

# The Portrayal of Good and Evil in Harry Potter

What Happens When the Rhetoric Fails?

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<p>Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan retoriikan eri keinoja J. K. Rowlingin kirjasarjassa ja sitä minkälaisia eettisiä opetuksia ne tuottavat lapsille. Tarkastelussa ovat varsinkin kielellisen, empaattisen ja tarinankerronnallisen retoriikan puolet. Kirjoja tutkiskellaan eettisestä näkökulmasta. Analyysin kohteena ovat Albus Dumbledore, Sirius Musta, Rohkelikot ja Weasleyt, Luihuiset, ja Draco Malfoy. Näkökulmana on eettinen, moraalinen ja oikeudenmukainen hahmojen kohtelu tarinankerronnassa. Tutkielman tavoitteena on todistaa, että kirjojen tarjoama retoriikka voi olla haitallinen nuorille ja kokemattomille lukijoille sekä hatara vanhemmille ja kokeneemmille lukijoille.</p> <p>Lastenkirjailijoilla on eettinen vastuu, johon kuuluu oikeiden eettisten ja moraalisten käytäntöjen opetus tekstin kautta. Tämä tarkoittaa esimerkiksi sitä, että sodan ja lapsisotilaiden ylistäminen tai kaunisteleminen eivät sovi lapsille suunnattuihin tarinoin, jos tarinan sisällä on aikuisia, jotka voisivat suojella lapsia. Koska lukijat, varsinkin lapsilukijat, kohtelevat fiktiivisiä hahmoja kuin aitoja ihmisiä, ja koska he muodostavat mielipiteensä näistä hahmoista näiden tekojen perusteella, eettisten ja oikeudenmukaisten sääntöjen luominen tarinassa on tärkeää. Analysoitaessa hahmoja kirjailijan eettinen vastuu ja tarinan eettiset säännöt ovat tärkeitä.</p> <p>Päähenkilönä Harry on sisäisesti fokaloitu hahmo, jonka kautta lukija tutustuu kaikkiin muihin hahmoin, joten Harryn ajatukset, luonne ja mielipiteet värittävät näitä tapaamisia ja muodostavat Harryn ja lukijan välille samankaltaisen suhteen kuin epäluotettavan kertojan ja lukijan välillä usein löytyy. Analyysissä on tärkeä ottaa lukijalle suotu näkökulma huomioon. Myös juoniaukkojen tutkiminen, arviointi ja niistä analyysiin sopivien valinta kuuluu tutkielman prosessiin.</p> <p>Analyysiosiossa tarkastellaan ensin "hyviä" hahmoja, jotka Rowling on siten luokitellut käyttäen kielellistä ja empaattista retoriikkaa. Hahmoin tutustutaan Harryn kautta, ja heitä kuvaileva kieli on positiivista, paikoitain jopa imartelevaa, ja Harry luo heistä heti myönteisen kuvan. Tarkassa analyysissä voi kuitenkin huomata tarinankerronnallisen retoriikan pettävän, sillä hahmot tekevät monia pahantahtoisia ja vaarallisia tekoja. Hahmoja ei rangaista tarinan sisällä, eivätkä he joudu teoistaan vastuuseen. Hatara ja viallinen retoriikka kirjoissa antaa ymmärtää, että jos hahmo on hyvä, hän pystyy vain hyviin tekoihin, ja hyviä tekoja voi tehdä vain hyvä hahmo.</p> <p>Toinen puoli analyysiä keskittyy "pahoihin" hahmoin, jotka on luokiteltu samoilla retoriikan keinoilla. Hahmoja kuvaileva kieli on negatiivista, jopa loukkaavaa, ja Harry muodostaa kielteisen mielipiteensä heistä nopeasti nojaten vahvasti muiden hahmojen sanoihin eikä omiin kokemuksiinsa. Kaikki käsitellyt hahmot kuuluvat Luihisiin, ja analyysissä huomioidaan varsinkin heitä yhdistävät luonteenpiirteet ja kuinka kirjojen retoriikka pyrkii luomaan näistä luonteenpiirteistä negatiivisia. Aikaisempi retoriikka uusitaan niin, että paha hahmo pystyy vain pahoihin tekoihin, ja pahoja tekoja voi tehdä vain paha hahmo. Oveluus ja neuvokkuus hyväksytään vain Rohkelikoissa, ja sitä paheksutaan Luihuisissa. Toisaalta ainoa tarinankerronnallisesti mahdollinen tapa vapauttaa Luihuinen on, jos hän esittää rohkeikkomaisia piirteitä, kuten rohkeutta ja uskallusta.</p>			
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# Abbreviations for Harry Potter Books

<b>PS</b>	Philosopher's Stone (1997)
<b>CoS</b>	Chamber of Secrets (1998)
<b>PoA</b>	Prisoner of Azkaban (1999)
<b>GoF</b>	Goblet of Fire (2000)
<b>OotP</b>	Order of the Phoenix (2003)
<b>HBP</b>	Half-Blood Prince (2005)
<b>DH</b>	Deathly Hallows (2007)

I will be using these abbreviations to refer to the books in the Harry Potter series, for example (PS, 100) to refer to page 100 of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

# 1. Introduction

Children's literature and literature aimed at children and younger audiences has always had two widely agreed upon goals: to entertain and to educate (Nelson, 2014, p. 15). When children's literature emerged as its own distinct genre in the later part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Nikolajeva, 1995), the stories written were often cautionary in nature. They meant to teach children not to steal or lie (and in some darker tales not to trust unknown adults), and how to be a good person with morals, following an ethical code of conduct (Nelson, 2014).

The very basis of this thesis is this assumption that children's literature has a certain obligation to its readership: teaching them morals and ethics. In order to do this, a story needs examples, scenes in which the characters are faced with a moral dilemma. Sometimes these moments are very overt in nature, such as when the protagonist is given a choice between something they want selfishly and something that helps others (*DH*, 564–575) – but they can also be covert – small instances where the options may not be said out loud, but an action is performed and can be judged as either good or bad (*CoS*, 355–356). Depending on the skill of the author, the rhetoric used for determining whether these actions are good or bad can influence the reader's opinions and thoughts, and in children's literature, our own morals.

