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**Choosing a Moral Compass:
The Journey towards Moral Maturity in *Harry Potter***

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By
Tricia Mieden
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Liberty University
College of Arts and Sciences
Master of Arts in English

Student Name: Tricia Mieden

Tess Stockslager, Ph.D
Thesis Chair

Date

Marybeth Baggett, Ph.D
Committee Member

Date

David Baggett, Ph.D
Committee Member

Date

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Introduction – Defining Morality as Developmental Process

“It is well said, then, that it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man; without doing these no one would have even a prospect of becoming good.” – Aristotle

J. K. Rowling has received worldwide success and recognition for her magical world and relatable characters within the *Harry Potter* series. However, the books have not always been seen as positive or appropriate for children and young adult readers. When the first book was published in 1997, religious and conservative activists, leaders, and scholars vocalized concern regarding the series for its portrayal of magic and witchcraft. Debates among fans and critics alike ensued, each side arguing its opinion on the possible ramifications of *Harry Potter*'s influence on young readers. For many, the books were met with high praise and instant support due to the positive values encouraged by Rowling's characters; in the first book, main character Harry is a quiet, respectful boy who follows the rules (mostly) and seeks to overthrow the “evil” plans of Professor Snape, and he accomplishes this with the help of his trusty companions, proving that love and friendship are all one needs when facing adversity.

Yet others saw within the books more concerning influences, such as Harry's frequent disregard for authority and his proclivity for justifying deception, which lead both him and his friends into life-threatening situations – not to mention they do all this with *magic*. In the early 2000s, the books were constantly challenged and even banned from various schools and libraries, and they appeared on the American Library Association's list of top ten challenged books multiple years in a row (“Frequently Challenged Books”). The moral panic resulting from this

series led to many prominent religious and community leaders speaking out about their own views of the series.

Many of these activists agreed with concerned parents about the negative influence these books might have on impressionable children. One of the more universal concerns with the books involves religious unease in regards to the lack of clear morals or of an objective standard of right and wrong for the characters. Rowling, although claiming that her Christian ideals influenced her works, never explicitly mentions religion of any kind in the books, and as a result there is no higher power or being to set standards for good behavior. This, coupled with the fact that the books are told using a medium of witchcraft and wizardry, upset not only evangelicals, but also those belonging to other religions such as Judaism, Greek Orthodox, and Islam around the globe. In American conservative circles specifically, arguments against the books have come from prominent organizations such as Focus on the Family, been expressed in evangelical tracts, and been written in publications such as *Christianity Today*. Taking these criticisms one step further, some prominent religious leaders have written essays and books supporting these complaints. Michael O'Brien, a popular Catholic writer, published a collection of his anti-Harry Potter articles in his book, *Harry Potter and the Paganization of Culture*. His stance, as the title might suggest, is that the books have no universal code of ethics and contribute to the downward spiral of cultural and social morality. Not only does he condemn the books as inappropriate reading material for any age, but he also gives advice to parents whose children have already read the books on how to rectify their children's faulty concept of moral order.

Although some critics continue to see the books as destructive to a young child's concept of morality, many more readers argue for the positive values that are supported by the series. *The Gospel According to Harry Potter* by Connie Neal, *Values of Harry Potter* by Ari Armstrong,

and *Looking for God in Harry Potter* by John Granger, who has in many ways become one of the leading voices in *Harry Potter* scholarship, are just a few of the books that support the positive influences of Rowling's series. These examples illustrate the ways that the series works to support not only a healthy view of social moral codes but also a Christian worldview that supports biblical truths. For example, Granger highlights throughout many of his books the biblical allusions within the series, considering such things as the battle between good and evil and Harry as Christ-figure. While those in opposition see the series as a dangerous passage into the occult, authors like Granger see the wizarding world as effective fantasy used to express larger truths comparable to works by Tolkien and Lewis.

When examining the series for its moral values, readers must take into consideration Harry's maturation across all seven books; however, many concerns about the moral implications of the series were expressed before the series' conclusion. If we are to look at the series as a compilation of Harry's moral development that spans all seven years, it is no wonder that many critics were concerned with the series' incomplete message of morality after only a few books were released. In David Baggett's essay "Magic, Muggles, and Moral Imagination," he confronts one such critic. Richard Abanes, in his book *Harry Potter and the Bible: The Menace Behind the Magick*, "accuses Rowling of projecting a morally ambiguous vision, in which infractions of rules often go unpunished, lying is an acceptable way to avoid trouble, and the distinction between good and evil is blurred" (Baggett 161). Abanes undoubtedly has given a bad reading to the *Harry Potter* series, one that ignores the many positive aspects of the books, yet perhaps part of the problem of his critique is that he had limited access to the breadth of Harry's development. Because Abanes' book was published in 2001, his argument about the books' amoral messages considers only the first four books in the series. Even Baggett's essay,

which rightly defends the moral complexities found within Rowling's series, was published in 2004, before the final two installments of the series came out in 2005 and 2007, and as a result, he did not have access to the full extent to which Harry matures throughout the series. Baggett, however, gives a clear defense for Rowling's books that, although Harry is not perfect, he is in fact maturing throughout the series, and this maturation should be considered essential to the series' overall message.

Moreover, Abanes denies the relevance of motivation when assessing certain character's decisions – particularly those of Harry and Voldemort – and he would argue that Rowling's ambiguous approach to morality denies any possibility of a universal code of ethics, something that he would argue is necessary. Baggett contends that each character's motivation is integral in understanding the moral complexities that Rowling's series reveals to its readers: "Given the intrinsic value of life and the particular moral goods at stake on such occasions, lying seems justified, and indeed a moral responsibility! This reminds us that ethics is about more than just rigidly obeying inflexible rules; it's about the kind of person one is and the sorts of moral goods one cherishes, such as human dignity, freedom, and life" (166). Throughout the books, Harry develops an awareness of the moral implications of his actions and how his decisions will undoubtedly influence those around him. Since the series' conclusion, we can see more clearly the moral growth that Harry experiences between his first year at Hogwarts and his final adventures in the series finale.

Thus, in response to the conversations regarding the moral implications of the *Harry Potter* books on readers, this thesis considers Harry's moral development over the course of the seven novels, which is evidence through his progression from an innocent adherence to rules in the series' beginning to a commitment to self-chosen principles at the conclusion. Much has been

said about the repercussions of Rowling's characters and their choices on the moral code of her readers, but there has been less study of how Harry comes to his own understanding of moral reasoning and how this affects his decision-making process throughout the series, particularly in considering the difference in how his concept of morality changes from an eleven-year-old mindset to that of an adult. This thesis follows Harry's journey towards moral self-awareness, observing the ways that his experiences and external factors influence his understanding and application of morality. For this thesis, studying Harry's moral development is about more than determining whether or not he acts morally; it even goes beyond determining whether or not he is a moral person. Instead, the focus is on the ways that Harry processes through difficult situations and the level of awareness he displays of the moral value of those decisions.

In order to grasp the importance of morality in Harry's moral judgments, a look at Aristotle's concept of virtue and ethics will be a beneficial foundation and explain clearly the role of choice in Harry's pursuit of morality. Aristotle, in a translation of *Nicomachean Ethics* by W. D. Ross, explains that "we are inquiring not in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good" (Book II). Aristotle was less concerned with whether an action is morally good and more on one's motivation to *be* good; to become good, then, one must hold the values he or she has in balance with the intentionality of acting on those values. He goes on to discuss the importance of choice in this matter, for "[w]e deliberate not about ends but about means" (Book III). He uses the example of a doctor who does not deliberate over whether or not to heal someone, but instead must determine *how* to heal someone. In the same way, morality can be measured not by the end result, but by the cognitive processes that lead one to that action. Anyone can act in a way that illustrates a strong moral standing, but because the motivation

behind such actions is internal, the true measure of morality cannot be judged without an awareness of those internal processes.

Harry's morality is thus not contingent primarily on his actions, but on the cognitive processes that he employs when determining his actions, something we as readers can observe through Harry's cognitive reasoning throughout the series, particularly when he is faced with conflicting situations. Focusing on his choices within these situations is crucial to understanding Harry's moral awareness at the series' conclusion. Dumbledore, one of Harry's prominent influences throughout the series, clearly illustrates an Aristotelian interpretation of choice in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, and this is a focal point throughout the series: "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities" (333). This statement is reflective of Aristotle, who says that choice "is thought to be most closely bound up with virtue and to discriminate characters better than actions do" (Book III). Aristotle argues that an individual can only be considered virtuous through an intentional "choice [which] involves a rational principle and thought" (Book III), much in the same way that psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg looks at an individual's cognitive processes as determining factors for his or her moral maturity. Aristotle's concept of morality provides the necessary foundation for my research and complements Kohlberg's approach to moral development as I consider Harry's choices and motivations over the course of the seven novels.

Lawrence Kohlberg approaches moral development from the position of how it can be cultivated through education; his research focuses on school-aged children, how they progress through his three levels of moral development, and how their external situations promote or hinder this progress. Joseph Reimer, Diana Pritchard Poalitto, and Richard H. Hershey, whose book consolidates the concepts of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, explain that a popular idea

about morality in psychology before the mid-1900s was that morality was assumed to be the result of feelings taught at birth and in childhood, not a rational decision process (43-44). Morals were thus indirectly taught to a child based on his or her societal interactions alone. However, this concept of morality proves relative, for the focus remains on environmental factors and gives little consideration to internal, rational functions. As a result, this concept of morality remains largely inadequate:

Many people think of morality in terms of the values they have acquired from their social environment. Thus a person is thought of as *having* values, and a moral person is supposed to act on these values. While this common-sense view accords well with much of everyday experience, it does not consider what happens when a person's values come into conflict with one another. How does one decide which value to follow? (Reimer et al. 45)

This final question is what Kohlberg sought to answer when he began his study of moral development. Through his research, he tracked the ways that children reacted to conflicting values, as seen in situations that had no easy answer according to their social expectations. Kohlberg's theory examined the ways in which "[t]he exercise of moral judgment is a cognitive process that allows us to reflect on our values and order them in a logical hierarchy" (Reimer et al. 47). From his research, Kohlberg developed a three level structure of moral development, one that includes the influences of both cognitive development and environmental influences of both the individual's interactions with peers and adult role models.

Although his theory has been met with contention, Kohlberg's work has been significant to the field of psychology in understanding moral development and cognitive reasoning, specifically how it relates to moral education, and the foundational concepts defined within his

stages provide a tangible standard for evaluating and teaching moral reasoning. Because of these contentions, however, Kohlberg adjusted his focus towards moral education later in his career instead of trying to establish an irrevocable theory of moral development. Yet this shift does not invalidate how his stages of cognitive reasoning influence and strengthen our understanding of moral reasoning. Kohlberg's objectives in moral education were to assist students as they progress through the stages he developed early on in his career. In *Lawrence Kohlberg's Approach to Moral Education*, F. Clark Power, Ann Higgins, and Lawrence Kohlberg explain that "when a [moral education] program aims to promote students' development of moral judgment, the objective is to change not simply a set of behaviors, but a structural capacity" (17), which refers to the six stages within Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Thus, the goal in any form of moral education, according to Kohlberg, is to guide students in their moral processing, not simply adjust their behaviors. This approach looks beyond action and prioritizes the internal reasoning of these children.

Kohlberg and his contemporaries sought to implement moral education through a variety of means, each one more effective than the last. Kohlberg's initial claims for moral education relied upon open dialogue; his original study involved social science teachers who incorporated specific hypothetical moral situations and discussions into their classrooms. This intentional integration of moral discussion in the classroom cultivated higher levels of moral reasoning at the conclusion of the study: "Research done on the effectiveness of the moral discussion classes showed significant student moral judgment development" (Power et al. 15). However, when Kohlberg and his colleagues returned to these same classrooms one year later, "not one [teacher] had continued to lead moral discussions" (Power et al. 15). The teachers attributed this to the difficulty in keeping hypothetical moral discussions closely related to their current curriculum.

As a result, Kohlberg continued to develop how his cognitive approach to moral development could be seamlessly incorporated in the classroom.

From his hypothetical discussion curriculum, Kohlberg began to consider other ways that moral education could be integrated. Kohlberg's concept of Just Communities resulted from the idea that moral reasoning is amplified through experience and engagement. Kohlberg's Just Communities worked as democratic systems in which students determine their school rules. In these school systems, Kohlberg sought "to create a school climate or atmosphere which would encourage adolescent peer groups, at their own operative stage levels, to choose to live by the ideals of fairness or justice" (Power et al. 38), and as a result, the students would be given real world experience on how to best interact in their social contexts from a strong moral foundation. However, the Just Community approach, while proven to be successful in promoting students' moral awareness within these situations, is attainable through an alteration of that school's social system. This presents a problem for many school systems that do not have the means or the support to adjust their preexisting structures and become a Just Community. However, there are ways to seamlessly implement Kohlberg's concepts of moral education on a smaller scale. Through applying Kohlberg's theory of moral development to specific disciplines, English literature for example, educators can use Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning to analyze characters' development and integrate similar discussions from his original curriculum into their classrooms.

Although Kohlberg's theory of moral development cannot reasonably be the definitive end for all of moral development, it can be used as a guiding standard within education, for a student's awareness of a character within literature's morality and the reasoning that character employs when approaching conflicting situations can be beneficial for that student's own moral

development. Therefore, applying Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning to characters within literature creates a situation in which dialogue can take place. Students who are asked to analyze and discuss a character's moral development according to Kohlberg's scale are in turn more aware of the reasons behind that character's decisions and actions. A. C. Garrod and G. A. Bramble, in "Moral Development and Literature," explain how literature especially can be used in moral education "because so many of the best poets and writers have addressed themselves, directly or indirectly, to issues of moral significance" (105), and it can be argued that J. K. Rowling addresses many issues pertaining to morality throughout her *Harry Potter* series. Garrod and Bramble propose that Kohlberg's stages of moral development provide a standard by which students and educators can discuss moral situations:

[W]e have employed Lawrence Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental approach to moral education because we believe that it is a conceptual tool which, in the face of conflicting values and moral systems, will help individuals to determine the fairest and most adequate course of action. Furthermore, we're confident that a thorough understanding of his theory can be used successfully by teachers to stimulate moral development without recourse to the 'preaching' of moral content (which many educators regard as objectionable); for even more important than the inculcation of specific values and attitudes is the development of an awareness and understanding of *what it means* to be honest, or *why* one should do his duty. (106)

By encouraging students to apply the elements of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, then, educators initiate conversations that will benefit students with their personal conceptions of morality. While Garrod and Bramble's curriculum limits its focus on specific events and conflicting situations throughout various pieces of literature, this thesis will focus on the overall

development and maturation of one central character, Harry Potter. Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, students are provided examples of Harry's developed moral reasoning in response to his external situations and his positive social influences. Thus, this thesis will refer to Kohlberg's theory as a standard on which to evaluate moral maturity, and through the analysis of Harry's progression through Kohlberg's three levels of moral development, one can apply these concepts to everyday life beyond literary analysis.

The first level in Kohlberg's theory of moral development is the preconventional level. This level consists of two stages, each focusing on the individual's concept of right and wrong, which is based largely on physical motivators. The first chapter considers Harry's progression through these stages as he exhibits different elements of these stages in the first two books in the series, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Kohlberg's concept of moral education asserts that most children progress past this initial stage rather quickly as a result of positive influences at home and school; however, because of Harry's borderline abusive upbringing, he exhibits elements of a stage 1 perspective, such as his reliance on punishment as a major motivator for his actions. Harry illustrates aspects of both stages often simultaneously while at Hogwarts as he encounters situations that do not match up to his predetermined expectations, and he acts on the idea that "right" is relative. In the preconventional level, children judge situations based on fairness and how that fits into their concepts of what is right. When Harry is faced with conflicting situations, he often focuses on his own placement in the situation and his decisions often reflect this position in the first level.

Chapter two follows Harry's progression into the second level of Kohlberg's theory: the conventional level. Interpersonal relationships and one's understanding of his or her role within a greater social structure signifies one's advancement into this level. The third stage and the first in

this level deals with an increased awareness of how others view the individual in terms of social expectations. Harry displays characteristics of this stage in books three and four, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. In these books, Harry's actions are largely motivated by the expectations of his trusted social circles, for example his role as a member of Gryffindor, and he is largely concerned with establishing interpersonal relationships as a result of his role within this distinct group. When he encounters moral dilemmas, he begins to make decisions based on the perspectives of others within the situation, which differs from the limited, individual perspective in the preconventional level. He also begins to calibrate his own moral compass alongside those within his circle, further illustrating how his moral conscience might be influenced by his societal role.

