towards Muggles and their occasional magical offspring.

Pure-blood supremacists are witches and wizards in the magical world who believe magic should only be kept within magical bloodlines to avoid what they call Mudbloods. The word “Mudblood” is a vulgar slur in the Wizarding world that refers to the magical offspring of Muggle families (CS 115-116). The prejudice of pure-blood supremacists provides a perspective and representation of the illogical hate towards a group of people. Hermione Granger, a bright Muggle-born witch, is subjected to blood-purist prejudice in an encounter with Draco Malfoy in *The Chamber of Secrets*, “The smug look on Malfoy’s face flickered. ‘No one asked your opinion, you filthy little Mudblood,’ he spat. Harry knew at once Malfoy had said something really bad because there was an instant uproar at his words” (112). In view of the fact that fellow students immediately came to Hermione’s defense indicates the word is clearly well known in the Wizarding community, and considering Draco uses it freely reveals it is still used in elitist pure-blood groups with which the Malfoy family identifies. To the likes of Malfoy, it does not matter that Hermione is intelligent and powerful in her own right, she is viewed as lower than him because she is Muggle-born. He illogically deduces that the “purity” of someone’s family dictates its worth or power of the person. This simply is not true. Furthermore, the Malfoys inadvertently acknowledge their illogical reasoning by following a powerful, violent, *half-blood* hypocrite.

Later on in the series, this elitist prejudice grows to full force with the resurrection of Lord Voldemort. Voldemort and his followers are an example of a

hypocritical group of people who believe their ideology gives them the license to harm others. Voldemort is the champion of pure-blood supremacy and strives to rule the Wizarding world and conquer all Muggles and Muggle-borns. A commonly (and conveniently) forgotten fact among his group of pure-blood supremacists is that Voldemort's father was a Muggle and, so, Voldemort is himself a half-blood. Voldemort is aware of this, and even though he admits in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* that he murdered his Muggle father, who had his own prejudice against magic (646), this does not change his blood status. Voldemort believes in the superiority of "pure" magical families and the eradication of those with any Muggle heritage: "Many of our oldest family trees become a little diseased over time. . . . Cut away those parts that threaten the health of the rest. . . [S]o in the world . . . we shall cut away the canker that infects us until only those of true blood remain" (DH 10-11). With an analogy as graphic as this one, it is clear what Voldemort's intentions are once he has murdered Harry Potter and taken over the Wizarding world. Not only does he promote violence from an illogical belief, but he is also a hypocrite as his existence infects the Gaunt family tree with the very "disease" he warns against. If he were to "prune" that disease from the branches of the Gaunt family tree, he would be pruning himself from the magical world since he is not considered "pureblood." This paradox is a representation to the audience of how intolerance for other groups such as Muggles is born from the desire for superiority and violence and is often hypocritical in its application. Voldemort's impurity is tolerated or ignored by the others because he brings them the superiority they crave. He gives them the opportunity to live out their desire to gain more power over Muggles. One could

argue that some Muggles are also intolerant of the magical world, like Voldemort's Muggle father, who was negatively affected by magic; however, Muggle intolerance is typically born from ignorance and fear.

The Dursleys are the first and most prominent Muggles introduced in the series. They represent the prejudice that witches and wizards are unnatural and to be feared, yet they are also a representation to readers of prejudice through ignorance. From the moment Harry enters their lives, Petunia and Vernon Dursley's perfectly normal lives are compromised. Harry, like his parents, has magic, something the Dursleys do not understand and, therefore, fear. So, before Harry finds out he is a wizard, the Dursleys do all they can to alienate him by literally shoving him under the stairs (SS 19) and leaving him out of family functions. The only thing keeping them from kicking Harry out onto the street is the fear of retribution from Dumbledore or other witches and wizards. Petunia is well reminded of this possibility when she receives the Howler in *The Order of the Phoenix* (40). It is her fear of magic folk and their power that allows Harry to remain in the house, a fear born from ignorance about magic and those who practice it. In *The Prisoner of Azkaban*--long after Harry learns of his true identity--Rowling sums up the Dursleys perfectly, "They were Muggles, and they had a very medieval attitude toward magic. Harry's dead parents, who had been a witch and wizard themselves, were never mentioned under the Dursleys' roof" (2). The abuse and neglect Harry experiences from Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon stems from an old hatred of those who do not fit the social norm and are, therefore, labeled "evil" or

“unnatural.” Medieval is an apt way to describe the Dursleys, particularly Petunia and Vernon. Dudley follows the example his parents set.

The hatred and fear the Dursleys have for Harry are reminiscent of the ideology that promoted the witch-hunting and burning in Europe during the Counter Reformation and even before then. As discussed, Rowling adds real events in history to her series to add a bit of realism; here she uses it for that purpose, to add realism and impress upon her readers the ignorance of others even outside the Wizarding world where the audience exists. In one of Harry’s magical textbooks, he finds that many Muggles during the witch and wizard trials in Europe were harmed from the ignorance of other Muggles, *“Non-magic people . . . were particularly afraid of magic in medieval times, but not very good at recognizing it. On the rare occasion that they did catch a real witch or wizard, burning had no effect whatsoever. The witch or wizard would perform a basic Flame-Freezing Charm. . .”* (PA 2). In her Wizarding world, Rowling points out that any real witch or wizard caught would escape burnings with magic, but falsely accused Muggles would die horribly in the fire. While the suppression of magic made magic folk retreat into hiding, the ignorance of Muggles led only to the death of innocent Muggles. To connect this point back to the Dursleys, it is clear that Vernon and Petunia do not know Harry, nor do they understand who he is. They are so blinded by the deep-rooted prejudice of their ancestors that they are willing to encourage violence in their son, Dudley, in an attempt to rid the family of what they perceive to be an abnormality. However, the Dursleys are not a template for all Muggles; there are two sides to every galleon. The Dursleys are merely a family that exhibits intolerance

towards a group different from their own; there are those in the Muggle and Wizarding worlds who embrace the differences in each other or, at the very least, tolerate them.

The Harry Potter series revolves around the conflict between wizard supremacy and Muggle fear, but there are those who break the barriers thrown up by intolerance in order to embrace the message of tolerance and coexistence. The most notable are the Grangers and Arthur Weasley. Hermione's parents play a small role in the series, but they are supportive of their daughter. Unlike the Dursleys with Harry, they care about their daughter's schooling and attempt to take part in her world even though it is foreign and intimidating. On the other hand, pure-blood wizard Arthur Weasley is a recurring character who advocates for Muggle rights and is enthusiastic about Muggle technology and customs. When Mrs. and Mr. Granger accompany Hermione to Diagon Alley to help her find supplies, they meet Arthur Weasley who is more than ecstatic to welcome them into his world, "'But you're *Muggles*,' said Mr. Weasley delightedly. 'We must have a drink!'" (CS 57). Hermione's parents are not as openly enthusiastic as Mr. Weasley, but they do attempt to understand the Wizarding world instead of fearing it, which makes their encounter with Arthur Weasley an excellent example of tolerance between two groups. The two families come from two different worlds, yet instead of being standoffish or showing disdain, they show tolerance for one another. It shows readers that perhaps one day Muggles and magic folk can live together in Harry's world. It teaches about the power of coexistence and learning from people who are different from ourselves instead of fearing or hating them. It is a lesson for any age, and

one many fans of this series can identify with because of the complicated relationship between Muggles and magic.

J. K. Rowling had a choice when writing the Harry Potter books. She could have created a world where magic is known to everyone, as many fantasy series have, but she decided to go a different route. She takes historical moments from reality and integrates them into her series to add realism for readers while also creating conflict within the Wizarding world--conflict based on historical events where she provides perspectives, from both groups, of tolerance and intolerance. Rowling decided to create a hidden world of witches, wizards, and magic that lives in secret alongside the world with which her readers are familiar. They identify with the Muggle world, yet they are enamored of the magical world and strive to learn more about it with Weasley-esque enthusiasm. It encourages them to become more engaged with the story and its messages including the message of accepting others. So, if the audience ever encounters a group of Weasleys and Malfoys, they will have the opportunity to apply the tolerance they learned as a Muggle in the magical world of Harry Potter.

An Examination of Abuse in the Harry Potter Septet

Roslyn White

There is a great deal of abuse in the Harry Potter series. Quite a lot of it is directed at the boy wizard himself. Some of it is blatant; some of it quite subtle. The Harry Potter series shows children the nature of abuse and warns them about it.

Abuse is a theme that for the most part, is not explored in children's literature. Personally, I had never come across explicit themes of abuse towards children in any books except for fairy tales like "Cinderella," and even then mostly in the Grimm version. Most of my experience learning about abuse when I was little was from health class or from doctors as an explicit teaching moment. For example, the teachers would begin a lesson on abuse with things such as a movie which would show a certain kind of abuse happening, be that neglect or psychological, emotional, sexual, verbal, or physical abuse. In the Harry Potter septet, J. K. Rowling has added a variety of types of abuse throughout, and I honestly think that the addition is perhaps the best idea she implements in the septet. I know that by reading the "Cinderella" story and seeing how her family neglected and used her made those actions and that treatment something I could recognize as being bad because of the impact it had on a fictional character whom I liked. In the Harry Potter septet, Rowling combines different kinds of abuse in a subtle enough way that the abuse is not immediately obvious to the reader. The main kinds I have been able to find were familial abuse, educational abuse, celebrity abuse--which has a lot to do with the media

and with the government--and the abuse of magical creatures and non-magicals. While the main point of focus in the septet is Harry and his experiences, and he is also the center of a lot of the abuse I will be discussing, there are points at which I will be discussing the experiences of abuse of other characters.

Perhaps the most noticeable and prevalent form of abuse in the septet is familial abuse, especially that of the Dursleys' verbal and physical actions against Harry. From the second chapter of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the audience is shown that the Dursleys have no love at all for Harry, and are at the very least neglectful and, at the very most, outright abusive. I would, in fact, go as far as to call them an abusive family: particularly when the words and actions of Petunia and Vernon Dursley are examined. Let's look at this quotation: "Harry lay in his dark cupboard much later, wishing he had a watch. He didn't know what time it was and he couldn't be sure the Dursleys were asleep yet. Until they were, he couldn't risk sneaking to the kitchen for some food" (SS 29). Here, Harry has to wait until he knows the Dursleys are asleep to get food that he needs to survive. He is shown throughout the books to be the one to make food--at the very least, to cook breakfast--and to do most of the other chores around the house and in the yard. He lives in a cupboard under the stairs with spiders as friends when there are, at a rough count, four bedrooms upstairs: the master bedroom; Dudley's room; the guest room (which likely exists based on Aunt Marge's visit in the third book); and Dudley's second bedroom (which is where Harry sleeps from the third chapter of the first book onwards).

The abuse that Harry encounters from the Dursleys stems from their obsession

with appearing normal and deliberately ignoring any obvious or subtle signs of magic. This obsession is both complicated and intensified by the arrival of Harry as a baby in a most unusual way, and further intensified by obvious (to Petunia) signs of magic while he was growing up: “. . . chased by Dudley’s gang, he [Harry] had somehow found himself out of their reach . . . dreading going to school with that ridiculous haircut, he’d managed to make it grow back. . .” (SS 58). As we can see from this example, there were, to Harry’s rather unreliable memory, quite a few instances of magic that stood out to his mind. As Petunia is someone who has had previous experience growing up with someone magical in the family, she would be even more aware of the different kinds of magical incidents that have likely occurred around Harry. In *Harry Potter and Philosophy: If Aristotle Ran Hogwarts*, Diana Mertz Hsieh discusses self-deception with the Dursleys as an example. The key point I would like to emphasize is Hsieh’s discussion on self-deception not insulating a person from reminders of the truth. The Dursleys would rather pretend that magic does not exist, but Harry serves as a constant reminder that magic *does* exist. Thus, as Hsieh points out, their self-deception is “doomed to frequent failure, as reminders of the facts are inevitable with a young wizard living in the house” (Baggett and Klein 27). This frequent reminder of something that the Dursleys would rather not acknowledge could be a reason for their lackluster treatment of Harry. The frustration over being unable to forget that magic exists is directed – unfortunately--at the closest magic that the Dursleys have available.

From what I have been able to gather from the Dursley parts of the books, the abuse that Harry goes through is borderline extreme child neglect with mentions of

physical abuse sprinkled in. Even when he is “upgraded” to Dudley’s second bedroom, we read in the second book about Mr. Dursley installing a cat flap into the bottom of the door for food and installing actual bars on the window to Harry’s room after Dobby’s visit:

Uncle Vernon was as bad as his word. The following morning, he paid a man to fit bars on Harry’s window. He himself fitted a cat-flap in the bedroom door, so that small amounts of food could be pushed inside three times a day. They let Harry out to use the bathroom morning and evening. Otherwise, he was locked in his room around the clock (CS 21-22).

Harry is unable to work on his schoolwork for the summer because the Dursleys have locked his trunk up in his old room: the cupboard under the stairs. He is forced to share food with Hedwig because Vernon Dursley has locked her cage with a padlock (which is animal abuse), and the food provided is shown to be not nearly enough for them both:

. . . Aunt Petunia’s hand appeared, pushing a bowl of canned soup into the room. Harry, whose insides were aching with hunger, jumped off his bed and seized it. The soup was stone-cold, but he drank half of it in one gulp. Then he crossed the room to Hedwig’s cage and tipped the soggy vegetables at the bottom of the bowl into her empty food tray (CS 22).

All the while, the Dursleys are eating full meals throughout the day.

Most instances of the Dursleys’ neglect and verbal abuse of Harry include

purposefully denying him food when he has done something even slightly magical, locking him first in his cupboard and then in Dudley's second bedroom, and yelling at him over small, innocuous actions or utterances. I can attest from personal experience that being yelled at by anyone for something you cannot help is traumatizing and damaging to a person's psyche in both the short and long term. Additionally, neither Petunia nor Vernon stops or chastises Dudley when he bullies Harry, with Dudley's bullying often being physical and undertaken with the help of his friends (all of whom are physically bigger and stronger than Harry). In fact, Dudley's favorite game is Harry Hunting. Mr. and Mrs. Dursley seem to encourage their son's behavior, which has its own ramifications for Dudley himself. In *The Order of the Phoenix*, there is a scene where "two large purple hands reached through the open window and closed tightly around his [Harry's] throat" (4). Harry does not seem surprised at all by this treatment and continues on as though his uncle had not just attempted to choke him. This lack of surprise implies that Vernon's choking Harry or physically hitting Harry has happened before, and we as readers have just never been privy before to its occurrence. Petunia even attempts to hit Harry with a frying pan once (and possibly more times than that) though Harry is able to dodge so that the pan doesn't actually hit him. These instances and others make Dudley's seeming nonchalance about physically harming Harry understandable. If Dudley is seeing his parents physically abusing Harry frequently, Dudley will imitate those abuses. Humans, after all, are imitative beings.

Overindulgence and spoiling are just as damaging to a child as neglect and abuse, only in a different way. By giving Dudley too much food and indulging him in

so many ways, Petunia and Vernon are setting him up for a life of hardship. In the process, they create a different, less obvious, form of familial abuse. Childhood obesity is linked to a multitude of diseases or chronic problems later in life: heart failure, diabetes, and psychological damage are only three amongst several. In fact, an article by David Ludwig on this very topic states that “obese children tend to be socially isolated and have high rates of disordered eating, anxiety, and depression. When they reach adulthood, they are less likely than their thinner counterparts to complete college and are more likely to live in poverty.” Yes, Dudley ends up becoming fit later in the septet, but that early experience of his being--in Harry’s words--as big as a small whale due to a lack of restriction on portion size and sugar intake can have potentially serious health risks for Dudley later in his life. Some of those health risks mentioned by the Ludwig article include psychological, neurological, endocrine, cardiovascular, pulmonary, gastrointestinal, renal, and musculoskeletal complications. Luckily for Dudley, however, another article states that childhood obesity in relation to the cardiovascular system has “long-term . . . morbidity and mortality mainly related to persisted obesity into adulthood,” and “subtle early cardiovascular effects of obesity can be observed during childhood and adolescence, but seem less prominent and pertinent than in obese adults” (Koopman and Mertens). However, these types of pediatric studies are few, small, and limited, and so there is currently no thorough research with a large enough sample to say definitively that childhood obesity has reversible effects for the cardiovascular system.

The encouragement from Dudley’s parents for him to overeat is shown to be a

prominent feature in Dudley's life, as we can see in the first chapter of the first book.

Dudley's increasing obesity is not halted or even slowed down until the fourth book when Smeltings sends Dudley home for the summer with a warning that if Dudley does not slim down the school would not be able to provide him with a big enough uniform. This comment shows just how much damage Petunia and Vernon have physically done to Dudley. This damage is even pointed out by Dumbledore (directly to the Dursleys) in the sixth book: "He [Harry] has known nothing but neglect and often cruelty at your hands. The best that can be said is that he has at least escaped the appalling damage you have inflicted upon the unfortunate boy sitting between you" (HBP 55).

Additionally, by not teaching Dudley the basics of politeness--not the false politeness which is a thin cover for sycophancy--Petunia and Vernon are also neglecting Dudley's own ability to connect with people properly. By learning early on how to interact with people in a manner that does *not* inspire fear, children are able to form friendships and relationships that can help them find balance in their pubescent years. Learning how to connect with people and not just inspire fear can lead to more healthy relationships that last far longer than power-oriented relationship dynamics, which are the only kinds of dynamics that we see Dudley, Vernon, and Petunia surround themselves with. Dudley doesn't have any true friends, just a gang of cohorts who like to be bullies and who intimidate others into not wanting to be friends with Harry: "At school, Harry had no one. Everybody knew that Dudley's gang hated that odd Harry Potter in his baggy old clothes and broken glasses, and nobody liked to disagree with Dudley's gang" (SS 30). Dudley is also spoiled for gifts and money, which can have

lasting deleterious effects according to a study, effects which can include buying impulsiveness and credit-card misuse later in life. The study found that “young adults who [have] been overindulged as children might excessively spend available resources in their adult years” (Horner et al.). Simply put, by overindulging Dudley as Mr. and Mrs. Dursley do, Dudley is being made vulnerable to future money-spending issues that could greatly affect his ability to afford necessities and to function in society as an adult.

The big turnabout for Dudley, the moment when he begins to realize that he perhaps needs to shape up and stop being a bully, is in *The Order of the Phoenix*, when Harry saves Dudley from the Dementor. Dudley, at this point, has stopped outright bullying Harry because of his fear of Harry’s magic, but the antagonism that had marked their relationship as cousins slowly seeps away after this terrifying and potentially deadly encounter. There is no mention in *The Half-Blood Prince* of Dudley’s interacting with Harry at all, but reconciliation--or rather the beginning of reconciliation--comes in the last book of the septet once Dudley realizes Harry is not going to be coming with his family into hiding. He says that he does not think Harry is a waste of space--the nicest thing he has ever said about Harry--and he even shakes Harry’s hand when he says goodbye.

So, Harry does not have a good home life at all, which is something that is noted but not acted upon by many characters in this septet. Sirius gets the closest to taking Harry away from the Dursleys, and is, in fact, one of the few characters who makes sure Harry gets fair (if not good) treatment from the Dursleys by his being a wanted criminal

and, thus, an active threat to the Dursleys' wellbeing. However, while other characters do indeed know that Harry does not have a good home life, Dumbledore (the person who placed Harry with the Dursleys in the first place) does not actually admit that he made a mistake in doing so until the sixth book, and then only when he knows he is dying. Harry's best escape is Hogwarts itself, though that place grows increasingly dangerous as the years go on. Unfortunately, even in Hogwarts, Harry is not able to escape abuse, whether that be abusive teachers or a headmaster who abuses his own power.

Dumbledore is an adequate headmaster in some respects, but in other ways he is not. There are numerous reasons for his being at least adequate. For one thing, he does an acceptable job because compared to the other headmasters that the Ministry could put into place at Hogwarts (especially later in the septet) he is the best choice. I personally think that McGonagall would have made a much better head teacher than Dumbledore, simply because she is an extremely fair professor who equally gives points to and takes points away from all the houses: none of the students is treated differently or preferentially, not even her favorites (of which Harry is definitely one). However, there are a few traits Dumbledore has which make him not an ideal headmaster even though he is markedly better than Umbridge in the role. One of these weaknesses is his making bad decisions when danger comes to Hogwarts. Specifically, he thinks about how to defeat the danger instead of how thoroughly to protect the students--even if that means sending the students home instead of keeping them in school where the students could potentially be seriously injured or even killed.

In the first book, Dumbledore himself brings the danger to Hogwarts and sets up an extremely obvious trap--in a school full of children who could become casualties--by just begging for people to try and break in. Foolishly, he announced this stratagem to the entire school in the form of a warning: if you go up to the third floor, you may face death. As Dumbledore puts it: "I must tell you that this year, the third-floor corridor on the right-hand side is out of bounds to everyone who does not wish to die a very painful death" (SS 127). This to a school full of children. Most of the school--at least the upper years--would have been curious enough to look in and see Fluffy. The Weasley twins especially would not have been able to resist, and since Rowling does not address what exactly the twins know in this first book, the two very well might have gone to take a look-see. In the second and third books, there are numerous points when Dumbledore should have sent people home for their own safety. Shutting down Hogwarts in those cases is significantly less dangerous than keeping it open. In fact, in the second book Dumbledore is not even the professor who brings up sending the children home for their safety. That decision falls on the rest of the faculty when Ginny is taken. The fewer children in the school when times become dangerous, the fewer children there are in danger from whatever threat is in the school, and the fewer families there will be who must mourn over a too-small coffin.

Another characteristic of Dumbledore which makes him not an ideal headmaster is the amount of bias in his hiring decisions. Not just in the Defense Against the Dark Arts position--though that is a part of it--but also the professors whom Dumbledore hires not because they are the best qualified in the field and the best qualified to teach

young children, hormonal teens, and young adults, but because they need to be protected from Voldemort when he eventually returns. Two professors who fall under this category of needing protection are Trelawney and Snape. Trelawney is not a great professor. In fact, it is shown in the fifth book that Firenze is more effective as a professor of Divination than she is: Firenze can better explain the subject without over-complicating everything or frightening children by predicting their deaths: “. . . you should know, Potter, that Sibyll Trelawney has predicted the death of one student a year since she arrived at this school. None of them has died yet. Seeing death omens is her favorite way of greeting a new class” (PA 109). Trelawney is hired because she is the one to speak the prophecy, and she is overheard by Snape, who then relays the information to Voldemort. So, Dumbledore hires her not because she is teacher material, but because she needs protection. This reasoning is the same with Snape: to protect his newfound spy from being sentenced to Azkaban, Dumbledore hires him for the Potions position, even though Snape is truly awful with children and seems to despise being a potions professor--at least for the younger years. We do not actually get to see what Snape is like with any potions class beyond fifth year.