In this thesis, I will be analysing J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, focusing on the rhetoric of how good and evil characters are portrayed. I will use close reading to analyse several characters from the series, including Albus Dumbledore, Sirius Black, and Draco Malfoy among others. To do this, I will first look at ethical portrayal in literature, doing comparisons between morals and ethics taught in our world, as well as those portrayed in both the muggle and wizarding worlds. As ethics and morals are highly subjective, I will be using the works of Nelson (2014), Palmer (1992), Phelan (1996), and Sklar (2013), as well as British and the fictional wizarding laws to judge the actions of characters, and I will look into instances where the characters acted with or against the ethical norms and how they were treated in these instances. Luckily, while the wizarding world does work under a different judicial system from Britain (*PS*, 70), the story is set in modern day, and as many of the characters have been raised in that world, or at least know how it works, some ethical principles are similar to ours.

Once I have studied the ethics of the fictional world, and how they are portrayed within the book, I will look at the rhetoric of the characters, starting with Harry Potter as the narrations internally focalised point of view. While the book is written from the third person point of

view, and occasionally illustrates both the internally and externally focalised viewpoints of characters besides Harry, or even unfocalized omniscient narration (*PS* chapter 1, *GoF* chapter 1, *HBD* chapters 1 and 2, and *DH*, 279–281) for the most part we, as the reader, are treated to Harry’s point of view. I will first analyse the way in which Harry offers an unreliable point of view for the reader, using the works found in *The psychology of Harry Potter: An unauthorized examination of the boy who lived* (Mulholland, 2009) as well as Nikolajeva (2014) and Genette (1983 & 1988). As a neglected and abused child, with very little positive social interaction from his peers or the adults around him (*PS*, 20–21), Harry’s view of the world and its occupants is slightly skewed, as many instances in the books show us (*PS*, 28, 214; *CoS*, 15; *PoA*, 16, 402; *DH*, 33–34).

Once I have established that Harry offers an unreliable point of view, and before I start on the main analysis, I will also briefly discuss how plot holes affect such analysis, and why I will focus on some scenes yet ignore others. My goal is not to point out every inconsistency within the books and make up theories that may or may not hold, but instead look at instances where the actions of the characters are clear. Plot holes that are only left open for speculation will not be included in the analysis, but I will go over some of them in this section in order to explain why I am not using them.

Finally, I will focus on the analysis of the characters that best emphasize the ambiguity of what can be seen as good and evil. I will examine their actions through an ethical point of view, and comparing it to the point of view that Harry offers. What I hope to achieve by doing this, is to not only to show how the different types of rhetoric (such as rhetoric of empathy, language and narrative) fails when an experienced and analytical reader views the books, but how it can be dangerous when it succeeds. As children’s books, one can argue that the Harry Potter series has a responsibility to guide children to become good people with good morals and strong ethics (de Vries, 1995, p. 121). While this does not mean no evil characters should be allowed, it does mean that a lesson as simple as “actions have consequences” should be upheld, especially in a story where the goal is to bring the main villain to justice.

## 2. Methods of Analysis

In this section I will present the methods with which I will analyse the characters in Harry Potter, looking at the way the rhetoric of empathy and the narrative used in the story moulds our opinions of them. To do this, I need to establish clear boundaries on how the rhetoric works, which I will do in the next three sections. First, analysing the characters in Harry Potter requires a good understanding of the world they live in as well as the ethical and moral norms of that world. We must also keep in mind the author's ethical responsibilities and how the use of rhetoric to claim someone as "good" or "evil" is both important and very dangerous when the readers are younger and hence more impressionable.

We must also look at the way everything is described and told to us as readers: through the eyes of a young boy. Children can easily identify with a younger protagonist but may not always have the ability to understand when the protagonist is not thinking objectively. Harry as the narration's point of view influences us, our reading experience and opinions, and before we can analyse any of the characters Harry meets, we must first understand how his mind works, so that we can better find the objective truth.

Finally, I will dismiss some of the more nonsensical plot holes, that, while having intrigued many and made people speculate, provide us with nothing concrete to analyse. I do this in order to showcase why some instances in the books are not used for analysis, despite them offering room for speculation, as they are nonetheless obscure and insignificant enough to have doubtfully even been noticed by a younger and more inexperienced reader.

### 2.1. Ethics and Morals of the Harry Potter World

Before analysing any characters and their ethics, we must first establish clear parameters for what can be considered ethical or moral within the magical world. Before delving into the characters themselves and how they are portrayed, we must first look at the world in which they live, since the way humans (and to some extent fictional characters) act is often culturally or contextually tied. While Rowling has intoned through her writing that the world in which the story is set in mimics the real one, or at least the muggle<sup>1</sup> part does (*PS*, 2–4, 97; *GoF*, 21; *OotP*, 47, 54), the wizarding world has a slightly different set of rules to it. Having magic

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<sup>1</sup> The wizarding term for non-magical humans (*PS*, 57).

readily at hand might somewhat change the world view and the way we look at danger. Losing all the bones in your arm loses its meaning slightly when they can be grown back within a night (*CoS*, 183). As such we must take these kinds of attitudes into account when looking at the characters' actions.

Here I will talk about not only the ethics and morals portrayed in the world of Harry Potter (and which ones are generally accepted and followed), but also the ethical responsibility of an author (especially one writing for children). I will first look at the author's ethical responsibility, citing several works written previously on the subject, after which I will analyse the books themselves to establish an ethical and moral background for the world, against which I will then judge the actions of the characters.

### 2.1.1. Author's Ethical Responsibility

In this sub-section I will use previous research made on the subject and make a case for an author's ethical responsibilities. Especially children's authors need to have a firm grasp on how to make sure they are not teaching their readers the wrong lessons (Rahn, 2016, p. 166). Children especially are easily influenced by fictional stories and the characters within them, and they, just like adult readers, "respond to the characters as human agents, as representing some ideas, beliefs, or values, and as artificial constructs playing particular roles in the larger construct that is the whole work" (Phelan, 1996, p. 91). Thus, writing characters, their actions and the outcomes to those actions in children's literature is decidedly important, and carries within it the responsibility of teaching these ideas, beliefs, and values to the children reading them.

Rowling has written a story in seven parts, where each year the stakes get higher, the danger bigger, and the inevitable final fight closer. At the end of the fifth book, Harry finds out that he alone has the power to vanquish the Dark Lord Voldemort for good (*OotP*, 774), which is one of the first true instances where an adult reader may think such a notion is ridiculous. While we cannot understand the specifics of magic or prophecies, we can agree that no sane adult would put such a burden on a 15-year-old, no matter how capable.<sup>2</sup> As a child, reading this scene can evoke a sense of destiny and determination, which is not how we should be introducing war to children. As Rahn (2016) points out: "along with the author's absolute

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<sup>2</sup> While many children's stories do force the children into dangerous situations (such as in *Hansel and Gretel*, or *The Snow Queen*), there is no adult character who puts this burden on the child.



power comes an implicit responsibility. The attitudes of children (and adolescents) toward war are still in the process of formation, and may be influenced as strongly by fictional wars as by real ones. Perhaps more so” (Rahn, 2016, p. 163). Glorifying war, and in the case of Harry Potter; child soldiers, is perhaps not Rowling’s intention, but ends up being the outcome.