The fourth stage in Kohlberg's theory and the second in the conventional level presents a shift from considering one's place within a specific social group to considering a larger system and how he or she relates to the larger social constructs surrounding that smaller group. In this stage, Harry develops an awareness to the wizarding community's social values. However, these values often contradict his own, and he must reconcile this with his own moral conscience. Harry's decisions within the latter parts of *Goblet of Fire* and throughout book five, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, illustrate this conventional perspective. However, it is not until he reaches the postconventional level that Harry appears to become fully aware of his responsibility to moral action, as evidenced by his decisions in the final installments of the series.

The fifth and sixth stages of Kohlberg's theory of moral development comprise the postconventional or principled level. These stages involve a holistic understanding of morality as it is seen across cultures. Individuals who reach the fifth stage prioritize human values and rights, regardless of social influence. Consequently, instead of simply following the laws set in place by

society, those within this stage of development begin to rely on their own code of morality and how their concept of right and wrong compares with social expectations. Whereas stage four follows the laws set by society, individuals within stage five begin to judge moral situations by their own determined standards, especially when presented with situations in which those standards might conflict. These individuals consider both moral and lawful perspectives and are aware that common ground is not always easily established between the two. The sixth stage of moral development deals with universal ethics. According to Kohlberg's theory, individuals who reach this stage understand that there are universally recognized values, regardless of either social or cultural beliefs, and they choose to act on these beliefs regardless of what the cost might be. These values encompass principles of justice and equality and the significance of human life.

For this chapter, Harry's moral reasoning within the final book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, will provide evidence for his moral maturity, specifically in the awareness he illustrates in regards to these moral decisions. Falling back on Aristotle's virtue ethics, it is Harry's choices, not just his actions, which illustrate whether or not he reaches a higher awareness of moral maturity. Harry's actions in *Deathly Hallows* are the result of chosen principles and values which transcend cultural and societal expectations. While Kohlberg's final level provides a foundation for the importance of choice in adhering to universal principles, certain aspects of his final level have been criticized for their fixation on justice alone. A popular feminist critique of Kohlberg considers the idea that Kohlberg's theory ignores the ethics of care, instead focusing on a detachment from relational influences when making moral judgments. Graham P. McDonough quotes feminist critic Carol Gilligan, who concludes that, in her estimation, "Kohlberg's ideal type is a 'conception of adulthood that is itself out of balance, favoring the separateness of the individual self over connection to others, and leaning more

towards an autonomous life of work than toward the interdependence of love and care” (204). Her argument appeals to the potential problems of an individual’s fixation on justice alone, and she rightly concedes that “moral situations raise both justice and care issues, and as such reflect a paradox in the human experience” (McDonough 204). Harry does exhibit aspects of Gilligan’s care ethics, and many of his actions are the result of his personal connections with others and less of Kohlberg’s concept of justice alone. Nevertheless, Harry’s adherence to chosen principles, the main focus of Kohlberg’s postconventional level of moral development, is the result of his commitment to pursuing what is morally good, and his sacrificial actions in the seventh book adequately portray his strong ethical stance and moral judgment.

If readers of the *Harry Potter* series study and evaluate Harry’s example of moral maturity, they might be more likely to apply these same principles to their own lives. In evaluating Harry’s development, one must be attentive to his cognitive reasoning, something which is illustrated to the reader through the narration. In the series’ beginning, the narrator gives little insight into Harry’s decision-making processes, which can support the idea that children in the lower stages of moral awareness are less likely to consider moral dilemmas in the same manner of those in higher stages. Bearing in mind that the narration reveals little of Harry’s cognitive reasoning in the early books, many of the claims made here of Harry’s moral reasoning in these early stages are conjecture. Although his internal thought processes are not as clear as they are in the latter half of the series, Harry’s actions and conversations provide evidence as to how his moral development might be measured according to Kohlberg’s theory. As Harry grows up, however, the narration offers more insight into Harry’s internal processes, and as a result, the reader can see more clearly Harry’s moral maturation. It is important, then, for readers of this thesis to be aware that the focus is on Harry’s development. Thus, any consideration of other

characters' actions is not a judgment on those character's moral placement, but an admission to the influence those characters might have had on Harry's moral development at that time. In compliance to Kohlberg's theory, Harry's moral maturity is the result of both his cognitive reasoning, which is illustrated through the narration, and his external factors, which are evidenced by his interactions with other characters.

Chapter One – Rule Following and Breaking in the Preconventional Level

“We could all have been killed – or worse, expelled.” – *Sorcerer’s Stone*

Attempts at determining the origins of an individual’s concept of morality have caused much discord among scholars, psychologists, and philosophers alike. The conversations regarding morality consider whether morals are nurtured from birth and as a result of one’s upbringing, if society influences an individual’s understanding of morality through day to day interactions outside the family unit, or if human beings are simply born with a goodness that encourages inherent moral behavior. Central to these conversations of origin is how morality can be cultivated, specifically from an education standpoint. Many theorists have considered the degree to which morality should be considered in education and how best to integrate moral teachings, and the difficulty in determining the most effective way of teaching morality lies in the differing opinions on how it is best developed. Lawrence Kohlberg, a psychologist whose theory of moral development tracks the influencing factors on a child’s development as a way to understand education’s role in development, formulated his theory by blending popular moral perspectives, and his theory successfully balances the internal and social factors of moral development.

Two of the more prominent views on the origins of a child’s moral development that influenced Kohlberg are Emile Durkheim’s moral socialization and Jean Piaget’s theory of cognitive development. John Snarey and Thomas Pavkov explain how Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory is an effective compromise between the two. Durkheim’s emphasis on socialization adheres to the idea that morality is only obtained through a child’s observations of those he or she comes in direct contact with and the social expectations surrounding his or her maturation.

However, Snarey and Pavkov point out that “[e]ven if children are provided with moral role models and upright literature...it is illogical to assume that this alone will facilitate moral behavior. Beyond imitating exemplary role models, moral behavior entails cognitive understanding and the exercise of free will” (107). Snarey and Pavkov address the limitations of a socialization perspective when teaching morality, for individuals do apply cognitive reasoning when making moral decisions. On the other hand, Piaget’s concept of morality downplays the influence of society and instead “involves supporting students’ development of autonomous inner standards of justice that overcome the dependence on external authorities” (108). Piaget’s focus devalues the ways that social interactions influence a child’s development. Kohlberg’s theory, however, finds a balance between these two opposing views, for it “involved both the collective socialization of moral content and the developmental promotion of moral reasoning” (Snarey and Pavkov 111). Children do rely on the examples they observe in society, but to reach moral maturity, they must effectively develop their own standards for morality and intentionally act based on those standards. Based on Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, then, children reach maturity through observing the moral actions of others through social interactions, which results in a developed understanding of their own moral consciousness.

The first level within Kohlberg’s three levels of moral development is the preconventional level, and children within this level are influenced largely by their physical surroundings as they are not yet capable of reasoning through situations from a morally aware perspective. The influence of socialization, thus, plays a large role in one’s development between stages 1 and 2, for children at this age cannot yet connect cognitive reasoning to their basic understanding of right and wrong and are therefore reliant on rules to define right and wrong. According to Kohlberg, “At this level, the child is responsive to cultural rules and labels of good

and bad, right or wrong, but interprets these labels either in terms of the physical or hedonistic consequences of action (punishment, reward, exchange of favors) or in terms of the physical power of those who enunciate the rules and labels” (“The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Moral Education” 671). This level focuses initially on a child’s immediate influences and how the structures of home and school contribute to that child’s concept of moral situations. As the child develops an individual awareness to morality, however, there is an added emphasis on reasoning as he or she progresses through the different stages and levels of Kohlberg’s theory.

However, because of the fluidity of these stages within each level, there is no definitive moment in which Harry moves out of stage 1 and into stage 2. Reimer, Poalitto, and Hersh explain, “Stages are descriptions of ideal stopping points (equilibriums) along the paths of development. People, especially young people, are likely to be transitional between stages and to use more than one stage of reasoning” (62). Elements of stage 1 are clearly seen by the ways that Harry categorizes people as good or bad and his reliance on rules to determine his actions in *Sorcerer’s Stone*, and yet Harry illustrates certain qualities from both stages simultaneously over the course of *Sorcerer’s Stone* and *Chamber of Secrets*. Much of this is the result of Harry’s natural instincts towards goodness, something that is not necessarily an aspect of Kohlberg’s theory, and because of Harry’s inclination towards goodness, he is quick to progress beyond the preconventional stages. This progression is further motivated by Harry’s change in environment and the increase of positive social influences at Hogwarts.

Stage 1: Physical Punishments as Motivators

When the reader meets young eleven-year-old Harry Potter in *Sorcerer’s Stone*, Harry displays certain aspects of Kohlberg’s early stages of Kohlberg’s theory, and his upbringing in the Dursley household is a large reason for this. Because Harry is raised in an oppressive

environment, his awareness of morality is delayed at the start of the series. According to Kohlberg's research, most children who are surrounded by positive social interactions progress beyond the initial stages of moral development by the age of nine. And while there is a very strong connection between cognitive development and moral awareness, Kohlberg believes that social interactions constitute a necessary foundation for moral maturity: "Moral development depends upon stimulation defined in cognitive-structural terms, but this stimulation must also be social, the kind that comes from social interaction and from moral decision making, moral dialogue, and moral interaction" ("Moral Stages and Moralization" 49). In the series' beginning, Harry is unaware of the complexity of moral decision-making, for he has not been shown examples of moral decisions and processes; he consequently understands right and wrong based on the expectations placed on him by his immediate influences – the Dursleys. The most evident issue with this situation, however, is that the Dursleys themselves do not have a developed concept of morality, and their choices are dictated by how they are viewed by others, not an internal desire to be good or morally right. Instead, they strive to be "perfectly normal, thank you very much" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 1), and for them, their normalcy is determined by the way they are perceived by others.

Because of the Dursley family's negative influence, Harry's ability to make decisions has been limited; his life up until this point has been dictated by his surrogate family and he has had very little interaction with society outside of his closet under the stairs. In the first chapter of *Sorcerer's Stone*, Rowling gives an overview of Harry's upbringing that illustrates the rudimentary awareness Harry has about right and wrong: Harry should not act out of the ordinary, disrespect Vernon, Petunia, or Dudley, and or do anything at all that that might disrupt the Dursleys' way of life. These rules are not the result of moral constraints placed by his aunt

and uncle, however; they derive from the family's selfish desire to fit into their suburban society. House rules are enforced largely by punishment, which further contributes to Harry acting based on a stage 1 understanding of morality.

However, it is important to note that Harry does not accept their moral code as much as follow their expectations in an attempt to survive under the Dursley's authority. Harry's interactions with the Dursleys illustrate his underdeveloped awareness of moral reasoning, for he is careful not to ever "ask questions – that was the first rule for a quiet life with the Dursleys" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 20). He goes on to note, "If there was one thing the Dursleys hated even more than his asking questions, it was his talking about anything acting in a way it shouldn't" (26). Harry, as a child with a limited understanding of moral decision-making, understands these "rules" based on the punishment he personally encounters when he acts in violation of these expectations. Harry recounts situations in which he is punished when unexplainable things happen: when his hair mysteriously grows back overnight after Aunt Petunia cuts it off, he is "given a week in his cupboard for this, even though he had tried to explain that he *couldn't* explain how it had grown back so quickly" (24); another time, he finds himself on the roof at school after running away from Dudley and his friends and is sent again to the cupboard (25); and following the situation where the glass disappears at the zoo, Harry is once again locked in the cupboard without meals (29). In each of these situations, Harry is punished for doing something against the family's perception of normal instead of breaking a morally determined rule. Thus, Harry's decisions are based largely on his immediate surroundings and how he can avoid punishment from his authority figures as opposed to a personal awareness to moral judgements.

As a result of Harry's upbringing, Harry's understanding of morality at age eleven matches the early stages of Kohlberg's theory of moral development. In the first stage of the preconventional level, "[t]he child at this stage thinks only in terms of physical problems and physical solutions" (Reimer et al. 66). Harry is not capable yet of considering the reasons behind why he should or should not act a certain way, and so he acts based on his understanding of the expectations placed on him by those in authority over him, and he accepts these parameters without questioning their validity. Harry also does not question these rules while in stage 1 because he has adopted Kohlberg's idea that "what makes something right or wrong is defined by the authority rather than by cooperation among equals" (*The Measurement of Moral Judgment* 25). As illustrated above, Harry's concept of right and wrong is physically motivated, such as the physical punishments that result from breaking the rules set for him. Harry is not given the chance to establish his own concept of morality because his immediate authority figures define it for him. In *Sorcerer's Stone*, Harry does not consider whether or not he *should* do what the Dursley's tell him; he simply adheres to these rules, and as a result of his limited perception of right and wrong, he is not given a chance to engage in effective decision-making.

Because of the emphasis on punishment, children in this initial stage do not look to morality as a guidepost in making decisions; instead, they factor in this fear of punishment when determining their actions within a given situation. But this focus on punishment is more than a guide for the child's own actions; the child will inadvertently rely on physical punishments as a means of enforcing rule following, which for them constitutes right and wrong. If a child in this stage believes that someone is a bad person, for example, he or she will desire that that person be punished, often physically, because that child only sees bad behavior being dealt with in physical ways. Reimer, Poalitto, and Hersh explain that children in this stage assess whether or not

someone is bad based on his actions, and “[i]f he is bad, they can punish him by beating him up. At this stage the problem is that simple; the child does not yet recognize other people’s rights and feelings and does not consider why the man was wrong or what will happen to the townspeople if they beat him up. The problem ends when the punishment is given” (66). Children in this stage do not look to others as autonomous people; they are unable to take on another person’s role and put themselves in that person’s shoes. For Harry, this is seen in his casual reactions to the idea of the characters he deems “enemies” being punished, and often it is Harry himself who seeks to administer this punishment. When Harry is in Diagon Alley for the first time, he looks at a book about curses and admits to Hagrid, “I was trying to figure out how to curse Dudley” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 80). He does not see anything wrong with cursing his cousin because he understands Dudley to be a bad person. Harry’s desire for Dudley to receive punishments for being “bad” is simply the byproduct of his stage 1 perspective, and many of his social influences encourage this perception.

Children are influenced by their environments regardless of whether they are aware of it, and their development of moral concepts is largely the result of observing those around them. These influence can be authority figures or peers, as both provide the child with examples of how to act based on a mutual understanding of social expectations. From these interactions, common moral values are established, and, as Reimer, Poalitto, and Hersh explain, these “[moral] values arise out of the child’s experience of interacting with adults and peers, and operate as conceptual modes of regulating social interaction” (85). According to Kohlberg’s theory, moral development is grounded in social experience, and Harry’s social influences are foundational to his moral conceptions.

Once he arrives at Hogwarts, Harry finds himself surrounded by positive social influences, and he relies on those he trusts to help him determine his actions at Hogwarts. Hagrid is the first person from the wizarding world that Harry interacts with, and for this reason, Harry relies on him for guidance as he learns about the wizarding world and Hogwarts specifically. However, in many of Harry's interactions with Hagrid, Hagrid's statements seem to encourage a stage 1 perspective. Hagrid's advice often complements a stage 1 focus on punishment as a central motivator for behavior. In response to the situation in Diagon Alley in which Harry looks for books to curse Dudley, Hagrid considers the trouble Harry would get into when telling Harry not to buy the book; he does not, however, consider the moral repercussions of using curses on another human being: "I'm not sayin' that's not a good idea, but yer not ter use magic in the Muggle world except in very special circumstances ... An' anyway, yeh couldn' work any of them curses yet, yeh'll need a lot more study before yeh get ter that level" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 80). As illustrated, Hagrid's advice is based upon the rules and what the immediate consequences might be. In the second book, after Ron's curse on Draco backfires as a result of his broken wand, Hagrid does not reprimand him for attacking another student. Instead, his response is in line with the children's concept of right and wrong at this preconventional level: "Well, I don' blame yeh fer tryin' ter curse him, Ron . . . Bu' maybe it was a good thing yer wand backfired. 'Spect Lucius Malfoy would've come marchin' up ter the school if yeh'd cursed his son. Least yer not in trouble" (*Chamber of Secrets* 116). Hagrid is not necessarily within stage 1 himself, but the reasons he gives to Harry, Ron, and Hermione strictly adhere to rules as a way to avoid punishment. Because he is a guiding influence, Hagrid's reasoning influences Harry's own decision-making while he is within the preconventional level.