Snape is the very definition of an abusive teacher. Granted, he does not use physical violence against his students, but bullying children to the point where you become their boggart (as he is Neville's) or almost murder a student's pet to make a point (as he tries to do to Trevor, Neville's toad) before taking points away when the potion turns out to be correct and does not kill the pet is not ideal teacher material in any way. In fact, Snape reminds me very much of my kindergarten Japanese teacher,

who I am going to refer to as Sensei. We were five years old, but Sensei had her favorites and was not afraid to show it. There was a hierarchy of who sat in the front of the group and who sat in the back, and students who were not her favorites were systematically embarrassed in front of their friends and--in extreme cases--their family as well. Many of my classmates, including myself, told their parents over Christmas break that they did not want to go back to school the following semester. Much of how Snape acts and reacts to students viscerally reminded me of Sensei, of a teacher who made learning more of a chore rather than something that should be fun, and who traumatized more than half of the class into not wanting to go to school or to fake being sick so that they would not be forced to go back.

There is no excuse for how Snape treats the students in his classes. If he wanted to be strict, he should have imitated McGonagall, who is equally strict to everyone in her class. Perhaps, for a more realistic solution, Dumbledore should have had two professors for Potions. One for the younger years and one for the older years, and Snape could take over the older--and thus more experienced--years so that he did not have to deal with children just learning how to mix ingredients while trying not to blow themselves up. The long-term impacts of the kind of abuse that Snape inflicts upon his students are complicated and varied. The form of abuse that Snape employs is emotional abuse, defined by Nearchou Finiki in her study as "a pattern of verbal and nonverbal behaviors that do not include any type of physical contact, between a student and a teacher, which results in emotional, social, cognitive, and somatic consequences for the student's functioning and adjustment." Snape exhibits both verbal abuse

(sarcasm, ridicule, disparaging statements, name-calling, mockery, and so on) and nonverbal abuse (deliberately ignoring someone, using homework to impose discipline, punishing someone for wrong answers, and so on). He does so almost constantly. While we do not see him interact during a class with any houses but Slytherin and Gryffindor, we can presume from the rumors discussed in the first book during the first feast that he acts towards the other two houses in the same way. In Finiki's article, she also discusses how this kind of emotional abuse affects the student: the abuse may (among other things) lower a student's self-worth, lead to later emotional and behavioral problems, create a sense of lack of security and safety within the school, and degrade student connection with the school.

Rowling, however, presents Snape as a sympathetic character in the last book: because he had a history with both Harry's mom and dad--one good, one bad--he should be pitied and, perhaps, even forgiven for the abuse he heaped (throughout his time as a professor) on anyone who was not a Slytherin; and because his history of having being bullied somehow erases the bullying that he inflicts on others as well as the bullying he encourages Slytherins to partake in. "The bullied becoming a bully" is a trope, but unfortunately this transformation does happen in real life. Additionally, a person who was bullied in their schooling years and goes on to become a teacher is more likely to participate in bullying or turn a blind eye to obvious signs of bullying in their students, much as Snape does. In one study, teachers who frequently bullied students "also showed significant correlations with being bullied at school when they were students" (Twemlow). The Twemlow article also mentions how instances of

bullying in schools by any kind of bully, be they student or teacher, are perpetuated by bystanders. We can see both kinds of perpetuation in Snape's life, both when he was being bullied and when he is being the bully. When he is younger, the bullying he experiences from the Marauders is seen by most other people as pranks, and so the bystanders laugh—a reaction which perpetuates the bullying of Snape. When he is older, Snape is the bully and is in a position of power over the people he is bullying, and, to a significant degree, no other professor pulls him aside to tell him to stop bullying the children. When the students *do* complain, their complaints are waved off, which perpetuates Snape's bullying of students.

Some of how Snape acts towards students--in particular, Gryffindor students--is, at some level, a way to keep in the good graces of Death Eaters so he can be welcomed back into their fold if Voldemort ever regains power. In this way, Snape could act as the double-agent he has become. However, no history of being bullied as a child excuses becoming a bully later in life to people who do not deserve and have not earned your wrath. It would be one thing if Snape were terrible to the parents but still a good teacher of students, but Snape focuses far too much on the fact that Harry is related to James Potter, and so places all the sins of James on the shoulders of Harry. He belittles children for the slightest mistake or seeming inattention: Harry and Neville most of all. To Neville: "'Idiot boy!' snarled Snape. . . . 'I suppose you added the porcupine quills before taking the cauldron off the fire?'" To Harry: "'You—Potter--why didn't you tell him not to add the quills? Thought he'd make you look good if he got it wrong, did you? That's another point you've lost for Gryffindor'" (SS 139). This scene is only one

out of a great many where Snape specifically targets either Harry or Neville during the course of a Potions class. By contrast, in other parts of the septet Snape routinely ignores any wrongdoing on the part of Malfoy and rewards instead of punishes Malfoy's bad behavior.

Snape also gets quite close to adding physical abuse of students to his résumé in *The Order of the Phoenix* when he is "teaching" Harry Occlumency:

. . . "Legilimens!" [Snape calls out.]

A great black dragon was rearing in front of him [Harry]. . . . His father and mother were waving at him out of an enchanted mirror. . . . Cedric Diggory was lying on the ground with blank eyes staring at him. . . .

"NOOOOOOOO!"

He [Harry] was on his knees again, his face buried in his hands, his brain aching as though someone had been trying to pull it from his skull.

"Get up!" said Snape sharply. "Get up! You are not trying, you are making no effort, you are allowing me access to memories you fear, handing me weapons!" (535-536).

I understand that there is a certain amount of speed necessary to keep Voldemort from rummaging around inside Harry's head and planting false information (as he does indeed end up doing), and I also understand that Snape is one of the strongest Legilimens and Occlumens out there who isn't Dumbledore. However, that does not condone Snape's being viciously petty in the way he teaches. He causes Harry more

harm than he helps him, and the first part of the lesson that he should have started with--but did not--was creating rapport by getting to know Harry beyond his being James Potter's son. Throughout the lesson, Snape refuses to explain any of the methodology of Occlumency besides telling Harry to focus on a spell, to clear his emotions, and to keep Snape out of his mind. As taught by Snape, this is not an informative lesson for Harry beyond his finding another piece of the puzzle mystery that he was trying to figure out that year. In the end, Harry's justified distrust of Snape is what makes the lessons fail in the face of Voldemort, and that failure ultimately leads to Sirius Black's death.

Along with Snape, Hogwarts has a habit of hiring professors for the Defense Against the Dark Arts position who are either not who they say they are or are more dangerous than they seem. Mad-eye Moody is both of those combined. He is actually Barty Crouch Jr. as well as a Death Eater who is in league with Voldemort to orchestrate Voldemort's return, and he is a good enough actor to fool even Dumbledore (who does not notice anything wrong with his life-long friend). There are two actions in Crouch Jr.'s career as a DADA teacher which would, at a normal school, have got him fired for psychological and physical abuse of students: the curses class and the transformation and mistreatment of Draco Malfoy after he has been changed into a ferret.

Learning about the Unforgivable Curses in book four was (of course) interesting for the audience, imperative for the plot, and useful for the reader to know. However, there is a certain disregard Crouch Jr.--as-Moody--shows for potential triggers for trauma, probably on purpose as he is a Death Eater. The killing curse (Harry) and the

torture curse (Neville) show Crouch Jr. abusing his own authority as a teacher, and Rowling makes the damaging psychological effects clear. So, she writes of Neville: his “hands were clenched upon the desk in front of him, his knuckles white, his eyes wide and horrified” (GF 214-215). For that lesson, a good teacher would announce at least a week beforehand that there could be potentially triggering information in the next week’s lecture, provide the class with information about what would be happening, and then not fault students for being absent. The need for advanced warning is the most basic kind of mental-health awareness my own high school teachers knew about, and high school is the age group to which Harry and Neville belong.

Though Malfoy is an annoyance and a bully, and the ferret scene in *The Goblet of Fire* is—on first reading-- hilarious, anyone is likely to become increasingly upset about its content when the episode is reread: “‘I don’t think so!’ roared Moody, pointing his wand at the ferret again--it flew ten feet into the air, fell with a smack to the floor, and then bounced upward once more. . . . [T]he ferret bounced higher and higher, squealing in pain” (205). It is something out of a horror story: turning a child into a ferret (an animal with a very thin, very breakable, skeleton)--and then bouncing it up and down. That treatment would likely give the child whiplash; it might kill them; it would definitely traumatize them. No matter how much of an annoyance Malfoy was being, no matter that he was going to curse Harry when Harry’s back was turned, Malfoy does not deserve to be almost killed for that behavior.

There is, possibly, not a single person in Potter fandom who likes Dolores Umbridge, and for good reason. Umbridge makes Snape’s teaching style (or lack

thereof) look tame. She is a master at combining both psychological and physical abuse, and on playing on her victim's need to stay silent throughout the process. Harry is her main victim and the perfect target for her practices. He comes from a home that is already abusive, and he has been shown throughout the years that no good has come from telling adults about everything he is having to deal with.

The psychological abuse Umbridge employs against her victims is two-fold: one is directed at limiting student resources for the entire school with her educational decrees; the other involves limiting information to students.

The first means there will always be peer pressure to conform to those new norms because of the potential for causing harm of different kinds to befall your friends or other students. A prime example of this strategy occurs when Umbridge limits the creation and enjoyment of student clubs. She does so to circumvent Dumbledore's Army from being created, and to make sure that students follow her rules so they can regain their Quidditch permissions. Angelina remarks on this strategy to Harry: "You realize she's including Quidditch in this?' . . . 'We have to go and ask permission to reform the Gryffindor team!'" And, she continues: "You read the sign, it mentions teams too! So listen, Harry . . . I am saying this for the last time. . . . Please, *please* don't lose your temper with Umbridge again or she might not let us play anymore!" (OP 355).

The second (limiting the information available to students) includes both restricting the DADA class from learning practical spells and restricting – indeed, censoring--the mail coming into and leaving Hogwarts. The best example of this strategy is when Harry, Hermione, and Ron are in Professor Binn's class and Hedwig

shows up at the window:

. . . [Harry] made to remove the letter tied to her [Hedwig's] leg.

It was only then that he realized that Hedwig's feathers were oddly ruffled; some were bent the wrong way, and she was holding one of her wings at an odd angle (*OP* 356).

Harry and his friends theorize, and are warned of the same by McGonagall, that Umbridge is watching all forms of communication and Hedwig has seemingly been a victim of her overzealous methods. This cruelty on Umbridge's part shows there is no limit to what she is willing to do for power. She also keeps an eye on the Floo network as another way of restricting information to and from students. Sirius Black is used by Rowling to make this point:

He broke off. His face was suddenly tense, alarmed. He turned sideways, apparently looking into the solid brick wall of the fireplace.

"Sirius?" said Harry anxiously.

But he had vanished. . . .

A hand had appeared amongst the flames, groping as though to catch hold of something; a stubby, short-fingered hand covered in ugly old-fashioned rings (*OP* 372-373).

Physical abuse, in most cases, is all about the use and enjoyment of power. Umbridge uses psychological abuse (requiring students to write lines repeatedly such as "I will not lie") in tandem with physical abuse (the blood quill) to ensure her victims are properly subjugated and, so, not likely to attempt to speak up or act against her. By

invoking the name of the Minister at every given opportunity, she is establishing a basis of power that goes beyond the school. This gives her a position in the school that, Bethany Barratt points out, does not come legitimately: Umbridge “cloaks herself in grandiose titles and trades on borrowed legitimacy from Fudge, who has less and less to spare (and therefore clings to it in increasingly undemocratic ways)” (23). The most obvious use of physical abuse is, of course, the blood quill relied on in her detentions. The blood quill uses a student’s own blood with which to write. Rowling describes the scene memorably:

[Harry] let out a gasp of pain. The words had appeared on the parchment in what appeared to be shining red ink. At the same time, the words had appeared on the back of Harry’s right hand, cut into his skin as though they were traced there by a scalpel--yet even as he stared at the shining cut, the skin healed over again, leaving the place where it had been slightly redder than before but quite smooth (*OP* 267).

There is also a point in the book where Umbridge decides that she will use the Cruciatus curse (the torture curse) on Harry to get information from him: “‘You are forcing me, Potter. . . . I do not want to. . . . The Cruciatus Curse ought to loosen your tongue,’ said Umbridge quietly” (*OP* 746). Most of her dialogue for these actions revolves around using psychological abuse to convince her victims (mostly Harry, since the books are from his point-of-view) that they are the ones at fault for making her use the quill on them or almost casting the Cruciatus curse. This behavior is typical of abusers, who make the victim out to be the one at fault. In that way, the victim will be

even less likely to reveal the abuse to anyone who would be able to do anything about it. Harry reacts in exactly this way *The Order of the Phoenix*.

Umbridge is able to focus most of her ire on Harry because he is a celebrity, and Rowling establishes as early as the first book that being a celebrity is a double-edged sword. Public opinion is fickle: one day you are society's darling; the next you are the spawn of Satan. Rowling masterfully showcases the different kinds of abuse celebrities and those near to their hearts experience throughout the course of their lives. She does so especially in *The Goblet of Fire* and *The Order of the Phoenix*. The media and the government can either help or harm (in Harry's case, they typically only harm) the reputation of the celebrity.

Harry is the main character, and his name is--as McGonagall points out in *The Sorcerer's Stone*--known by everyone in the Wizarding world from the time of his being left at the Dursleys. He is completely unaware of this fact until his first jaunt to Diagon Alley with Hagrid, where our favorite gentle giant tells Harry the whole sordid story of his parents' murder and Harry's subsequent upgrade to celebrity status. He even has an epithet: "the boy who lived." So, on top of finding out that he is a wizard, he is also thrust into a world that is watching him closely and dissecting his every move. Any small mistake becomes a mountain, and this puts more pressure on Harry to *be* the savior and the defeater of Voldemort. Snape's first reaction upon reading Harry's name on the roster, for example, is immediately to pile questions on Harry to which no one in the class but Hermione and, possibly, Malfoy knows the answers. Then he belittles Harry when he fails to answer the questions. Professor Flitwick's reaction is to squeak

and fall off his chair. Harry is also caught between making friends with people who just want to be his friend and knowing which people want to be his friend because he is “the boy who lived.” Thankfully for Harry, that difference is almost immediately obvious when Rowling introduces the characters of Ron and Draco on the train to Hogwarts in the first book in the series.

Harry’s reputation in Hogwarts itself flip-flops throughout the series and especially in the individual books. No matter what Harry does, he is constantly either scrutinized because of something he cannot remember, or is compared to his parents, who were well loved by Hogwarts’ professors. He gets a taste of how hot and cold public opinion is--especially in a microcosm such as Hogwarts--when he and his friends each get fifty points taken off the house points for Gryffindor, and they become pariahs: “From being one of the most popular and admired people at the school, Harry was suddenly the most hated. Even Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs turned on him, because everyone had been longing to see Slytherin lose the house cup” (SS 244). In *The Chamber of Secrets*, Harry’s reputation is used against him as more and more people are petrified after he accidentally reveals that he’s a parseltongue (although he didn’t know that bit of information himself). The ease with which the schoolchildren collectively decided that he was the heir of Slytherin because of this ability showcases just how quickly public opinion about a person--based on a small amount of information and a large amount of rumor--can change. In both *The Goblet of Fire* and *The Order of the Phoenix*, the seesaw of public opinion really kicks into gear. In the fourth book, Harry is made an outcast by almost the entire school, and his unwanted fame even drives Ron away. Only Hermione

stays directly by his side for the entire book. While Ron does eventually get over his dislike after the first task, his reaction to Harry's celebrity status shows how damaging that kind of fame can be to friendships. In both the fourth and fifth books, Harry also experiences a level of hate from the public that he had never experienced before except in very small doses. Most of what drives that hate is the media as well as propaganda from the government itself.

Rita Skeeter is the driving force of public perception from the media in the septet--particularly in *The Goblet of Fire* since that is where she is introduced. Skeeter is exceptionally talented at using what we now refer to as "click-bait" titles and half-truths as well as outright lies to create a story that people will consume. She is particularly talented at finding out who will be the best story and is not afraid to go after people surrounding her target, as we see with the inflammatory story about Hermione and how that story has affected her relationships with people, but especially Mrs. Weasley: "Hedwig didn't return until the end of the Easter holidays. Percy's letter was enclosed in a package of Easter eggs that Mrs. Weasley had sent. Both Harry's and Ron's were the size of dragon eggs and full of homemade toffee. Hermione's, however, was smaller than a chicken egg. Her face fell when she saw it" (549). Depending on how Harry has reacted to her questioning, Rita paints Harry as sympathetic or deplorable in turns. She is a typical paparazzi kind of reporter, tenacious and willing to break the law to get a story, as Hermione finds out before the third task. Rita is a beetle animagus, and Hermione says: "I caught her on the windowsill in the hospital wing. Look very closely, and you'll notice the markings around her antennae are exactly like those foul

glasses she wears.' Harry looked and saw that she was quite right" (728). This power allows Skeeter to gain access to information she would not necessarily have obtained otherwise. It also means she can invade the privacy of her victims. The media in the Wizarding world seems to have a stranglehold on how the public perceives people so that quite a few of our favorite characters — such as Molly Weasley—can be duped and taken in by the blatant lies told by the paper. These lies profoundly damage the people at whom they are directed.

The abuse of public perception is heightened for Harry in *The Order of the Phoenix*, when both the government and the media are working together to try to slander and libel Harry so that people will not believe him when he says Voldemort is back. The motivation is simply that Fudge does not want people to panic and he himself does not want to believe that Voldemort is back. This underhanded strategy works, too, as we can see from the interactions Harry has with the rest of the students, particularly those of his own house: "Harry lay back on his pillows while Ron bustled around the next bed, putting his things away. He felt shaken by the argument with Seamus, whom he had always liked very much. How many more people were going to suggest that he was lying or unhinged?" (220). Harry and those who closely affiliate themselves with him are essentially cast out, and Umbridge, who is put into position in the school by the Ministry to make sure that Harry isn't believed, doesn't help with her own abuse against the students. To stand up for Harry, in this case, is to incite the wrath of the Ministry, which uses Harry's own fame against him. The Ministry uses this identical technique to turn public opinion against creatures and against people who are

descended from them as well as to manipulate public opinion against individuals whom they do not like. We see the Ministry do this sort of undermining with Harry time and time again throughout the septet. Because of this frequent strategy, we can tell that one of the main abusers of non-magical people and magical creatures is the Ministry, which feeds off public opinion.

The magical government in the Harry Potter septet is interesting because how the government functions makes some sense in real life. A lot of the Wizarding government works by reacting to public opinion and influencing it. This dynamic is how every other government in existence operates. Historically speaking, the Wizarding world operates the way it does because of the witch trials and the persecution of magical beings by Muggles. This persecution separated the two societies very early on. Analyzing the abuse that the Ministry heaps on the people of the Wizarding world is tricky because that past persecution is the reason for most of the laws that trouble Muggle-borns until Voldemort takes control of the Ministry. In its seventh chapter, *Harry Potter and History* usefully discusses how the Ministry was created. Here Janice Liedl argues the Wizengamot is based on the Witenagamot, meetings of kings with important subjects who were wise men, or *witan*. The magical government bears vague similarities to the Muggle equivalent with certain governmental positions, such as the Minister, remaining the same. However, whereas the Muggle government in the UK is based in several different buildings, the Ministry of Magic is based in only one. The lack of “rule of law” has also led to the magical government committing many abuses according to Liedl: “[w]hile Muggle governments

became more democratic and accountable over the centuries, the Ministry showed little change from the whimsical policy-making and judgments of medieval times” (169).

This sentiment is echoed in the book *The Politics of Harry Potter*, where Bethany Barratt observes that the magical government seems to be almost entirely bureaucratic in nature. This characteristic “tends to lead to corruption, because of the lack of oversight from outside bodies” (19).

Barratt’s point about the Ministry is noteworthy. The Board of Governors, for example, holds sway over Minister Fudge during his time in office because the Board largely consists of members of prominent families from a high social class. They have lots of money. They hold the seats. They make the decisions. For example, Lucius Malfoy--one of the governors – holds a lot of influence in the government because he has class, money, and power. On numerous occasions, Lucius directly meddles in the affairs of Hogwarts. He shows up in person at Hogwarts in the second book to witness the arrest of Hagrid and the firing of Dumbledore. In the third book, he manipulates the trial of Buckbeak so that there can be no appeal, and so that Buckbeak and Hagrid lose the trial. Overall in the septet, there is no mention of how a Minister is elected to office or how the government works beyond what we are shown at the points where Harry is at the Ministry itself. We particularly do not know how the magical justice system works. Harry’s trial in the fifth book is the most amount of time Rowling spends on the workings of the Ministry and on explaining how the trial itself works.

The magical world’s response to Muggles and Muggle-borns is somewhat outdated but, again, understandable if looked at through the historical lens of how the

Statute of Secrecy came to be. The actions that are taken in the septet against Muggles and Muggle-borns--especially in the seventh book--are either subtly or blatantly abusive by the Wizarding government. The way in which the Ministry classifies humans into four groups--Muggle, Muggle-born, half-blood, and pureblood--allows the Ministry to make certain decisions about laws that benefit different groups of people. Muggles are not necessarily a part of the Wizarding world until either a family has a child who has magic, or they marry someone who has magic, or one of their siblings has magic. However, just because Muggles are not as much a part of the Wizarding world does not mean they are overlooked for abuse by both the government and by public perception. The perception that the Wizarding world has of Muggles ranges from infantilization to ambivalence (at best) to dehumanization and outright hatred (at worst) (Barratt 65). Mr. Weasley is a good example of the infantilization of Muggles: he is absolutely enthralled with Muggle technology, and he even has a collection of plugs and sundry other Muggle "curiosities."