In a war between good and evil forces, the choice involved in *jus ad bellum*<sup>3</sup> is really no choice at all, because it can never be wrong to wage war on evil. Again, if one’s aim is the eradication of evil, any means of doing so may be justifiable. To generalize from this type of imaginary war to real-life situations runs the risk of making any war seem glorious, any attempt to prevent war by negotiation seem futile, and any means of conducting war seem acceptable. A children’s author who prefers— as, in fact, most do— to encourage quite different opinions, must consider these problems and find ways to deal with them. (Rahn, 2016, p. 166)

One of the most interesting and terrifying points that Rahn (2016) makes is that in children’s literature (and thus Rowling’s books), when fighting evil, “any means of doing so may be justifiable”. This debate on whether the “ends justify the means” has been tricky, not only in literature but in human history. While the release of the two atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki put a fast stop to all the fighting in World War II, it is largely considered a terrible and cruel act, surrounded by regret. The same war also accelerated research into engineering and medicine that might have otherwise taken several more decades, yet it was at the cost of millions of lives. When it comes to the Harry Potter books, it is unclear whether Rowling is for or against this mentality. While often writing scenarios where this mentality of sacrifices being needed comes into positive play – such as all of Harry’s dangerous heroics being rewarded, or the importance of Lily Potter’s blood-sacrifice for her son being expounded upon – in the final book we are given two conflicting views on it: the main characters showing their distaste to the phrase “for the greater good” when encountering it in a younger Dumbledore’s letter to his friend<sup>4</sup> (*DH*, 291–293), yet Harry willingly sacrifices his life for this “greater good” later on in the same book – though with a sense of betrayal (*DH*, 565).

The Harry Potter books, written from the point of view of a boy aged between 11 and 17, tell us the story of a war between good and evil, and how Harry ends up being the saviour of the

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<sup>3</sup> “Jus ad bellum” means “just war” or “the unlimited right to start, initiate, and wage war, and use force against another state” (duhaime.org).

<sup>4</sup> Gellert Grindelwald, who later became the most feared dark wizard of his time, thought to have been working together with Nazis in the WW2.

wizarding world (twice). While his age is sometimes commented on, and some question whether he is ready to take on the burden he bears, only a couple characters ever try to actually tell him not to join the fight (*OotP*, 81–89). A war waged between children and adults, while symbolic, is one that can have consequences on a child’s mind. Feeling as though you are responsible for the world at 15 (when you are not supposed to even be fully responsible for yourself) is not something children should think is normal.

### 2.1.2. Ethics and Morals in Wizarding Society

In this sub-section I will analyse parts of the series where one can make a case for a widely accepted ethical or moral law within the series. I will also make cases for some similarities and differences between our ethical and moral laws compared to wizards, and try to hopefully come up with a reasonably simple way to navigate the world of the series. I will however also keep in mind that the readers are in fact children from our world, and while the wizarding world may have a different ethical system, Rowling as the author is still teaching ethics, not to the fictional children with magic, but to the real children without magic.

The judicial system in the wizarding world could be considered deeply flawed by our standards (and is even commented upon by the main characters), yet some cases are as clear cut as in our world. The three worst crimes in wizarding community are murder, torture, and subjugation, which are achieved respectively by the curses “Avada Kedavra”, “Crucio”, and “Imperio”, and “the use of any one of them on a fellow human being is enough to earn a life sentence in Azkaban” (*GoF*, 183). However, the society does not seem to view murder by proxy as serious of a crime as murder using a spell, which is showcased in Hagrid’s school career (*PS*, 65 ; *CoS*, 261) as well as Sirius’ (*PoA*, 378–379), where the former was accused of having a giant spider kill a fellow student (followed by expulsion from the school and snapping his wand), and the latter tried unsuccessfully to have a werewolf kill a fellow student (followed by unknown punishment, yet no expulsion or the snapping of his wand).

What we can gain from this (and the series as a whole) is that harm caused by a spell or a curse is considered worse than if it were caused by a creature or an object. *Attempted* murder is not given the same kind of judicial punishment as in our world, if the attempt is unsuccessful, and whether the *intent* of the crime is taken into consideration seems to have varying nuances to it. In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry encounters the Minister of Magic,

Cornelius Fudge, after blowing up his aunt into a balloon, and the interaction that follows makes it clear that not all instances of law-breaking are treated the same:

‘So all that remains,’ said Fudge, now buttering himself a second crumpet, ‘is to decide where you’re going to spend the last three weeks of your holidays. I suggest you take a room here at the Leaky Cauldron and –’

‘Hang on,’ blurted Harry, ‘what about my punishment?’

Fudge blinked.

‘Punishment?’

‘I broke the law!’ Harry said. ‘The Decree for the Restriction of Underage Wizardry!’

‘Oh, my dear boy, we’re not going to punish you for a little thing like that!’ cried Fudge, waving his crumpet impatiently. ‘It was an accident! We don’t send people to Azkaban just for blowing up their aunts!’

But this didn’t tally at all with Harry’s past dealings with the Ministry of Magic.

‘Last year, I got an official warning just because a house-elf smashed a pudding in my uncle’s house!’ said Harry, frowning. ‘The Ministry of Magic said I’d be expelled from Hogwarts if there was any more magic there!’ (*PoA*, 47–48)

Later in the series, when Harry and Fudge are on less friendly terms, Harry is put on trial for using magic in front of a muggle (his cousin, Dudley) to save them both. This, according to Dumbledore is highly unusual for a “simple matter of underage magic” (*OotP*, 137), but as the scene in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* suggests, we can assume that the Ministry of Magic is corrupt at least to an extent; an assumption further compounded by several other instances in the books (*CoS*, 176; *GoF*, 443–444, 591, 594–595; *OotP*, 69, 284–286, 576; *DH*, 98). The crime or intent seem to matter less than the opinion and the good grace of the Minister and the ministry itself.