Hagrid also provides Harry with information about his parents and what they were like when they were alive – something his aunt and uncle deprived him of – and this knowledge provides Harry with positive role models that help to motivate his maturation. With this new information, Harry begins to focus his attention on how he can measure up to their reputation. Hagrid describes their time at Hogwarts and the ways that they were both successful and kind: “[Y]er mum an’ dad were as good a witch an’ wizard as I ever knew. Head boy an’ girl at Hogwarts in their day! ... knew yer mum an’ dad, an’ nicer people yeh couldn’t find” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 55). From this point forward, Harry seeks to emulate his parents, and their reputation of being good people influences Harry’s desire to be equally good. Up until this point, Harry illustrates a certain level of innocence. Readers can perceive from his early actions that his instincts are good, but he does not illustrate conscious moral leanings in either direction, and much of this is the result of his innocence in stage 1. Knowing that his parents were good people, though, encourages Harry to follow their example, which results in his desire to make good decisions. Throughout the series, Harry will continue to learn things about his parents, and each discovery motivates him towards positive moral action. As he settles in at Hogwarts, for example, Harry makes very clear choices according to what he assumes his parents would expect of him. Anne Klaus discusses how Harry’s early decisions illustrate a subconscious desire to be good:

Harry’s choice of companions reveals a careful consideration and an inner moral compass: he picks his friends based on like-mindedness, regardless of whether these companions will earn him a great reputation. Harry makes the modest choice that affirms his goodness, namely choosing the poor but happy Weasley family and the Muggle-born

Hermione Granger over the influential but selfish and materialistic Malfoys. His goodness and selflessness run like a thread through the seven volumes. (27)

Harry clearly desire to be a good person, to live up to the expectations as the Potters' son, and to be a worthy member of Gryffindor, but at this point in the series, Harry is not consciously aware of how moral values play into these decisions. However, by aligning himself with positive role models, he provides himself with strong examples of moral behavior, which contributes to his moral development.

Harry's interactions with his peers also influence his stage of moral development, and because they are in the same environment, his classmates both illustrate his similar understanding of moral perspective and encourage his progression through Kohlberg's stages. In *Sorcerer's Stone*, Hermione establishes herself as a strict rule follower. Whenever she hears that Harry and Ron are considering to break the rules, she has a reason as to why they should not. However, her reasons are not that what they are about to do is morally reprehensible; instead, she argues that breaking the rules will lead to tangible consequences for herself and the other members of Gryffindor. When she attempts to stop Harry from retrieving Neville's Remembrall from Draco, she is not concerned for his safety, but rather that his disobedience might "get [them] all into trouble" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 148). Later when she hears about Harry and Ron's plans to sneak out and meet Draco for the Wizard's Duel, her concern is again on how their actions will impact her as opposed to the harm they might come to: "Don't you *care* about Gryffindor, do you *only* care about yourselves, I don't want Slytherin to win the house cup, and you'll lose all the points I got from Professor McGonagall for knowing about Switching Spells" (155). Although she sounds at first like she is selflessly speaking for the greater good of Gryffindor, her true incentive here is self-motivated, for she places a greater value on the points

she has secured for her house than on Harry's situation. After Ron and his brothers rescue Harry from the Dursleys' house in *Chamber of Secrets*, she again falls back on the motivation of consequence in her evaluation of the situation: "I hope everything went all right and that Harry is okay and that you didn't do anything illegal to get him out, Ron, because that would get Harry into trouble too" (45). Her concern about the boys' illegal actions is motivated not by a greater concern for what is morally right or wrong, but instead by how much trouble would result.

Stage 2: Moral Justifications Based on Fairness

While children's decisions in the first stage of level one are motivated by how the consequences of their actions will influence themselves only, children who progress to the second stage begin to think beyond these immediate repercussions. In stage 2, Kohlberg explains that children begin to justify their decisions based on not only their perception of the situation, but also on how others might perceive it: "Stage 2 is characterized by a concrete individualistic perspective. There is an awareness that each person has interests to pursue and that these may conflict. A moral relativity develops out of the understanding that different persons can have different yet equally valid justifications for their claims to justice" (*The Measurement of Moral Judgment* 26). Thus, children become aware of the idea that each person has his or her own investment in a situation, and this begins to affect children in their cognitive reasoning. Children in stage 1 are largely egocentric, for "[t]hey are not yet capable of distinguishing between their own perspective (what they want) and the perspective of others (what others want of them)" (Reimer et al. 48-49). In stage 2, however, each child considers more than the rules, for "the child becomes aware that other people can take his role as he can take theirs. Thus the child can anticipate how others will react to his actions and can plan his actions accordingly" (Reimer et al. 71). This awareness complicates the child's justifications for his or her actions, for there is a

greater desire to uphold a certain level of fairness with others. These children, while they still do not measure things as morally good or bad, begin to judge actions based on what is fair in the situation. This focus on fairness also leads children in stage 2 to push limits and sometimes even break rules if they can justify it – something that is true for Harry throughout the first two books.

While children in stage 1 commonly demonstrate a black and white view of right and wrong as defined by the rules laid out for them, those in stage 2 begin to understand that rules can sometimes be broken in an attempt to maintain what they determine to be fair. As Harry begins to consider alternatives to the rules as written, he often finds himself breaking these rules for reasons that he justifies according to the situation. When living with the Dursleys in stage 1, for example, he followed the rules and did not question what the Dursleys deemed to be right or wrong; at Hogwarts, however, he begins to consider how the rules relate to his situation in an attempt to determine the right or wrong choice. This shift from stage 1 to stage 2 is seen early in *Sorcerer's Stone* when Harry is placed in a situation in which he must decide to follow orders or act on someone else's behalf, and he easily chooses to disregard the rules.

Moral judgments happen most often when an individual's values conflict, and Harry's desire to follow the rules is often placed in opposition to his consideration of other people's feelings throughout the series, and this is something that will continue to influence Harry's decisions as he progresses through Kohlberg's levels of moral reasoning. In *Sorcerer's Stone*, Neville has just been taken to the hospital wing by Madam Hooch who warns the students that if anyone flies on his or her broomstick while she is gone, he or she will be punished. Draco, who has established his role by this point in the series as a bully, takes Neville's dropped Remembrall and flies into the air. Harry, in an attempt to maintain fairness between the children, takes it upon himself to get it back, grabs his broom, and follows Malfoy into the air. In this instance, although

the children are given a clearly defined rule to follow and that rule has a definitive punishment attached to it, Harry makes his decision in spite of that. According to Reimer, Poalitto, and Hersh, stage 2 supports the concept that “if someone has a good reason for doing something, it is only fair that he or she be judged by that reason and not by the arbitrary will of an authority figure” (68). Madam Hooch, who is the authority figure and who has set the rules, is not around to enforce the rule when Harry makes his decision. Unlike stage 1 where he was limited to acting in fear of punishment, Harry acts in accordance to his own interpretation of this situation. It was not fair to Harry that Draco took Neville’s Remembrall, and if Draco was going to break the rules by flying, then it would seem justified that Harry do the same.

Fairness continues to motivate Harry’s actions throughout the first book, and he becomes more willing to break the rules for the chance at an equal opportunity. When Draco and his cronies challenge Harry and Ron to a Wizard’s Duel, neither Harry nor Ron hesitates in accepting the challenge. By participating in this midnight duel, Harry and Ron are aware of the rules they are breaking – wandering the school at night and using magic against another classmate outside of the classroom setting. However, Harry again justifies this based on Draco’s mutual participation in this situation. Draco will also be breaking the rules by meeting him after dark, and since Draco has established himself as a bully figure, Harry deems the misdemeanor warranted. As Harry is deliberating about whether or not he should go to the duel, Rowling’s narrator reveals how he justifies this action: “Harry felt he was pushing his luck, breaking another school rule today. On the other hand, Malfoy’s sneering face kept looming up out of the darkness – this was his big chance to beat Malfoy face-to-face. He couldn’t miss it” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 155). Harry’s decision to go to the duel depends on his belief that it is fair for him to do so. Within Kohlberg’s second stage, “fairness primarily involves everyone’s getting an equal share

or chance” (Reimer et al. 69). Based on the nature of the boys’ rivalry, Harry is constantly calculating who is on a higher level, and because he sees himself as representing goodness as opposed to Draco’s badness, he believes that any allowances Draco receives are fair to him as well.

A large concern that critics have had with the *Harry Potter* series is in regards to how Harry disregards authority, particularly his professors at Hogwarts; however, when approaching the series through the lens of Kohlberg’s theory, it is clear that Harry’s actions are, for the most part, justified as he attempts to maintain fairness. Harry’s disrespect towards professors is most apparent in his treatment of Professor Snape, someone who is biased against the Gryffindor house in favor of his own house, Slytherin, and, for all intents and purposes, a bad man. Because of this, the Gryffindor students act against him, and this reaction against authority further supports the idea that these children are motivated by a stage 2 perspective of morality. In stage 2, “[a]n authority is like everybody else insofar as he has to play by the rules of the game, which are the rules of fairness” (Reimer et al. 68-69). Because the children see that Snape is prejudicial to the Gryffindor house, they are less motivated to uphold certain rules when he is the authority figure involved. When Harry attends his first potions lesson with Snape, he immediately identifies where Snape’s favoritism lies. Harry loses house points twice during the lesson, neither reason truly being something worthy of punishment: he loses a point for his apparent “cheek” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 138) and when Neville does poorly with his potion, Snape blames Harry for not correcting him, taking another point (139). Although Snape seems to critique every other student in the lesson, Harry notices that this excludes Draco, for Snape clearly shows favoritism towards his own house. In *Chamber of Secrets*, the favoritism only gets worse, as indicated by the narrator: “Harry also happened to be Snape’s least favorite student. Cruel, sarcastic, and

disliked by everybody except the students from his own house” (77). Because Snape acts outside of Harry’s concept of fairness, Harry finds it easier to break rules and justify his decisions.

In the first book, Harry’s ability to justify his decision to break the rules is clear as a result of Snape’s treatment. Because Harry believes Snape is after the Sorcerer’s Stone, once he finds out that Hagrid told someone the secret to getting past Fluffy, the three headed dog guarding the Stone, he does attempt to go to the proper authority figures to protect it. Harry is aware of the rules and the limitations that are placed on him as a first year student, but when he discovers that Dumbledore has left Hogwarts and Professor McGonagall ignores his warning that the Stone is no longer safe, he is willing to break the rules in defense of the Stone. When Hermione warns Harry that he might get expelled for breaking the rules and going after the Stone himself, he vocalizes his justification:

Don’t you understand? If Snape gets hold of the Stone, Voldemort’s coming back!
 Haven’t you heard what it was like when he was trying to take over? There won’t be any Hogwarts to get expelled from! He’ll flatten it, or turn it into a school for the Dark Arts! Losing points doesn’t matter anymore, can’t you see? D’you think he’ll leave you and your families alone if Gryffindor wins the house cup? If I get caught before I can get to the Stone, well, I’ll have to go back to the Dursleys and wait for Voldemort to find me there, it’s only dying a bit later than I would have, because I’m never going over to the Dark Side! I’m going thorough that trapdoor tonight and nothing you two say is going to stop me! Voldemort killed my parents, remember? (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 270)

Harry’s justification for breaking the rules begins with his relationship with Snape. Snape has never acted in accordance with fairness, and this gives Harry greater reason to disregard the rules now. He expects Snape to break the rules, and because Harry believes his cause is the right

choice, he is willing to break the rules. Yet his justification for stealing the Stone still revolves around his role in the situation. While he clearly understands that Voldemort returning to power will affect the wizarding world, he is driven first and foremost by his own relationship with the situation. He argues first that there will be no more Hogwarts. His understanding of Voldemort's return is limited to his immediate placement and how his version of home will be affected. He also recognizes that his own life will be forfeit if Voldemort comes back, again focusing on how he fits within what he assumes to be Voldemort's agenda. Lastly, and perhaps the most motivating reason Harry feels the need to intervene, his parents were the last victims of Voldemort's tyranny. His motivations stem from his own placement in the situation, which aligns itself with Kohlberg's second stage.

As in stage 1, Hermione's progression into a stage 2 perspective of morally complicated situations positively influences Harry's own development. While Hermione's actions in the first two books are almost always in line with following the rules, which illustrates a stage 1 perspective on the importance of rules as a way to avoid punishments, she begins to consider that some situations require her to go outside of the rules and her reasons consider morality in a way that Harry has yet to do at this point in the series. In *Chamber of Secrets*, Harry, Ron, and Hermione believe that Draco is the Heir of Slytherin, and Hermione comes up with a plan to approach Draco by using Polyjuice Potion. However, they would have to steal ingredients from Professor Snape's private storage to brew this advanced potion. She concedes, "There might be a way...Of course, it would be difficult. And dangerous, very dangerous. We'd be breaking about fifty school rules, I expect" (159). Ron, who is usually willing to break rules in situations that yield immediate positive results, questions Hermione's uncharacteristic suggestion. Her response, however, displays a more advanced level of moral reasoning: "I don't want to break

rules, you know. *I think threatening Muggle-borns is far worse than brewing up a difficult potion*” (165). In her process of deciding whether or not she is willing to break school rules, Hermione compares the importance of following rules to protecting Muggle-born witches and wizards who are at risk. Her ability to think beyond her immediate role in the situation, as a student who is expected to follow the rules set by the institution, and consider the fact that her actions are justified by a larger concern for those around her also influences Harry as the children are developing their moral consciousness.

Learning to take on the roles of others and consider alternate perspectives is integral to a child’s development through Kohlberg’s stages, and this is something that is most evident in the shift from stage 1 to stage 2. Harry becomes aware of others’ thoughts, feelings, and perspectives while at Hogwarts, supporting Kohlberg’s argument about the importance of a social atmosphere on development: “The first basic dimension of social atmosphere is the role taking opportunities it provides, the extent to which it encourages the child to take the point of view of others. Role taking is related to the amount of social interaction and social communication in which the child engages, as well as to his sense of efficacy in influencing attitudes of others” (“The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Moral Education” 676). Although at the series’ beginning Harry’s moral awareness is limited, he quickly begins to progress through the preconventional level as he begins to take on the role of others when processing through decisions.

A crucial indicator that children are participating in positive role taking is seen in their ability to empathize with others, and this most clearly differentiates a stage 1 perspective with one of stage 2. Kohlberg explains, “In the cognitive-developmental view, morality is a natural product of a universal human tendency toward empathy or role taking, toward putting oneself in the shoes of other conscious beings” (“The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Moral

Education” 675). Harry’s influences at Hogwarts encourage an understanding of other people’s situations and perspectives, and becomes more morally aware as a result of his ability to empathize with others. In *Sorcerer’s Stone*, Harry’s decisions are often motivated by another’s situation. When he violates Madam Hooch’s rule during flying lessons, he does so with the intention of getting Neville’s Remembrall back from Draco. He recognizes that Draco is a bully, and he decides to defend Neville from this treatment. Later in the same book, Hermione overhears Ron speaking badly about her and spends the rest of the day crying in the girls’ bathroom. While neither of the boys admits that what he did was morally wrong, Harry does express empathy for Hermione. He tries to point out that she seemed upset when she overheard Ron, but Ron acts as if this does not matter. Later, when she does not show up to dinner and a troll is reported in the castle, it is Harry who encourages Ron to go look for her. Ron does not seem to think it is necessarily his responsibility, but Harry’s consideration of Hermione’s wellbeing motivates him to separate from the group and go looking for her. Moreover, he continues to express feelings of protection towards Neville, who is in many ways a laughingstock among the other students.

In *Chamber of Secrets*, Harry is also more willing to put himself in harm’s way when considering other people within the situation and not just himself. When he decides to go into the Chamber of Secrets, his reasons are selfless: “He couldn’t not go, not now they had found the entrance to the Chamber, not if there was even the faintest, slimmest, wildest chance that Ginny might be alive” (*Chamber of Secrets* 301). He does not go into the Chamber for personal gain or an attempt to reestablish fairness; he considers the position Ginny Weasley is in and acts in response to this. Harry’s awareness of others’ perspectives when making decisions illustrates his

progression through Kohlberg's first level of morality, and taking the role of others continues to influence Harry's development.