Despite the Weasleys being the titular pro-Muggle family in the septet, Arthur's turns of phrase when it comes to Muggles depicts them as being like cute puppies, whose efforts to make their way in the world are clumsy and confusing, but charming, and so they need to be protected from that which they do not understand. Barratt also makes a good point when she argues that the fascination Arthur has with Muggle technology is "reminiscent of the exoticism often directed toward subjugated peoples under colonialism" (Barratt 66). Arthur's questions-- especially how he asks them-- reflect the first ethnographic inquiries of anthropology in its early days, inquiries

anthropologists today look back on with shame. This perception that Mr. Weasley has of Muggles is set up when we first meet him in Chapter Three of the second book. Even a little before his in-person introduction, Fred comments on how his dad is “crazy about everything to do with Muggles” and how “our shed’s full of Muggle stuff. He [Mr. Weasley] takes it apart, puts spells on it, and puts it back together again” (CS 31). Fred’s comment is added to with the very first thing that Mr. Weasley has to say about Muggles: “Sell them a key that keeps shrinking to nothing so they can never find it when they need it. . . . Of course, it’s very hard to convict anyone because no Muggle would admit their key keeps shrinking--they’ll insist they just keep losing it. Bless them, they’ll go to any lengths to ignore magic, even if it’s staring them in the face” (CS 38). His condescending perception is further shown in the very next chapter when he sits next to Harry to quiz him about anything Muggle. He says it’s “fascinating!” and “ingenious” how Muggles have found so many ways to “[get] along without magic” (CS 43).

Lucius Malfoy and Dolores Umbridge are both examples of ambivalence about and hatred towards Muggles. Both also happen to be prominent figures in the Ministry. Umbridge is the one – in *The Deathly Hallows* – who writes the anti-Muggle pamphlet “Mudbloods and the Dangers They Pose to a Peaceful Pure-Blood Society.” She also helps to implement the registration of Muggle-borns, an action which evokes the registration of Jewish people before and during World War II. And that registration led directly to the infamous Nazi death camps (Barratt 67-68). Muggles and Mudbloods are dehumanized by people such as Malfoy and Umbridge as lesser creatures. So, terms

such as “Mudblood” become a widespread slur in Wizarding society, at least in the UK. The majority of Death Eaters do, in fact, hold this viewpoint, much as the Nazis or the Ku Klux Klan viewed those that they committed violent acts against as being sub-human. To these racists, Muggles and, by extension, Muggle-borns are seen as being of less value than purebloods and half-bloods, and half-bloods are seen as less than purebloods. The more “Muggle” blood there is in your veins, the less “authentic” a wizard or witch you are--despite genetics accurately telling us there is little to no difference between groups of humans. I must assume that this lack of real difference is the same between magicals and non-magicals. Lucius Malfoy’s first appearance marks the beginning of this antagonistic perception of Muggles and those pureblood families who “side” with Muggles. So, he slips Tom Riddle’s diary into Ginny Weasley’s cauldron so she will be at fault for killing Muggle-borns in the school. This act also victimizes her. This single action would get rid of all Muggle-borns in the school and destroy the Weasley family. The racist views of the Malfoys are exacerbated throughout the septet. They culminate in outright terrorism in the seventh book, terrorism Muggles finally begin to take notice of.

The general public and the Wizarding government do not act much better towards magical creatures. There are three attitudes the public holds towards magical creatures. These attitudes have influenced how the government treats magical creatures and have also been influenced by the government. The first attitude is that magical creatures should be treated with the same respect afforded humans. The second attitude is that magical creatures are different from humans but are nevertheless equal. The

third attitude is that any kind of magical creature is inferior and subhuman (Barratt 78). The Wizarding government mostly adheres to the second attitude, but there are points where the government's attitude aligns with the third attitude--even early in the septet. One of the most prominent, "throwaway-line" examples of this attitude is the description of The Fountain of Magical Brethren, which appears in *The Order of the Phoenix*:

A group of golden statues, larger than life-size, stood in the middle of a circular pool. Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air. Grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin, and a house-elf. The last three were all looking adoringly up at the witch and wizard (127).

The description of this statue very neatly describes how most people in the Wizarding world view beings who are not human. By making the centaur, goblin, and house-elf statues subservient to the witch and the wizard, the Ministry is saying that witches and wizards are inherently superior to other magical groups who aren't entirely human or aren't human at all, no matter how sentient those groups may be.

While Rowling does not showcase many instances of discrimination and abuse against magical creatures or even witches or wizards who are *part* magical creature, there are a few notable instances in the septet where she does so. Outside of the obvious werewolf and house-elf discrimination and abuse which crops up the most in the septet, Rowling shows that the effects of having a magical creature as a parent can be detrimental to the social and political standing of the person in question. For example,

Hagrid and Headmistress Olympe Maxime in *The Goblet of Fire* when Rita Skeeter abuses her position as a journalist and exposes their inheritance to the entire Wizarding world as being part giant. Immediately, the Wizarding world looks at Hagrid differently, and Madam Maxime is absolutely horrified by this revelation although she is able to keep her job as Headmistress of Beauxbatons. However, the magical creatures who are--at least from the readers' perspective--the most affected by the magical government and are the most abused by both the government and public perception in two different ways are werewolves and house-elves, both of whom feature prominently in the septet.

Werewolves are first introduced by Rowling in the first book when Harry, Hermione, Neville, and Draco are all serving detention with Hagrid in the Forbidden Forest. Werewolves are only mentioned to induce fear in the students--potentially to make them stick together and not run off--but the introduction sets up an attitude most witches and wizards seem to have towards werewolves in the rest of the septet, often with good reason--as we see in the sixth and seventh books whenever Fenrir Greyback is mentioned. Greyback is the epitome of the "big bad wolf," and explicitly states his favorite people to bite are children (*HBP* 593). Such a view does not help the people's perception of werewolves as functioning members of society. The first sustained encounter Harry has with a werewolf is, however, in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, although he does not initially know he has. Remus Lupin is the werewolf, and he is first described as looking "ill and exhausted. Though quite young, his light brown hair was flecked with gray" (*PA* 74). Being a werewolf but having to hide his condition from the

entire Wizarding world when basically every adult knows the signs to look for to know who is afflicted is obviously wearying to him. Remus gets the same treatment from the Wizarding world as may be expected from someone with his condition in the real world. Historically speaking, wolves and--by extension--werewolves have had a varied reputation throughout the centuries, but by and large the reputation has been primarily bad (Brugger 294-295). The historical precedent in the septet of both Muggles and the Wizarding world painting werewolves in an "evil" light leads to werewolves being classified as beasts and having their own registration and capture squads.

Later in the series, after Remus Lupin is revealed to be a werewolf by Severus Snape, we learn that after Lupin left Hogwarts, anti-werewolf legislation was passed by the Ministry that makes obtaining a job almost impossible if so afflicted (*OP* 302). We are also shown how this legislation has affected Lupin's health through a description when Harry first sees Lupin again after a gap of only two years: "Though still quite young, Lupin looked tired and rather ill; he had more gray hair than when Harry had said good-bye to him, and his robes were more patched and shabbier than ever" (*OP* 47). Because of this legislation implemented by Dolores Umbridge--who is known to be extremely "anti-halfbreed" according to Sirius (*OP* 302)--werewolves such as Lupin are either forced into poverty or forced to take jobs that are beneath the level of work they can accomplish. A third option many werewolves choose is joining Voldemort's forces as they have promised the werewolves retribution against the Ministry. To make matters worse, the anti-werewolf legislation can be directly linked to Lupin being outed by Snape. This revelation sparked an outcry from parents, and because public

perception was so negative the legislation passed.

The first introduction of house-elves in the septet is not a happy one. Dobby, the house-elf who pops up consistently throughout the series, is introduced in *The Chamber of Secrets*, where he has been intercepting Harry's mail in order to make Harry not want to go back to Hogwarts. He wants to protect Harry from a danger he says is coming to Hogwarts. The way Dobby acts during this scene is alarming to say the least. He frequently self-harms and self-punishes for going against the orders of his master (13-19). Dobby's introduction ushers in the concept of slavery to the Wizarding world. Immediately, the bright, colorful world from the first book grows much darker. There are a few different ways house-elves are treated by the Wizarding world, but the most damaging of them is the abusive and indifferent treatment. By adding house-elves and the concept of slavery to the septet, Rowling shows early on that rot exists in the Wizarding world, and the plight of the house-elves is an excellent way to show how magical creatures and power structures can be abused. The abuse of Dobby is both psychological and physical. Just from Dobby's first meeting, we know that he has never been asked to sit down by a witch or wizard, never been treated like an equal, never been able even to indicate he does not like his family without having to punish himself physically by, for example, shutting his ears in an oven door. He can never leave his situation until he is freed or dies. He can never even talk about any plots his masters might be fomenting without punishing himself (CS 13-16).

Just from Dobby's introduction, there are plenty of reasons why we are shown house-elves as slaves is morally reprehensible. For example, through Dobby we can see

there are no rules in place to ensure house-elves are not physically or psychologically abused by their owners. Additionally, the attitude that the Wizarding world as a whole has towards house-elves is deeply troubling and evokes the kind of attitude slavers in the antebellum South had towards their slaves. This attitude is especially powerful when we are brought face-to-face with that point of view through Ron, whose family had (up until the fourth book) been very forward-looking and open-minded about equality for different peoples and creatures: “‘Hermione--open your ears,’ said Ron loudly. ‘They. Like. It. They *like* being enslaved!’” (GF 224). This quotation helps to show how prevalent, indeed ubiquitous, the sentiment is that house-elves enjoy their enslavement. If the Weasleys have that sort of attitude, then everyone else does too. Hermione seems to be the only one to disagree in the septet (with the exception of Dumbledore up to a point). Steven W. Patterson concurs when he states that “if house-elves were real, then we would owe to them every moral protection that we would owe to other human beings, because like us, they have the ability to reason” (109-110). Herein lies the explanation for house-elves still being enslaved by witches and wizards, why they are allowed to be treated poorly without any support systems in place: the Wizarding world is indifferent to their plight. Like the werewolves, house-elves have always been treated this way, and so how they are treated is not seen as wrong by the public.

The best example of a house-elf treated with indifference and neglect is Kreacher, the house-elf of the Black family, a being whom Sirius thoroughly despises. The feeling is very obviously mutual on Kreacher’s part as he does whatever he can to overturn or

foil the plans of the Order of the Phoenix. So, he cleans out Grimmauld Place of dark artifacts and, in the end, helps Voldemort's plan come to fruition. Dumbledore's explanation to Harry perfectly sums up why Kreacher acted in the way he did, and also helps to demonstrate the negative impact indifference can have on groups of people who are enslaved or in similar situations to the house-elves: "Sirius did not hate Kreacher," said Dumbledore. "He regarded him as a servant unworthy of much interest or notice. Indifference and neglect often do much more damage than outright dislike. . . ." And, Dumbledore continues: "Sirius was not a cruel man, he was kind to house-elves in general. He had no love for Kreacher, because Kreacher was a living reminder of the home Sirius had hated" (OP 833-834). Kreacher acts as he does because of his resentment of Sirius, their shared past, and the way that he is currently treated by Sirius. While Kreacher is not punished as Dobby is, Dumbledore is right in saying that the indifference and neglect Sirius showed were as damaging to Kreacher as the Malfoys' mistreatment was to Dobby, albeit to a different degree.

Despite its length and the number of different kinds of abuses it has delved into, this essay has truly only scratched the surface of the nature of the abuse in the Harry Potter septet. It has focused on the nature of abuse aimed at Harry, with some quick side-explorations of other characters such as Neville and Remus, but there is so much more to the abuse in Rowling's narrative. Its discussion of the treatment of non-magicals and non-humans has been brief, but it has drawn attention to how masterfully J. K. Rowling has shown children how they should *not* be treated in or out of the home. It has shown how subtle some abuses can be when those abuses are systematic and

systemic--a regular, mundane part of life.

What Makes Harry Potter a Memorable Character?

Jack Butto

Creating a memorable character is one of the most difficult things to do in fiction. Harry Potter evolves in the series as a real person would. He is flawed and, yet, heroic. He makes world-changing feats believable. That alone makes him memorable.

Making a good character isn't easy. Making a memorable character is often one of the hardest challenges any author faces. Part of the achievement depends on the author's writing ability, but it is also important to remember memorability is entirely subjective. Even if a character or series has gained international popularity, this subjective outlook still holds true. Do I think Harry Potter is worth all this memorability and tremendous praise throughout the years? To put it simply, yes. As to why I find him memorable, well, here in this essay I'll be breaking down what I consider Harry's best traits and special moments to show why I think he deserves his place in literary history.

Before I begin, I must first list a few criteria for what makes a character memorable: personality; flaws; and impact. These aren't in any particular order of importance, so don't be surprised if I start with one subject and then jump to another. I would add appearance, but appearances can be superficial at times and sometimes lackluster when the standards I have laid out are not met. These are the qualities I see as the most interesting in any fictional narrative. Please note that many characters, even titular characters, do not always fit these criteria, but that doesn't necessarily mean they

are bad characters to begin with. Rather, those who do meet these standards I find worthy of being remembered instead of being just part of a one-time reading.

Let's start with special, impactful moments. Impactful moments usually range from personal achievements to disastrous events, or they simply mean being in the right place at the right time (or, in some cases, wrong time and wrong place). Harry Potter manages to fulfill all of these circumstances beautifully, with each moment being neither too long nor too short so that a reader is put off.

The first impactful moment is in the first chapter of the first book. At the end of that chapter, Harry's left on the Dursleys' doorstep by Dumbledore, Hagrid, and McGonagall (SS 14-17). This moment is a peculiar example, perhaps, because Harry hasn't done anything yet--he's just a baby after all--but it's the buildup to his introduction that I find interesting. Up to this point of introduction, we have two perspectives for the start of the series: one from the Muggles' side with the Dursleys, and the other from the wizards such as Dumbledore. The latter starts the buildup by alluding to something both horrible and wonderful that has happened involving Harry. The chapter doesn't exactly explain how or why; it just lays the foundation for the rest of the story, and builds up to the most memorable line of any of the opening chapters in the septet: "'To Harry Potter – the boy who lived!'" (SS 17). That line makes all the buildup even more powerful as it leaves me, especially when I was a kid, wondering just who Harry Potter is. So much so that I remember when I was young eagerly starting the next chapter wanting to know more. A good memorable start for a lasting legacy.

Another particular impactful moment is when Harry completes the Tri-Wizard tournament and faces Voldemort in an epic confrontation. The fight is mostly one sided with Voldemort tormenting the boy, but what really makes the scene memorable is how Harry is able to perform the spell *Priori Incantatem* (GF 665-669). This act allows everyone Voldemort killed recently to return back as shades, not ghosts, and distract the lord of darkness long enough for Harry to escape with Cedric Diggory's body and the titular Goblet of Fire. It's an intense scene, and one filled with a certain wonderment as if seeing a miracle performed when all hope seems lost. To me, this is the true climax of the book (even though there are more chapters afterwards) not only because it is an intense struggle, but also because it is one that shows Harry isn't yet the best wizard ever. He's young; he's still inexperienced; he's just a boy who has just watched his friend die by the wand of the vilest wizard in the series. Even other scenes in the septet, such as the eventual climax of the series, can't top this grand confrontation.

Next, I want to talk about personality. In any sort of fiction, having characters with many traits, good or bad, is something I always look out for. Eccentrics, lunatics, humble souls, self-important snobs, and so much more, they all have the potential to be memorable in their own right. And in the septet, there are plenty of characters who have so much personality that it's often a war to see who can keep my attention the longest. For Harry himself, he's what I call an evolving-hero personality. What this means is that the personality he started out with naturally changes over time, much like any child would as they grow older.

At the start of the series, Harry's rather . . . well not exactly shy, but more like someone trying not to offend anyone too much. This trait is mainly due to the Dursleys mistreating him for any "slight" they perceive against them. As a result, Harry becomes very mindful of what he says and does to others. However, the moment he's shown actual kindness and compassion, such as with Hagrid or with his friends, Harry starts to stand up for himself a bit more. One of my favorite examples of this evolution is when he confronts Draco Malfoy during their second meeting (SS 108-109). It's a relatively small confrontation to the more tremendous ones throughout the series, with Harry only refusing to be Malfoy's friend and defending Ron's honor, but it shows a vital development in Harry's character: he no longer forces himself to be meek. Rather he's taking a stand, minor though it is, against those who would otherwise previously have bullied him. I see this moment as Rowling laying down the foundational stones of Harry's character as he constantly evolves to be a better person rather than staying stagnant or becoming a cliché.

One of Harry's greatest personal traits is his ability to be an all-loving hero. By which I mean, he doesn't hold any grudges, doesn't try to act superior to anyone, and always see himself as lesser to other powerful wizards such as Dumbledore. This ability is essential as it allows him to be charismatic enough to get the right people together to fight Voldemort when others are too afraid to stand against the dark lord. One particular example of his humble nature is when he gives his Tri-Wizard winnings to the Weasley twins at the end of *The Goblet of Fire* (732-734). It's not just because it's a very generous gesture from Harry that I find it endearing (especially as both of the

twins lost everything they owned on betting before Harry's generous act), but it's the way he sees himself at that point in time. While Harry technically won the tournament, he doesn't see himself as having done so. He thinks Cedric Diggory is the true champion and, so, he doesn't deserve the prize in the end. It's that humility that really helps solidify his nature as a hero instead of a glory hound or someone vain.

However, Harry isn't flawless. As he is the protagonist, it's only natural Rowling would include a few hiccups in his personality and character. Otherwise, he would be quite dull and boring. These flaws help make Harry feel "normal": he has some real-world qualities which a reader can understand or identify with. These, in turn, highlight his more heroic nature. One particular flaw which sticks out to me is that, despite passing most of his classes, Harry is pretty "book dumb." He's certainly not stupid and is competent for the most part in his studies, but it's clear that he's not as good as, say, Hermione or even Neville in certain subjects. He passes his courses each year, but he doesn't quite excel as some would think he would given his reputation. If I had to guess, he fails truly to apply himself to his subject because he has to deal with each new mystery/adventure he encounters in successive books.

This need to undertake adventures ultimately causes Harry great difficulty as others take advantage of his lack of education. For example, during *The Goblet of Fire* Barty Crouch Jr. (who was impersonating Professor Moody at the time) manipulates several people into giving Harry key information for the trials in the Tri-Wizard Tournament (676-679). Crouch Jr. does so because he knows Harry won't actively seek out the information he needs to win the event, so he (Crouch Jr.) has to make sure it

falls into Harry's lap – otherwise, his masterplan would fall apart. If Harry had been brighter, perhaps he would've avoided being repeatedly manipulated in such a way – especially in the fifth book.

One of the biggest flaws in Harry's character is ironically also one of his greatest strengths: his stubborn refusal to leave his friends or family in danger. This trait wouldn't normally be such a flaw in other heroic settings, but in the septet it's more of a double-edged sword. An early example of this stubborn heroism is when he and Ron go to save Hermione from the troll in the first book (SS 175-179). There is no question that they ultimately save Hermione from a horrible fate, but in their haste to save her it never occurs to them that they have had no experience in battling such a monster before. They are, after all, just kids who start out their narrative lives at Hogwarts. If they had had a teacher with them, they could've achieved the same result (saving their friend) without the inevitable backlash for their brazen actions. Thankfully, Hermione is able to save them from professorial wrath by taking the blame. She adds that the boys saved her life at the most crucial moment when the teachers were busy elsewhere. This kind of heroism is both lauded and condemned by the faculty. Regardless, it gives the reader a good insight into Harry's unwavering heroism. Unfortunately, the display of this sort of heroism becomes a trend throughout his life. He goes into dangerous situations recklessly. He does so sometimes without a real plan, and this lack of preparation leads to disastrous results and always gets someone else into trouble. There is, for example, the trap the Death Eaters set to lure Harry to the Ministry of Magic. That trap ultimately gets Sirius Black killed (OP 805-806).

Ultimately, however, all three of these special traits build Harry Potter from just a regular child-hero into a memorable character worthy of praise and recognition around the world. Like pieces of a puzzle, details build one upon another, and they bond to strengthen what a great protagonist can become in the right hands. And I have to thank J. K. Rowling for being that author. Otherwise, I wouldn't have enjoyed the Harry Potter series as much as I have. A good character can make a difference to a story. Be it a good hero or a memorable villain. And for a protagonist, such as Harry Potter, being memorable is something I consider a great achievement.

Memorability is one of the hardest things any character, or even story, can achieve. It's easy to say that one person or work is memorable, but it's another thing to survive as history, even for a few decades. To me, Harry Potter himself somehow does that to an extraordinary degree despite being conceived of by Rowling many years ago. There is something very charming about Harry throughout each book, something which readers find endearing. He proves to be just as heroic as others say he is. He just needs to mold himself into that role. Growing pains. He starts out a mere child, but trials and adversity, even tragedy, help to shape him from some prophesied boy into a hero who can stand his ground against the most evil of wizards. Yes, there are others who show considerable qualities as Harry does, such as Neville, Ron, or Hermione, but none holds a candle to him. Could they have stood in his place all the times he faced the Dark Lord? Could they have bested one of the most powerful wizards, not once but many times? Yes, they help him out a lot, but only Harry himself can claim such truly world-moving feats. Harry is that remarkable and winning a character.

The Production of a Functioning Society

Mackenzie Lindeman

The Wizarding and Muggle worlds both share components of that which makes a society function: education, transportation, government (among others).

In a world filled with greed, hubris, and corruption, drawing the line between those who are different from us has become all too normal. It should come as no surprise that humans have tended to draw lines one by one. These eventually become a box. This box represents the human mind. A box is a notorious shape because it is confined by four sides, and the inside becomes filled with elements of bigotry: the attitude that you are better than someone else, that you are superior to them. Those elements may have been placed subconsciously or consciously; the human mind is peculiar in nature. But there is nothing normal about adding discriminatory elements into anyone's repertoire; that is an inventory that doesn't need to be shelved.