Underage witches and wizards (meaning those under 17 years old) seem to be punished directly by the school in most cases, and the harshest punishment they can get is expulsion and the snapping of their wand. Mostly punishments are doled out by taking points from the culprits Hogwarts House, causing them harm in the yearly House Cup<sup>5</sup>, and turning the ire of their housemates on them (*PS*, 263). Other punishments include detentions, though these seem to

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<sup>5</sup> A system where each of the four Hogwarts Houses (Gryffindor, Slytherin, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff) compete against each other, and gather points by good behaviour and school work, to win the cup and enjoy the end of the year feast decorated in their house-colours. Points are lost through rule-breaking.

wary largely depending on who sets them, sometimes being simple physical labor, writing lines, or even doing something very dangerous (*PS*, 268–275).

Adult witches and wizards are punished by the Ministry of Magic, and while it remains unclear whether smaller crimes earn monetary punishment or something else, seemingly all bigger and more serious crimes have the criminals put into the wizarding prison: Azkaban. Azkaban is a solitary fortress situated in the middle of a sea, supposedly impenetrable, and guarded by magical creatures called Dementors. Dementors are what make the prison the terrible punishment it is, as they have the ability to quite literally suck out all your happy thoughts and memories, leaving you with your worst nightmares and terrifying thoughts. Continued exposure leads to madness more often than not. (*GoF*, 446) This type of punishment would be considered absolutely barbaric, inhumane and rather counterproductive in reforming criminals by the standards of the real world, and while accepted in the wizarding world, many seem to think of them in a similar fashion to us – the main characters included.

While no perfect answer on how the judicial system works in the wizarding world, or even how the wizards view ethics and morals, it seems as though magic gives them some leeway. Permanent damage is deemed worse than something that can be quickly fixed no matter if the latter is more painful in the moment (*CoS*, 182–183). Murder or injury by proxy is not deemed as heavy of a crime as if it was direct. Heavy, almost torturous punishment is seen as normal and in many cases necessary or just (*PoA*, 399). When I analyse the actions of the characters, I will consider both the judicial, ethical and moral systems of the real world (as they are what we wish to teach our children), as well as those of the wizarding world (which provides context and cultural understanding) as well as Harry’s point of view (as it is through him that the narration is focalized).

The reason I focus on the actions of the characters specifically when analysing them is that while descriptions and opinions may form their own rhetoric within the story, it is the actions that drive the narrative forward and make the characters more real. Sklar (2013, p. 17) intones that readers tend to “regard fictional characters as [they] would real individuals” and according to Palmer (1992, p. 62) we “see people as being ‘in’ their actions, such that what they do expresses what they are and how they see things”. I agree with Sklar and Palmer’s view on the matter, which is why I believe Rowling’s ethical rhetoric falls apart with her characters’ actions.

## 2.2. Narration Focalized Through Harry Potter is Unreliable

In this section I will be analysing the character of Harry Potter, how he reacts to and interacts with the other characters and in different situations in the series. I will base my approach on *The psychology of Harry Potter: An unauthorized examination of the boy who lived* (Mulholland, 2009) as well as the works by Nikolajeva (2002), Genette (1983 & 1988), and Barker (2016). Before analysing the other characters, we must be sure through what kind of a point of view they are shown to us. Apart from the first chapters in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, *Goblet of Fire*, *Half-Blood Prince*, and *Deathly Hallows*, as well as some memories Harry bears witness to, we as readers are shown the world through Harry's eyes. While the narration is from a third person point of view, it is undeniably Harry's thoughts that we are privy to. Thus, before being able to analyse any other character, one must know what kind of a character Harry himself is, in order to see past possible bias and general childish naivete. To do this, I will use other theoretical works on the subject and provide evidence through the books to establish that due to the narration being *internally focalized* through Harry, the reader is given an unreliable point of view, as Harry's opinions are not always objective or fair.

Child characters tend to be dynamic, under development, and not yet psychologically mature (Nikolajeva, 2002, p. x). Children's literature too needs to be easily understood, and while not necessarily less complex, the themes are meant to be understood by people such as the character described above. In the Harry Potter books both child characters and children's fiction fuse together, and we end up with a main character with clear, strong opinions, a world that at first glance looks very black and white, and a narrative that very clearly follows Harry's psychological maturation.

According to Goodfriend (2006, p. 84), Harry's upbringing has made him "avoidant" when it comes to attachment. Due to being neglected, berated and outright abused at times, Harry has grown very self-reliant, he tends to not trust others, and his thoughts often turn very pessimistic. On the contrary, Hook (2006, p. 91) believes that Harry is an unnaturally resilient child, with a very positive outlook on life, and strong connections to other people. According to her, it is the adversity he has faced in his younger years that has made him strong enough, brave enough, and healthy enough to face all future adversity he ends up facing (Hook, 2006, p. 91). It is

Provenzano and Heyman (2006, p. 105) who propose the idea that while Harry can be considered to be surprisingly normal, it is not *because*, but *despite* his circumstances. They consider Harry to have a very resilient nature partly because of his parents early influence (Provenzano & Heyman, 2006, p. 113) and because of the positive relationships he gets to experience at Hogwarts (Provenzano & Heyman, 2006, p. 114–117), though unlike Hook (2006), they do not see the adversity having any sort of positive effect on him. Somewhat similar to Goodfriend (2006), and Provenzano & Heyman (2006), I too have come to the conclusion that the adversity Harry has faced has not done him any favours, and through deeper analysis would say he shows a disposition located somewhere in the middle of Goodfriend's (2006) and Provenzano & Heyman's (2006) conclusions. While he has clearly been negatively affected by his treatment, he does show ability to trust someone, though his reasons are very emotionally driven, subjective and unreliable.

The Harry Potter books are told by Rowling focalizing the narration through Harry (with a few previously mentioned chapters as exceptions). What this means, is that while the reader gets to see the world through Harry's eyes and be privy to his thoughts, Harry is not the narrator of the books, though Nikolajeva (2002, p. 61) is of the opinion that "focalization implies manipulation of the narrator's, character's and reader's point of view, resulting in our perceiving the narrative "as if" it were told by the focalizing character". I agree with her notion, and though there are a few instances where Harry is described quite clearly from an outsider perspective: "Yet another unusual thing about Harry was how little he looked forward to his birthdays" (*PoA*, 6), even these moments are somewhat focalized through him.

According to Genette (1983), one of the leading authorities on focalization, Harry could be classified as a character through whom the narration is *internally focalized*. This means that "rewriting the narrative section under consideration into the first person" (Genette, 1983, p. 193) should be possible without it becoming grammatically incorrect. If we take the previous extract from *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (*PoA*, 6) as an example, the sentence would become "Yet another unusual thing about *me* was how little *I* looked forward to *my* birthdays". This poses no problems for the grammar or the narrative, though still leaves the question if or how Harry could be referred to within this thesis. Genette doesn't use the terms *focalized* or *focalizer* in respect to characters, because according to him a character is not a focalizer (as that would be the narrator), and narration is focalized *through* the character (Genette, 1988, pp. 72–73). As I can use neither term to refer to Harry – "unreliable focalizer" not being viable – I will refer to Harry as someone who offers an *unreliable point of view*.