Harry reaches a level of moral awareness near the end of *Chamber of Secrets*, specifically in how he considers the importance of choice in moral decisions. After he meets Tom Riddle, Harry learns that there are many similarities between himself and Voldemort. As a child, he still seems to view good and bad in the same polarized way that right and wrong is constructed through rules. Because Harry is still developing his concept of goodness as he moves out of innocence, he is concerned that the connections he shares with Voldemort will somehow determine his own morality and mark him as equally bad. He brings this fear to Dumbledore, especially considering that the Sorting Hat almost placed him in Slytherin. The Sorting Hat tells Harry, "You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 121). However, Harry shows that he is not fixated on personal greatness when he asks the Sorting Hat not to place him in Slytherin, and this leads to Dumbledore's assurance that Harry's choice in this matter "makes [him] *very different* from Tom Riddle" (*Chamber of Secrets* 333). This choice is, according to Dumbledore, the mark of Harry being different and morally superior to Voldemort. He goes on to say, "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities" (333). According to Kate Behr, even the reader is unaware of the implications of Harry's choice in *Sorcerer's Stone*, for "[w]e don't begin to realize the significance of that choice until Harry antagonizes over it in *Chamber of Secrets*, marking the awakening of Harry's moral consciousness" (264). This moment signifies a new level of moral awareness for Harry, who up until this point does not seem to fully consider how his actions influence him in lasting ways. As he continues to grow and develop, he becomes more aware of the effect of his choices not only on his own situations,

but also the situations of others, and this awareness leads him into the next level of Kohlberg's theory, the conventional level.

Chapter Two – Social Influences and Expectations in the Conventional Level

“We are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided.” – *Goblet of Fire*

Level 2 of Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development is the conventional level. This level is differentiated from the preconventional in that individuals within this level become aware of their place within society, and these social expectations shape right and wrong, good and bad. While individuals are focused primarily on how rules dictate their personal decisions in the first level, rarely looking beyond their own placement in a situation when making moral judgments, those in the second level begin to look outside of themselves when confronted with moral dilemmas. Those within Level 2 show concern for how they are viewed by society, for how loyalty is shared among other people, groups, and authorities, and for the overall welfare of other people groups within society. Harry illustrates these three qualities of a Level 2 perspective, particularly through his actions, in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, *Goblet of Fire*, and *Order of the Phoenix*.

The shift between levels of Kohlberg’s moral development often overlaps, much like the shift between stages. Level 2 individuals begin to focus on more than simply following the rules, and as they progress into level 2, motives are important when assessing the quality of someone’s moral judgment. Individuals within this level look more closely to what factors determine a good or bad action beyond what the rules might imply, such as the individual’s reasons for action and how those correlate with societal expectations. Harry begins to consider the importance of motives at the end of *Chamber of Secrets*, as evidenced by his consideration of how the Sorting Hat placed him in Gryffindor at his request; however, he has not fully grasped how motives interact with rules. In the beginning of *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry gets angry at his Aunt Marge,

and he accidentally uses magic as a result. His immediate reaction is to run away, for he still responds to the situation with a level 1 understanding of rules as black and white, and his assumption that the punishment will be his expulsion from Hogwarts seems to support this perspective. As he leaves his aunt and uncle's house, he learns about the escaped prisoner, Sirius Black, and he compares his accidental misuse of magic with Black's intentional crimes: "He, Harry, had broken wizard law just like Sirius Black. Was inflating Aunt Marge bad enough to land him in Azkaban?" (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 40). Had Harry approached the situation with a level 2 perspective, he might have understood that his accidental crime pales in comparison to the crime that Black was in Azkaban for – murder. Evaluating his motives might have also eased Harry's concerns, for he did not intentionally inflate Marge, while the Azkaban prisoner was wanted for intentionally killing innocent Muggles. However, in the moment, Harry defaults to his understanding of right and wrong as rule-based. Consequently, his innocent intentions mean little to his analysis of the situation, and consequently, his physical actions are enough to condemn him as criminal. As he progresses through Kohlberg's level 2, however, he moves away from basing his decisions wholly on rules and instead considers different perspectives when making moral judgments.

Stage 3: Interpersonal Relationships and Shared Expectations

As Harry's moral consciousness develops within level 2, his focus shifts from an individualized perspective to one that considers how his relationships with others impact his adherence to social expectations. His perspective in stage 3 focuses on personal relationships and those closest to him. According to Kohlberg, "At Stage 3, the separate perspectives of individuals are coordinated into a third-person perspective, that of mutually trusting relationships among people, which is embodied in a set of shared moral norms according to which people are

expected to live” (*The Measurement of Moral Judgment* 27). These shared norms are determined by the group, and members of these groups accept these expectations out of respect for the other members within the group, whereas previously, rules were followed simply as a way for the individual to avoid punishment. Kohlberg further explains, “Stage 3 norms can be distinguished from Stage 1 rules in that norms represent an integration of perspectives that have been recognized as separate, a coming to general social agreement on what constitutes a good role occupant, whereas the orientation to rules at Stage 1 represents a failure to differentiate individual perspectives” (27). Individuals in stage 3 are not bound to the rules in such stark ways; they consider their roles within their specific group and their fulfillment of these roles to be of greater importance. Thus, Harry develops a stronger sense of identity relative to those around him as a result of the expectations that that group determines.

Consequently, Harry further develops his identity as he attempts to measure up to the social expectations placed on him, and because stages 3 and 4 are concerned with an adherence to mutually agreed upon social values, an individual’s motives behind his or her decisions play a major role in determining what constitutes whether that action is right or wrong. According to Kohlberg, individuals become more aware of how they are viewed by society within stage 3, and Harry’s shift in concern for how others see him is evident as the series progresses. Kohlberg discusses the important aspects of stage 3 and the major indicators for individuals within this stage:

The primacy of shared norms at Stage 3 entails an emphasis on being a good, altruistic, or prosocial role occupant and on good or bad motives as indicative of general personal morality. This recognition of the importance of motives also distinguishes Stage 3 norms

from Stage 1 rules. As a result of the socially shared perspective, the individual at Stage 3 is particularly concerned with maintaining interpersonal trust and social approval. (27)

Kohlberg's concept of shared norms in stage 3 is the bridge between the individual's focus on self in stages 1 and 2 and the larger awareness of the individual's place within society in stage 4. A stage 3 individual is not yet focused on his or her role within a larger social context; however, there is an obvious awareness to what is expected by one's immediate group and how these expectations should affect the way that person responds to others. When Reimer, Poalitto, and Hersh discuss stage 3's third-person perspective, they explain that "[t]aking a third person's perspective is crucial to the development of moral judgment, for it allows the person to perceive how the group will react to his dealings with other individuals" (72). They go on to say, "At this stage you realize that other people have expectations of how you *should* (not only how you *would*) behave, and judge you as a person accordingly" (Reimer et al. 73). Individuals within stage 3 are more aware of other people's expectations for them, and as a result, the group that an individual finds himself in determines in many ways how that individual will act.

For Harry, many of his decisions at this point in the series and in his development are directly related to his social role as the Boy who Lived. Even before Harry is aware of the role society plays in his reasoning, he is guided by this identity. Andrew Mills discusses the importance of this role for Harry and how it influences his decisions:

To understand how our identities are 'constructed' by our membership in communities, think of Harry's identity as 'the Boy who Lived.' This is central to how Harry sees himself, how everyone else sees him, and what he takes as his obligations and values. Nearly everything about Harry is centered on this role he has played in the wizarding

world. Removed from that world, with its history, alliances, family relations, and traditions, Harry wouldn't know who he is what he should do. (108)

This role affects his actions on many occasions, and as he grows more comfortable with his role as the Boy who Lived, these expectations continue to influence his moral judgments. Moreover, Harry's external influences encourage his actions, and his motives begin to integrate with the norms of his trusted social groups. The most prevalent social motivators for Harry are his placement within the Gryffindor house, his role in personal friendships, and his role as Lily and James' son.

While Hogwarts has become more of a home to Harry than the Dursleys' house had ever been, his dependence on relationships with those within his house intensifies throughout the middle of the series. John Kornfeld and Laurie Prothro discuss the ways that Rowling subverts traditional familial expectations through the Hogwarts house structure: "Family connections and loyalties are bound not by birth and genetics, but by more enduring factors; the roles family members assume are determined less by age or gender than by actions and relationships forged among individuals" (124). The students at Hogwarts act according to their house's expectations for them, and each house encourages different qualities and virtues. The Sorting Hat explains these different house characteristics in *Sorcerer's Stone*:

*You might belong in Gryffindor,
Where dwell to brave at heart,
Their daring, nerve, and chivalry
Set Gryffindor apart;
You might belong in Hufflepuff,
Where they are just and loyal,*

*Those patient Hufflepuffs are true
 And unafraid of toil;
 Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw,
 If you're a ready mind,
 Where those of wit and learning,
 Will always find their kind;
 Or perhaps in Slytherin
 You'll make your real friends,
 Those cunning folk use any means
 To achieve their ends. (117-18)*

While the Sorting Hat does place each child in the house he or she best relates to, the house he or she is placed in does influence a further cultivation of these character traits. For example, as illustrated in the previous chapter, Harry could have been placed in any one of the houses, for the Sorting Hat comments, “Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind either. There’s talent, oh yes – and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that’s interesting. . . . So where shall I put you?” (*Sorcerer’s Stone* 121). Although he could have been a member of a different house, his placement in Gryffindor affects the qualities he aspires to promote throughout the series. Charlotte Fouque describes the ways that the houses at Hogwarts provide these small group structures with expectations specific to those groups and how these expectations influence further development: “Wizard children are shaped by their experiences in their house during their most formative years and therefore grow into adults who uphold the views and values generally associated with that house” (75). The Hogwarts houses operate as a family unit, and

Harry's connection with Gryffindor and the role he assumes in response to that private structure determine how he acts in many situations.

One such example involves the Gryffindor house's most well-known attribute of bravery and how living up to the expectations as a brave member of Gryffindor correlates with those students being good members of their respective society. Although each house has a certain standard for its members to live up to, Gryffindor is set apart from the other Hogwarts houses in the way that its house qualities require common expectations of moral behavior, namely courage and self-sacrifice. For example, Tom Morris contrasts the positive influence of bravery on Gryffindor members with the negative effects of the Slytherin adherence to ambition: "Notice that ambition is a virtue and not a vice. It's the desire to excel and do great things. But many students in Slytherin show that their concern for greatness far outstrips any interest they might have had in goodness. So they often pursue their ambitions without the 'hindrance' of ethical considerations" (*If Harry Potter Ran General Electric* 27). Not every student in Slytherin rejects a moral standard and Gryffindor is not the only house to promote positive qualities, but the implications of bravery are more clearly connected to the students' display of goodness.

Because bravery is a clear expectation for Gryffindor members, Harry seeks to measure up to this standard throughout the series, and this directly influences how he treats others. Morris explains how the quality of bravery requires more from a person than simply approaching a situation without fear:

Courage is doing what's right, not what's easy. It's doing what seems morally required, rather than what seems physically safe or socially expected. It's doing what's best, overall, rather than necessarily what's best for you. A courageous person properly perceives when there is danger and then overcomes the natural urge for self-preservation,

self-protection, comfort, personal gain, or even the solicitude for guarding the feelings of others that might counsel avoidance of that threat. (“The Courageous Harry Potter” 13)

Harry and his fellow Gryffindors exhibit these qualities throughout the series, as each member of the house desires to uphold the expectation placed on him or her. Harry specifically shows concern for those around him, as seen in the ways he sacrifices himself in each book. Because his self-sacrificing habits are evident even in the first book as Harry confronts Voldemort alone in his desire to protect the Sorcerer’s Stone, they are clearly integral to Harry’s being; however, they are further developed and more intentionally expressed as he becomes more aware of how his decisions influence these moments of bravery. Morris goes on to define that “[a] courageous action ... is a motivated and measured response to perceived danger by a person who is willing to face that potential harm for the sake of securing or promoting a greater good. It’s generated by a person’s values, and the depth and intensity with which they are held, and it’s to be displayed in a way that is proportionate to the needs of the situation” (“The Courageous Harry Potter” 13). Harry’s commitment to others stems from his inherent goodness, and with a more developed sense of moral obligation, Harry’s desire to inhabit the qualities of Gryffindor only intensifies with his commitment to those societal expectations.

With a stage 3 perspective, Harry consciously decides to emulate bravery as a way to defend his role as a member of Gryffindor. At the end of *Chamber of Secrets*, Harry tries on the Sorting Hat in Dumbledore’s office in order to affirm whether he was meant to be in Gryffindor or not. The Sorting Hat does little to comfort his fears: “‘You’ve been wondering whether I put you in the right house,’ said the hat smartly. ‘Yes...you were particularly difficult to place. But I stand by what I said before’ – Harry’s heart leapt – ‘you would have done well in Slytherin –’ Harry’s stomach plummeted. He grabbed the point of the hat and pulled it off” (206). Harry’s

response to the Hat illustrates his early awareness of the importance of choice in determining one's identity: "'You're wrong,' he said aloud to the still and silent hat" (206). Harry is determined to prove the Hat wrong and earn his place in the Gryffindor house, and he succeeds in this as Dumbledore encourages Harry that only a true member of Gryffindor could have pulled the sword out of the Sorting Hat in the situation with the basilisk (334). In this situation, Harry does in fact recognize the importance of choice, and his placement in Gryffindor directly relates to his determination to emulate bravery when the situation demands it.

In the *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry's bravery is questioned due to his response to the dementors. The first time the students encounter a dementor is on the train to Hogwarts, and Harry is the only student who faints. He feels embarrassed by how this might be perceived as a weakness since no one else reacts in such a way, and he internally questions his reaction to the dementor: "Why had he gone to pieces like that, when no one else had?" (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 86). Draco takes advantage of the situation and makes fun of Harry for this, and Harry refuses further medical attention from Madam Pomfrey because "[t]he thought of what Draco Malfoy would say if he had to go to the hospital wing was torture" (90). Fainting spells such as these continue throughout the book, and Harry becomes bent on overcoming them as a way of further establishing his place as a member of the Gryffindor house. Lupin claims that Harry's reaction to the dementors "has nothing to do with weakness...The dementors affect [Harry] worse than the others because there are horrors in [his] past that the others don't have" (187), but Harry's knowledge of this does not change the way that other people see Harry. As a result, he studies under Lupin to learn the Patronus charm and face his fears head on, and Harry continues to prove his bravery when faced with particularly difficult situations, as Dumbledore will continue to commend Harry for his bravery throughout the series.

In addition to his role as a member of the Gryffindor house, Harry continues to evaluate his role within close personal relationships with other people, and the trust that he establishes with those closest to him influences how he develops his own identity. One of the biggest outcomes of close community such as in the Hogwarts houses is that, in a close relationship, each individual within a relationship “recognizes each other’s needs and sublimates his/her own immediate interests and needs in order to help that person” (Kornfeld and Prothro 125). Because Gryffindor members are expected to be self-sacrificing, for example, they are willing to sacrifice their own wants for their close friends. Harry illustrates this later in the series when he believes he is responsible for Nagini’s attack on Mr. Weasley. Because of Harry’s connection to Voldemort, he considers himself to be a danger to everyone in the Order of the Phoenix. His immediate response is to separate himself from those he cares about:

There was only one thing for it: He would have to leave Grimmauld Place straightaway. He would spend Christmas at Hogwarts without the others, which would keep them safe over the holidays at least.... But no, that wouldn’t do, there were still plenty of people at Hogwarts to maim and injure... A leaden sensation was settling in the pit of his stomach. He had no alternative: He was going to have to return to Privet Drive, cut himself off from other wizards entirely. (*Order of the Phoenix* 494)

His instincts to protect others even at the expense of his own desires is a direct reflection of his role as a member of Gryffindor. Harry is willing to leave the only places he can reasonably feel at home – Grimmauld Place with Sirius and Hogwarts with his friends – for the safety of those he is in close community with, namely those within the Order and his house at Hogwarts.

While Harry, Ron, and Hermione do go through periods of adversity and have confrontations among themselves, these characters value their friendships in spite of these

occasional difficulties, which further supports Kohlberg's concept of the importance of interpersonal relationships. Harry, Ron, and Hermione illustrate this developed concept of community in their response to Hagrid's situation with Buckbeak. Hermione and Ron are in the midst of a fight when they learn that Buckbeak is sentenced to death, but because of their commitment to Hagrid, they prioritize his situation above their individual concerns in the moment. Ron tells Hermione he will help her, and in response she "flung her arms around Ron's neck and broke down completely" (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 292). Their relationship with Hagrid is worth more to them than a petty fight, and their commitment to the relationships they have established is prioritized over what each would individually desire. Ron and Hermione also prioritize their relationship with Harry by staying with him over Christmas break: "Both Ron and Hermione had decided to remain at Hogwarts, and though Ron said it was because he couldn't stand two weeks with Percy, and Hermione insisted she needed to use the library, Harry wasn't fooled; they were doing it to keep him company, and he was very grateful" (189-90). Whereas in level 1 Ron and Hermione would have acted based on how the situation impacted them personally, they now consider the larger context of how they should act within a close relationship with those involved. They value their relationship with Harry above their individual desires to spend the holidays with their families, and the importance of measuring up to the expectations of friendship is increasingly important for this stage.