Throughout J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, consisting of seven books, recurring emphasis is placed on the idea that all humans are innately the same, but sameness does not mean a lack of originality. It means there is commonality. Commonality most certainly does not rule out conflict, but commonality is a greater force that is worth looking into. Commonalities should be celebrated, not feared nor rejected. After all, it's only natural for humans to want to fit in, rather than to stand out. Rowling represents this notion, that all humans are the same foundationally, through her depiction of

wizards and Muggles throughout the septet. A wizard is a man who is skilled in occult art, or magic, and a Muggle is a person with no ability to use magic. At the level of denotation, wizards and Muggles appear to be the exact opposite of one another; however, they are more alike than different. Without the depiction of both the Wizarding and Muggle worlds created by Rowling throughout the septet, there would be no comparison to make.

The commonalities between the Muggles and wizards could be variously analyzed, but for the purposes of this essay I will be looking at their shared elements of a functioning society. These include educational institutions, transportation, and an established government. These three elements are worth looking into, for they foster development, communication, and stability. While each category may be structured differently for both wizards and Muggles, there is no superiority between the two worlds; they are not inherently different but, rather, inherently the same, and any conflict that emerges between the two worlds is often resolved through the modification of Muggle memory. Through my analysis, I am supporting Rowling's own comment that her books are an "'argument for tolerance, a prolonged plea for an end to bigotry'" (Barratt 4). Both worlds have their own version of magic--the behavior or act of wise and brilliant people.

The establishment of educational institutions is a key factor in a functioning society, for such institutions teach people how to become better citizens through self-development and personal growth. As Martin Luther King Jr. put it in an article in *Maroon Tiger* (Morehouse College's literary journal) in early 1947: "The function of

education is . . . is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically” and, later in the same essay, “Intelligence plus character--that is the goal of true education.” While the Wizarding and Muggle worlds have different educational policies, they both offer an education. For wizards in the Potter series, Hogwarts is the well-known residential school of Witchcraft and Wizardry. According to Birgit Wiedl, Hogwarts was undeniably founded on a “separation between magical and nonmagical folk” that had not existed before; it is here one begins to see the drawing of lines in an effort to separate those who are different from us (96).

While the wizards may have tried to create a separation between the two worlds, no amount of magic can separate the idea of education: to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Just as Hogwarts expected their students, such as Harry himself, to use his intelligence and character to learn new concepts and take qualifying exams, Muggle schools follow suit: “Harry had almost forgotten that the exam results were still to come, but come they did. To their great surprise, both he and Ron passed with good marks” (SS 307). A wizard education at Hogwarts is seven years long; however, it is possible to quit before the full seven years are completed at Hogwarts. So, Fred and George Weasley leave school part way through their seventh year in *The Order of the Phoenix*: ““I think we’ve outgrown full-time education,”” the latter brother says (674). It is also possible to get expelled from Hogwarts, which would result in wizard training being incomplete. Harry and Ron specifically love to test the limits of this one.

Dumbledore tells Harry and Ron, after they crash the flying car into the Whomping Willow: ““I must also warn you that if you do anything like this again, I will have no

choice but to expel you” (CS 81). Similarly, Muggles may also opt out of completing high school and can be expelled from a school for inappropriate behavior. Minor differences between the two schooling systems can be chalked up to a Muggle education typically beginning at the age of five or six whereas a wizard education doesn’t start until the age of eleven. Additionally, most Muggle education involves a daily commute with the student returning home after a day of classes. A wizard education has students boarding at the school. In that way, it is similar to the typical Muggle-college experience. Rowling alludes to this detail with a minor piece of stage business after the Sorting Hat experience has been described in detail: “Percy [Weasley] directed the girls through one door to their dormitory and the boys through another” (SS 130). And of course, there is the distinct pre-modern era look to Hogwarts. Most Muggle educational institutions look quite different. So, Rowling offers this precise description of Hogwarts’ entrance: a “pair of magnificent wrought iron gates, flanked with stone columns topped with winged boars” (PA 87). Hogwarts has an eerie style; it lures those who are filled with curiosity.

As for the educational methods used in the two worlds, let’s begin with Hogwarts. Hogwarts is a school which fosters an uncertain, surprising, and relevant education. Professor Lupin teaches problem-solving skills and Professor Moody challenges the students to be prepared for the unexpected. Hogwarts has an applied, hands-on curriculum that promotes curiosity; for example, at the end of the first book Dumbledore offers Harry the opportunity to ask him any questions he wants and continues: “I shall answer your questions unless I have a very good reason not to” (SS

298). Dumbledore knows Harry is curious at heart and his inquisitiveness is “the invisible backbone to the story” (Engel and Levin 19). The primary courses at Hogwarts include Astronomy, Charms, Herbology, History of Magic, Potions, and Transfiguration (Rosenberg 11). The core subjects in the Muggle world include Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and History. In the wizard world, the “parallel is evident in that magic serves as a substitute for natural science” (Kalish and Kalish 61). While there are evident differences between the two worlds’ concept of education, with the Wizarding world appearing more “old-school,” one should acknowledge that the differences are only superficial. Ultimately, both the Wizarding and Muggle worlds offer students the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and cognitive development as well as to expand their repertoire to be applicable to the real world—even if the methodology behind it may vary or even be up for debate. To produce intelligence and character is the goal of true education, and it is met by both worlds’ educational standards. In this way, Rowling shows that these standards are not inherently different but, rather, inherently the same.

Establishing effective means of transportation is key to a functioning society, for it enables people to overcome social barriers and allows for communication and the exchange of ideas. Arthur C. Clarke once wrote (in 1968 and earlier): “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.” Falling under the category of advanced technology is ways of transportation. While the Wizarding and Muggle worlds have various means of getting from one place to another, they do both offer a way to do it: each world has their own version of magic. Transportation isn’t just about

the transportation of people; it can also include the technology that helps get a package or product from point A to destination B.

When it comes to transportation in the world of Harry Potter, it is undoubtedly exciting. The first types of travel readers are introduced to in the series is flying. Various ways of flying throughout the septet include thestrals, broomsticks, flying carpets, flying motorcycles, and flying cars. In the first novel, Rubeus Hagrid arrives fashionably on “a huge motorcycle,” which “fell out of the air and landed on the road in front of them [McGonagall and Dumbledore]” (SS 14). In the Wizarding world, there are other ways to get around besides flying. These include the floo network, the toilet network, a vanishing cabinet, portkeys, and apparating. As for traveling on the ground, there is the Hogwarts Express, the Knight Bus, and Ministry cars. When wizards don’t want to travel themselves to deliver a message or package, they opt for sending an owl, a bird traditionally associated with magic. In a letter from Dumbledore to Harry, the former writes: “Term begins on September 1. We await your owl by no later than July 31” (SS 51). Owls are such an essential part of wizard communication that students attending Hogwarts are required to bring one. As for Muggles, they typically travel by vehicle (car, bus, train, lorry, van, or motorbike). So, the Dursley family (with Harry in tow) desperately tries to evade the summons to Hogwarts: “Ten minutes later they had wrenched their way through the boarded-up doors [of their house] and were in the car, speeding toward the highway” (SS 41). Even though the Muggles can’t teleport or travel by fireplace, it is a Wizarding-world form of transportation nonetheless, and it has been advancing at an exponential rate. When Muggles don’t want to make the

commute to deliver a birthday card or an important message, they can use the postal service or technology to send an email digitally. When Harry is living with the Dursleys he considers the former as a means of communication: “he was going to wait for the postman on the corner of Privet Drive” (SS 39). While there are evident differences between the two worlds’ ways of transportation, the differences are only superficial, and each world provides a way for social barriers to be overcome. Ultimately, both the Wizarding and Muggle worlds have advanced technology as demonstrated through transportation. As a result, both worlds have their own version of magic. So, wizards and Muggles are not inherently different but, rather, inherently the same.

The establishment of a government is key to a functioning society because it creates social and economic security. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Swiss philosopher of the mid-eighteenth century, once said government exists to secure agreement between the people and its leaders in order to carry out “the execution of the laws and the maintenance of liberty, both civil and political.” While the Wizarding and Muggle worlds have varying ideas of what a government looks like, both worlds attempt to find a form of association which would protect them. In the Wizarding world and magical community of Britain, the Ministry of Magic serves as a form of government throughout the septet. While the Ministry’s employees don’t appear to be an elected body, the post of Minister is stated to be an elected position from which its holder may be sacked or resign. As Cornelius Fudge remarks in the midst of a crisis: “My dear Prime Minister, you can’t honestly think I’m still Minister for Magic after all this? I was sacked three days ago! The whole Wizarding community has been screaming for my resignation for

a fortnight'" (*HBP* 15). There are also a variety of departments within the Wizarding government, such as the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, the Department of Magical Accidents and Catastrophes, and the Department of Magical Transportation. Through the use of spells, charms, and magic, the Wizarding world attempts to keep the two worlds separate. To this end, it creates the International Statute of Wizarding Secrecy, which forbids Muggles to know anything about magic, and it erases Muggle memory when needed. Again, it is here that one can see the drawing of lines in an effort to separate those who are different from us. As for the Muggle government, the Prime Minister serves as the central authority and the monarch serves as the head, more symbolically than anything else. Similar to the Wizarding world, the Muggle government has an organized set of departments, each with a minister at its head. While there are evident differences between the two worlds' concepts of what a government should look like, the world of politics is never an easy business. It is evident that neither world can dispense with protection, and both worlds share elements of established governmental control even in the presence of magic.

The relationship between magic and the nonmagical world has then been established by an analysis of forms of education, transportation, and government. The Muggle and Wizarding worlds used to be one, and they still are. Without the narrative of the Muggles, the Wizarding world would be incomplete; without the narrative of the Wizarding world, the Muggles world would be incomplete. One needs the other. While the Wizarding world may believe it is superior to Muggles (based simply on the belief that they are), they aren't. The Wizarding world appears to draw lines, one-by-one, that

form a box around their magical and secretive society, and it fails to acknowledge that the line between the two worlds is permeable. Magic has not made the wizards immune to the necessary elements of a functioning society; that is, the need for a way to promote intelligence, overcome social barriers, and create a common force. Without wizards or Muggles, these functioning societies would cease to exist, for they are a result of wise and brilliant people. While the elements of each world look very different, they are so only superficially and organizationally. The differences show each world's uniqueness and originality. Below the surface, there is commonality. Magic in our world doesn't always come in the form of flying cars or schools with stone columns topped by winged boars. Magic can also be found in the simplicities of life, and life itself---the art of being human *is* magic.

Sex, Sexuality, and Love in J. K. Rowling's Septet

Charlene Ducut

J. K. Rowling's mission in the seven-book series is to promote tolerance. With that goal in mind, she creates a story that shows the beginning stages of sexual attraction and young romance, but the story is overtly heteronormative and fails to explore the world from an LGBTQ+ perspective. Acceptance and not merely tolerance should be the goal.

When describing the Harry Potter septet, most readers characterize J. K. Rowling's magical literature as a commentary on important issues such as race, social class, and justice. However, a majority of readers would likely neglect to mention an important topic – sex. Rowling's usage of the word "sex" is non-existent, and the act of sex is itself limited. Specifically, sex is kept behind closed doors and is not a main focus in the septet. Although Rowling actively chooses to limit it, the Harry Potter series demonstrates certain ideas about teenage sexuality, attraction, and adult relationships, and these provoke a conversation about Rowling's heteronormative choices in the Wizarding world.

Why does Rowling choose to limit the act of sex in her septet? Although Rowling has stated she did not plan her target audience, Rowling chooses to write her story featuring a young, prepubescent hero. Harry, in the first book, is described as eleven-years-old when he first discovers his magical heritage. This description means that a young, eleven-year-old would identify with the characters or find interest in the septet.

Culturally, the topic of sex education has been deeply argued. When is the right time to teach these adult concepts? Surely, Harry's age is a perfect middle; Harry is around the age where most preteens get curious. Sexuality does not appear out of nowhere. According to the "The Sexual Development and Education of Preschool Children: Knowledge and Opinions from Doctors and Nurses," although the topic of sex is kept separate from childhood, sexuality starts the day a baby is born (Kurtuncu 208). Adolescence marks a person's acquisition of knowledge related to sexuality; attitudes about sex change due to environmental factors, one's thoughts, and perceptions (Kurtuncu 208). Like most concepts such as use of language or morality, adults have the responsibility to teach and guide the young as they encounter these perceptions and ideas.

Rowling's active choice to limit sex in the septet stems from the responsibility of an author; most parents would not have their children read about mature, sexual themes. Rowling chooses not to guide her audience to develop their own perceptions of sex. Rather, she expects its natural development as her audience ages. Rowling's expectation can demonstrate why as the septet continues, word choice, organization, and sentence structures become more advanced and why certain themes are introduced.

This attitude of gatekeeping on Rowling's part is not a surprise. A majority of parents or guardians choose to gatekeep sex education due to their beliefs and/or their perceptions of their children; some are motivated through religion while others simply believe teaching sex education is irrelevant: children are unable to reproduce; thus, sex

education is not needed. Most children are not expected to have an interest in sex around Harry's age, but, according to CDC data, most Americans have lost their virginity by 17 years of age (Fortenbury). Rowling's audience, at the time of *The Sorcerer's Stone*, is then six years too young in experience. By catering to the parent's or guardian's wishes, Rowling establishes credibility. More parents or guardians will be inclined to purchase her books because they have deemed Rowling as trustworthy and appropriate in her choices.

Furthermore, Rowling's goal to teach other messages is more significant to her mission. Rowling in a 2006 interview stated, "'The *Potter* books in general are a prolonged argument for tolerance, a prolonged plea for an end to bigotry'" (Tait). In order to successfully argue for tolerance, Rowling must focus on other concepts such as race, gender, and social class rather than developing sex-related concepts. Certainly, it can be argued that there is bigotry related to sexuality; however, Rowling desires to steer away from teenage romance as the septet's focus. Teenage romance can often shift the audience away from the story by disrupting its focus; romance takes time to build and requires dedication. This conscious choice characterizes why Rowling's plot mentions sex very little and any mentions occur towards the end of the septet: her audience and characters are least worried about sex and have other anxieties of their own. In the audience's case, most are more worried about what will happen to the characters. In their real lives, most eleven-year-olds have the same worries as Harry during his first year such as fitting in, making friends, and adapting to a new school-setting (in real life, middle school). In the story itself, the characters are focused on

defeating the looming threat of Voldemort. Most are worried about their lives and are faced with responsibilities. In this case, Harry is met with the greatest journey of all. Rowling, however, does mention briefly topics related to sexuality such as crushes and attraction, both of which are seen in teenage and adult relationships. Rowling emphasizes the connection of love and the importance of mutual attraction which can lead to sexual relationships.

One of the first instances of attraction for Harry is when he meets Cho Chang, an older Ravenclaw Quidditch Seeker. Harry's first meeting with Cho occurs in the third book, *The Prisoner of Azkaban*:

The Ravenclaw team, dressed in blue, were already standing in the middle of the field. Their Seeker, Cho Chang, was the only girl on their team. She was shorter than Harry by about a head, and Harry couldn't help noticing, nervous as he was, that she was extremely pretty. She smiled at Harry as the teams faced each other behind their captains, and he felt a slight lurch in the region of his stomach that he didn't think had anything to do with nerves (259).

Harry's body language, represented through his nervousness, displays a form of attraction. Attraction for most people begins with the assessment of looks; Harry notes that Cho is "extremely pretty," meaning Harry acknowledges his fondness for her. Scientifically, attraction begins in the brain. Based on the research studies led by Dr. Helen Fisher at Rutgers, romantic love can be explained in three ways: lust, attraction, and attachment (Wu). Depending on the stage of love, certain hormones are released.

Lust, characterized as the desire to have sex, has the evolutionary purpose of reproduction (Wu). The brain stimulates testosterone and estrogen from the sex organs (the testes and ovaries) to excite both partners (Wu). In Harry's case of attraction, the brain fires the control-reward center. The brain produces dopamine (a hormone released when we do pleasurable activities) and norepinephrine (a hormone responsible for the fight- or-flight response) (Wu). Attachment then allows couples to stay together longer. The brain releases the hormones oxytocin and vasopressin to ensure a bond has been established and will stay established (Wu). Harry, for the most part, does not experience lust, but has a similar response, which is attraction. Harry further demonstrates his attraction when he asks Cho to the Yule Ball in the fourth book, *The Goblet of Fire*. Although Harry's request is rejected, the fourth book demonstrates a turning point for all the characters involved; the trio (Harry, Hermione, and Ron) experience their first instances of love and attraction. These mark the beginnings of puberty and an opening of the gates of sexual attraction and desire.

The only instance or mention of sex in the septet relates to a biological circumstance: some adult couples have children. One example of an adult couple with children is the Weasley family. Specifically, the Weasley family consists of nine people: Arthur and Molly Weasley are the parents; William, Charles, Percy, Fred, George, Ronald, and Ginevra are their children. Rowling, as expected, does not go into detail about the sexual aspects of this biological circumstance; however, a knowledgeable reader can infer that Arthur and Molly have had a persistent sexual relationship.

Rowling, as with her teenage couples, focuses more on the emotional than the sexual aspects of love.

This decision makes sense. Rowling's main objective is to promote tolerance against bigotry, and love is the best power to defeat it. Bigotry is characterized as an attachment towards a prejudiced belief and can represent hatred. Love, whether it is represented by friendship, teenage relationships, or adult relationships, allows the strength in numbers and unity to combat the evil forces of bigotry. Rowling's choices in her pairings, however, can serve as a problem because she overwhelmingly chooses heteronormativity, and that choice suppresses diversity. Sexuality, then, can be characterized in Rowling's septet as a heteronormative environment, one which lacks the representation of different sexualities.

Similarly, if readers were asked to point out any queer characters, they would be unable to give a definitive answer. Rowling's decision to keep the Wizarding world heteronormative might be related to timing and marketing. In the 90s, when the septet began to be published, LGBTQ+ representation was limited. Rowling, wanting to be a successful writer, followed particular patterns to ensure success such as focusing on a male hero and limiting controversial topics related to the LGBTQ+ community. More recently, Rowling has indicated the existence of different queer characters such as Dumbledore and Grindelwald. Rowling states, "Their relationship was incredibly intense. It was passionate, and it was a love relationship" (Damshenas). Rowling addresses the nature of their relationship in the interview: Dumbledore and Grindelwald are lovers with a sexual relationship. She also claims, ". . . I'm less

interested in the sexual side--though I believe there is a sexual dimension to this relationship--than I am in the sense of the emotions they felt for each other, which ultimately is the most fascinating thing about all human relationships'" (Damshenas). Rowling, during a time of greater sexual freedom, still chooses a more conservative approach towards relationships. Rowling's interest encompasses the emotions of relationship development rather than its sexual aspects. Rowling's interest in emotional bonding is seen through other themes such as abuse, friendship, and unity. Harry's orphaned background creates a lack of emotional bonding with his biological family, but that bonding is then fulfilled by friendship. Rowling demonstrates what different types of emotional relationships can do for us, and she emphasizes these rather than sexual relationships.

While this representation is a positive step forward, Rowling's published books still represent the heteronormative dominance of the Wizarding world. This dominance is seen through the establishment of straight couples and certain gender roles. In the Epilogue (titled "Nineteen Years Later") of the final book in the septet, *The Deathly Hallows*, all of Rowling's couples are straight, all have offspring of their own. This setup re-establishes the unity of a nuclear family. Families such as the Dursleys represent the gender roles present in Rowling's time: husbands are the expected breadwinners while wives take care of domestic affairs. Rowling, desiring to portray diversity, actually retraces common ideas and themes. Diversity isn't exactly celebrated in the septet.

Our world itself views heteronormative relationships as the default. Most media represent heteronormative relationships and assume them to be the norm. This

problematic notion can create an uncomfortable space for those who do not identify with this “default.” When one promotes heteronormative relationships as the norm, one erases the spectrum of sexuality and gender identity. Considering heteronormativity in this way can create space for prejudice and bigotry, the very things Rowling seeks to eliminate.

It is fair to assume that the septet does not feature queer relationships and transgender characters; there are no obvious signs. Rowling’s characters exhibit a comfort in gender and in their heteronormative sexuality. Certain characters, such as those who are transgender, do not exist. Although some readers will not identify within the LGBTQ+ community, it is highly unlikely that all readers will identify with heteronormativity. One of the bestselling aspects of Rowling’s septet is Rowling’s ability to write relatable characters such as Harry, Hermione, and Ron. Readers, worldwide, can find characteristics and traits that represent them when reading about these characters. However, it can be discouraging and disheartening for those within the LGBTQ+ community when there is a lack of representation. Some might say Dumbledore and Grindelwald’s relationship is enough representation, but those within the community desire more. This request should be met with empathy, yet most media neglect to mention the LGBTQ+ community. Stories follow the same tropes, which creates a lackluster narrative and a pattern of disappointment. Those within the queer community simply seek to relate to a hero who is just like them.

Overall, Rowling’s septet lacks the mention of sex. Any mention of sex or sexuality is kept private; only knowledgeable readers, by reading very carefully, can

connect sex to certain characters. Much of Rowling's focus is on attraction such as Harry's crush on Cho Chang. However, these budding elements are what lead to mature, sexual relationships. Rowling not only demonstrates this movement by pairing beloved characters with one another, but also emphasizes a heteronormativity that mimics Rowling's past environment and our current future. One might ask, "Is the Harry Potter septet, then, a great representation of sex and sexuality?" The answer depends on whom you ask. For most cisgender and heterosexual people, Harry Potter can represent the triumphs of love. For those who do not identify as cisgender and/or heterosexual, they might feel the series lacks representation because of its heteronormative predictability. All in all, despite these challenges and the lack of sexual content, Rowling demonstrates that love is the greatest power of all. Love can end all forms of bigotry, and this achievement can lead to tolerance, or--much better--acceptance.

Good versus Evil

Melanie Brice

Evil comes in many guises in the Harry Potter series. Some are obvious; some insidious. The battle between good and evil is complicated because it shows up in the narrative in so many different ways, both large and small. Above all, J. K. Rowling sees evil as a force that must be resisted.