Harry is a very emotional character, and his emotions tend to run his moral compass, easily deeming that characters he dislikes are bad people and do not deserve the same kind of consideration as those he likes. While he does not completely disregard their well-being, he does deem punishments he might have previously considered unacceptable to be agreeable when used on the disliked person (*PoA*, 399; *OotP*, 746; *DH*, 483). As Nikolajeva (2002) expresses in her work, characters in children's fiction work in a different way than those in literature aimed at more mature audiences:

While many general questions concerning literary characters will certainly be pertinent to children's fiction, its specific poetics present some additional challenges. Characters in children's fiction are not necessarily less complex, but they must be comprehensible for young readers. More commonly than in the mainstream they serve as ideological (or rather educational) vehicles. Furthermore, child characters are by definition dynamic, under development; they have not accomplished their psychological maturation yet. All these factors, and many others, imply that characters in children's fiction are in several respects constructed differently than in general fiction. (Nikolajeva, 2002, p. x)

Harry is a growing child, which is expressed well by Rowling, as both his moral compass and ability to follow it despite his emotional responses grows along with him throughout the books. In early books he has an easier time enjoying the plight of those he dislikes, such as Draco Malfoy (*GoF*, 174), though later he seems to dislike them getting hurt more and more (*HBP*, 435). He is never fully objective however, and it is only when he can empathize with someone that he believes they deserve to be treated kindly. A great example of this sort of thinking can be found as far along the series as in the final book, where he gets to know a house-elf called Kreacher better than he did before:

He would have found Kreacher, with his snout-like nose and bloodshot eyes, a distinctly unlovable object even if the elf had not betrayed Sirius to Voldemort. (*DH*, 153)

Kreacher's sobs came in great rasps now; Harry had to concentrate hard to understand him.

[...]

'Oh, Kreacher!' wailed Hermione, who was crying. She dropped to her knees beside the elf and tried to hug him. At once he was on his feet, cringing away from her, quite obviously repulsed.

‘The Mudblood touched Kreacher, he will not allow it, what would his mistress say?’  
‘I told you not to call her “Mudblood”!’ snarled Harry, but the elf was already punishing himself: he fell to the ground and banged his forehead on the floor.  
‘Stop him – stop him!’ Hermione cried. ‘Oh, don’t you see, now, how sick it is, the way they’ve got to obey?’  
‘Kreacher – stop, stop!’ shouted Harry.  
The elf lay on the floor, panting and shivering, green mucus glistening around his snout, a bruise already blooming on his pallid forehead where he had struck himself, his eyes swollen and bloodshot and swimming in tears. Harry had never seen anything so pitiful.  
(*DH*, 158–159)

While he first finds Kreacher to be completely unlovable both due to his previous actions as well as outward appearance, after finding something to empathize with, his new assessment is that Kreacher is “pitiful”. His treatment of Kreacher is however only changed after Hermione explains Kreacher’s thought-processes, and he reassesses himself on how he perceives the house-elf:

‘I don’t understand you, Kreacher,’ he said finally. ‘Voldemort tried to kill you, Regulus died to bring Voldemort down, but you were still happy to betray Sirius to Voldemort? You were happy to go to Narcissa and Bellatrix, and pass information to Voldemort through them...’

‘Harry, Kreacher doesn’t think like that,’ said Hermione, wiping her eyes on the back of her hand. ‘He’s a slave; house-elves are used to bad, even brutal treatment; what Voldemort did to Kreacher wasn’t that far put of the common way. What do wizard wars mean to an elf like Kreacher? He’s loyal to people who are kind to him, and Mrs Black must have been, and Regulus certainly was, so he served them willingly and parroted their beliefs. I know what you’re going to say,’ she went on as Harry began to protest, ‘that Regulus changed his mind... but he doesn’t seem to have explained that to Kreacher, does he? And I think I know why. Kreacher and Regulus’s family were all safer if they kept to the old pure-blood line. Regulus was trying to protect them all.’

‘Sirius –’

‘Sirius was horrible to Kreacher, Harry, and it’s no good looking like that, you know it’s true. Kreacher had been alone for a long time when Sirius came to live here, and he was probably starving for a bit of affection. I’m sure “Miss Cissy” and “Miss Bella” were perfectly lovely to Kreacher when he turned up, so he did them a favour and told



them everything they wanted to know. I've said all along that wizards would pay for how they treat house-elves. Well, Voldemort did ... and so did Sirius.'

Harry had no retort. As he watched Kreacher sobbing on the floor, he remembered 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 as a human's ...*

'Kreacher,' said Harry, after a while, 'when you feel up to it, er ... please sit up.' (*DH*, 159–160)

Comparing Harry's treatment of Kreacher to his treatment of Dobby, both being house-elves with questionable motives and actions, shows a clear, and quite unfair, bias towards someone he finds an emotional connection with (Barker, 2016, p. 117). Both beings are slaves forced into subjugation and they both have a tendency to apply corporal punishment to themselves, yet looking at Dobby, Harry's moral compass is much louder in telling him that the treatment of the house-elf is wrong (*CoS*, 15). This is a very obvious and morally unsound bias, which is nonetheless not looked harshly upon, as Harry is considered somewhat impervious to moral rules due to being the "hero" of the story, and he (as well as those he considers good) are forgiven more easily by moral transgressions than other characters (Barker, p. 118).

Having grown up in a house where he was neglected (and outright abused) by the adults and relentlessly bullied by a child, Harry tends to distrust adults to a point, preferring to act on his own instead of getting their help (*PS*, 290; *CoS*, 315, *OotP*, 669). He also forms his opinions on people very fast, and holds on to said opinions unless he is given indisputable evidence to the contrary (*PS*, 84, 128, 206; *DH*, 153). Coupled with his emotion-driven moral compass, these strong first impressions offer the readers a very unreliable point of view, which manipulates the readers perception on the narrative. Though we are often made to believe through the focalization that Harry acts and feels like a regular child (Hook, 2006), he has emotional issues normal children would not have and could not so easily realise. Harry forms a curious case, where child readers might think they can relate to him, yet as inexperienced readers they are unable to read between the lines and realise the fallacy in his thinking.