In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, the Gryffindors begin to illustrate this much more clearly than before as the students in each house are described as having a group mentality about issues. Consequently, their approach to situations is based on more than just earning points than in the first few books. This connection is illustrated through descriptions in which whole groups act as one being, such as when the Hufflepuffs gang up against Harry when they believe he is the Heir

of Slytherin in *Chamber of Secrets*, when the Slytherins refuse to raise their goblets to honor Harry in *Goblet of Fire*, and when the entire class of Gryffindors stand up to Snape in *Prisoner of Azkaban*. In this latter incident, the class unites over both their dislike of Snape and their protection of Hermione. The individuals within the houses, then, develop very clear expectations as a whole and build their own unique social structures within the larger unit of Hogwarts.

Because individuals in stage 3 begin to value their personal groups' expectations over other factors when making decisions, they intentionally consider these groups' best interests above their own. In *Harry Potter*, students are therefore more willing to break rules on account of what is best for their house. For example, when Snape singles out Neville during Potions lesson and tells him that his toad will have to sample the potion he brews, Hermione risks house points for the sake of Neville and his toad, Trevor, as she "mutter[s] instructions to him out of the corner of her mouth, so that Snape wouldn't see" (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 127). In the preconventional level, the students most commonly focused on the points they could earn for their houses as individuals, and they sought to be recognized for their individual efforts. For example, Hermione expressed her concern when Harry and Ron threatened to lose points and thus take away what Hermione herself earned for Gryffindor in the *Sorcerer's Stone*.

Additionally, there was a greater fear of them as individuals losing points, for when Harry loses points for sneaking out at night in the first book, he laments, "In one night, they'd ruined any chance Gryffindor had had for the House Cup... What would happen when the rest of Gryffindor found out what they'd done?" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 244). Harry's concern in these early stages of development revolved around what he as an individual did and how the consequences would impact him. However, as he begins to view himself in relation to his chosen social group, he

accepts the expectations that are required as a member of Gryffindor, even if this means going against the rules or expectations of a larger institution.

The motives behind a person's actions become more important to those within stage 3, and Harry's increasing awareness to the question of why he should act the way he does becomes apparent throughout this stage. The concept of choice has already been broached to Harry by Dumbledore in *Chamber of Secrets* when he tells Harry, "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities" (333). In response to this, Harry continues to develop his understanding of choice, specifically how it relates to moral judgments. Due to the various meanings of the word *choice*, Gregory Bassham discusses three possible types of choices that could provide clarity for what Dumbledore means by this. Bassham's first possibility is "internal-choice," which he defines as those choices an individual makes that do not necessarily result in a physical action, such as when Draco decides to kill Dumbledore in *Half-Blood Prince* but cannot follow through when the situation presents itself (159). These choices do not influence action, and therefore are not as influential on one's character. The next possibility is "act-choice," which includes "an observable act performed in a context of presumed alternatives" (159), as with the reflection that Dumbledore made poor choices in his youth with regards to Grindelwald. The third option is "motive-choice," which is a complex blend of the first two options and cannot truly be studied unless the motive behind the physical action is somehow made known (160). While it might be easy to say that choices define a person's character and to further support this idea with Aristotle's own view that choice is "most closely bound up with virtue and to discriminate characters better than actions do" (Book III), understanding these different types of choice included in character judgments is crucial. According to Bassham, in regard to character, "[t]he most revealing kinds of choices will

generally be motive-choices. Motive-choices convey more information than either internal-choices or act-choices do. They tell us not only what choice we have made (mentally), but also what motivated us to make the choice and whether we had the strength and consistency of character to act on the choice” (160). For Harry, choice becomes increasingly important, and throughout these middle books, Harry’s thought processes show his awareness to “motive choices” both in his own actions and the actions of others.

In *Goblet of Fire*, the narration reveals the cognitive processes behind Harry’s actions, further elaborating on the importance of motives in assessing his character. Harry is a competitor in an international wizard’s tournament with other contestants who are much older and more capable with magic than he is at this point in the series, and yet he exhibits a moral maturity above the other contestants through his consideration of others during the competition. Although he is in many ways underqualified for the various tournament events, he does not let the competition overwhelm his values, and he continues to put the needs of others before his own. Harry’s actions distinguish him from the other contestants, and his motives for these actions are altruistic as he does things for the good of those around him and not for personal gain, something which is revealed to the reader through Harry’s internal processing. In the second challenge, Harry is the first contestant to reach those in the water, but he hesitates out of concern for the other hostages. He, albeit rather foolishly, believes that if the other contestants do not make it to their targets in time, those people will be lost to the lake forever. Because of this, Harry spends time waiting to see if the other contestants will show up, considering his options while waiting: “Would he have time to take Ron to the surface and come back down for Hermione and the others? Would he be able to find them again?” (*Goblet of Fire* 500). He waits to see Cedric and Krum come to save their hostages, but when he does not see Fleur, he decides he must act

against the merpeople's instruction in order to save Fleur's sister. In a moment of desperation, he saves both Fleur's sister and Ron, sacrificing his time in the trial and, seeing as he must stand up to hundreds of watching merpeople in the process, his assurance of personal safety to keep all the hostages safe. Although the other contestants are concerned only with winning the challenge, Harry shows "moral fiber" (507) by putting the needs of others before his own.

Harry continues to behave selflessly in the final task of the tournament, and each instance shows him considering another person's perspective in addition to his own as he uses this awareness to choose the best course of action. At this point, Harry is more confident in his abilities to actually win the Triwizard Tournament, and while this does motivate him to try and win the third trial, he still prioritizes the other competitors' wellbeing in the midst of competition. While in the maze, he hears Fleur scream, and the reader is given insight into his thought process in response to this:

He paused at a junction of two paths and looked around for some sign of Fleur. He was sure it had been she who had screamed. What had she met? Was she all right? There was no sign of red sparks – did that mean she had gotten herself out of trouble, or was she in such trouble that she couldn't reach her wand? Harry took the right fork with a feeling of increasing unease... (625)

Harry's initial reaction is concern for Fleur. Similar to his actions in the second task, Harry momentarily shifts his focus off his own chances at winning, prioritizing another's needs before his own. Harry illustrates this later in the maze as he saves Cedric not once, but twice on his way to victory, which further supports that while he is aware of what is at stake in the tournament – personal fame and glory – his motives for action are largely selfless in nature. When he hears Krum cursing Cedric, he immediately looks for a way into Cedric's path, using magic to create a

hole in the hedge between them and stun Krum. Later, he and Cedric both see the Triwizard Cup and run towards it. Harry knows that Cedric will reach it first, but when a giant spider appears and is about to intercept Cedric, Harry warns him in enough time that he can dodge it. Had Harry only cared for winning and therefore elevating his own situation, he might have let the spider attack Cedric and continued on to victory. However, after seeing that Cedric dropped his wand and is defenseless, Harry attacks the spider, drawing the spider's attention to Harry instead of Cedric. Throughout the competition, Harry illustrates an altruistic approach when considering others' perspectives, and as the narrator reveals Harry's motives throughout these complicated situations, the reader can see that "motive-choices" (Bassham 160) truly do reflect Harry's developed sense of morality in this competition.

Harry's awareness of his own motives also influences his judgments of other people's actions, seen most clearly when he learns that his father is not the hero he expected him to be. As the leading role model in Harry's life, James is the epitome of the kind of person Harry hopes to become. However, during Harry's Occlumency lessons with Professor Snape in *Order of the Phoenix*, he witnesses a memory of his father and Sirius being cruel to Snape, the only reason for their attack on him being that they were bored and ultimately, as James said, "it's more the fact that [Snape] *exists*" (647). The realization that his father might have been as arrogant and self-obsessed as Snape always told him impacts how he views his father. He tries desperately to justify James and Sirius' actions, considering how he might also have treated his enemies in a similar way:

Yes, he had once overheard Professor McGonagall saying that his father and Sirius had been troublemakers at school, but she had described them as forerunners of the Weasley twins, and Harry could not imagine Fred and George dangling someone upside down for

the fun of it...not unless they really loathed them... Perhaps Malfoy, or somebody who really deserved it...

Harry tried to make a case for Snape having deserved what he had suffered at James's hands – but hadn't Lily asked, 'What's he done to you?' And hadn't James replied, 'It's more the fact that he *exists*, if you know what I mean?' Hadn't James started it all simply because Sirius said he was bored? (653)

Although Harry tries to find justification for their actions, he cannot, and the unmistakable pride he once felt for his father has been compromised. He even goes so far as to break into Professor Umbridge's office in his desperation to speak with Sirius about the memory. When Sirius and Lupin attempt to write the situation off as youthful recklessness, Harry contests that he is the same age as they were, for he understands that acting indecently towards others is not as easily justifiable by simply age or boredom. While Harry might have once understood this treatment towards someone as deplorable as Snape, as seen by his approach to situations with his own enemies, Dudley and Draco, he now illustrates a stronger concept of moral awareness in regards to the motives that initiate action.

Harry's constant consideration of other people's wellbeing also illustrates another aspect of Kohlberg's criteria for stage 3, which is an adherence to the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (*The Measurement of Moral Judgment* 27). Because individuals in this stage have begun to consider those around them as opposed to simply focusing on themselves, they use the notions behind the Golden Rule when determining action. The situations above illustrate this, as Harry is clearly considering Snape's role in the situation and how this should have influenced his father and Sirius' actions. This concept is specifically relevant for Harry's development, for the people within his immediate sphere of influence

typically encourage this mentality. His close friends, other members of Gryffindor, and those he looks to as role models typically use this same mentality, for those wizards who strive to benefit society and be considered good people generally follow this rule. Morris explains, “Throughout the adventures and difficulties faced by Harry and his friends, all the good wizards tend to interact with the people around them in accordance with the Golden Rule, and the others do quite otherwise” (*If Harry Potter Ran General Electric* 98). While not labeled as the Golden Rule throughout the story, the very concept of Gryffindor’s pursuing bravery and esteeming sacrificial acts above selfish gain supports Kohlberg’s concept within this stage’s perspective. Harry’s developed awareness of other people’s perspectives when making decisions effectively illustrates the concept behind the Golden Rule.

Harry also illustrates this adherence to the Golden Rule by seeking to establish a level of fairness with his fellow competitors. In the previous level, Harry sought to maintain fairness based on his own connection with the situation and what he felt he deserved. Harry’s approach to fairness involved him determining what he could do to level the playing field with little to no consideration to the other person’s view of the situation: if Draco broke the rules, Harry easily justified that he could also break to rules because that would put them on equal levels, and if Professor Snape was unfair to the students, then Harry and his fellow Gryffindor’s were justified to act out against Snape’s rules. However, stage 3 presents a new expectation for fairness, one that looks to a less subjective view of how to treat others within complicated situations. In preparation for the first task in the Triwizard Tournament in *Goblet of Fire*, Harry learns from Hagrid that the contestants will be expected to face dragons. After realizing that all the champions know about this but Cedric, Harry acts on his understanding that Cedric should also be made aware as a way to establish fairness between the competitors. When Harry tells him,

however, Cedric seems confused as to why Harry would be helping him, and rightly so considering they are competing against one another. When Cedric asks him why he told him, “Harry looked at him in disbelief ... ‘It’s just...fair, isn’t it?’ [Harry] said to Cedric. ‘We all know now...we’re on even footing, aren’t we?’” (*Goblet of Fire* 341). Harry’s idea of fairness is no longer limited to what he can gain from the situation; he now views fairness as equal opportunity for those within his immediate social influences, which, in this instance, includes the other Triwizard champions.

Stage 4: Social Systems as a Whole

While there are many benefits to the house system at Hogwarts, the enmity fostered among the houses by the students’ desire to win the House Cup each year is problematic. The Gryffindor community offers Harry a true sense of home for the first time in his life, one that, “for Harry, represents connection, shared meals, the bonding of a team sport, even a specific place within Gryffindor quarters respected by others as his own individual, private space” (Kornfeld and Prothro 125). These elements of communal life strengthen Harry’s connection to his house and positively affect his significance as an integral member of his community; however, pitting the students against each other does present the possibility that such division can diminish the students’ view of a holistic community within Hogwarts as a larger system. Mills explains that “[w]ith division comes divisiveness, and what may have started out as harmless sorting for noble ends will end up as the basis for opposition and hatred” (102), as seen most clearly through the hostility between Harry and Draco. However, these strict lines between houses begin to blur at the conclusion of *Goblet of Fire*, and as Harry progresses into stage 4, he begins to look to the greater wizard community beyond the safety of Gryffindor common room.

Voldemort's return in the final chapters of *Goblet of Fire* presents many challenges to the comfortable life Harry has come to depend on while at Hogwarts. Suddenly the students have a greater battle to fight that goes beyond who will win the House Cup. Cedric is murdered for Voldemort's cause, an event that deeply affects the community at Hogwarts. The Triwizard Tournament, which although encouraged competition between the schools involved, sought to "further and promote magical understanding" (*Goblet of Fire* 723). In response to Voldemort's return, Dumbledore speaks to the Hogwarts student body and encourages a new focus on connectivity beyond house affiliations:

I say to you all, once again — in the light of Lord Voldemort's return, we are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided. Lord Voldemort's gift for spreading discord and enmity is very great. We can fight it only by showing an equally strong bond of friendship and trust. Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open. (723)

Dumbledore is aware of the ways that the Hogwarts house structure can lead to discord, and his words of advice have a deep impact on Harry's own approach to social expectations in the subsequent books.

Beyond Dumbledore's encouragement, the Sorting Hat offers similar advice to the Hogwarts student body in *Order of the Phoenix*, encouraging the students to unite against a common enemy:

Though condemned I am to split you

Still I worry that it's wrong,

Though I must fulfill my duty

And must quarter every year

*Still I wonder whether sorting
 May not bring the end I fear.
 Oh, know the perils, read the signs,
 The warning history shows,
 For our Hogwarts is in real danger
 From external, deadly foes
 And we must unite inside her
 Or we'll crumble from within. (206-07)*

The Sorting Hat calls attention to the houses' propensity for division and instead encourages them to untie over a common enemy, one that supersedes the normal house conflicts of point systems and Quidditch matches. This new appreciation for community and the call by both Dumbledore and the Sorting Hat to look beyond house boundaries motivates Harry in his understanding of social responsibility. From this, Harry's personal decisions in *Order of Phoenix* further illustrate the ways his community expands beyond Gryffindor, and his involvement with both the Order of the Phoenix and Dumbledore's Army supports his transition from stage 3 to stage 4.

Stage 4 on Kohlberg's chart depicts individuals who have expanded their social obligations beyond those of their trusted inner circle and personal relationships and begun to consider their place in a larger group. Once individuals reach stage 4, they consider the expectations of society as a whole and not simply what is expected from their immediate social circles. Kohlberg explains how a stage 4 "perspective is based on a conception of the social system as a consistent set of codes and procedures that apply impartially to all members" (*The Measurement of Moral Judgment* 28). Therefore, there are minimal exceptions made for smaller

groups within the larger social system. Reimer, Poalitto, and Hersh further explain the difference between these two stages and how one's perspective of society broadens:

Whereas stage 3 role taking is primarily characterized by the ability to take the third-person perspective of *significant* others, stage 4 role taking is primarily characterized by the ability to take the shared point of view of the *generalized* other. That is, a person takes the perspective of the social system in which he participates: his institution, society, belief system, and so on. (74)

As Harry progresses beyond stage 3, he shifts his focus from a limited perspective as a Gryffindor member to a greater view of his role within the wizarding community as a whole.