Impossible odds, daring escapades, and Good standing resolute against Evil. These are the ingredients in a literary recipe baked to perfection in adrenaline-fueled battles and fantastic feats. In J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, these are all present. Any fan knows of the trials and tribulations Harry and his friends go through in order to defeat Lord Voldemort. Still, these are not the only ways to portray good versus evil, and Rowling recognizes the battle through smaller, just as meaningful, struggles within the Wizarding world. Hermione exemplifies the battle against evil with her dedication to the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare (S.P.E.W.), first mentioned in *The Goblet of Fire*. Hermione is battling a perhaps more insidious form of evil, one in which even people perceived to be good are complicit. When speaking of insidious types of evil, one cannot forget the despicable Dolores Umbridge, who terrorizes the entire school in *The Order of the Phoenix*. The fight against her has to be more subtle and careful, but it is effective nonetheless in resisting a complete takeover through her cruelty. Take Draco Malfoy: While he is a bully and persistently rude to those around him, he is not capable of performing truly evil acts--as

evidenced in *The Half-Blood Prince*. Malfoy inadvertently defies evil as the goodness in him is just enough to stop him from performing a heinous act. Rowling was able to showcase different types of evil in the septet in ways which are both relatable and which help illustrate the ways in which even ordinary people can stand up to everyday evil through believable acts of defiance.

In *The Goblet of Fire*, Rowling introduces a more developed understanding of the relationship between house-elves and the Wizarding community. Not only is Dobby brought back into the story, but a new house-elf named Winky is presented. Hermione (and readers) had previously assumed that Dobby's mistreatment was rather out of the ordinary, that the cruelties he had suffered were due to his forced servitude to the Malfoy family. As the Malfoys had already been established as cruel, it was easy to chalk up Dobby's mistreatment to extenuating circumstances rather than to see it as a widespread societal norm. Unfortunately, it becomes exceedingly clear in this book that the Malfoys, while crueler than most, were not alone in their views of house-elves. Winky's debut in the novel provides some insight into their treatment, when she says "House-elves does what they is told. I is not liking heights at all, Harry Potter . . . but my master sends me to the Top Box and I comes, sir" (99). She also reveals to Harry that house-elves do not receive any compensation for their work, and that she finds it in poor taste that Dobby, as a now free elf, wishes to be paid for his labor (98). With this new information, it becomes clear that house-elves are in fact slaves; they are not given any of the benefits other intelligent magical creature have, and it seems that almost no one is bothered by their treatment. Rowling is showing a facet of evil very different

from previous books with Voldemort. The enslavement of any being is deplorable, and the fact that the Wizarding community not only accepts but actively participates in slavery is shocking. This behavior is truly repulsive, and to see that the Weasley family is also involved makes it even worse. Hermione is shocked--as she should be--that a nice family so different from the Malfoys would be entirely nonchalant about a system which clearly hurts part of the population. Hermione decides something should be done, and, so, creates S.P.E.W. (GF). By taking such a keen interest in their situation and creating this organization, Hermione is fighting evil. She is actively taking a stand against something so obviously wrong but so long accepted, and this kind of fight can be even more difficult than others which are more out in the open. Systemic oppression of the house-elves within the Wizarding community has been going on for such a long time that Hermione faces criticism and ridicule as others such as Fred, George, and Ron Weasley as well as Hagrid assert that house-elves actually enjoy their enslavement. (Ron's comment to this effect is typical [GF 224].) That belief is so harmful because it feeds into wizards' and witches' feelings that they are justified in their part in this continued oppression. Rowling having Hermione fight for what she knows is right in such a lopsided struggle is a small but extremely meaningful portrayal of what good versus evil can look like.

When speaking of different types of evil, it would be a disservice to overlook Dolores Umbridge. Introduced in *The Order of the Phoenix*, Umbridge quickly garnered hate among fans for her abhorrent personality and "fake-sweet" persona. The absolute injustice of Hogwarts' students being subjected to her makes the situation even worse.

Umbridge is imposed upon the school with increasingly outrageous rules that have the full support of the Ministry of Magic. Umbridge's kind of evil is particularly horrifying because of the support she is given: she is empowered to spread her racist beliefs and her physical torture of students. She does it all with a simper that makes it feel even more infuriating for readers. It is clear that Umbridge is a monster--at times, perhaps, inspiring more hatred than even Voldemort does--because she represents something real in what is perceived as evil. Her character is truly lifelike because people who resemble her exist in the real world. From doling out unjust and torturous punishment to those who simply disagree with her, to her clear favoritism for the Slytherin students she appoints to the Inquisitorial Squad, most readers can recognize this extreme behavior watered down in at least one teacher or superior in their lifetime. This aspect of her portrayal is what makes Umbridge so terrifying and so easy to hate. She is the amalgam of every student's or worker's worst nightmare. In *The Order of the Phoenix*, Hermione once again takes the lead in a small rebellion against Umbridge's tyranny by convincing Harry to teach real defense against the dark arts to some of his peers. They form a secret group, "Dumbledore's Army," to meet and learn real magic as a way both to defy Umbridge's decrees and to develop useful skills. Fred and George Weasley make a great show of ridiculing Umbridge at every available chance--with their pièce de résistance being their turning a corridor into a swamp. As Umbridge is incapable of rectifying the Weasley brothers' act herself, she asks the other professors to lift the enchantment, and they all boldly lie to her that they are unable to fix the hallway -- with the lie proved untrue when, towards the end of the book, Professor Flitwick easily gets

rid of it with minimal effort. Umbridge's reign of terror at Hogwarts is not easy to cope with, but the students and staff still find ways to counter or subtly fight against her. Going against institutionally-backed malice is tremendously difficult to do, but Rowling describes the battle in a manner both realistic and gripping.

Evil and good are not always as clearly defined as the house-elves' mistreatment or Umbridge's cruelty may suggest. For most of the septet, Malfoy appears to be on the side of evil. After all, he is a bully; he is cruel; and he certainly does not seem to have any of the necessary traits ever to be considered a good--or even decent--character. Still, in *The Half-Blood Prince*, Malfoy is written in a different light. While he is still not the epitome of goodness, there is a distinct change in him. Readers know that Harry suspects Malfoy is now a Death Eater and has been given a task to complete, although exactly what that is does not become apparent until the end of the book. At first, Malfoy acts his usual self: arrogant, aloof, boastful. Readers see these qualities on the train to Hogwarts when he tells his entourage, "I might have -- er -- moved on to bigger and better things" (151). It is obvious he doesn't fully understand what he is getting himself into and is simply relishing the idea of being important. Yet, as the book progresses, he comes to realize the seriousness of his position and begins to show some character development. One of the most unexpected moments for readers' understanding of Malfoy is when Harry walks in on him weeping and crying out to Moaning Myrtle, "I can't do it. . . . I can't" (522). He is struggling internally with the task appointed to him. So far, his attempts to accomplish it have failed, and he fears retribution from Voldemort. Still, he does not give up his attempts entirely, and he is able to corner

Dumbledore. Here the truth comes out concretely. Malfoy has been trying to kill Dumbledore under Voldemort's threat of death if he fails, yet his attempts are, as Dumbledore puts it, "'So feeble . . . that I wondered whether your heart has been really in it'" (585). Malfoy has not truly done his best, and really is acting mostly from feelings of fear and a wish for self-preservation. It is simply not in him to commit murder, the ultimate form of evil against another being. He has the chance to murder Dumbledore, and as the other Death Eaters join him in the astronomy tower they try to goad him into it, but still he does not. Rowling intentionally shows Malfoy's reluctance, and, in a way, his goodness by making him take a small stand against the Death Eaters and Voldemort. Malfoy in this decision (called cowardice by those around him) is tremendously brave. By defying the orders given to him, he has made his own stand in the battle of good against evil.

Good versus Evil does not always have to be a grandiose, drawn-out battle. Sometimes, smaller acts by ordinary people work just as well to fight evil every day. Had Rowling only ever focused on Harry's battle with Lord Voldemort, the books would have lost something important: the opportunity for progression and depth in life outside of Harry's story. Her inclusion of evil as it can be experienced in reality allows for characters other than Harry to do their part in the continuing struggle of good against evil. Hermione is able to grow past simply being the smart friend Harry relies on for help. She is able actively to work against the generational enslavement of house-elves, arguably one of the worst forms of evil Rowling introduces in the septet. Almost all of Hogwarts has something to do in standing against Umbridge, most notably Fred

and George Weasley and the professors. Before this moment in the narrative, the Weasley twins were always too casual, too funny, to be taken seriously by readers, but here they put their talents to the test in consistently fighting against Umbridge's dictatorial regime simply by being themselves. The professors (McGonagall and Flitwick in particular) do their utmost to protect their students and make life more difficult for Umbridge in subtle, but effective, ways. Malfoy struggles internally, wracked by fear and the fact that he is simply not evil enough to commit murder. What is remarkable about all of these moments is that each character is at risk of ridicule, harm, or worse, and still chooses to resist in ways that are completely believable. Starting a club to stand against oppression is not farfetched at all. Inconveniencing someone with jokes or a white lie about one's ability is entirely within the realm of possibility in everyday life. Even not doing something, silently, speaks volumes. Triumphant against evil acts or circumstances does not require constant flourishes but rather the will simply to say no.

Popularity of the Harry Potter Series

Rosalie Makar

The popularity of the Harry Potter series rests on the universality of its themes, the variety of its characters, the quality of the writing, and the comfort it offers its readers. Above all, the narrative resonates with its readers.

“‘You’ll stay with me?’ [asks Harry]
‘Until the very end,’ said James” (*The Deathly Hallows* 700).

The Harry Potter septet has been widely beloved by many. It has been turned into hit movies, an illustrated book series, merchandise, a theme park, parodies, fanfiction, music, band names, and video games. It has influenced countless readers in different ways. Many readers grew up with Harry: learned, loved, mourned, stepped up, laughed, and went on adventures with him. Other readers found him later in life and still embraced the series as a favorite. But why is the Harry Potter series so popular? Why have so many readers fallen in love with Harry’s adventures? There are many reasons why the series has become popular. The themes, the characters, the writing, and the comfort it brings all add up to make the series one that readers love.

Looking at the first of the reasons literature like Rowling’s is great and/or popular: it examines what it means to be human. Writers can add to the continuing conversation about the human condition. And writers who do it well have their works pored over and remembered by many. The Harry Potter series is part of that

conversation. Throughout the narrative, there is the conversation about what is good and what is evil. As we follow Harry while he comes to understand this moral issue, we also learn. One poignant exchange about this topic comes when Harry and Sirius Black discuss whether Dolores Umbridge is a Death Eater. Harry says, ““She’s foul enough to be one,”” and Sirius replies, ““Yes, but the world isn’t split into good people and Death Eaters”” (OP 302). Growing up, many of us have this sense that good and evil is a black-and-white proposition; we eventually learn that it is much more complex than that. This single line from Sirius, put so straightforwardly, still speaks volumes. You cannot judge someone based on one definition of evil; there are different kinds of evil in the world.

Another theme to look at is loss and the need to cope with grief. Harry’s first encounter with death, that he can remember, happens in *The Goblet of Fire*. When Cedric Diggory dies, Harry is distraught. He comes back from the graveyard where he encountered Voldemort and goes into shock. Harry then has to cope with this experience in the next book (*The Order of the Phoenix*), where we find Harry frustrated at being left in the dark. He’s still upset by Cedric’s death and dreaming about it. He’s just trying to cope with his feelings about the events. At the end of the fifth book, Harry watches Sirius Black die. He is filled with even more shock, anger, guilt, and pain from that loss. Harry saw Sirius as his last bit of family. When he is in the office with Dumbledore after the events at the Ministry, Dumbledore tries to tell Harry he knows what Harry is feeling. Harry says that Dumbledore does not know what he, Harry, is feeling and he does not want to talk about it. Dumbledore replies ““Harry, suffering like this proves you are still a man! This pain is part of being human--”” (OP 824). This

exchange is an excellent example in the septet of Rowling's focus on the human condition. Dumbledore is correct in what he says: without feeling pain from the loss of someone, we are not really living. Our connection to others is what makes life richer, and though we feel great pain at losing those we love, the experience tells us we are human for feeling those things. Rowling's exploration of these themes resonates with so many. Just looking online at what quotations matter to readers, you will find these quotations about evil and loss prominent among them. Rowling puts some of these complex themes so simply. She makes them easy to understand, so it makes sense for the series to be so popular.

From Harry to Luna, Hermione to Professor McGonagall, and Hagrid to Draco Malfoy characters have made the series popular as well. Harry's journey is hard for readers to forget. We see him grow up with each book. From ages 11 to 17, and then at 36, Harry matures in many ways. The series mainly follows Harry and his experiences and adventures, and Harry can be quite relatable. How he deals with grief, his courage, and curiosity are some of the reasons he is a great protagonist. With every book comes new characters to meet and fall in love with or dislike immensely. Rowling does a great job writing female characters as well. They are diverse and not one-dimensional characters for the most part. Girls admire Hermione for her smarts, tenacity, and compassion for her friends. Ginny is fierce in the face of danger, funny, and independent. McGonagall is stern, quick witted, and cares deeply for Hogwarts and its students. There are so many great female characters. Rowling also writes complex villains. Readers learn about Voldemort and his views about the world, why he does

not think there is evil but only power and those too weak to seek it (SS). And then there is Voldemorts's absolute inability to love and his deep mistrust for all others, even his followers. And what of Draco Malfoy's motivations in *The Half-Blood Prince*? At that point in the story, it is hard not to feel sorry for Malfoy. He is put in a hard place: follow Voldemort's orders or die. Rowling makes these antagonist characters complex, and you understand them a little better because of how she writes them.

There is also Albus Dumbledore. Although he has his faults, his wisdom is what a lot of readers love. Countless times he has said something wise to Harry that has made him think about or understand something complex. However, he also has whimsy, for example his discussions on candy with Harry and telling Fawkes "'to get a move on'" since the bird had been looking dreadful for days (CS 207). The latter is actually a very good joke. Harry sees Fawkes literally burn up in front to him as Fawkes is a phoenix and must self-immolate before being reborn. Dumbledore knows that, of course, but Harry does not. Dumbledore tells Harry he makes mistakes as well. As a kid or a teen, that is not something you hear often from adults in your life. Hearing this admission from someone Harry and many readers look up to has an impact. It shows that adults, and the people we admire and think are wise, are human just like the rest of us. Rowling's writing of Dumbledore is an excellent addition to the series and is definitely a reason why it is so popular.

The writing is a big part of the popularity of the series. If it were not good, the series would not be as popular. Rowling has some excellent writing that adds to the series. One example is her descriptions of Harry's angst. Starting more heavily in the

fourth novel, *The Goblet of Fire*, Harry is angst ridden about being thrust into a competition for which he did not sign up. He has no choice but to compete, and the school shuns him because they think he signed up on purpose and against the rules. How Rowling writes about this period in Harry's life is beautifully done. You understand why Harry is feeling the way he does; you feel mad that Ron does not believe him; and you feel anxious on his behalf about the Triwizard Tournament challenges awaiting him. *The Goblet of Fire* shows Rowling's range. She can write about angst really well, and the action, and the heartbreaking moments with Cedric Diggory's death and Harry's distraught reaction to it. Every novel brings a new side to Rowling's writing. In the fifth book (*The Order of the Phoenix*), Harry's feelings are so varied: isolation, anger, romance, and – again--angst. There is a lot to unpack in that novel; it is no wonder it is the longest in the series. Then, in *The Half-Blood Prince*, Rowling breaks readers' hearts with the so-unexpected death of Dumbledore. Coming after the deaths of Cedric and then Sirius, this death hits Harry just as hard if not harder. It deeply moves the reader as well. How Rowling writes the last few moments of Dumbledore's life is extraordinarily well done. Reading it again when you know what will happen is just as moving, if not a little more heartbreaking as you know what will be coming and yet it cannot be changed. Again, Rowling's writing of these themes and scenes is so accomplished. There is no doubt that without her style, this story would not be the same.

For fans of the series, reading it can also bring comfort. Either because of the themes, the characters, or the writing people love to read these books again and again.

Especially when in need of comfort. Sometimes it is because of a line that Dumbledore says about grief, or it's the humor of the Weasley twins which makes you laugh; there is always something to find in the story when you need it. Although nearly all readers know what happens, even the many sad losses, it is comforting to reread the series. Going back to something familiar where you feel you know the characters so well is comforting. Knowing Molly will protect her children and Harry fiercely, that Luna will be herself no matter what others say, and even that Umbridge will still be the nasty character she unforgettably is comforts. Reading the series again brings on new revelations, and reading the story later in life does the same. Encountering the series as a child is far different from encountering it as an adult. There is comfort in that as well: knowing the series can still teach you something as an adult.

Readers who grew up with Harry have found a lot of comfort in the series. In some ways, it defined our childhoods. We eagerly awaited each novel's publication to find out what would happen next. We dreamed of going to Hogwarts and learning to do magic. We cried with the losses, laughed at the jokes, and felt every other emotion in between those book covers. The series had such a big impact on readers who grew up with Harry. They wanted to know more and share that understanding with others. The sharing is what made it popular as well. Word of mouth brought in so many more readers, especially younger ones who do not care about books being on bestseller lists. I know telling others about the series and what I loved about it helped those who had not yet encountered the world of Hogwarts to read and fall in love with it as well.

Harry Potter's adventures are popular for all these reasons. The epigraph at the beginning of my essay is, I feel, a simple way of expressing the emotion of the series for so many. The themes, characters, writing, and comfort the series gives are proof it resonates with readers and keeps them hooked to the end. They revisit the series as needed in their lives and share it with others. Rowling's creation will continue to resonate with readers. It will influence other artists and authors. Although these are some of the most important characteristics many readers can agree about, there are other qualities in the series which are personal to each reader--memories of reading the series, lessons learned from it, or something else unexpected. The series itself is loved by so many. It is hard to see how it will ever change. It is no wonder so many of us stayed with Harry until the end.

The Best of the Best and the Worst of the Best

Tobias Horton

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix is the best book in the septet; Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows is the worst. The reasons for such a judgment are many. One of them, which may be overlooked, is the power of editing.

The Harry Party books are all fantastic. Each one tells a gripping tale with precise details. However, for me, the best of these books is *The Order of the Phoenix*. It is a genuine tome, 870 pages in length. Even so, the writing is tight; there is witty dialogue and dramatic action; the novel presents relevant information; and the details of each storyline loops back on itself. By contrast, for me the worst of the seven is *The Deathly Hallows*. It too is a hefty tome, 759 pages in length. But the story is not as tightly written, and there is about 200 pages of Harry, Ron, and Hermione camping where the story does not progress. It is just plain boring. It seems as if the editors had not gone over the manuscript before it was published.

The first chapter of *The Order of the Phoenix* opens with an absolutely miserable fifteen-year-old Harry who is trying his best to avoid the Dursleys and getting very frustrated that no one from Hogwarts is writing to him (8). I love the way this book opens because it is so true to how Harry would feel being back in such a hostile environment and not receiving any indication that there are people elsewhere that love him. Hogwarts and his friends from there have given him a fragile hope that things will be better in the future. To have to go back to the Dursleys year after year and take their

abuse and neglect seems cruel to Harry because no one has explained to him why he must stay there.

Even the name for this opening chapter is perfect: "Dudley Demented." Harry lashes out at Dudley after seeing him come back from beating up a younger boy (13). This behavior is fairly new for Harry. It has developed from his misery at being away from the Wizarding world and from being picked on for years by Dudley. It has also come about from his having gained the confidence to stand up to bullies after attending Hogwarts for several years. Harry's going after Dudley does not endear the reader to him (12). However, Harry redeems himself when he and Dudley are attacked by the Dementors and Harry blasts them successfully with his Patronus charm (18). This first chapter is such a good opening because it quickly brings the reader up to speed in what is going on in Harry's life. It shows him trying to read and listen to as much news as possible so he can interpret whether Voldemort is on the move, and it puts Harry in the position where he can choose to save Dudley. Unfortunately, Harry's actions cause him a major problem--he is underage to perform magic and has also performed magic outside the walls of Hogwarts. Harry Potter is in trouble.

Chapter Two reveals the depth of Harry's problems as he receives several messages by owl telling him he is expelled, telling him that Dumbledore is sorting it all out, and telling him to stay put. But the most interesting aspect of this chapter comes at its end. Aunt Petunia receives a letter by owl. It bursts into flames and triggers an "awful voice" that intones: "*REMEMBER MY LAST, PETUNIA*" (40). We are not told what it means or even by whom it was sent. But whoever sent it is aware of the

situation at Number Four, Privet Drive. Again, this is an example of Rowling's excellent use of foreshadowing: She gives us a bit of information, and then later reveals the significance of it.

Like most teenagers, Harry is not easily placated after getting his feelings hurt, and they are hurt. Even with the Advance Guard coming to rescue him and take him to Sirius's home at Grimmauld Place, Harry nurses his anger and snaps at Hermione, Ron, and even Ginny (74). It is so uncharacteristic of Harry to snap at his friends that some people may claim it is not believable. However, they are not remembering what it was like to be a teenager and feel rejected and alone. Being upset when you are in imposed isolation is a natural reaction, and it would be weird and unbelievable if Harry were *not* upset. Research done regarding how our population has reacted to the imposed isolation of the recent pandemic shows that people are angry and resentful towards others because of the measures the government has taken in the last year (Powell).

The Order of the Phoenix has intrigue and information that expands our knowledge of what different characters are capable of, either good or bad. We are introduced to Kreacher, the house-elf for the Black family, and he is a miserable and unpleasant character. He grumbles and complains constantly. Rowling uses Kreacher to teach Harry, in a sense, about the long-term effects of wizards mistreating house-elves. Harry is, of course, stunned that Kreacher lies to him, at one point in the narrative, about where Sirius was, but since Kreacher is not tied to Harry, he can do so (829). Rowling ties Hermione's quest to free the house-elves to Kreacher's devious behavior that ultimately led to Sirius's death at the hands of Bellatrix Lestrange. Rowling does so

in order to have Dumbledore educate Harry about the terrible conditions Kreacher has lived under. Dumbledore had earlier warned Sirius to treat Kreacher with kindness and respect otherwise Kreacher would continue to feel resentful and angry about his poor treatment, and those feelings might lead to underhanded actions (832).

Of the entire Harry Potter septet, *The Order of the Phoenix* has some of the most dramatic scenes in it. It's that quality which makes this book such a good read. One of my favorite dramatic scenes is when Dumbledore is about to be arrested by Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic, but succeeds in besting him before vanishing in a very theatrical way:

Fawkes circled the office and swooped low over him
[Dumbledore]. Dumbledore released Harry, raised his hand, and grasped
the phoenix's long golden tail. There was a flash of fire and the pair of
them had gone (622).