## 2.3. Plot Holes and Their Use in Analysis

Before analysing anything, one must be clear on what one can use to make a compelling argument. While the Harry Potter books have been well thought out and the world-building can be seen as something amazing, Rowling has hardly been able to make a perfect story.

Inconsistencies and even *plot holes* can be found throughout the series. According to Marie-Laure Ryan (2009, p. 66), a *plot hole* “designates an inadvertent inconsistency in the logical and motivational texture of a story”. In other words, a plot hole is a mistake or oversight on the authors part, a mystery that never gets resolved. Whenever the author cannot come up with a reasonable explanation to said mistake, they generally ask their readers to ignore their oversight. These oversights may include a simple mistake in timing of certain events, or lack of knowledge, whether it comes to physics or even psychology.

There are some obvious plot holes within the books, some easier to see than others. Some of these plot holes are instances where the characters act inconsistently, and not according to their apparent “goodness” or “badness”. These plot holes, while most likely not intentional on the part of the author, nonetheless affect the story and change the rhetoric:

In narrative, plot exists on two levels: the plotting of the author, who creates the storyline; and the plotting of the characters, who set goals, devise plans, schemes and conspiracies, and try to arrange events to their advantage. The plotting of both author and characters is meant to exercise control: for the author, control over the reader, who must undergo a certain experience; for the characters, control over other characters and over the randomness of life. But sometimes the goals of the author are at odds with the goals of characters. The author needs to make the characters take particular actions to produce a certain effect on the reader, such as intense suspense, curiosity, or emotional involvement; but acting toward this situation defies narrative logic, because it is not in the best interest of the characters, or not in line with their personality. (Ryan, 2009, p. 56)

While these kinds of instances that Ryan (2009) refers to will in some cases be used in my analysis, as they are heavily tied in together with rhetoric and the author’s ability to convince the reader on whether a character is good or bad, I will exclude instances where the timeline is inconsistent, the lack of information too much to be a basis to anything more than mere speculation, or a moment is too coincidental. This type of an instance where the timeline of the books does not match up, happens in the very first chapter of the very first book.

The story starts with the Dursleys waking up on a “dull, grey Tuesday”, going about their day while all around them mysterious things are happening: owls flying around in daylight and a cat reading a map (*PS*, 2), people walking around in robes (*PS*, 3) and whispering about the “Potters” (*PS*, 4), not to mention shooting stars all across the country (*PS*, 7). Vernon Dursley

is even directly told by a man dressed in robes that “You-Know-Who has gone at last!” (*PS*, 5). We later learn in the series that the Potters (Harry’s parents) were murdered on Halloween night, the day before, and we’re even provided with a memory of the event through the murderer’s eyes (*DH*, 279–281). Through these examples it has been made clear that the fabled event of Harry Potter defeating Voldemort has happened the night before the story begins, yet it is only by late evening, after the entire neighbourhood where the Dursleys live has gone to sleep, that Harry is brought on a flying motorcycle by Hagrid. This leaves us with several hours completely unaccounted for. This is an unmistakable plot hole, but while it is relatively easy to spot, nothing about the characters, their motives or morals can be analysed from it, and no concrete conclusion can be achieved. Other similar plot holes will be ignored in consequent analysis.

Another type of a plot hole, while interesting, is one we’re simply not given enough context for to fully understand the situations and why the characters may have acted one way or another. These instances are often centred in the past, before Harry, as our point of view, has been alive to experience them and thus given the reader more context to work with. “The truly unbridgeable plot holes involve strategic decisions from the characters that blatantly violate common sense. While characters may not always act in the same way we would if we were placed in the same situations, we expect of them a minimum of rationality, unless, of course, they suffer from impaired mental abilities” (Ryan, 2009, p. 67). Moments like these include the lack of trial for Sirius Black in 1981, and Dumbledore’s consequent lack of actions regarding the situation.

Once we reach *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* we are acquainted with Sirius Black, Harry’s godfather, and are told that he has escaped the Azkaban prison after being “convicted” of murder. As it turns out however, Sirius never received a trial, as he tells Harry Ron and Hermione in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*:

“D’you know Crouch, then?” said Harry.

Sirius’ face darkened. He suddenly looked as menacing as the night when Harry had first met him, the night when Harry had still believed Sirius to be a murderer.

‘Oh, I know Crouch all right,’ he said quietly. ‘He was the one who gave the order for me to be sent to Azkaban – without a trial.’” (*GoF*, 443)

While on its own, this information may be insignificant, but as we later learn, Severus Snape was accused for being a Death Eater, a servant of Voldemort, yet was vouched for by

Dumbledore (*GoF*, 498). We also learn in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, that Sirius and Dumbledore had worked together to defeat Voldemort before the Potters' death, yet Dumbledore decides not to help him or give him a chance at explaining himself, despite clearly having some sway over the court, and being a man with titles and the powers that come with them (*PS*, 55). We are also told that Dumbledore "believes in second chances" (*GoF*, 397), yet this is an instance in which he goes against his apparent nature. However, we are never given enough information about the happenings that led to this curious decision, and as such it remains an unsolved plot hole.

I bring up these instances, because while they provide very little room for academic analysis, they offer many opportunities for pure speculation, which the fans of the series have taken full advantage of, and which I admit has been one of the reasons I chose this topic for my thesis. While outside the academic context, the fans of the series have analysed these types of plot holes, tied them together with observations similar to my own, and created fan-theories and stories. Experienced readers have used fanfiction as a creative outlet for when they disagree or oppose something in the source text (Roine, 2016, pp. 222–223). These include fanfictions which feature "Harry with a backbone" (Perfect Lionheart, 2012, *Partially Kissed Hero*) or ones where he "decides to embrace his Slytherin side" (GenkaiFan, 2010, *Poison Pen*). Both stories take moments to point out how unreliable the canon Harry Potter's point of view is and take up many of the issues I discuss in my own analysis, despite their unacademic nature.

### 3. Consequences for Good Acting Bad

In this chapter I will start on the analysis itself. Working together with the groundwork done in the previous chapter and doing a close reading of the books, I will focus on Albus Dumbledore and Sirius Black, as the two of them are somewhat hero-worshipped by Harry and are thus shown in a very good light no matter their actions. I will also look at the Gryffindor house and the Weasleys; how they are viewed by Harry, and how they act.

I will go about my analysis by first looking at the language used to describe the characters (ie. how they are seen through Harry's eyes) and how it influences the reader's opinions about them. After this I will move onto second-hand descriptions offered by the other characters, and show how the opinions of other characters influence the opinions of the reader and Harry too, before finally looking at the actions these characters perform and how they contradict their supposed "good" nature. I will also take into account the consequences the characters face for these actions (if there are any), and what this all teaches children about good and bad.