However, as anyone who has read the *Harry Potter* series will know, Harry's actions in the latter half of the series, while committed to the betterment of humankind, are often in direct opposition to the rules set by society at large. This acknowledgment of the ways Harry defies social expectations does not negate Kohlberg's theory, however; it actually supports it. Kohlberg himself offers a caveat to stage 4, one that provides an exception for situations similar to what Harry and his friends find themselves in throughout *Order of the Phoenix* and the remaining books. The social codes that an individual in stage 4 chooses to follow and uphold might not come from mainstream society in the event that society is in direct contradiction to a higher moral set of laws, and Kohlberg does consider this possibility: "[T]he [stage 4] perspective may be that of some higher moral or religious law that is embodied in the individual's conscience and that may conflict with institutionalized law. In this case, internal conscience or moral law is equated with some system of divine or natural law" (*The Measurement of Moral Judgment* 28).

In Harry's case, the fight against Voldemort equates to Kohlberg's idea of an "internal

conscience of moral law” (28), and this allows Harry to easily justify the efforts of the Order of the Phoenix and Dumbledore’s Army.

Harry first learns about the Order of the Phoenix when he comes to stay at Grimmauld Place at the end of summer. The Order of the Phoenix is a secret society that had its start the last time Voldemort was in power. Since Voldemort’s return following the Triwizard Tournament, Dumbledore has reestablished the Order, and its goal when Harry learns of the group is to track known Death Eaters, recruit other wizards to the cause against Voldemort, and try and keep Voldemort from advancing his plans of domination. However, because the Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge feels threatened by Dumbledore’s influence, he refuses to believe Dumbledore’s claims. Fred comments that “Dumbledore’s name’s mud with the Ministry these days...They all think he’s just making trouble saying You-Know-Who’s back” (*Order of the Phoenix* 71). Because the wizarding community has no hard evidence about Voldemort’s return, Fudge manipulates the wizarding community to believe that Dumbledore and Harry are unstable. Hermione explains to Harry that the *Daily Prophet* reporters are “writing about [Harry] as though [he’s] this deluded, attention-seeking person who thinks he’s a great tragic hero or something” (74). Fudge uses his authority and connections with the media to ensure that the wizarding community doubts Dumbledore and Harry’s credibility, and George further comments that “Fudge has made it clear that anyone who’s in league with Dumbledore can clear out their desks” (71). If Harry and the Order had followed social expectations as Kohlberg described, they would never have reinstated their society, they would not be recruiting members unbeknownst to the Ministry, and they would not break the laws of proper wizarding society placed on them by Fudge.

Yet Harry is aware of the necessity of these violations to social order, and his commitment to a greater moral obligation requires that he aligns himself with a different set of norms. The members of the Order must defy social expectations for the common good of humanity; if Voldemort returns to power, his control will affect not just the wizarding community, but the global community as well. They prioritize this over their obligations to the Ministry's social expectations, and they take extreme risks in their professional and social reputations, as well as in regards to their physical wellbeing. Because of the great personal threat, the Order does not allow Harry and his other friends who are still in school to be a part of the group. However, after living in the Order's headquarters over summer, each of them still hopes to do his or her part for the group. The larger tensions between the Order and the Ministry are represented on a smaller scale for the students and their fight against the new social order at Hogwarts throughout *Order of the Phoenix*. Because Harry has seen firsthand how the Order is handling the conflict of interests with the Ministry, he is able to apply these same concepts towards the conflict of societal rules at Hogwarts and that which he and his friends know to be morally right.

As the Ministry gains more control over Hogwarts, Harry mirrors Dumbledore's efforts by creating a secret social group at Hogwarts its members call Dumbledore's Army. Following the Triwizard tournament, Harry witnesses Dumbledore's attempts to persuade Fudge about Voldemort's return, and when he refuses to listen, Dumbledore makes his position on the issue clear: "If your determination to shut your eyes will carry you as far as this, Cornelius...we have reached a parting of ways. You must act as you see fit. And I – I shall act as I see fit...The only one against whom I intend to work...is Lord Voldemort. If you are against him, then we remain, Cornelius, on the same side" (*Goblet of Fire* 709). Dumbledore illustrates how one can contest to

authority in a situation in which that authority contradicts one's own moral obligations. Morris affirms this idea, saying, "Ethics and law overlap, but they are distinct things... Harry and his fellow students, as well as some of the teachers, including Dumbledore himself, have on occasion had to resist and actually violate official Ministry of Magic decrees that were unjust and dangerous. It was precisely their strong ethical concerns that generated their stance and their resulting actions" (*If Harry Potter Ran General Electric* 65). The students who make up Dumbledore's Army continue the work that they have witnessed the Order doing, and much like Dumbledore before them, the members establish their own moral obligations with a new social code.

At Hogwarts, a place that has in the previous four books been a solace for Harry, the Ministry of Magic begins to usurp Dumbledore's authority, and as a result of Fudge's involvement with the school's social structure, the students join together across house lines and choose to uphold their moral obligation to the wizarding world over the rules set for them by the Ministry. Following Ron and Hermione's insistence, Harry begins to teach any students interested how to defend themselves against Voldemort. However, this group meeting is in direct violation of the rules that the Ministry puts into place via Dolores Umbridge, the new Defense against the Dark Arts professor who is placed at Hogwarts to keep Dumbledore in line with the Ministry's agenda. However, the students choose to abide by their moral conscience in place of the rules forced upon them: "After Dolores Umbridge becomes Hogwarts High Inquisitor in Book 5, she breaks the Hogwarts family covenant by turning the school from a refuge into a repressive regime. That action – and her refusal to teach her students how to defend themselves – gives her students the right to resist Umbridge's authority and form Dumbledore's Army" (Kornfeld and Prothro 128). Just as the Order must work around the Ministry's laws in secrecy,

so must the students who join Dumbledore's Army. However, Harry and his friends are successful, for the most part, in creating a strong community within the safety of Dumbledore's Army, one that spreads the truth of Voldemort's return and effectively trains its members for the possible battles forthcoming.

Dumbledore's Army represents a larger social system in that it involves more students than one small subset, and Harry becomes invested in other students aside from those in Gryffindor. The group that makes up Dumbledore's Army is made up of students from all Hogwarts houses, Slytherin excluded, which, according to Mills, "shows that House (or national) divisions matter little when everyone is affected equally by an external threat, and that unifying in the face of that threat can be an effective response to it" (103-04). Although stage 3 individuals would advocate for each house to maintain its own moral and social codes of conduct as the house members would see fit, a stage 4 perspective is much more focused on the larger social context. However, as Harry continues to develop his concept of moral judgment, he must come to terms with the inadequacies of societal expectations, even those within the Order of the Phoenix or Dumbledore's Army. This realization comes from a shift away from an individual's focus on social influence and a greater dependence on one's objective moral beliefs.

Harry continues to realize that his chosen role models are fallible, as seen through his contemplation of Sirius and James' behavior. In *Goblet of Fire*, Harry comes to think of Sirius "like a *parent*: an adult wizard whose advice he could ask without feeling stupid, someone who cared about him" (22), and as a result, Harry comes to trust and respect Sirius as a father figure. When Sirius commends Harry for forming Dumbledore's Army, he tells Harry, "D'you think your father and I would've lain down and taken orders from an old hag like Umbridge?" (*Order of the Phoenix* 371), and Harry takes pride in the comparison drawn between him and his father.

However, while Harry cares for Sirius and values his input, he begins to question certain aspects of Sirius' motivations as Harry develops his own concept of morality. With the realization that his father and Sirius were far from perfect role models – at least in their youths – he must decide what kind of person he wants to become, and as a result, he desires less to simply follow in their footsteps. For example, when he encourages Sirius to stay at the Order's headquarters and not meet him, Ron, and Hermione in Hogsmeade, Sirius claims, "You're less like your father than I thought... The risk would have make it fun for James." And while Harry clearly desires to measure up to the expectations placed by them, he does wonder, "But did he really want to be like his father anymore?" (667). As Harry is disillusioned to the idea that his role models are perfect, he begins to trust himself and depend more on his own response to difficult situations and less on the influence of others. As this realization continues to influence Harry in the following books, he must rely on himself when complicated situations arise. While this does not always work out in his favor, he does gain confidence in his abilities to make decisions, and this self-awareness follows him into the third and final level of Kohlberg's theory of moral development.

Chapter Three – Choosing Universal Principles in the Postconventional Level

“We’ve all got both light and dark inside us. What matters is the part we choose to act on.”

– *Order of the Phoenix*

Lawrence Kohlberg’s postconventional level of moral development represents a complex and abstract culmination of moral maturity. Stages 5 and 6 are much harder to identify than the previous four stages, and as a result, these stages are difficult to define. Kohlberg was aware of the limitations of his approach to this third and final level; nonetheless, the theoretical possibilities of this level can be studied and applied. In real world scenarios, this level is harder to analyze than the preconventional and conventional levels, in part, because, according to Kohlberg’s theory, individuals are only capable of reaching this level of moral maturity later in life. The postconventional level depends on an acute sense of autonomy and cognitive reasoning. Autonomy, however, does not refer to an individualized sense of self that is displaced from social contexts. Kohlberg’s understanding of autonomy borrows from Kantian tradition and Piagetian concepts, for as McDonough summarizes, Kohlberg uses autonomous to mean “that one has the capability to think and decide for one’s self in accord with universal moral principles and reversibility” (202). Therefore, autonomy in this sense does not allow each individual the right to determine his or her own individual moral principles; autonomy here means that each individual is able to personally appropriate objective truths. For Harry, his maturation is complete when he aligns himself with universal truths and acts in response to these.

However, according to Kohlberg’s theory, the level of an individual’s moral awareness correlates with his or her cognitive abilities. Kohlberg argues that “advanced moral reasoning depends upon advanced logical reasoning; a person’s logical stage puts a certain ceiling on the

moral stage he can attain.” He goes on to say, however, that “most individuals are higher in logical stage than they are in moral stage. As an example, over 50% of late adolescents and adults are capable of full formal reasoning, but only 10% of these adults (all formal operational) display principled (Stage 5 and 6) moral reasoning” (“The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Moral Education” 671). Although Harry is only seventeen in *Deathly Hallows*, the situations that Harry must react to time and again throughout Rowling’s seven novels expedite his development beyond what is typical for someone his age. As a result of the experiences Harry encounters over the course of the series and the encouragement from his social influences, Harry fully realizes the importance of choice in regards to his moral character. After realizing how his actions and the motives behind them are necessary in overcoming Voldemort, he saves both wizards and Muggles alike through his self-sacrifice. In response to Harry’s final actions in *Deathly Hallows*, Harry’s journey towards moral maturity culminates far beyond that of a normal 17-year-old adolescent, and through evaluating his moral judgments in the final book through the narrative attention placed on his thought processes, readers can see that Harry reaches the higher stages of Kohlberg’s theory of moral development.

For the majority of the series, Harry’s choices have been heavily influenced by both his role models and the expectations he accepts for his role within society. Whether that be as a member of Gryffindor or as the Boy who Lived, Harry strives to live up to the expectations placed on him, and he looks to others for their example on how to emulate goodness. However, as a result of Voldemort’s infiltration of the Ministry of Magic and Hogwarts and his attacks on the Order of Phoenix in *Half-Blood Prince* and *Deathly Hallows*, Harry can no longer rely upon these influences to dictate his choices. Reimer, Poalitto, and Hersh explain that “Kohlberg and others have suggested that a ‘crisis of faith’ in one’s previously unquestioned assumptions about

the social order may provide such motivation” (77) for an individual to move into stage 5. For Harry, his crisis of faith begins while he is still within the conventional level. Dumbledore has always been considered the only wizard Voldemort fears, and as a result of Dumbledore’s reputation, Harry trusts him as having infinite capabilities. However, the illusion that Dumbledore can solve all of Harry’s problems is shaken in *Prisoner of Azkaban* when Dumbledore confesses that he cannot force others to see and therefore act upon truth – a fact that Harry learns all too well over the remaining books. With this admission from Dumbledore, however, “Harry stared up into the grave face and felt as though the ground beneath him were falling sharply away. He had grown used to the idea that Dumbledore could solve anything. He had expected Dumbledore to pull some amazing solution out of the air. But no... their last hope was gone” (*Prisoner of Azkaban* 393). Harry must accept that neither he nor a wizard of Dumbledore’s caliber can force anyone to act a certain way, and yet part of the maturation process is understanding one’s obligation towards moral action regardless of what mainstream society advocates.

As Harry’s view of the world continues to broaden throughout the series, he becomes aware of the ways he cannot wholly trust those around him to be infallible. As Harry matures, he slowly begins to see the ways that rules, which are the product of a social system, are created by human beings, and as such, they are only as dependable as those responsible for their inception. While it might be easy as a child to see moral situations as strict binaries and, as a result, categorize people as good or evil, it is Sirius who reminds Harry in *Order of the Phoenix* that “the world isn’t split into good people and death eaters” (302). David and Catherine Deavel further clarify this idea, for “[n]either Harry nor any of the other characters, including Dumbledore and Voldemort, is either all good or all evil” (146), and this truth is something

Harry continues to see throughout the series' final books. Harry begins to learn through his development that people are not all good or all evil, and as a result, even the most trusted social system is flawed. For Harry, "[p]art of growing up is taking seriously the importance of seeing clearly, of recognizing good and evil for what they are, and trying to act for the good and against the evil" (Deavel and Deavel 146); thus there is a focus placed upon individual choice and how it is an individual's motivations towards pursuing good or evil that matter, not an intrinsic quality within someone that defines him or her as wholly good or evil.

Harry continues to struggle with determining how to qualify other people in light of the binaries of good and evil, and Hermione positively motivates him on his journey towards moral maturity. In the aftermath of Dumbledore's murder, Harry compares Snape to Voldemort, calling both evil. Hermione, as an ever present influence on Harry for moral maturity, displays her own level of moral maturity by qualifying this statement and admitting that "'[e]vil' is a strong word" (*Half-Blood Prince* 638). Even though Snape is the one responsible for Dumbledore's death, Hermione is aware that that alone is not enough to condemn a person as being wholly evil. According to Victoria L. Schanoes, "[Hermione's] moral sophistication and her rational reasoning reveal themselves in her sensitivity in still not judging Snape as evil after he 'apparently' killed Dumbledore... 'By separating Snape's lack of "nice-ness" from his behavior in a larger conflict between good and evil,' Hermione reaches a degree of moral reasoning that exceeds even that of the hero" (qtd. in Klaus 30). Her ability to withhold judgment on someone like Snape, even after he kills Dumbledore, illustrates for Harry that one action cannot determine whether someone is all good or all bad. Harry continues to grapple with how he defines good and evil, and this tension pushes Harry forward into defining his own views of right and wrong in the final book of the series. Harry considers his own role within morally conflicting situations and

acts consistently based on his determined moral compass within each situation. At this point, his moral compass is the culmination of the moral lessons he has learned thus far. For example, Harry consistently shows the various aspects of a Gryffindor member, namely bravery and self-sacrifice, and these values continue to motivate him even when he leaves Hogwarts in *Deathly Hallows*, for he has established these traits within his very character. Through the confidence gained in his abilities to make morally difficult decisions, Harry progresses into the third and final level of Kohlberg's theory of moral development.

Stage 5: Individual Moral Rights

As a result of Harry's realization that he cannot rely on societal rules – even those that he trusts such as in the Order and Dumbledore's Army – he progresses into Kohlberg's stage 5. According to Kohlberg, stage 5 is a "prior-to-society perspective." He goes on to explain that individuals within this stage have "a 'society-creating' rather than a 'society-maintaining' perspective" (*The Measurement of Moral Judgment* 29). In stage 4, societal rules and expectations were taken largely at face value, but in this higher level, there is a greater value placed on the individual's concept of values that transcend social laws. Laws are to be judged on how they effectively protect and support all basic rights. Kohlberg details this consideration of both human rights and the overall wellbeing of all groups including minorities, both of which Harry defends throughout *Deathly Hallows*: "There is a clear awareness of the relativism of personal values and opinions and a corresponding emphasis upon procedural rules for reaching consensus. The result is upon the 'legal point of view,' but with an emphasis upon the possibility of changing law" ("The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Moral Education" 671). Harry comes to the understanding that legal expectations alone are not enough to enforce moral action from those within that society; one's personal commitment to making morally right choices is the

true motivator. When the social systems in place do not encourage moral action in regards to human rights, it is the individual's responsibility to maintain his or her values in spite of the social consequences. While Harry spends the beginning of the series acting on behalf of what other people expect of him, he learns that he cannot rely solely on others' opinions or socially accepted rules for right and wrong; he must act according to his conscience.