Hogwarts is supposed to be a place where one cannot disappear. And yet
Dumbledore has no trouble doing just that.

Several of the characters in *The Order of the Phoenix* are described so aptly that they feel immediately known to the reader. Dolores Umbridge is one such character. She is all dressed up in pink, high heels, bows, and ruffles as if she were a sweet-tempered woman--which she is definitely not. Rowling clearly was subjected to women similar to Umbridge at some point in her life (perhaps at school?) because she gets the character down perfectly. Umbridge speaks in a fake baby voice and does a fake cough to gain control of every room she goes into, but she is just a bully (238). It is all a

pretense. She is unremittingly vicious in her treatment of students and staff alike at Hogwarts.

In this book, too, we see the main characters growing up. They are old enough to realize they are being put in danger by Umbridge's requirement that students not practice spells in The Defense Against the Dark Arts class. Being more mature and realizing their danger leads them to form a secret society called Dumbledore's Army where they will learn from Harry and practice in the Room for Requirement (or the Come and Go Room) (339). Their reaction to Umbridge's restrictions is impressive. However, these students have been through tough things together, and so they know they have to arm themselves with knowledge and experience of the dark arts.

There are so many dramatic events written into this book that make it riveting reading. There is the awful scene where Harry peers into Snape's memory and learns more than he bargained for about his father and mother (645-648), and there is the scene during the O.W.L.s where Hagrid gets fired by Umbridge, the staff try to stun him, and he has to flee for his life into the forest with his dog, Fang (722). And there is real sorrow too. The saddest scene in *The Order of the Phoenix* is when Harry and his friends rush to the Ministry of Magic having been lured there by a false image of Sirius Black being killed by Voldemort. They enter the Hall of Mysteries and look for the location where Harry in his mind had seen Sirius in trouble, but Sirius is nowhere to be found (780). Now, the Death Eaters find them, and the fight begins. Sirius and those of the Order of the Phoenix arrive to help him fight the Death Eaters. Utterly unexpectedly, Bellatrix kills Sirius with the Avada Kedavra curse (805-806). Bellatrix is a character we

can understand and loath because she is wicked, sniveling, sneaky, and wretched. The fight continues moving through the Ministry of Magic's main hall where Voldemort nearly takes possession of Harry. Dumbledore and Voldemort duel. Voldemort flees after being seen by everyone at the Ministry (815-817). Although Sirius has died, there is some relief, at least, in knowing the Ministry now cannot deny Voldemort has returned.

And now for the weakest book in the septet: *The Deathly Hallows*. There is too much focus on our heroic trio's travels, and the story does not move along for about 200 pages while they are camping out. It was a bit of a *Moby-Dick* section, frankly--it just went on and on. Indeed, it may be that its length is a tribute more than anything else to Rowling's years as a Girl Guide. In essence, the book is not well edited. Yes, there are moving and impressive moments, but they are just that: moments.

In Chapter Five, for example, things get very dark for Dumbledore's Army and the Order of the Phoenix. While Harry is transported out of the Dursleys' house, the team is attacked: Hagrid is blasted off his motorcycle and drops to the ground; George Weasley's ear is blasted off; and Mad-Eye Moody is killed by Voldemort (78). Through all this drama and these tense encounters with the Death Eaters, Harry and Ginny's relationship develops into love (116). If Rowling had not included these heart-felt love scenes, the book would have felt too hopeless and dark. Rowling wisely included Bill and Fleur's wedding in the narrative, too, but it ended sadly because Kingsley Shacklebolt sent his Patronus with a message, "*The Ministry has fallen. Scrimgeour is dead. They are coming*" (159). Ron, Hermione, and Harry flee, but they realize that they are being tracked by means of a trace put on Harry. Hermione, as usual, has anticipated

events. She has withdrawn all her money from her savings and is prepared with camping gear for a long camp-out, so they can hide for a while from the Dementors. I do like the action of this section, but 200 pages of it is just too long and it becomes dreary.

I also enjoyed the section where Harry, Ron, and Hermione go to ask Xenophilius Lovegood about the Deathly Hallows because it plays out true to character. Unbeknownst to the trio, Lovegood has sent an owl to the Ministry notifying them that he has Harry and will turn him over to them in exchange for the return of his daughter, Luna, whom they are holding captive. This is a torturous scene because Harry has just been looking at Luna's picture and thinking what a great friend she is, and immediately after that thought Lovegood betrays him (419). When Harry, Ron, and Hermione go to Malfoy Manor to help Luna escape, Hermione is captured and tortured by Bellatrix Lestrange. Dobby appears and intervenes by dropping a chandelier on Bellatrix and knocking Narcissa's wand out of her hand. As Harry and his friends disappear, Bellatrix throws a knife that kills Dobby as he re-appears at Shell Cottage (475). So, there's excitement and a rapid narrative, but these cannot make up for the lengthy and dull digressions.

When Harry and his friends get back to Hogwarts, the staff and students prepare for the coming battle. This section of the book is epic, but as in all battles there are losses. Fred Weasley is killed by Bellatrix Lestrange (637), and Molly Weasley decides she has had enough of this horrid woman. She duels with Bellatrix and kills her with the Avada Kedavra curse (736).

The book ends cleverly with Harry dueling with Voldemort. Harry wins because the elder wand was never truly Voldemort's. The wand chooses the wizard, and the elder wand chose Draco Malfoy. But since Harry Potter had disarmed Malfoy, he now is the new master of the wand. Voldemort tries to kill Harry with the Avada Kedavra curse, but since the wand was bound to Harry the curse bounces off him and kills Voldemort instead (744). The Epilogue is clever and hopeful because Harry marries Ginny and Ron marries Hermione. But I still feel this book was written in a disjointed manner as a collection of highlights, and the section covering Harry, Ron, and Hermione's camping trip was much too uneventful and long. This book needed more editing to keep my interest. It needed a tighter plot.

Colors of the Wizarding World

Stephanie Goens

One of the most-neglected aspects of the Harry Potter series is its use of colors. Particular colors are associated with certain characters. It is a way for J. K. Rowling to give added coherence to a narrative of great length and dazzling complexity.

Throughout the seven books which make up the Harry Potter series, J. K. Rowling uses color association to draw readers into the story, distinguish characters, and sort the students of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry into Houses. This color association carries on throughout the septet as the plot matures from a child's point-of-view to more adult themes. This continuation roots readers in the familiar while enhancing the contrast of the darker themes and content.

The Hogwarts Houses stand out with their assigned colors, each representing the values of their house and animal representative. Gryffindor House's colors are red and gold, signifying the students' bravery, "daring, nerve, and chivalry" (SS 118). Their House is represented by a lion, king of beasts as well as the emblem of Richard the Lionheart. This representation cements their association with bravery and courage. Gryffindor House is home to the three main characters of the series--Harry Potter, Ronald Weasley, and Hermione Granger--and thus it is the House which readers become most familiar with throughout the septet. Gryffindors are also associated with fire and are known for their tempers and fierce loyalty to family and friends.

Hufflepuff House is introduced by the Sorting Hat:

*“You might belong in Hufflepuff,
Where they are just and loyal,
Those patient Hufflepuffs are true,
And unafraid of toil” (SS 118).*

Hufflepuffs are generally hardworking individuals who are known for their kindness and friendship. They are represented by yellow and black (a nod to wheat and soil), and their House emblem is a badger. Hufflepuff is the only House whose secondary color is not metallic. This emphasizes their humble and honest natures. While Hufflepuff is the least-mentioned House in the septet, the characters who are associated with the House appear at pivotal plot points, and they are the second most-represented House during the Battle of Hogwarts.

Ravenclaw House is represented by blue and bronze to symbolize the students' association with feathers and air beneath their eagle mascot's wings. Ravenclaw students are known to be exceptionally knowledgeable and creative. Their philosophical nature is emphasized in *The Deathly Hallows* when Luna Lovegood takes Harry to Ravenclaw Tower and explains that students must answer a riddle in order for the door to open. If the answer is incorrect, they must wait for another student to solve the riddle; thus, Ravenclaw students are constantly learning.

Slytherin House colors are green and silver, which are often associated with the darker side of Witchcraft and Wizardry. They are known to be *“cunning folk [who] use any means/To achieve their ends”* (SS 118). The founding father of Slytherin House, Salazar Slytherin, was a Parselmouth--someone who can converse with snakes--and

chose a snake as the emblem for his House. Snakes are also associated with the Dark Arts, and Slytherin House has a reputation for turning out dark wizards. Its students are known for their ambition and determination; their moods are fickle; yet they are willing to fit into a new mold in order to achieve their goals.

Outside of the four Houses, there are several instances of color association which represent individual characters in the series. Headmaster Albus Dumbledore is first introduced as wearing “a purple cloak that swept the ground” (SS 8). Purple is a color synonymous with royalty and ambition. The color carries through the series in other forms: “It took several purple firecrackers exploding from the end of Professor Dumbledor’s wand” to bring order in the Great Hall after Professor Quirrell’s announcement about a troll in the dungeon (SS 172). Later, during Harry’s third year, Dumbledore conjures “hundreds of squashy purple sleeping bags” (PA 163) so that students can sleep in the Great Hall after Sirius Black sneaked into Hogwarts. Dumbledore’s association with purple throughout the series demonstrates his aspiration to conquer the Dark Lord as well as his status in the Wizarding community.

Hogwarts Deputy Headmistress, Minerva McGonagall, is also introduced wearing her signature color: “a cloak, an emerald one” (SS 9). Later, she wears “emerald-green robes” (SS 113) when Harry Potter and the other first years arrive at Hogwarts. As Deputy Headmistress, it is Professor McGonagall’s duty to send out the welcome letters to first-year and returning students before the start of the new school year. Each of the many letters addressed to Harry was “written in emerald-green ink” (SS 34, 42, 51) indicating that it was indeed McGonagall who had sent the letters. The

color emerald is associated with prosperity, growth, and stability--wonderful qualities which are shown in Professor McGonagall's personality throughout the septet. Her caring nature, strict adherence to the rules of Hogwarts, and stable presence in Harry's life at school showcase her character.

It is interesting to note that while several characters have a signature color, one of the many Defense Against the Dark Arts Teachers was as colorful as his stories: Professor Gilderoy Lockhart. While his favorite color is lilac (100), he is described as wearing robes of forget-me-not-blue (59), turquoise (89), jade-green (173), deep plum (189), lurid pink (236), and midnight blue (296) in *The Chamber of Secrets*. Lockhart's changing colors emphasized his chameleon-like ways as he steals the stories and glory from witches and wizards far more skilled than he is. Later, in *The Order of the Phoenix*, Harry, Ron, and Hermione find Lockhart recovering from his backfired Memory Charm in St. Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries. This time he is dressed in a "long lilac dressing gown" (509). Perhaps the Healers at St. Mungo's thought Lockhart would take comfort from his favorite color during his recovery.

Gold is a color associated with nobility and heroes who are pure of heart. With this association in mind, it is no wonder that protagonist Harry Potter is drawn to the color throughout the septet. There are many instances from objects to spells where this color came into play for Potter. In *The Sorcerer's Stone*, during Harry's first interaction with the Wizarding world in Diagon Alley, "Hagrid wouldn't let Harry buy a solid gold cauldron . . . ('It says pewter on yer list'), but they got a nice set of scales for weighing potion ingredients and a collapsible brass telescope" (80).

Also, in Harry's first year at Hogwarts, he is selected as Seeker for the Gryffindor Quidditch team. Gryffindor Quidditch Captain Oliver Wood introduces him to the ball he will be looking for during their matches: "[T]his . . . is the Golden Snitch, and it's the most important ball of the lot" (SS 169). The Golden Snitch is further important to Harry's character development as it gives readers a better understanding of how dedicated and persevering Harry can be when put to a task.

Continuing on to Harry's second year at Hogwarts, he has several interactions with Dumbledore's phoenix, Fawkes, who helps Harry to escape from the Chamber of Secrets. Descriptions of Fawkes are littered with golden references: "took flight in a whirl of gold and scarlet" (CS 322); "wide scarlet wings emitted a soft golden glow" (CS 324); "long golden tail feathers" (CS 325); and "glowing gold along the corridor" (CS 326). These references highlight Harry's focus on the world around him, searching for the golden glow that illuminates the darkness. Harry is continually searching for a light in the darkness, either literal or figurative throughout the septet.

In *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry had "to stop himself from buying a handsome set of solid gold Gobstones (a Wizarding game rather like marbles, in which the stones squirt a nasty-smelling liquid into the other player's face when they lose a point)" (50). Again, we see Harry's love for gold and his desire for the better things in life.

During Harry's fourth year, the Triwizard Tournament is held at Hogwarts and Harry is chosen as the fourth champion. For the First Task, the champions are told "your task is to *collect the golden egg!*" (GF 349) from a brooding mother dragon. As with the Golden Snitch, Harry's desire for this magical object is driven by a need to win

and, in this case, survive the encounter with the dragon. For this task, Harry summons his Firebolt and uses his skills as an exemplary Quidditch Seeker to outmaneuver the dragon and obtain the golden egg.

Later in the novel, Harry faces Lord Voldemort in the Riddle Family graveyard. There, Lord Voldemort strives to prove to himself, as well as to his Death Eaters, that he is and always was the better wizard and that Harry's escape as a baby was pure luck. To do so, he gives Harry back his wand and demands that they duel. When Harry finally fights back against his more experienced opponent, his *Expelliarmus* and Lord Voldemort's *Avada Kedavra* collide: "A jet of green light issued from Voldemort's wand just as a jet of red light blasted from Harry's--they met in midair . . . and a narrow beam of light connected the two wands, neither red nor green, but bright, deep gold" (663). This gold beam of light foreshadows Harry's defeat of the Dark Lord in the graveyard. It also forces the *Priori Incantatem* effect, which holds Lord Voldemort accountable for his prior spells and requires him to face those whose deaths he was responsible for in both the Wizarding and Muggle worlds.

In *The Half-Blood Prince*, Harry's O.W.L. (Ordinary Wizarding Level) results qualify him to participate in Professor Horace Slughorn's Potions class where Harry is introduced to a number of advanced potions. One of these is Felix Felicis, which is described as a potion "splashing about merrily; it was the color of molten gold, and large drops were leaping like goldfish above the surface" (186-187). The eye-catching color and promise of a day filled with good luck are more than enough to entice Harry to win the potion. Felix Felicis serves Harry well later in the novel as he is able to use it

to obtain a memory from Professor Slughorn which will aid Harry and Dumbledore in their battle against Lord Voldemort.

In *The Deathly Hallows*, Mad-Eye Moody concocts Polyjuice Potion to transform six other characters into Harry in order to fool the Death Eaters while Harry makes his escape from Privet Drive before his mother's charm will break on his seventeenth birthday: "Harry dropped the hair into the mudlike liquid. The moment it made contact with its surface, the potion began to froth and smoke, then, all at once, it turned a clear, bright gold" (50). It is interesting to note that not only is Harry drawn to gold, but also his essence is literally gold as shown with the Polyjuice Potion. This association with gold reinforces Harry's standing as the hero of the septet with a heart, and essence, of gold.

Soon after this event, when Harry flees Privet Drive, Lord Voldemort catches up to Harry and Hagrid. Harry's and Lord Voldemort's wands are brothers as they share the same wand core: a phoenix feather from Fawkes, Dumbledore's phoenix. When Harry attempts to defend himself from Lord Voldemort's *Avada Kedavra*, Harry's wand acts without Harry's command when it recognizes Lord Voldemort's wand as its mortal enemy: "As the pain from Harry's scar forced his eyes shut, his wand acted of its own accord. He felt it drag his hand around like some great magnet, saw a spurt of golden fire through his half-closed eyelids, heard a crack and a scream of fury" (61). This golden fire triumphs against Lord Voldemort's green tinged Killing Curse.

The series culminates with Harry's defeat of Lord Voldemort at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. During their final battle, they use their signature spells:

Harry, “*Expelliarmus!*” and Voldemort, “*Avada Kedavra!*” Their spells meet and “the golden flames that erupted between them . . . marked the point where the spells collided” (*The Deathly Hallows* 743). Again, gold is highlighted as their colliding color marking the outcome of the battle before its actual end. Harry Potter is the boy with the heart of gold, the hero, the Boy Who Lived.

J. K. Rowling’s use of color association throughout the septet distinguishes characters, their Houses, and the spells which give readers a way to sort the good from the bad, the hero from the villain, and defensive from offensive spells. With this color-blocking, Rowling organizes her septet in an unusual way and allows a better understanding of the goals and whims of her characters as the story shifts from the perspective of a child to that of a young adult facing adult-themed challenges.

The Guardian of the Wizarding World

Stephanie Goens

Harry Potter is the guardian of the Wizarding world. He is the hero whose fate is decided long before he could make his own decisions. He is hidden from the world he comes to save. What makes him remarkable is that he has the qualities of all the Hogwarts Houses. In that sense, he is an everyman.

Harry James Potter of number four, Privet Drive is a child who enters into a world filled with rules that were constantly broken, ambition which was rewarded, knowledge that was highly sought after, and justice which was disregarded by those in positions of power. Harry Potter is introduced to the Wizarding world on his eleventh birthday in the midst of a storm; he saves that same world seven years later as “[t]he sun rose steadily over Hogwarts” (*DH* 744); the world is awash in light after living through an oppressive darkness during Voldemort’s reign. Harry Potter is not only the hero of this story; he is the guardian of the Wizarding world.

Harry is a baby when he arrives at the Dursleys’ home: a wizard, an orphan left alone with those who love him least of all because he represents a world so utterly different from theirs. Harry struggles constantly in the Muggle world. He is unable to fit into a perfect mold created by his aunt and uncle, and unable to contain the magic which is inherently part of him. Harry’s introduction to the Wizarding world is a balm to his soul; he learns his parents died as heroes; he finds friends who stand by him no

matter the cost; he forms a family whose bonds are thicker than blood during his time at Hogwarts.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is subdivided into Houses by its four Founders in order to meet their ideals in teaching magic to those who enter the school. The division of Houses is illuminating as each stands by their described attributes and are defined by them. However, Harry Potter defies the Founders and fits into all four Houses at Hogwarts. The Sorting Hat says it best as it whispers in Harry's ear: "Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind either. There's talent, oh my goodness, yes--and a nice thirst to prove yourself" (SS 121). He represents each of the characteristics the Founders of Hogwarts held in highest esteem. This characteristic marks him as a wizard outside the norm. He glorifies each House in his own way.

Gryffindors are known for their daring, nerve, and chivalry; however, it is clear they also blatantly disregard the rules. Gryffindors care about justice, about right and wrong. There is no grey, only a world of black-and-white, which they will paint red in their pursuit of justice. Harry continually breaks school rules during his time at Hogwarts as well as rules laid down by the Ministry of Magic. Each of these times, Harry is going out of his way to find justice. So, in his first year he ignores Professor Dumbledore's orders not to go into the third-floor corridor on the right-hand side. In his second year, he goes into the Forbidden Forest. In his third year, he aids and abets an escaped criminal. In his fifth year, he uses magic in front of a Muggle. His search for justice lands him in a world of trouble, but as his actions are noble and done for the greater good, he is usually rewarded for these acts of rule breaking.

Hufflepuff House is celebrated for its belief in equality. If the landscape and its limitations are equal, then all is right with the world. Hagrid calls Hufflepuff students “a lot o’ duffers” (SS 80) because they are kind, accepting, and friendly. These qualities paint them as pushovers and softies in the Wizarding world. What the other Houses fail to understand is how fiercely Hufflepuffs will fight for what they think is right. They will defend each other and those they deem worthy with all of the magic and physical force of which they are capable--and then some. They will fight for what they think is right, and no one can stand in their way. Throughout the series, Harry sustains physical, emotional, and psychological damage which a lesser wizard would not be able to overcome, and he comes back swinging. At one point in the narrative, Harry faces Lord Voldemort in a graveyard surrounded by Death Eaters. He has been betrayed yet again by his father’s former friend. His body is covered in bruises; his leg is unable to support his weight; his mind reels from witnessing the callous murder of his schoolmate. Despite these handicaps, Harry not only escapes death, but recovers Cedric’s body and brings it back to Hogwarts.

Ravenclaws are the intelligent ones, the knowledgeable, the witty. They are the dreamers and the philosophers who search for new ways to look at the world. Rules and regulations are unnecessary limitations. They hinder forward movement and, thus, may be easily dismissed. Ravenclaws are brilliant, creative, ambitious, proud, and, if they are pushed too far, they will break everything and everyone that gets in their way. Harry does what no other character is able to do in the septet or, indeed, in the history of the Wizarding world: he possesses and conquers all three Deathly Hallows. He

understands the limitations of the Resurrection Stone and uses it to see those he loves just before he dies. He hides from Death until the right time by using the Invisibility Cloak, but he greets Death as an old friend in order to save those he loves. He knows the power and the strength of the Elder Wand but decides to forget the wand, preferring to die of old age so the wand's vengeful power will die with him. Harry discovers a way around the limitations placed on the Deathly Hallows and is able to circumvent the rules laid out by Death for the Peverell brothers.

Slytherins are known for their cunning, their ambition, and their ruthlessness. Their House upholds rules with a severity that cannot be matched. They may have created the rules, but they are rules nonetheless. They will impose parameters and limitations on themselves by creating their own framework within which to operate. If anything opposes those rules, or seeks to violate their own internal code, it will not be undertaken. Harry's rules are simple: If someone disrespects, harms, or kills anyone he loves, he will be avenged. When he witnesses the Death Eater Amycus Carrow talking to Professor McGonagall in a disrespectful manner and then spitting in her face, Harry sees red. He finds the will and the motivation to cast the Cruciatus Curse with such severity that Carrow "writhed through the air like a drowning man, thrashing and howling in pain . . . and [he] crumpled, insensible, to the floor" (*DH* 593). While Professor McGonagall may call this an act of chivalry, it is truly an act of revenge. Amycus Carrow breaks Harry's rules and has to pay for his transgression.