#### 3.1. Albus Dumbledore

When building a character and making them into something the reader is supposed to like and connect with, one needs to account for several things. In this section I will look at the way Rowling uses the narrating voice to describe the character of Dumbledore and analyse how it puts him in a positive light for the reader. Then, I will focus on how other characters describe him to Harry (and thus, the reader), and how much value Harry puts into these opinions. Finally, I will look at the *actions* of the character, the way they play out, and in contrast: how they are viewed.

Nothing like this man had ever been seen in Privet Drive. He was tall, thin and very old, judging by the silver of his hair and beard, which were both long enough to tuck into his belt. He was wearing long robes, a purple cloak which swept the ground and high-heeled, buckled boots. His blue eyes were light, bright and sparkling behind his half-moon spectacles and his nose was very long and crooked, as though it had been broken at least twice. This man's name was Albus Dumbledore. (*PS*, 9)

The very first time we as readers are introduced to the character of Albus Dumbledore is through this passage. Until now we have learned that Privet Drive and those who live there are

very mundane, boring, and outright mean (at least in the case of the Dursleys), and Dumbledore is put in stark contrast against that. The curious way he is described (beard tucked into his belt, wearing a purple cloak and buckled boots) creates a pleasing and somewhat quirky image in our minds (once again comparing Dumbledore to the Dursleys and how Vernon decided to pick out “his most boring tie for work” (*PS*, 2)). Lastly, if any reader still felt unsure on whether to see this character as “good”, his eyes are described “light, bright and sparkling”, a description echoed numerous times in the other books as well, and adjectives that have traditionally positive connotations. With only a brief description and a few choice adjectives, we are already very aware of how Dumbledore is a character we are supposed to like. According to Suzanne Keen (2006), this type of simple character identification links directly to empathy:

The most commonly nominated feature of narrative fiction to be associated with empathy is character identification. Specific aspects of characterization, such as naming, description, indirect implication of traits, reliance on types [...] may be assumed to contribute to the potential for character identification and thus for empathy. (Keen, 2006, p. 216)

Not only do we have this first paragraph to colour our opinions about Dumbledore, as one of the most important characters to the series, he gets many introductions and descriptions throughout the books. Another linguistic device used to appeal Dumbledore to the reader is a curious, yet powerful sentence structure indicating his location, starting from vague to precise:

And there, in the centre of the High Table, in a large golden chair, sat Albus Dumbledore. [...] Dumbledore’s silver hair was the only thing in the whole Hall that shone as brightly as the ghosts. (*PS*, 130)

Directly above them, framed in the doorway from the Brain Room, stood Albus Dumbledore, his wand aloft, his face white and furious. Harry felt a kind of electric charge surge through every particle of his body – *they were saved*. (*OotP*, 741)

In both of the examples seen above the sentence is written with a certain rhythm that forces you to focus on Dumbledore, and in both cases, Dumbledore is situated in middle of something, impressing upon us his importance and power. These are common linguistic tools to put focus on something, and the reason they are common is because they work. Just like Harry’s, our focus is now on Dumbledore, and whether we like him or not, his placement both in the room and in the sentence demands attention.

Another rhetoric tool used to make Dumbledore appeal to the readers is to pair him with silly, quirky things. He frequently eats lemon sherbets, dresses in colourful, sparkly robes, claims to want thick, woolly socks for Christmas, and enjoys knitting. Especially Dumbledore's fashion choices are often used to make him appear as a fun-loving, grandfatherly character:

Up on the High Table, Dumbledore had swapped his pointed wizard's hat for a flowered bonnet and was chuckling merrily at a joke Professor Flitwick had just read him. (*PS*, 218)

'Crackers!' said Dumbledore enthusiastically, offering the end of a large silver one to Snape, who took it reluctantly and tugged. With a bang like a gunshot, the cracker flew apart to reveal a large, pointed witch's hat topped with a stuffed vulture.

[...] Snape's mouth thinned and he pushed the hat towards Dumbledore, who swapped it for his wizard's hat at once. (*PoA*, 241)

'There I am,' said Dumbledore brightly, pointing ahead of them to a tall figure crossing the road in front of a horse-drawn milk cart.

This younger Albus Dumbledore's long hair and beard were auburn. Having reached their side of the street, he strode off along the pavement, drawing many curious glances due to the flamboyantly cut suit of plum velvet that he was wearing. (*HBP*, 219)

While some lesser characters in the Harry Potter books might only ever receive superficial adjectives and descriptions like the ones above, in Dumbledore's case we are also treated to character opinions of him. When Dumbledore interacts with another character<sup>6</sup> for the first time since his appearance, they call him "noble" (*PS*, 12), and when Harry is finally told about his magical heritage and the Hogwarts school, the contrast between the hated character Vernon Dursley calling Dumbledore a "CRACKPOT OLD FOOL", and Hagrid – who has come to save Harry from his family – telling Harry that Dumbledore is "the greatest Headmaster Hogwarts ever had" (*PS*, 63), is obvious, and we are inclined to believe the more likeable Hagrid.

Whenever the "good" characters express an opinion about Dumbledore, they tend to be positive, while the "evil" character's opinions are negative. Draco Malfoy and his father believe Dumbledore to be "the worst Headmaster the school's ever had" (*CoS*, 281), and as they are viewed by Harry as bad people, their opinions are viewed as automatically wrong. On the other

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<sup>6</sup> Minerva McGonagall, Harry's Head of House, and one both he and other characters greatly respect.

hand the characters Harry likes often give Dumbledore a ringing endorsement, one that Harry himself starts parroting in the later books, colouring the reader's thoughts on Dumbledore further:

'You're [Voldemort] not,' he said, his quiet voice full of hatred.

'Not what?' snapped Riddle.

'Not the greatest sorcerer in the world,' said Harry, breathing fast. 'Sorry to disappoint you, and all that, but the greatest wizard in the world is Albus Dumbledore. Everyone says so. [...]' (*CoS*, 332)

Professor Dumbledore, though very old, always gave an impression of great energy. [...] He was often described as the greatest wizard of the age, but that wasn't why Harry respected him. You couldn't help trusting Albus Dumbledore, and as Harry watched him beaming around at the students, he felt really calm for the first time since the Dementor had entered the train compartment. (*PoA*, 96)

The first example is from the second book in the series, from a scene where Harry is face to face with Tom Riddle (the younger counterpart of the main villain Voldemort). Previous to this, Riddle has held a speech where he expounds upon his own greatness, and Harry argues that he is not as great as Dumbledore, that Dumbledore is "the greatest wizard in the world", a phrase he himself admits is borrowed from others: "Everyone says so". At this point Harry has not seen Dumbledore perform much magic (apart from writing in the air and having a sense for invisible people that is) and as such the opinion is not in fact his own. In fact, it is not until the fourth book that Dumbledore shows more magical skill (*GoF*, 219, 233), and the first time we (and Harry) ever witness him duelling is in the fifth book (*OotP*, 748–750).