An individual's commitment to act on principles in stage 5 revolves around more than a simple awareness of when societal expectations are lacking, however; the motivation for these individuals involves defending basic human rights in any situation. Kohlberg gives more details about this stage in *The Measurement of Moral Judgment*, defining the ways that individuals in this stage look to issues beyond immediate moral judgments:

Within the Stage 5 perspective, the primary focus may be either on rights or on social welfare. The former orientation emphasizes that some rights must be considered inviolable by the society... Each person has an obligation to make moral choices that uphold these rights even in cases where they conflict with society's laws or codes. There is a concern for protection of the rights of the minority that cannot be derived from the social system perspective of Stage 4. (29-30)

For Harry, his actions in *Deathly Hallows* rightly support these concerns, mainly the rights of minority groups – which in Harry Potter's world includes those who are part human, nonhuman, or Muggle-born – and how these basic rights should be universally recognized across societies and cultures.

Throughout the series, Harry shows kindness towards different minority groups within the wizarding world, but he does not seem to understand the importance of these rights in a larger context until he reaches stage 5, for it is in this stage that he actively defends these rights

and prioritizes the value of all life. One prime example of this shift in Harry's approach to his interactions with others is seen through his relationship to his inherited house-elf, Kreacher. Harry and Hermione came into the wizarding world without the usual wizard bias towards house-elves as a result of their Muggle upbringing, but Harry does not show quite the same level of activism towards their freedom as Hermione does with her organization, S.P.E.W (the Society of the Protection of Elvish Welfare). When Harry encounters house-elves like Dobby and Winky, he treats them well, but he is not concerned with altering the way that society in general treats their kind. However, with a stage 5 perspective, Harry clearly considers the ways that house-elves have been marginalized, and he makes the conscious decision to treat these creatures with respect and advocate for them in the wizard community.

Harry illustrates his commitment to minority groups' welfare in stage 5 through his change in attitude towards Kreacher. He has no personal reason to be kind to Kreacher, especially considering that the house-elf played a part in orchestrating the death of Sirius, yet Dumbledore's analysis following Sirius' death has a lasting influence on Harry: "[Sirius] regarded [Kreacher] as a servant unworthy of much interest or notice. Indifference and neglect often do much more damage than outright dislike... The fountain we destroyed tonight told a lie. We wizards have mistreated and abused our fellows for too long, and we are now reaping our reward" (*Order of the Phoenix* 833-34). When Harry, Ron, and Hermione move into Grimmauld Place, Hermione reminds Harry that house-elves are not treated fairly by wizards when she tells him that "house-elves are used to bad, even brutal treatment; what Voldemort did to Kreacher wasn't that far out of the common way. What do wizard wars mean to an elf like Kreacher? He's loyal to people who are kind to him" (*Deathly Hallows* 198). Her statement about the social norm of wizards mistreating house-elves reminds Harry once again "what Dumbledore had said

to him, mere hours after Sirius's death: *I do not think Sirius ever saw Kreacher as a being with feelings as acute to human's*" (199). Harry reflects on this, and instead of demanding things of Kreacher, which would be normal since Harry is Kreacher's master, he begins to ask. He chooses to give the house-elf more respect, for he has seen firsthand the ways that even those within the Order, especially Sirius, have occasion to act according to the social bias that considers house-elves to be subhuman and therefore undeserving of respect.

Once Harry starts treating Kreacher like an equal, there is an observable change in the way that Kreacher responds to the three young wizards. After Harry gifts Regulus' locket to Kreacher, "[Kreacher] then made two low bows to Harry and Ron, and even gave a funny little spasm in Hermione's direction that might have been an attempt at a respectful salute" (200). Although Kreacher has been adamant about his dislike of all three of them – Harry for being Voldemort's enemy, Ron for coming from a family of blood-traitors, and Hermione for being Muggle-born – he begins to show them respect and kindness in response to their treatment of him. His transformation results from their treatment of respect and consideration: "Nothing in the room, however, was more dramatically different than the house-elf who now came hurrying toward Harry, dressed in a snowy-white towel, his ear hair as clean and fluffy as cotton wool, Regulus's locket bouncing on his thin chest" (225). Kreacher's transformation shows that respect for other beings yields positive results, and this is an important lesson for these young wizards to remember. Ron, perhaps the least likely to speak positively about any house-elf, remarks about Kreacher, "Bless him...and when you think I used to fantasize about cutting off his head and sticking it to the wall" (236). They continue to illustrate a concern for lesser beings throughout the book, and Harry himself is recognized for his treatment of those traditionally marginalized by wizards.

Harry's commitment to protecting social welfare, especially for groups such as house-elves and goblins with minimal rights, and his dependence on these groups for help throughout his quest set him apart from other wizards. When Dobby is killed by Bellatrix, Harry honors him by digging the elf's grave by hand without magic; in doing so, he shows a level of respect to Dobby that contradicts social norms. Harry and the others would not have made it safely out of the Malfoy's manor had it not been for the elf, and Harry humbles himself as a way to pay tribute to Dobby for his sacrifice: "He dug with a kind of fury, relishing the manual work, glorying in the non-magic of it, for every drop of sweat and every blister felt like a gift to the elf who had saved their lives" (478). His actions towards Dobby also supposed Carol Gilligan's concept of care ethics, for in this stage Harry is driven by his emotional connection to others in a way that Kohlberg does not quite consider. Griphook, a goblin who is no stranger to mistreatment by wizards, takes notice of Harry's actions. When Harry goes to speak to Griphook following the burial, Griphook appraises his actions towards the elf by saying, "You are an unusual wizard, Harry Potter" (486). He goes on to say, "If there was a wizard of whom I would believe that they did not seek personal gain...it would be you, Harry Potter. Goblins and elves are not used to the protection or the respect that you have shown this night. Not from wand-carriers" (488). Harry's mutual respect of other beings stands out to Griphook, and even this goblin, who has no interest in the wars between wizards, can see that Harry is both different from other wizards and also honest in his motives towards justice.

In addition to showing respect for creatures like house-elves, Harry's progression into stage 5 is seen in the way he differentiates himself from the social norms of wizards by asking for and accepting assistance from these minority groups. He often asks Dobby and Kreacher for help throughout the series, and this distinguishes him from Voldemort especially. Harry willingly

lowers his pride to ask for Griphook's help in breaking into Gringotts. Griphook questions why he should help them when, as he believes, wizards will only continue to control those creatures that fall under their rule, but Hermione passionately contests this due to her own status of Muggle-born and the fact that they have been fighting for equality such as elf freedom for years (489). After hearing that their mission will benefit all creatures, including house-elves and goblins, Griphook "gazed at Hermione with the same curiosity he had shown Harry" (489), and ultimately he agrees to help them break into the Lestranges' vault. Through these situations, Harry and Hermione effectively illustrate their understanding of personal moral obligation towards all creatures, no matter what the social norms might suggest. Hermione has always been a positive influence on Harry, and once again her passion for the livelihood of all those marginalized by Voldemort, herself included, motivates Harry to boldly defend those whom society looks down upon. Andrew Mills further illustrates how this commitment to social welfare and equal opportunity strengthens Harry's cause and distances him from Voldemort: "But when we think about how Harry was able to defeat Voldemort, we see that much of his success was due to his ability to move among cultures and his willingness to work together with people from different ethnic groups" (111). While Harry treats creatures with respect throughout the series, he becomes more willing and able to advocate for these rights when society fails to uphold universal principles.

Beyond social welfare, Harry displays a developed appreciation for human life in how he responds to his enemies in *Deathly Hallows*, particularly during the final battle at Hogwarts. In the series' beginning, Harry's view of good and bad as clearly differentiated from one another with no overlap encourages the idea that bad people should always be punished, and he often considers how bad people deserve violent punishments, often to the point of death. Harry's

desire to hex Dudley when he first learns about magic, his initial belief that Sirius deserves death for selling out his parents to Voldemort, his willingness to duel and inflict pain on Draco almost any chance he gets across the seven books, and even his feelings of hatred often associated with various Death Eaters, such as Snape and Bellatrix, display Harry's temptation throughout the series to administer judgment for wrongdoing, and often this judgment manifests in a way that violates another's right to human life. And while there are clearly times that violence is necessary and justifiable, Harry reaches a stage of morality that encourages him to prioritize life above his desire for justice. Thus, he considers more intently the situations in which violence is used, and he advocates for life whenever he deems necessary.

One of the most recognizable indicators of Harry's moral maturity is his consistency in putting others before himself, and this attention to others' wellbeing is evident in the spells Harry uses. Harry typically defaults to using the Disarming or Stunning Spell, and when he chooses to use a stronger spell, at times even the Unforgiveable Curses, it is against an opponent who willingly sets himself or herself against Harry's values and corresponds with Harry's desire for justice. For example, Harry attempts to use the Cruciatus Curse, which is one of the Unforgivable Curses, three times throughout the series. Two instances illustrate Harry's desire for justice: once after Bellatrix kills Sirius and the second after Snape kills Dumbledore. After the situation with Bellatrix in *Order of the Phoenix*, she comments on his inability to truly inflict pain: "You need to *mean* them, Potter! You need to really want to cause pain – to enjoy it – righteous anger won't hurt me for long" (810). Harry, although reacting from the pain of losing Sirius, is unable to truly inflict pain upon Bellatrix. The third time Harry uses this curse is in response to Amycus spitting at Professor McGonagall. Harry's curse is not so much a desire for justice as it is a reaction of his affection towards McGonagall. This instance supports once again

the ethics of care that Gilligan believes is necessary to true moral reasoning, and although Kohlberg focuses on justice, Harry illustrates how his relationships with other people influence his reasoning. And yet each of the situations in which he attempts this curse *is* justifiable in the moment, for in each one, the Death Eater has violated the standards that Harry values.

Harry makes it clear throughout the series that even in the stress of battle, he is attentive to the kinds of spells he uses. A clear example of his intentional consideration of others during battle is when he chooses to Disarm Stan Shunpike in the beginning of *Deathly Hallows*. Harry believes that Stan is not acting on his own volition but is instead forced to fight for Voldemort under the Imperius Curse. In the middle of the fight and regardless of the fact that the Death Eaters are fighting to kill, Harry chooses not to Stun Stan because doing so could inadvertently lead to his death. Lupin reprimands him for this display of mercy: “Harry, the time for Disarming is past! These people are trying to capture and kill you!” (*Deathly Hallows* 70). However, Harry defends his choice, for he understands that his moral obligation to protect life whenever possible is a major distinction between him and Voldemort. Harry responds to Lupin, “I won’t blast people out of my way just because they’re there... That’s Voldemort’s job” (71). Harry has learned over the course of the series that although inflicting harm to the point of death is justifiable and often necessary considering the fact that they are fighting a war, one should be mindful of when these extreme measures are used. Thus Harry stands by his decision to Disarm Stan since he cannot be sure that Stan chose to fight against Harry. His awareness of choice affects not just his own decisions, but it also influences how he judges the decisions of others. Harry chooses to act according to his values, and how he reacts in these morally grey areas determines the kind of man Harry becomes.

Harry continues to prioritize the protection of life whenever possible, as seen specifically in how he treats Draco during the final battle at Hogwarts. When Draco, Crabbe, and Goyle attack Harry, Ron, and Hermione in the Room of Requirement, they unleash a powerful spell that engulfs the room in flames. Although Draco and his companions attempt to kill and harm them during this altercation, Harry, Ron, and Hermione choose to save them from the fire at the risk of not making it out of the room themselves: “Harry could not see a trace of Malfoy, Crabbe, or Goyle anywhere: He swooped as low as he dared over the marauding monsters of flame to try to find them, but there was nothing but fire: What a terrible way to die.... He had never wanted this...” (632). Harry manages to save Draco and Goyle, even though they were trying to harm him and his friends moments before. Harry has always expressed feelings of hatred towards Draco, but at this point in his development, he clearly values human life over his personal opinions of a person, which further distinguishes him from Voldemort. As Harry illustrated in his comment towards Lupin early in the book, Voldemort kills people with minimal instigation throughout the series: he kills for the sake of convenience, as with Cedric’s death in *Goblet of Fire*; he kills when he is upset, such as when he kills those around him when learning the Lestranges’ vault was broken into in *Deathly Hallows*; and he kills even his most faithful followers when they are no longer necessary to his plan, such as with Snape. He shows no consideration of others, and Harry’s constant consideration of life even in the midst of a war highlights the quality of his character and his commitment to his moral conscience.

Harry’s decency towards even his enemies is the result of his personal convictions, and his awareness in stage 5 of Kohlberg’s theory to the importance of personally adhering to principles influences how he judges those he respects. Although Harry depends largely on his role models as he progresses through Kohlberg’s levels of moral development, his newfound

independence of his own values and his desire to uphold a certain standard of morality in stage 5 stem from his ability to divorce himself from the expectations of those role models. Harry no longer acts solely based on how he will be viewed by those role models or how they would expect him to act. As a result, his moral development surpasses many of his role models, and his progression is evident in his realization that living up to the reputation society places on him, specifically in regards to his late parents, is not as important as choosing what is right based on his own concept of moral conscience. The shift from a concern about how he fits within the social expectations placed on him by his role models to a focus on an individualized concept of universal morality has its roots in stages 3 and 4 when Harry initially considered motivations, particularly when he was made aware of his father's cruelty towards Snape. As illustrated in the previous chapter, Harry began to consider the ways his chosen role models – specifically Sirius, James, and Lupin – are not without fault; as a result of Harry's confidence in his own understanding of moral judgment in *Deathly Hallows*, Harry's progression into stage 5 is shown clearly in how he becomes a guiding influence on Lupin.

Once Lupin learns Tonks is pregnant, he comes to Grimmauld Place in order to join Harry, Ron, and Hermione on their quest. He expects them to welcome him on their journey, but instead, Harry reprimands Lupin for his cowardice. Harry believes it is Lupin's responsibility to uphold his commitments to his wife and family, and he does not withhold his judgment from Lupin. This situation presents yet another place in which Harry's motivation is more in line with care ethics than that of justice. After the confrontation, Harry considers briefly how his father might have reacted to his conversation with Lupin: "Would James have backed Harry in what he had said to Lupin, or would he have been angry at how his son had treated his old friend?" (216). Although Harry is still concerned with how his father would feel, this concern does not hold the

same weight as it once did, for Harry now relies on his objective convictions to dictate his actions. He makes his choice to deny Lupin's request based on how he, Harry, views the situation, and he does not dwell on whether or not James would be proud of him. However, he learns later from Ron that Lupin listened to Harry and went back to Tonks, and Lupin himself encourages Harry to "follow his instincts, which are good and nearly always right" (441). As Harry progresses towards a higher understanding of moral awareness, he depends less on others' opinions or expectations, choosing instead to focus on his individual commitments to morality.

Harry continues to develop a confidence in his own morality as he relies less on his role models. Perhaps the most influential role model for Harry throughout the series is Dumbledore, and, as Klaus explains, the physical loss of Dumbledore and the truth about his moral inconsistencies contribute to Harry's confidence in his ability to act on his own motivation:

Harry shows a growing moral conscience and greater self-reflexivity throughout the series...The biggest leap forward in Harry's spiritual development can be observed in scenes in which Harry reluctantly had to learn that he has to demarcate himself from people he had formerly worshipped or trusted. Thus, for instance, in the last volume, *The Deathly Hallows*, Harry realizes that Dumbledore, to whom he had shown his unquestioned admiration, had put his egoistic aspirations before the well-being of his family in his youth. The disappointment and the exasperation with the respected headmaster trigger Harry's self-reliance, which makes up an essential part of his maturation. (27-28)

Harry is faced with the uncomfortable truth that Dumbledore made mistakes in his past and did not always act in a morally consistent manner. When Harry learns that Dumbledore was friends with the infamous Gellert Grindelwald, his reaction is similar to the situation in *Prisoner of*

Azkaban in which Harry realized Dumbledore could not fix his problems or force people to accept truth, for this time, “[s]ome inner certainty had crashed down inside him...He had trusted Dumbledore, believed him the embodiment of goodness and wisdom. All was ashes” (*Deathly Hallows* 360). The knowledge that Dumbledore was willing to oppress Muggles for the greater good of wizards, albeit in his youth, shakes Harry out of his blind admiration of Dumbledore and encourages him to rely on his own judgment in carrying out his quest.