Harry's best moments in the series are not those celebrated with a feast or rewarded with House points. However, these moments continue to celebrate each of the

four Houses of Hogwarts and that for which they stand. Harry Potter saves the life of the man responsible for the murder of his parents and chooses instead to spare Peter Pettigrew so that he may face justice at the hands of the Ministry of Magic. However, Pettigrew escapes justice once again. When Harry later encounters Pettigrew at Malfoy Manor, his ideals are put to the test as Lord Voldemort's "gift" of a magical silver hand, which replaces the one Pettigrew sacrificed to create a new body for his Master, strangles Pettigrew. Harry's desire to save a life and to bring Pettigrew to justice propel him to save Pettigrew's life once again: "Without pausing to think, Harry tried to drag back the hand, but there was no stopping it" (*DH* 470). Justice is served as Pettigrew realizes the Master to whom he betrayed his friends, for whom he hid in the shadows, and to whom he shows undying loyalty is the one to cause his death.

Harry Potter stands up for those who are oppressed, downtrodden, and humiliated in the Wizarding world. Harry Potter keeps Dobby, a house-elf and a servant, from harming himself even after learning that Dobby is attempting to sabotage Harry's return to Hogwarts. Harry frees that same house-elf from his abusive masters, the Malfoys, after Harry's arm has been broken by the house-elf's enchanted Bludger. Harry Potter digs Dobby's grave without magic to show how much he loved and cherished Dobby's friendship, to honor his memory, and to repay Dobby in the only way he can after Dobby's death. Harry fights for Dobby throughout the series; he stands up for him; he keeps him from harming himself; and he becomes a friend to the house-elf when before he knew only cruelty and degradation.

Harry Potter realizes that if one is clever enough, there are ways around the limitations put on certain magical objects. When Harry's wand is destroyed and he is forced to share Hermione Granger's wand, he finds the wand does not feel the same as his original one, nor is the magic he produces with it of the same caliber. Harry recalls Mr. Ollivander telling him "'it's really the wand that chooses the wizard'" when Harry purchases his original wand (SS 82). Later, Xenophilius Lovegood tells Harry the possessor of the Elder Wand "'must capture it from its previous owner'" if he is to be the true master of it (DH 412). As Harry did not capture Hermione's wand from her, her wand will not work as well for him. With this realization, Harry recognizes that, though Lord Voldemort possesses the Elder Wand, he is not its true owner. Professor Dumbledore is the owner of the Elder Wand when he is disarmed by Draco Malfoy on the night of his death and Draco is later overpowered by Harry when the latter escapes from Malfoy Manor. Harry knows when he faces Voldemort in their final battle the wand will not work for Voldemort if it is directed at Harry as Harry is the true master of the Elder Wand. When their spells meet, the Elder Wand flies "through the air toward the master it would not kill" and Harry gains full possession of it at last (DH 743-744).

Harry Potter is ready to die to save everyone during the Battle of Hogwarts. His willingness to die, his self-sacrifice, is (as Harry says to Voldemort) "'what did it. I've done what my mother did. They're protected from you. Haven't you noticed how none of the spells you put on them are binding? You can't torture them. You can't touch them'" (DH 738). Harry Potter willingly allows a Killing Curse to hit him, and this casts

a protection charm on those fighting against Lord Voldemort, similar to the one Lily Potter used to save Harry's life as an infant. This protection charm is Lord Voldemort's downfall. Unable to hurt those who fight against him and unable to comprehend the sacrifice Harry has made puts Lord Voldemort at a disadvantage when he faces Harry for the last time. Harry Potter will do anything for those he loves and shows a ruthlessness unmatched even by Lord Voldemort. Harry realizes the way to defeat Lord Voldemort is not with clever tricks or with magic he has yet to discover, but with love. Harry's love for those at Hogwarts--the students, the teachers, and the creatures--outweighs any and all dark magic Lord Voldemort has discovered since leaving Hogwarts.

Harry Potter is forged in the fires of oppression, tyranny, and hate. He becomes the Boy Who Lived, The Chosen One, and Undesirable No. 1 because he is willing to sacrifice everything in order to bring change to a world that celebrates him and then disavows him in turn. Harry stands for what is right in the world. He makes sure others know what his beliefs are and what he is willing to do to uphold them. He represents the light of the Wizarding world by casting doubt on the darkness. He reveals the lies hidden behind those too scared to see the truth, and he defends those who are weaker than him at all costs. In a world divided, Harry Potter stands out as a symbol of hope, of connection, of redemption which is both scorned and coveted by those around him. Harry guards the ideals, the connections, and the power of the Wizarding world through his words and actions during his trials and tribulations. He manages to grow, to conquer, and, at long last, live in the Wizarding world.

Muggles in a Wizard World

Heather Lee

Throughout the Harry Potter series, the Muggles are treated as simpletons, at best. Magic is performed on Muggles without their knowledge. In the end, the series illuminates the failings of the adults in power – especially those with access to magic.

The Harry Potter series enchants readers as they leave the non-magical, or “Muggle,” world behind for seven school years in the Wizarding world at Hogwarts. It is exciting to forget mundane and familiar experiences for a reality where magic exists. Wizards and Muggles live alongside each other, but their interactions are extremely limited. Most Muggles never know that magic is part of the world they share after religious persecution forced the magical community into hiding. Unfortunately, this persecution created a divide between the two communities and modern wizards view Muggles as lesser persons, and, because of this attitude, Muggle lives often become collateral damage to the chaos of the Wizarding world.

The Ministry of Magic created the International Statute of Secrecy (first mentioned in *The Sorcerer’s Stone*) in the seventeenth century. This law prohibited witches and wizards from exposing the magical world to the non-magical one. Historically, witches were persecuted by the church. This is not just a fact in the Wizarding world which J. K. Rowling created, but a grisly fact of human history. Men and women who were suspected of possessing or using magical powers (or, sometimes,

just angering their neighbors) were accused of witchcraft, tortured, found guilty, and judicially executed.

In her world, however, Rowling considers the witch-burning completely pointless. Through the use of the “Flame-Freezing Charm,” witches and wizards were able to escape being burned at the stake while putting on a show where they appear to die. So, Harry reads in Bathilda Bagshot’s *History of Magic* of one extraordinary witch, Wendelin the Weird, who “enjoyed being burned so much that she allowed herself to be caught no less than forty-seven times in various disguises” (PA 2). The consequences for performing magic are playfully minimized though the tragic history alluded to by Rowling so that she seems to sidestep delving deeper into the history. Instead, she creates a narrative that is funny, but it still shares the prejudice and persecution the magical community historically faced from Muggles.

It is understandable, then, that witches and wizards made the decision to go into hiding. The Statute of Secrecy prohibits Muggles in general from knowing about magic. This remarkable prohibition is accomplished in many ways. The Memory Charm, *Obliviate!*, is used to erase memories and is often used when a Muggle witnesses or learns about magic. When a Muggle, Mr. Roberts, overhears Ludo Bagman in *The Goblet of Fire* discussing Quidditch, for example, an anti-Muggle security wizard apparates to perform the memory charm before Mr. Roberts can form any conclusions (GF 77). In the final book, Hermione Granger also uses the memory charm on her parents during the second war to protect them from the Death Eaters. In this way, witches and wizards manipulate the minds of Muggles to protect their secret with seemingly no regard for

the known risks. Extensive use of the *Obliviate!* charm can cause extensive memory damage as seen when Gilderoy Lockhart mistakenly casts the memory charm on himself and loses his entire identity.

The need for wizards and witches to protect themselves from persecution is valid. However, the modern Wizarding community, which has experienced no firsthand persecution, has developed an attitude that wizards are entitled to use magic against Muggles to suit themselves and not just for the purpose of protection and safety. An example of magic being harnessed against Muggles for entertainment value alone occurs at the Quidditch World Cup. Mr. Weasley explains that the stadium has “Muggle Repelling Charms on every inch of it. Every time Muggles have got anywhere near here all year, they’ve suddenly remembered urgent appointments and had to dash away again . . . bless them” (*GF* 95-96). Spells have been written specifically for the purpose of maintaining the concealment of magic. Mr. Weasley also expresses the pervading attitude that modern witches and wizards have toward Muggles: They seem to feel a little sorry for them. Mr. Weasley is particularly sympathetic to the Muggle experience, yet he does not hesitate to support the use of the memory or repelling charms on Muggles so that the sporting event can take place. This use of charms and spells is when the intent to protect the Wizarding community becomes obscured. Wizards take advantage of their magic to control and manipulate Muggles, whom they view as less than themselves.

This “less than” attitude is evident in the preoccupation with blood status in the Wizarding world. The slur “Mudblood” refers to witches or wizards born from one or

more Muggle parents because their Muggle blood dirties the better blood of magical people. The term is first used by Draco Malfoy when he calls Hermione a “filthy little Mudblood” (CS 112). Many of the old Wizarding families, or the “pure bloods,” such as the Malfoys believe it is imperative for magical blood to remain pure and untainted by Muggle genetics. This sense that Muggles are undesirable all the way down to their blood is the heavily biased and hateful rhetoric behind the two great Wizarding wars which occur during the lifetime of Harry and his friends. Voldemort, though born of a Muggle father himself, particularly supports the pure-blood agenda. It was this anti-Muggle sentiment which made many of the old pure-blood families his allies.

The modern attitude toward Muggles is also displayed by the way in which other pure-blood Wizarding families perceive and treat the Weasley family. The Weasley family is among the oldest, pure-blood families in the Wizarding community, but they are considered to be “blood traitors.” A blood traitor is another derogatory slur for a pure-blood witch or wizard who doesn’t support the pure-blood agenda, or who sympathizes with, supports, and protects Muggles. Mr. Weasley’s job at the Ministry of Magic is in the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts department. He strives to protect Muggles from objects witches and wizards have enchanted. He also is particularly fascinated by Muggle culture. Though he seems to view Muggles as clever little people for getting by so well without magic, which is slightly condescending, it comes from a place of sincere interest in Muggle ingenuity. Other members of the Ministry of Magic look down on Mr. Weasley and his department for his involvement with Muggles.

This problematic position against Muggles in combination with the Statue of Secrecy creates an environment where witches and wizards feel entitled to perform magic on and against Muggles without much fear of repercussion. This attitude necessitates the department of the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts where Mr. Weasley works. Mr. Weasley explains “Muggle baiting” with the example of casting a spell on a key so that it keeps shrinking. By this means, a Muggle cannot find it (CS 38). It is a generally harmless prank, but indicative of the attitude towards non-magical people. In addition to pranks, some Muggle objects are enchanted then fall back into Muggle hands. In one such case, a kettle attacked and severely burned a Muggle man.

Muggle injury and death as a result of misused magic is not limited to these small incidents involving objects, however. There are many examples across the septet where Muggles are injured and even killed when they cross paths with magic. At the Quidditch World Cup, for example, the Roberts family is attacked by a dark-wizard mob supporting Lord Voldemort and his anti-Muggle agenda. Spells are used to bind and suspend Mr. Roberts, his wife, and his two children above the angry mob. As another instance: Sirius Black is reported in the *Daily Prophet* to have killed *thirteen* Muggles with a single, powerful blasting curse (PA 37-38). Casualties among Muggles living ignorantly alongside magic grow in number as the chaos in the Wizarding world mounts. As Voldemort returns to power, Muggles become collateral damage in a war they don't even know exists. A hurricane of magical origin costs Muggle lives and property. The collapse of the Brockdale bridge too costs Muggle lives and countless pounds sterling (HBP 2). Muggles suffer economic losses as well as lose their lives while

the Wizarding world continues to wage war. Yet, Muggles are mostly left in the dark with no explanation and no help from the magical community.

The few Muggles who do know--parents of students, spouses of witches and wizards, and the leaders of the Muggle government--can do little more with the information than fret. The head of the Ministry of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, liaises with the Muggle Prime Minister in the UK. So, he shares warnings with him when the magical community might bleed over into the non-magical one in a dangerous way such as when Sirius escapes from Azkaban. Eventually, he shares with him the harrowing news that Lord Voldemort is back from the dead and gaining power once more. He does offer the Prime Minister an Auror to protect him, but he does not offer any magical solutions to the problems facing the Muggle community because of the wizard war. It seems his goal is simply to keep the Muggle government informed. The entitlement the Wizarding community gives itself with the International Statute of Secrecy to perform magic on and against Muggles in the name of self-preservation-- in combination with the general superiority complex most magical people have when it comes to Muggles--leaves Muggles ignorant and defenseless in the crossfire of powerful magic. Yet, the Wizarding community doesn't take effective steps to mitigate the problem.

The magical community does not hold itself accountable for its use of magic and the negative impact of that magic on the non-magical world. The Ministry of Magic should reevaluate the purpose and implications of the International Statute of Secrecy and its stated entitlement to perform magic against Muggles in the name of that secrecy.

Indeed, does the non-magical community still pose a threat to the magical one or have the tables turned so much so that the protection of Muggles should become a priority? The pervasive attitude and treatment of Muggles by the Wizarding community, individually and systematically, violates modern societal ethics and morals. Even the Muggle-sympathizing wizards, such as the Weasley family, have internalized their belief in the inferiority of Muggles. In a progressive world which is accepting more and more unique identities, perhaps the witches and wizards owe the non-magical community an understanding of the world they really live in so that Muggles may have the agency to choose whether and how to live alongside witches and wizards and the magical chaos that sometimes surrounds them.

Creation, Cliché, and Omission: The Sins of J. K. Rowling

Phillip Granath

Gaping plot holes, inconsistencies, and paper-thin explanations. These are just some of the weaknesses in the Harry Potter series. However, the greatest weakness is a sin of omission: J. K. Rowling utterly fails to explain where magic comes from. The Harry Potter story is a remarkable achievement, but it does not live up to the hype.

William Shakespeare is widely regarded as the greatest writer in English history. A master playwright, poet, and actor in his own right. Though over four-hundred years have passed since he put quill to parchment, his work continues to find a new audience even today, a testament not only to his skill but also to his ability to appeal to something deeper in each of us. However, no matter how extraordinary his accomplishments, it should be noted that even Shakespeare was not without his detractors. Ben Jonson, a contemporary of Shakespeare's and a noted rival, often described his work as glib, denounced his penchant for dramatizing both history and geography, and, worst of all perhaps, derided his rabid use of puns. The discerning reader would find it hard to disagree with any of Jonson's assertions. Though an extraordinary writer, it seems that even Shakespeare is capable of a literary misstep or two. And if that is the case, then isn't it safe to assume the same of every writer? Even those on whom accolades have been heaped?

In recent history, very few writers can compare with the literary success that J. K. Rowling has enjoyed. As the author of the beloved Harry Potter series of books, she can

easily be considered a master of her craft. However, just like Shakespeare before her, she is not beyond reproach. A careful review of her much-lauded septet reveals a series of missteps, elisions, and downright mistakes that even her most adamant fans cannot ignore. Specifically, these include the author's penchant for creating new locations and events as the series progresses without any prior reference and then forcing her characters to act as if nothing out of the ordinary has transpired. Next, Rowling's world relies heavily upon clichés. They keep the narrative moving; they allow her to explain things simply. Her magical world would crumble entirely without them. And finally, in perhaps her most grievous offense, she commits a willful act of omission, one that in retrospect seems mindboggling in its scale.

As one progresses through the Harry Potter series, it quickly becomes apparent that Rowling has established a simple but successful narrative formula. The reader sees Harry's (usually terrible) home life with the Dursleys. Then he visits Diagon Alley for some reason, and then it is off to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry on the Hogwarts Express. The bulk of the novels take place in and around the school, and then, in the final chapter, Harry and his friends--having barely survived another school year--get back on the train and head home. This formula works and is especially effective for younger readers who can easily follow along, knowing what they can expect as the novel progresses. This formula allows Rowling to layer new narrative material on top of the older, more familiar material. In essence, she creates an easy-to-swallow narrative sandwich. However, while effective, this formula is not without its flaws; most noticeably, such a formula makes it very difficult for the author to add

large-scale plot devices, such as new locations or major events, to the established narrative frame.

Hogsmeade is a prime example of this difficulty. The quaint, magical village is located within walking distance of Hogwarts and is the *only* all-wizard community in Great Britain. It hosts almost two dozen shops specializing in a variety of magical goods: Wizarding supplies, clothing, sweets, and even a joke shop. The village is continually portrayed as a busy hub of activity with wizards and witches coming and going. It is large enough to support two inns, the Hog's Head and the Three Broomsticks. On top of all of these details, the reader learns that there is also a dilapidated old house just outside of Hogsmeade, one that is so haunted that it has been dubbed the "Shrieking Shack" and is considered the most haunted building in all of the British Isles. Now, on its face, all of this seems rather mundane in comparison to the wonders of the Wizarding world. What makes Hogsmeade interesting is its sudden appearance in the series. While the first book in the series, *The Sorcerer's Stone*, does note that the Hogwarts Express stops at Hogsmeade Station, there is no reference to an actual village. It is not until the opening chapters of the third book, *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, that the reader is suddenly informed there is a village that all students (third year and higher) can visit on certain weekends.

Adding insult to injury, Rowling tries to play this ruse off as if it has been a part of the series from its inception. Unfortunately, her own formula of mixing the new with the old actually works against her in this case. Wouldn't a magical village just a stone's throw from the school have been mentioned at all, even if only in passing? Wouldn't

younger students, especially those inclined to break the rules such as Harry and Ron, be eager to go and see the shops and stores off-limits to them? Wouldn't bad influences, like George and Fred Weasley, have facilitated such fun with access to secret tunnels in and out of Hogwarts? Of course they would! However, they didn't, because in a narrative sense, Hogsmeade didn't exist until the third novel when Rowling realizes what she had done. While Rowling's formula helps establish the series, by the third novel the author seems to be growing more confident in her work and is beginning to realize just how confining even a place such as Hogwarts can be. By design, students are secluded, cut off from the events of the larger world. What she needs is a mechanism by which to easily allow the rest of the Wizarding world in and give the protagonists a chance to occasionally function outside the school. What she wants is a Diagon Alley, one located just a stone's throw away from Hogwarts. The only problem is that she has already established that Diagon Alley is in London, and explaining how students would easily slip back and forth would be troublesome when one considers the distance and the magical spells which prevent teleportation magic. All that she is left with is creating the village out of thin air and hoping no one notices.

The next issue we come across in Rowling's septet is the author's widespread use of clichés. *The Oxford English Dictionary* describes a cliché as "A phrase or expression regarded as unoriginal or trite due to overuse." Rowling's work has taken a considerable amount of criticism for being trite in this way, perhaps most notably from literary critic Harold Bloom, who once said of Rowling: her "mind is so governed by clichés and dead metaphors that she has no other style of writing." While most readers

of the series would probably disagree with Bloom's venom, his point about Rowling's fondness for cliché is arguably fair. The careful reader need look no further than the first chapter of the first book in the series, *The Sorcerer's Stone*, to find evidence for this fondness. Beginning on page seven of the septet, the freshly orphaned Harry Potter is delivered to his only surviving relatives by what may amount to the triumvirate of clichéd fantasy: a wizard, a witch, and a giant.

The series' first delving into the magical Wizarding world occurs on page eight when a strange man suddenly appears seeming to have "just popped out of the ground." This is, of course, the reader's very first introduction to Albus Dumbledore, the most powerful wizard in the world. However, Rowling doesn't christen him as a wizard, not once in that first chapter, choosing instead to refer to him by either his name or his professional title, "Professor Dumbledore." She does, however, describe him in great detail: "he was tall, thin, and very old, judging by the silver of his hair and beard, which were both long enough to tuck into his belt. He was wearing long robes, a purple cloak that swept the ground, and high-heeled, buckled boots." Then a few paragraphs later, we see him perform his first feat of magic by removing all the light from the street with the aid of his "Put-Outer" (9). In this scene, Rowling isn't just mildly flirting with clichés, she is completely enamored with them. She is counting on her young readers to recognize a wizard on sight and then just as easily accept that there is magic in the world.

Rowling pulls the same trick a few paragraphs later when the reader meets the series' first witch, Professor McGonagall. However, in this case, she gives the reader

even less to go on, casually describing how a tabby cat instantly changes into a woman. There is no mention of her being a witch, but again thanks to the magic of cliché, none is needed. Rowling has already established that magic is real, and what animal is most often associated with witchcraft in pop culture? The cat. The final member of the triumvirate to arrive is, of course, the fan favorite, Hagrid. Again, Rowling makes no attempt to explain what a giant is or how one could coax a motorcycle into flight. She is relying upon the readers' understanding of what a giant is and then asking them to make the added mental leap that if flying brooms and carpets are an accepted part of pop-culture magic, then why not motorcycles too? From this point on, the series never looks back, and with each new novel we receive a not-so-fresh installment of recycled clichés, most of them offered up with no attempt to deviate from the pop-cultural perception. From centaurs to unicorns, from basilisks to dragons, and many more, Rowling offers readers incessant waves of one-dimensional clichés.

J. K. Rowling's final and, yet, perhaps most overlooked mistake is not one that she committed to paper, but one that she seems committed to omitting. From flying motorcycles to invisibility cloaks, from firing bolts of lightning to transforming a student into a ferret, the Harry Potter series is founded upon a world in which magic is commonplace. Yet, over the course of seven novels and 3407 pages of text, Rowling makes no effort to explain exactly what magic is. What is this power that allows a person to perform feats that defy all the laws of nature and physics? How can the utterance of a few words and the swish of a bit of wood change matter from one form to another? Is this power somehow siphoned from the very fabric of reality or powered by

the light of a yellow sun, like our favorite son of Krypton? Is it, perhaps, derived from the dreams of the Old Gods?

Over the span of the seven novels, Rowling provides us with no answers and, in fact, never even addresses the question. Instead, she shifts the focus of the series onto who can and cannot use magic: those who are magic-born, Muggles, or the unfortunate squib. In effect, she's calling upon the "mysteries of DNA" to answer this question for her, a science still in its formative years when the series was first published. It should also be noted that Hogwarts, a Wizarding school, would be the perfect plot device by means of which to answer these questions. Wouldn't it make sense for all first-year students to have a class in which these fundamental questions are answered? It could have even been included as a throwaway line, a short scene in which a young Harry, still awestruck by the magical world, raises his hand and asks a simple question, "Professor, where does magic come from?" Surrounded by students raised in Wizarding families, his question would draw a round of snickering, and the professor would just smile and reply, "No one really knows Harry, it just is." Unfortunately, Rowling never allows the reader even this non-answer; instead, it's straight to changing animals into inanimate objects in Transfigurations and defying gravity in Charms class. This weakness of Rowling's is one instance in which the movies may have actually improved the narrative, as the film adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* includes a reference to the class "Magical Theory," but it never depicts the class or provides any further details. Perhaps, with a younger audience in mind, the author decided that delving too deeply into the theory of magic would confuse readers or bog

down the narrative. However, this defense would seem to be refuted by the author's inclusion of issues such as child abuse in the first novel and the introduction of slavery in the second. No matter how it is considered, Rowling's decision to exclude an explanation as to the fundamental nature of magic is a mistake, one that compelling characters and an interesting narrative allow her to continue to make over the span of the series.