Although he feels like little more than a pawn in Dumbledore’s plans throughout much of *Deathly Hallows*, Harry comes to the realization that it is his choice to follow through on his tasks and that he must sacrificially pursue justice in spite of Dumbledore’s shortcomings. When Aberforth questions Harry’s obligations to carry out Dumbledore’s plans, Harry reflects on his motivations and reminds himself that he made the choice to continue on, regardless of his doubts pertaining to Dumbledore. Confronted with Aberforth’s harsh truth about Dumbledore’s selfish actions in his youth and how they affected his family, Harry realizes that Dumbledore repented for his foolishness and sought to protect life in response. At this point, Harry recognizes that although Dumbledore is not without fault, the choices he has made since his indiscretions define him as a good man, and just as Dumbledore fought for the rights of all humankind, Harry knows he has a similar obligation. As a result, Harry defends his role in the fight against Voldemort to Aberforth: “[S]ometimes you’ve *got* to think about more than your own safety! Sometimes you’ve *got* to think about the greater good!” (568). Harry understands that it is his choice to sacrifice himself for Dumbledore’s cause, and his personal decision to put the wellbeing of others ahead of his own needs signifies his progression into the final stage of Kohlberg’s theory of moral development.

Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principles

The credibility of Kohlberg's stage 6 is controversial among psychologists and theorists since this stage "is the only stage for which there are no clear supporting data. It stands as an ideal equilibrium toward which moral judgment may develop, but its existence is based on conjecture rather than fact" (Reimer et al. 62). Because of the extreme nature of Harry Potter's situation in *Deathly Hallows*, however, one can argue that Harry reaches this last level of moral maturity through his commitment to moral action and embodiment of universal values. While Harry's awareness of self-chosen moral principles is present in stage 5, his progression into stage 6 is marked by the ways in which his intentional actions reflect these concepts. Kohlberg explains the difference between the two postconventional levels: "Stage 6 is based not so much on a new social perspective beyond Stage 5's notion of a prior-to-society perspective as on a *deliberate* use of the justice operations as principles to ensure that perspective when reasoning about moral dilemmas" (*The Measurement of Moral Judgment* 31). He goes on to discuss how consistency in acting on one's principles can only be attained when that individual understands why those moral principles matter and how he or she can rely on them in all moral decisions (32). For Harry, his choices and consequent actions in the final battle illustrate his awareness of his moral obligations to the greater good of humankind.

Harry's driving influence towards his final act of self-sacrifice comes from the most unlikely of role models: Severus Snape. Snape, in his last moments of life, gives Harry important memories that provide the missing holes in the task that Dumbledore entrusted to Harry. Through these memories, however, Harry is given the example of a man who, while disliked and within Voldemort's close circle of Death Eaters, also progressed through Kohlberg's three levels of moral maturity, and in Snape's final act, he is the role model Harry needs to reach a stage 6 perspective of morality.

Snape's story begins in innocence. He is neither good nor bad in childhood, and he sees no reason for Lily's status as Muggle-born to affect her ability to become a successful witch at Hogwarts. However, while Harry is encouraged by his influences as a Gryffindor member to pursue goodness and put others first, Snape is dragged down by the other Death Eaters he meets in his house, Slytherin. He is also confronted with the reality that choice is a major factor in determining one's character, as Lily ends their friendship based on the values each chooses and how these conflict (*Deathly Hallows* 676). However, while Snape serves Voldemort in his youth, he regrets his choices when the one person he loves, Lily, is the victim of Voldemort's cruelty. As a result, he commits to Dumbledore's cause and promises to do everything in his power to protect Lily's son, Harry. Snape's decisions beyond this moment of remorse cater towards protecting Harry, although he desires to keep this hidden from everyone but Dumbledore. Dumbledore himself commends Snape for his bravery, commenting that perhaps Hogwarts sorts the students into their houses too soon (680). Snape continues to develop his moral conscience, and his memories illustrate these changes between the boy he was and the man he is at the end of the series.

Similar to Harry's own development, Snape comes to value and protect human rights, and although he does not reveal his motives until showing Harry these memories, the latter memories show Harry the ways that Snape has acted on his principles throughout the series. He continues to protect Harry from Voldemort even after Dumbledore's death. Beyond this, he even protects other members of the Order during battles, as illustrated in his attempts to protect Lupin from a fellow Death Eater's curse when the Order is relocating Harry to Grimmauld Place. Although Snape is no stranger to people suffering for Voldemort's causes, when Dumbledore asks how many people he has watched die, Snape responds, "Lately, only those whom I could

not save” (687). Snape prioritizes the sanctity of life as a result of his moral maturation. He also exhibits a commitment to the social welfare of those he once reviled. While he used to use the derogatory term “Mudblood” freely in his youth, he reprimands the portrait of Phineas Nigellus when he refers to Hermione in this way. Snape’s decisions to uphold the universal values that Harry also prioritizes illustrate that it is truly the choices one makes that mark him or her as good. Harry witnesses Snape’s moral journey through these memories, and as a result of this example and the truth about his relationship with Voldemort, Harry is able to make the conscious decision to act on the principles consistent with a stage 6 perspective.

In order to overcome Voldemort and thereby protect the lives of everyone at risk, Harry must surrender willingly to death, offering his very life for Dumbledore’s cause. Harry embraces this final task with the full confidence that it is the only way to defeat Voldemort and protect others. He reflects on the path before him, realizing that “Dumbledore knew, as Voldemort knew, that Harry would not let anyone else die for him now that he had discovered it was in his power to stop it” (*Deathly Hallows* 693). Harry walks toward death emulating his greatest role models, having just witnessed Snape’s moral progression and fully understanding that Dumbledore’s death was chosen by him well in advance. As Harry approaches his death, he mirrors Dumbledore, ensuring that Neville in addition to Ron and Hermione is aware of the necessity to kill Nagini, the last remaining Horcrux: “This was crucial, he must be like Dumbledore, keep a cool head, make sure there were backups, others to carry on” (696). The knowledge that he alone has the ability to end the war with Voldemort and the examples of ultimate sacrifice from both Snape and Dumbledore carry him into the forest where Voldemort waits.

Harry's choice to accept death for the sake of others completes his moral maturation, and his physical death and subsequent reawakening mark this final transformation. Harry awakens after being hit by Voldemort's killing curse in a white room that he compares to King's Cross station; Dumbledore is there, and in one final act as a mentor, he enables Harry to fully realize the importance of universal principles in overcoming Voldemort. Through this final interaction with Dumbledore, Harry's progression into Kohlberg's final stage of moral maturity is made complete. For Harry, the act of dying on behalf of others marks him as fully reaching a complete sense of moral maturity. When Harry approaches Dumbledore in King's Cross, Dumbledore greets him, "You wonderful boy. You brave, brave man" (707). This affirms the idea that Harry has completed his maturation and moved from the innocent eleven-year-old boy in the series' beginning to a morally mature man in the series' finale. According to Charles Taliaferro, "[S]ometimes spiritual or actual death may have to be endured for there to be a regeneration of life, reconciliation, and a triumph of good over evil" (243). This transformation allows for Harry to face Voldemort as a pure embodiment of goodness. Dumbledore explains to Harry, "You are the true master of death, because the true master does not seek to run away from Death. He accepts that he must die, and understands that there are far, far worse things in the living world than dying" (*Deathly Hallows* 720). Harry is thus given the choice to either move beyond life or return to the living and attempt to overthrow Voldemort once and for all. Dumbledore explains the weight of Harry's choice: "By returning, you may ensure that fewer souls are maimed, fewer families are torn apart. If that seems to you a worthy goal, then we say good-bye for the present" (722). Because Harry prioritizes human life, equality, and justice through his stage 6 perspective, he returns to finish the task set before him, and he is able to defeat Voldemort, finally securing the safety of all humanity. Harry's understanding of life's importance is juxtaposed by

Voldemort's inability to face death, and Harry ultimately defeats him as a result of their differences.

While Harry and Voldemort have many similarities, the differences far outweigh their connections, and Harry's ability to overcome even death in his fight against Voldemort is a result of Harry's commitment to goodness. Voldemort has never considered the wellbeing of others, and this makes all the difference in the fight between him and Harry. Dumbledore explains to Harry in their final meeting at King's Cross, "That which Voldemort does not value, he takes no trouble to comprehend. Of house-elves and children's tales, of love, loyalty, and innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing. *Nothing*. That they all have a power beyond his own, a power beyond the reach of any magic, is a truth he has never grasped" (709-10). Harry's moral character sets him apart from Voldemort, and although Voldemort is the more advanced wizard, Harry rises above Voldemort's skill and experience. Harry's commitment to chosen principles continues to support Kohlberg's definition of stage 6 morality:

Right is defined by the decision of conscience in accord with self-chosen *ethical principles* appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency. These principles are abstract and ethical...At heart, these are universal principles of *justice*, of the *reciprocity* and *equality* of human *rights*, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as *individual persons*. ("The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Moral Education" 671)

Harry illustrates these qualities, and his commitment to these ethical principles motivates his actions. Dumbledore explains all this to Harry, confessing to his own failures and the ways that Harry surpasses even Dumbledore's judgment, as illustrated through Harry's ability to possess the Deathly Hallows.

Harry's approach to the Deathly Hallows, one that contrasts with even Dumbledore's, expresses his maturity, for similar to other situations, Harry puts the needs of others before his own, even when presented with the possibility of individual glory or power. Dumbledore confesses to Harry that his curiosity for the Hallows was self-motivated, and as a result, he was unworthy of possessing them. Harry, however, is capable of harnessing the Hallows because of his commitment to the common good, as opposed to the greater good. In explaining his relationship with Grindelwald, Dumbledore confesses that he sought personal glory and the ability to conquer death through whatever power he might gain through possession of the Hallows. Conversely, he claims that "perhaps those who are best suited to power are those who have never sought it. Those who, like [Harry], have leadership thrust upon them, and take up the mantle because they must, and find to their own surprise that they wear it well" (*Deathly Hallows* 718). Dumbledore trusts that Harry's moral conscience will embolden him to prioritize others over his own potential claims to power, and Harry proves this correct when one considers the fact that Harry chose to let Voldemort have the Elder Wand even before he fully understood the importance of the Hallows.

Earlier in *Deathly Hallows*, Harry is faced with the decision between Hallows and Horcruxes, and his decision to pursue the destruction of Voldemort's Horcruxes over his own glory through possessing the Hallows further illustrates his maturity. He is given the chance to speak with Griphook about the Horcrux in the Lestranges' vault or with Ollivander in regards to the Elder Wand, and this choice causes him to hesitate: "He knew what hung on this decision. There was hardly any time left; now was the moment to decide: Horcruxes or Hallows?" (484). He chooses Griphook, and that decision allows Voldemort to obtain the Elder Wand from Dumbledore's tomb without resistance. However, this further represents not only Harry's

maturity but the ways he is additionally distanced from Voldemort, for while Voldemort's driving concern throughout his life has been self-preservation, Harry's has been the constant commitment to others and sacrificing himself for those he loves. Dumbledore remarks on this in the scene at King's Cross when he explains how Harry's willingness to die – even as early as the battle between Harry and Voldemort in *Goblet of Fire* – sets Harry's strength apart from Voldemort's: "He was more afraid than you were that night [in the graveyard], Harry. You had accepted, even embraced, the possibility of death, something Lord Voldemort has never been able to do. Your courage won" (*Deathly Hallows* 711). Harry's ability to accept death from the beginning, as seen as early as the situations within *Sorcerer's Stone*, stands in stark contrast to Voldemort's fear of death. Harry's willingness to sacrifice himself for the good of mankind is something Voldemort could never understand, and as a result, Harry defeats Voldemort as a result of the conscious decisions he has made throughout the series to prioritize and protect his self-chosen moral principles.

Once Harry returns to the battle at Hogwarts following his sacrifice in the forest, he faces Voldemort one final time, and through his commitment to a stage 6 perspective, he overcomes Voldemort once and for all. Harry confronts Voldemort, offering him the chance to repent: "'It's your one last chance,' said Harry, 'it's all you've got left...I've seen what you'll be otherwise...Be a man...try...Try for some remorse'" (741). Harry has seen through the examples of both Dumbledore and Snape that remorse is necessary towards moral transformation, and Harry offers this chance to Voldemort. Harry does not judge Voldemort in this final encounter, for he understands that Voldemort's own actions and all the choices he has made up until this point could be reversed if he lowered his pride and accepted the offer to repent for his wrongdoings. Harry's withholding of judgment supports Kohlberg's argument that an individual

within stage 6 of moral maturity does not cast blame or use his or her principles to assign judgment: “At the highest stage, the principle of justice (or the principle of maximizing human welfare) prescribes an obligation to act justly (or to further human welfare), it does not prescribe a duty to blame the unjust or give us rules for meting out blame to the unjust” (“Stages of Moral Development as a Basis for Moral Education” 52-53). Harry has come to the understanding that he is responsible for his own actions, and while he cannot force others to follow his example, he can uphold his principles and encourage others to do the same. Voldemort denies the offer of repentance, and through the choices Dumbledore made before his death and Harry’s awareness of these choices, Harry lays claim to the Elder Wand; consequently, Voldemort is defeated as a result of his own poor decisions. Harry’s moral obligations promote the wellbeing of others above his own desires, and as a result of his commitment to the right principles, he survives the final battle with Voldemort and brings peace once more to the wizarding world of *Harry Potter*.

Conclusion – Reading *Harry Potter* as Moral Education

“Children are not ‘they.’ They are us. And this is why writing that succeeds with children often succeeds just as well with adults—not because the latter are infantile or regressive, but because the true dilemmas of childhood are the dilemmas of the whole of life: those of belonging and betrayal, the power of the group and the courage it takes to be an individual, of love and loss, and learning what it is to be a human being, let alone a good, brave, or honest one.”

– J.K. Rowling

Harry Potter’s progression towards moral awareness throughout the *Harry Potter* series reaches beyond the limits of literary study, and the implications of the work presented in this thesis apply to all readers, scholars, and educators alike. Lawrence Kohlberg’s purpose behind studying moral development was to equip educators with the skills necessary to engage children in conversations that lead to them becoming effective members of society, and this consequent development is best achieved through an observance of others’ moral reasoning and a greater awareness of moral concepts. Kohlberg explains the necessity of intentional moral education in schools, for children are constantly learning based on their social interactions:

Most teachers are not fully aware that they must deal with issues of moral education . . . Nevertheless, they are constantly acting as moral educators, because they are continually telling children what to do, continually making evaluations of their behavior, continually monitoring their social relations in the classroom, and doing all of this as part of a larger social institution called society. (“Stages of Moral Development as Basis for Moral Education” 18)

Because children are influenced by their environments, educators must be aware of how to encourage their students' moral behavior, judgment, and thoughts inside and outside the classroom. While there are many potential approaches to moral education as presented in Kohlberg's studies and the works of others beyond his theory, evaluating literature is perhaps one of the best ways to illustrate these concepts and ideas.

Harry's journey towards becoming a morally conscientious member of society is a well-formed example of what readers themselves can strive towards in their everyday lives. Further study should thus consider the practical ways that works of literature such as *Harry Potter* can be used in the classroom to encourage children to act according to Harry's own moral values, those of bravery, generosity, kindness, and concern for all people groups and ethnicities. Michael W. Austin illustrates this best when he writes, "Harry, however, in his unselfishness, devotion to his friends, and loyalty to the good of all, lives a rationally desirable and morally good existence. The lesson here is that we live best when we live for a cause greater than ourselves" (266). Although many critics might still see the books as dangerous to young minds, Rowling's series represent the best and the worst of human potential, and her characters' abilities to choose their actions and moral values mirrors the same potential in real world situations.

Some still might fail to see the ways that works of fiction can influence children's moral development in a classroom, but, as Rowling clearly illustrates, the conflicts that Harry faces over these seven novels are at the basic level the same conflicts that human beings across time and culture grapple with. Critics who continue their fight against the applicable truth within this series fail to consider the way that "[a]ll of the values we share of loyalty, friendship, romantic love, fairness, our opposition to enslavement (free the house-elves!) and the role of remorse, forgiveness, and reform are very much in play in both Rowling's fiction and our own Muggle

world” (Taliaferro 243). Readers, particularly children, grow alongside Harry, and as he becomes aware of his own moral obligations, so too these readers become aware of the rights and values that matter to them.

Harry Potter’s moral transformation is applicable to all ages, all cultures, and all time periods, and as a result, Rowling’s series should be held in high esteem for its ability to encourage goodness in its readers. Because her writing reflects her character’s development, reading all seven books is necessary to fully grasp the depth of Harry’s development, and this mirrors not only Kohlberg’s progressive theory on moral development but also the expected development of her readers. Just as Harry learned from the example of Professors Dumbledore and Snape, so too can readers of the *Harry Potter* series be influenced morally by the example of Rowling’s young hero, Harry Potter.

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