While no one can question J. K. Rowling's ability to tell a compelling story, the Harry Potter series most definitely has its share of flaws. Flaws that readers willingly forgive her for in exchange for her exciting narratives that permeated our childhood and are now undeniably flavored by nostalgia. However, these are still mistakes. Errors in judgment and pointed omission that less notable authors would never have been permitted to make. A victim of her own formula, Rowling is forced to expand her world by creating places out of thin air, most notably Hogsmeade and its Shrieking Shack. This is a major misstep compounded by her dismissive assertions that both had been there all along. Next come the clichés, a never-ending parade of them, from the very beginning of the series to its bittersweet end. Most are presented as the pop-culture references her audiences expect with only a few modified to fit the narrative. Finally, and perhaps most troubling, there is Rowling's conscious decision to exclude any explanation as to what magic is or how it works. If the Harry Potter series is constructed of paper-thin clichés, then magic is the glue holding this papier-mâché world together. Yet no one questions it, not a single student or professor.

No writer lies beyond the bounds of criticism, neither a revered master like William Shakespeare nor his modern-age equivalents, authors such as J. K. Rowling. And though a reader may recognize a mistake, a misstep, or even a conscious omission, that does not mean the artist's work goes unappreciated. For Ben Jonson, the same playwright who once derided the master's work, also wrote a dedicatory poem in the 1623 Folio of Shakespeare's work, published seven years after Shakespeare's death. In that poem, Jonson described him as ". . . not of an age, but for all time!" ("To the Memory of . . . Mr. William Shakespeare"). However, Jonson would not stop there. In "De Shakespeare nostrat. – Augustus in Hat. –," he wrote of Shakespeare, "There was ever more in him to be praised than to be pardoned." Perhaps the same will hold true for J. K. Rowling, and one day the timelessness of her work will outweigh the pardon.

Azkaban and Alcatraz

Phillip Granath

Azkaban has remarkable similarities to the present-day correctional system in the United States, but what is overlooked is that Azkaban is more progressive than most readers give it credit for. It is also worthy of note that we never see Azkaban through Harry Potter's eyes; it is all second hand.

Fyodor Dostoevsky, the celebrated Russian novelist, once wrote, "The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons."

Unfortunately, for those readers who take this sentiment to heart, some startling realizations begin to arise for fans of J. K. Rowling's beloved Harry Potter series. While a world in which wizards, witches, dragons, and most importantly, magic coexist alongside the non-magical world may seem like a dream for many, for those sentenced to serve time in prison in Rowling's world, it is, in fact, a hellish nightmare. A nightmare that comes to life, day after agonizing day, inside the walls of the Wizarding world's most notorious prison, Azkaban.

Aside from the first book in the series, *The Sorcerer's Stone*, the prison of Azkaban is referenced in every book in the Harry Potter series. However, since the septet is told through Harry Potter's experiences and the boy wizard never visits the prison, the reader is forced to rely on accounts provided to Harry by those souls either twisted enough or perhaps simply unlucky enough to have spent time confined on the island prison. The most prominent descriptions in the series come from the experiences of two

escapees, Sirius Black and Barty Crouch Jr., in *The Prisoner of Azkaban* and *The Goblet of Fire*, respectively. By carefully examining these texts, we can get a sense of the experience that these prisoners endured. However, such an examination would be moot without a touchstone, a common point of reference by which to gauge a prisoner's treatment. As Rowling hails from a Western culture, it seems fitting that a Western justice system be employed in this regard. In this instance, the U. S. Federal Prison system will be used as a point of reference. To begin, the reader must first note the physical structure of the prison. Then the way in which the prisoners themselves are treated must be considered. And finally, how the prisoners are being prepared, if at all, for an eventual return to society.

As aptly demonstrated in Alexandra Gillespie's essay, "Beastly Books and Quick Quills," the Wizarding world is a strange distillation of both the old and the modern (55). This is, of course, made possible by magic, and the same holds true in regard to its prisons. At the first terrifying glance, Azkaban prison resembles one of the United States' most notorious prisons, Alcatraz. Alcatraz was originally used in the 1860s to house prisoners from the Civil War, but the facility was not federalized until 1933. Much like Azkaban, the island prison is comprised of stone and concrete walls and surrounded by miles of frigid waters. This comparison is so obvious, in fact, that in 2015, after 15 years of internet-fan theories, Rowling would finally admit that the California prison did inspire its literary counterpart ("Azkaban").

However, while Alcatraz and Azkaban appear to be remarkably similar, the service they provided is notably different. Closing in 1963, Alcatraz was only fully

operational for 29 years before it was closed. The Bureau of Prisons cited the cost of operating a prison on an island along with the costs of maintaining the outdated and crumbling facilities as the reason for its closure. Any attempts to update the facilities to meet the modern requirement of larger cells and other renovations would have required complete demolition and a rebuild from the ground up, a fiscal impossibility. However, the Bureau of Prisons maintains that, while outdated, the facility was effective. In fact, not a single prisoner is believed to have escaped, officially at least, although many died in the attempt, and the remains of several have never been recovered (Federal Bureau of Prisons, "The Rock").

In contrast, Azkaban was a much older structure. Rowling has stated it was built in the fifteenth century. It served first as a fortress and was not converted into a prison by the Ministry of Magic until much later. While the reader is never provided a detailed description of the interior, based upon Gillespie's essay and its real-life counterpart the reader can safely assume that Azkaban changed little in its more than five hundred years of service. No doubt its thick walls intended to repel attacks, its narrow passageways designed to be easily defended, and its small dark cells all remained untouched over the centuries. Additionally, though highly praised by the Wizarding community throughout Rowling's septet, Azkaban actually boasts a terrible record when it comes to keeping its prisoners locked up. In fact, prisoners escape in three of the seven books in the series, including Sirius Black and Barty Crouch Jr., and there is also a mass escape orchestrated upon Lord Voldemort's return. While the terrifying visage of the Dementors may seem essential for the perfect correctional officer, in fact,

quite the opposite is true. All of these escapes can be directly attributed to the inhuman Dementors who guard the prison. Because these beings have trouble understanding human emotions, Sirius escapes in the guise of a dog. And because they cannot distinguish between one sick human and another, Crouch Jr. similarly escapes. And finally, because they have no humanity of their own, no sense of right or wrong, they gladly betray the Ministry and follow Voldemort upon his return in exchange for the promise of fresh souls to feed upon.

Moving on to the questions of the actual treatment of prisoners, we again find similarities and yet, also, vast differences. Federal law mandates that all U. S. inmates be permitted at least four hours of visitation per month, with many facilities allowing more, especially around the holidays. Some prisons even provide spaces, such as small apartments or trailers for entire families to spend time together to celebrate birthdays or to unwrap Christmas gifts together. Any immediate family members, relatives, and up to ten friends can visit a federal prisoner as long as they go through the proper security procedures and are approved by the inmate. Additionally, other, non-family visitors are allowed to take advantage of visitation hours. These visitors may include attorneys, members of the clergy, employers both former and prospective, sponsors, and members of civic groups. All of these guidelines follow modern, progressive prison theory, which considers these visits as important considerations in a prisoner's rehabilitation. It is thought they provide positive motivation and influence as the prisoners plan to one day reintegrate into society (Federal Bureau of Prisons, "General Visiting Guidelines, 2020").

At first glance, Azkaban appears to be an altogether different animal from U. S. prisons; however, two particular incidents demonstrate that these systems may not be as different as one may think. The first, in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, demonstrates that while the prison may be staffed by Dementors, the Ministry still cares about the prisoners interned there. The Ministry's attitude becomes apparent when Sirius Black explains to Lupin how he received a copy of the *Daily Prophet*: "'When he [Fudge] came to inspect Azkaban last year, he gave me his paper'" (PA 362-363). This single comment provides two subtle hints of the deeper workings of Azkaban as a prison. First, the Ministry of Magic has some set, official standards for the running of the prison, and it is not simply left up to the inhuman Dementors to do as they will. It seems that the Wizarding world as a whole does care, at least somewhat, about the inmates' quality of life. If not, why would Fudge be conducting an inspection instead of just handing prisoners over to the Dementors? And Black's comment also tells us that the Ministry, in this case represented by Minister Fudge, cares about the prisoner's wellbeing. The Ministry is not as heartless as the cold gray walls of the prison that it oversees. If Fudge didn't care on some level, why would he give Sirius his paper? It's a small and utterly unnecessary gesture. It may mean little to Fudge, but it must seem like a godsend to a man imprisoned in Azkaban for 12 years, with only his own tortured mind for solace. This idea is further reinforced as the text unfolds and the reader is provided with multiple examples of Fudge's disdain for Black. In fact, by the final chapter of *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, the Minister is demanding Black be executed without trial by the

Dementors the moment he is captured. Fudge *truly* believes that Sirius is guilty of those 12 murders, but this just makes his small gesture all the more meaningful.

The second example can be found in the final chapters of *The Goblet of Fire*, as Barty Crouch Jr. confesses his sins under the effects of Snape's most powerful truth potion: "My mother saved me. She knew she was dying. She persuaded my father to rescue me as a last favor to her. . . . They came to visit me" (684). Barty Crouch Sr. smuggles out his son, altered to look like his mother with the aid of the Polyjuice potion, and leaves the dying woman in his son's place. However, just how Barty Crouch Sr. gained access to the prison isn't made clear. He may have used his position within the Ministry of Magic as an explanation--an impromptu inspection perhaps?--just as Minister Fudge had in the previous novel. However, even if this theory is correct, it doesn't explain how Mrs. Crouch was permitted access. She has no official position within the ministry and yet is still allowed to visit her son, in this case smuggling a vial of potion in with her. Barty Crouch Jr.'s confession is filled with a series of revelations as he neatly ties up many of the novel's loose ends. Dumbledore and the other wizards are hanging intently on every word and yet allow this point about Mrs. Crouch's access to pass without comment. The absence of any comment from Barty Crouch Jr.'s listeners implies that the prisoners inside of Azkaban are, in fact, permitted visitors, and that it is not the rules which keep friends and family from visiting but, perhaps, the stigma of being associated with a prisoner. While disheartening for the families, this explanation makes perfect sense, as most of the prisoners in Azkaban are there for crimes committed in the name of the Dark Lord. A wizard visiting Azkaban, even to see a loved one,

could run the risk of being accused of associating with Death Eaters, something no one would want to risk.

By closely examining Azkaban and comparing it to the U. S. Federal Prison system, it quickly becomes evident that one is a grim shadow of the other. While U. S. prisons, such as Alcatraz, have been labeled outdated and either expanded or closed, Azkaban has remained unchanged. The prisoners are suffering under the same conditions as they would have experienced over 500 years ago. Additionally, while the U. S. system recognizes the importance of treating the prisoners with respect and a degree of compassion, little evidence exists of similar policies in the Wizarding world. So, programs to prepare prisoners for a return to society are non-existent, and while visitation may be permitted it seems a privilege seldom used. The truth is that any prisoner condemned to Azkaban would have found even the most notorious of U. S. prisons a welcome change.

Perhaps one of the secrets behind Rowling's success lies in her ability to mirror the real world while simultaneously angling the surface just enough to magnify other aspects of the story. Magic, larger-than-life characters, heroes and villains, wizards and witches all spring to life, a reflection of our fantasies--both good and evil.

Unfortunately, at times that mirror reflects shadows as well, and there is no place in the Wizarding world where those shadows pool more darkly than in the forgotten cells of Azkaban.

Ron Weasley and the Perspective of the Privileged

Ashley Cook

Ron Weasley exhibits racist and controlling behavior. That much is clear. He presents the perspective of the privileged, but J. K. Rowling's depiction of privilege is complex and subtle.

Throughout the Harry Potter series, J. K. Rowling shows many examples of prejudice, hate, and discrimination--especially with regard to racism. She uses historical events and current racist tactics in her series so that adult readers may teach children about how minority groups are mistreated and how they should have the same rights as other people. Hermione is the biggest character to fight for these rights and teach other students--and readers--about discrimination and the need for equality. Harry, through whom most information is filtered to readers, seems to have a more neutral view on these issues, likely because of his many duties and his need to lower tension between Ron and Hermione. Ron Weasley and the rest of his family are quite privileged in the Wizarding world. This point is often stated but is hidden beneath the poverty they experience. The Weasleys often say racist things throughout the series, which is unfortunate because many children will look up to them and may be confused by the conflicting views about the slavery endured by house-elves. These multiple perspectives present a very realistic view on prejudice and ignorance, and Rowling does a great job at creating a world that is not strictly black and white. Ron Weasley is the member of the Golden Trio that casually exposes his racist

beliefs and his support for discrimination based on race. Rowling makes Ron into the main racist character because it fits with his position in society; it gives children a greater depth of understanding about casual racism; and it gives Hermione more opportunities to correct prejudices and teach readers the harm in prejudice.

It's important to examine Ron's position in the Wizarding community because it illustrates the power dynamics in Rowling's world and explains his views on that world and its politics. To most readers, Ron and his family do not come off as privileged. When Harry goes to visit them, he describes the Burrow as looking like "a large stone pigpen" and having a "sloping ceiling" and "shabby wallpaper" (CS 32, 40).

Throughout the series, Rowling always contrasts the Weasleys' lack of money with the comfort Harry experiences because of what his parents left for him in the vaults at Gringotts. The Weasley family is poor, but they still have other privileges such as being born wizards and, especially, being pure-bloods. To young readers, the allusion that this term makes may not be apparent, but many older readers can understand that this allusion refers to Western European aristocracy in an earlier era where many nobles would marry distant relatives to maintain their "pure" blood. The Weasleys do not have this same obsession, in contrast to the Malfoys, but they are a pure-blood family. Though wealth is often associated with the aristocracy, aristocrats can be poor, and this is the case for the Weasleys. They will never be regarded as existing on the same social level as the Malfoys, but they are still part of the pure-blooded community and, therefore, have the privilege to disregard the suffering of Muggles and other, magical, beings. Beyond that, they have been taught similar values

as the Malfoys, such as wanting to have house-elves and supporting slavery, along with being raised to be prejudiced against other magical creatures – for example, werewolves and goblins. Ron is raised in a family who supports racism against other magical creatures even if they do accept Muggle-born wizards and Muggles. He does not understand the privilege he enjoys and has no one but Hermione throughout the series to correct him--until he is forced to interact with other species, and even that doesn't change his attitude. Ron's position in the Wizarding world does not mean that he cannot learn or change. His brother Bill's comments about goblins are helpful here. He remarks to Harry when they are at Shell Cottage: "'As far as there can be friendship between wizards and goblins, I have goblin friends--or, at least, goblins I know well, and like'" (*DH* 516). This remark does not show lingering prejudice against goblins, as Bill really does show his ability to understand goblins and their culture. It is most likely his acknowledgment of the tension which still exists between wizards and goblins. It's safe to assume that Ron has the ability to break through his racism by learning about and understanding other magical races, but the environment he is raised in has implanted many prejudices in him which will take work to overcome.

Many of the depictions of racism that involve Ron are not uncommon in the modern world, and readers get a better idea of how racist comments are used to defend racism and oppression while pretending to be neutral and logical. These comments are often excused as playing Devil's Advocate to distract from their real purpose: justifying hate and distracting people from the actual oppression they represent. Ron clearly follows these patterns, and Rowling gives people a new context to see how harmful

these comments and views are. She does so especially by giving Hermione the role of standing against these views. The first example is when Hermione creates S.P.E.W. and Ron emphatically defends wizard enslavers by saying, ““They. Like. It. They *like* being enslaved!”” (GF 224). This defense was not uncommon during the period when Black people were enslaved in the United States and Great Britain. It was originally completely acceptable, and no one questioned it when colonists claimed that slaves were too stupid to live on their own without white people to “take care of them.” Although there is little explanation as to how house-elves came to be enslaved, we do know that they have been for centuries (GF 224) and that their enslavement is defended in the typical ways people use once others have started to question the ethics of slavery. Ron likely does believe that house-elves enjoy being slaves when he tells Hermione so. After all, his parents wanted to buy their own house-elf. Throughout the series, however, he continues to defend slavery even after seeing the traumatic effects it has on Dobby and Winky. The defense of slavery appears as Ron’s support for the power imbalance in his world and the ideology with which he was raised. He wants to believe that he and his family are good people but does not want to free house-elves. This line of thinking leaves him with only one defense: house-elves enjoy slavery.

Another benefit for the enslavers which I haven’t discussed yet is the amount of money it would cost wizards to pay house-elves if they were freed. At the moment, no one is willing to hire house-elves for pay except for Dumbledore. Laura Loiacono and Grace Loiacono sum this up perfectly in their observation about the Malfoy family. They describe them as “pureblood wizarding aristocrats who are born into privilege

and who are struggling to retain their social dominance” (181). With the attitudes and defenses that wizards have used towards S.P.E.W., Dobby, and Winky, it is likely that any efforts to free the house-elves would be met by resistance from many wizarding families with talk of how prohibitive the cost would be if they were paid.

Ron also expresses his thoughts about other races in the Wizarding world, including werewolves, giants, and goblins--most notably goblins because Rowling goes into the history between goblins and wizards that causes the strain in their relationship. So, when discussing the ownership of the Gryffindor sword, Ron makes an extremely offensive remark: “It’ll be one of those goblin stories . . . about how the wizards are always trying to get one over on them. I suppose we should think ourselves lucky he [Griphook] hasn’t asked for one of our wands” (DH 506). This comment echoes arguments in the modern world, where people accuse minority groups of faking their oppression in order to justify their own inaction, prejudice, and oppressive behavior towards minorities. Ron does not believe that goblins could have been cheated or misunderstood because he sees them as the cheaters rather than as a group of individuals who have different values and the free will to be good or evil. The second part of his statement further emphasizes this prejudicial thinking by implying that the only reason goblins would fake their oppression would be so they could steal magic from wizards. Yet, we know it’s wizards who are restricting goblins from having access to magic. The next remark Ron makes about goblins is to defend wizards and his own prejudice. “They’ve killed plenty of us. They’ve fought dirty too” (DH 506), he tells Hermione when she defends goblins. This is another phrase that is not new to

contemporary readers. Ron is again holding goblins to different standards from wizards. When groups of wizards brutalize goblins, it is because goblins are evil, but when goblins fight back, he criticizes the entire race with an unsubstantiated assertion about their use of violence. This line of thinking is similar to that used about the colonization of America and the treatment of Indigenous peoples. There are still people today who present the same defense as Ron for the genocide and colonization of Indigenous peoples by suggesting that defending one's home is the same as destroying someone else's home. Such ideas also assign a pseudo-morality to Americans, which is then used to justify inaction against PTSD, poverty, alcoholism, the death of Native languages, and other effects of colonization that Indigenous people have suffered down the centuries. Ron's racist views were meant by Rowling deliberately to mimic the world we live in today so as to teach in a new way how racism hurts individuals and groups of people by calling them immoral and justifying the systems that oppress them.

Rowling has created a trio of three very different people with different perspectives and skills. This creation allows her to endorse positive qualities she wants to teach children. These include standing up for others and being mindful of our opinions, the opinions of others, and the facts of history. Ron's racism would be completely horrendous in this series if it were not checked by the author in some way because it would lead to supporting his racist ideas as opposed to dismantling them, and Rowling uses Hermione, the extremely smart and conscientious, Muggle-born wizard to do the dismantling. Although Hermione has expressed her hesitancy towards some races based on prejudice, she does learn that all races include good people and

that all they need is an accepting environment where they can be themselves and are given the help they need. (Here one thinks, for example, of Remus Lupin.)

Hermione consistently defends Kreacher even when he says insulting things to him, and she is the only person seen trying to interact kindly with Kreacher. When she speaks to him, Kreacher is angry but says hesitatingly, ““The Mudblood is talking to Kreacher as though she is my friend”” (OP 108). Even Kreacher can recognize the kindness Hermione is trying to bestow upon him even though he does not appreciate it. Yet, the Weasleys, and especially Ron, discourage her. Hermione’s efforts are later supported by Dumbledore (OP 832) though too late to stop Kreacher’s betraying them at a crucial moment, and she continues to show kindness to Kreacher and the other magical creatures in *The Half-Blood Prince* and *The Deathly Hallows*. Hermione never stops her advocacy for S.P.E.W. or for other creatures whom she comes across even under the barrage of consistent disagreement, and even derisiveness, from Ron. When Ron suggests promising the sword to Griphook and then keeping it anyway, Hermione responds, that ““is despicable. Ask for his help, then double-cross him? And you wonder why goblins don’t like wizards, Ron?”” (DH 507). Hermione is quick to call out every racist comment Ron makes in the series, and she always renders judgment when he mistreats another magical creature. This calling Ron out is actually the most important thing Hermione can do in the series of novels. She never allows Ron’s racist remarks to go unquestioned, and her continued support for advocating for minorities and dismantling racist ideas and systems gives readers the understanding of how they

can help others and why racist ideas are so awful and harmful to many groups of people.

Ron's racist comportment throughout this series is frankly disgusting, but it gives Rowling enough material to dismantle past and current racist comments and mentalities by means of Hermione. She, it is, who looks at racism from a new reference point so that people may gain a better understanding of how racist comments pretend to be neutral and hide behind the frame of equality when all they support is oppression. Ron could have been a great character to show how a privileged person could learn about minority groups and change for the better, but unfortunately this role isn't fully realized. Harry could have also done more in his efforts to help other races, yet he still displays acceptance for all races, and Hermione is always there to correct Ron when he is prejudiced. Although this series should not be the main way to teach children about racism, it provides a great reference point for when children do learn about racial inequality. It enables them to put what they are learning into an understanding of a story they already know.

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