The second example provides us with a somewhat typical rhetoric of Rowling to make a character appear "good" or "evil". Harry intones that it is not the title of "the greatest wizard of age" that makes him respect Dumbledore, but something else, yet he provides the reader with no concrete reason. Using phrases such as "couldn't help trusting" while not providing a reason to trust can be considered a somewhat lazy rhetoric tool to impress upon the reader the "inherent" trustworthiness of the character in question. Harry is basing his opinions of Dumbledore on his own feelings and other people's opinions instead of facts.

Now, having established how Dumbledore is viewed by Harry and the other characters, we can look at his actions, which should not be considered the same as the *way* he acts. Dumbledore is a very charismatic character, but once we get rid of Harry's bias, we can easily find a pattern



in the way he works and then look at whether his actions can be considered ethical, moral, or even legal.

At the end of the first Harry Potter book, Harry finds himself alone, fighting against the spirit of Voldemort and another adult wizard. He manages to win, though comes very close to death, and after he has somewhat recovered from the ordeal, he ponders together with Ron and Hermione whether Dumbledore actually put him up to it:

‘He [Dumbledore] already knew – he just said, “Harry’s gone after him, hasn’t he?” and hurtled off to the third floor.’

‘D’you reckon he meant you to do it?’ said Ron. ‘Sending you your father’s Cloak and everything?’

‘Well,’ Hermione exploded, ‘if he did – I mean to say – that’s terrible – you could have been killed.’

‘No, it isn’t,’ said Harry thoughtfully. ‘He’s a funny man, Dumbledore. I think he sort of wanted to give me a chance. I think he knows more or less everything that goes on here, you know. I reckon he had a pretty good idea we were going to try, and instead of stopping us, he just taught us enough to help. I don’t think it was an accident he let me find out how the Mirror worked. It’s almost like he thought I had the right to face Voldemort if I could ...’

‘Yeah, Dumbledore’s barking, all right,’ said Ron proudly. (*PS*, 325)

Hermione is the only character who seems to find fault in Dumbledore’s actions - and it is worth noting that she was raised in the muggle world (the world mirroring the real world) and in a relatively happy and normal home – while Ron seems to admire him (despite his choice of words), and Harry, believing Dumbledore to be a good person, decides that whether he understands the man’s motivations fully or not, they must be good.

Other similar incidents, where Dumbledore seemingly risks Harry’s and the other students’ lives are when he allows Harry to fight Voldemort yet again in the *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (*CoS*, 345), and makes Harry and Hermione travel back in time to save Buckbeak the hippogriff and Sirius Black, while hiding from a werewolf and battling against a hundred dementors in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (*PoA*, 417–444). He also knowingly hires an array of Defence Against the Dark Arts teachers that range from incompetent idiots (*CoS*, 104–108) and power-hungry sadists (*OotP*, 247, 687) to werewolves (*PoA*, 368), and even a man possessed by Voldemort himself (*PS*, 315).

In *Chamber of Secrets*, Dumbledore allowing Harry (at the time a 12-year-old boy) to fight against Voldemort is not explicitly brought up, though it is hinted at that he knew what was happening (*CoS*, 345), and as Harry received help from Dumbledore's phoenix – the bird which is in later books revealed to have the ability to apparate Dumbledore to different locations (*OotP*, 575) – we can come to the conclusion that allowing Harry to fight, and denying him help was a knowingly made decision. When magic provides a character with a solution, yet they fail to use it, their decision is not easily justified (Ryan, 2009, p. 64). Instead of feeling resentment or a sense of betrayal, Harry, showcasing his unreliable point of view, feels a sense of gratitude for the help the phoenix provided, and pride for Dumbledore praising him (*CoS*, 350).

In the case where Dumbledore orders Harry and Hermione (at the time 13 and 14 years of age respectively) to travel back in time on a dangerous quest, he does not provide much help, yet the characters automatically trust him without question (*PoA*, 420–421). While the laws of time travel are not made entirely clear, and as such we cannot know if it would have even been possible for Dumbledore to have done the trip, his lack of help, and willingness to send children into danger is overlooked by the other characters. In the same way, Dumbledore hiring Quirrell in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, despite knowing of his connection to Voldemort (*DH*, 555), is overlooked, and instead the focus is on Dumbledore's intelligence for having realised the connection in the first place.

In almost all the cases where Dumbledore is concerned, he tends to work on a modus operandi of “the ends justify the means”, or as is revealed in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, “for the greater good” (*DH*, 291). As long as the end result is what he had planned, he rarely seems to try and avoid the cost of it. He leaves Harry to live with the Dursleys so as to avoid getting arrogant (*PS*, 14) and to protect him with the use of Lily Potter's sacrificial magic, which he believes is a good enough substitute for the neglect and abuse Harry has had to endure for it: “The magic I evoked fifteen years ago means that Harry has powerful protection while he can still call this house home. However miserable he has been here, however unwelcome, however badly treated, you have at least, grudgingly, allowed him houseroom” (*HBP*, 46).

While the exact reasons for Dumbledore allowing and encouraging Harry to face danger throughout his years at Hogwarts are not made clear, it can be speculated that they have something to do with preparing Harry for his future. Some darker speculations include the reason to be to make Harry malleable and easily manipulated to become loyal to Dumbledore,

and whether or not this is the intention, it works regardless. In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* Harry has a conversation with the new Minister of Magic, Rufus Scrimgeour, the latter implies that Dumbledore's intentions were exactly that, and Harry seems to agree:

‘Well, it is clear to me that he has done a very good job on you,’ said Scrimgeour, his eyes cold and hard behind his wire-rimmed glasses. ‘Dumbledore’s man through and through, aren’t you, Potter?’

‘Yeah, I am,’ said Harry. ‘Glad we straightened that out.’ (*HBP*, 290)

This apparent loyalty on Harry's part has been referenced throughout the books, his thoughts reflecting his implicit trust and respect for the man through phrases such as “you couldn't help trusting Albus Dumbledore” (*PoA*, 96), or “he's not as gone as you might think” in response to Riddle in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (*CoS*, 332) and later “he was cleverer than you [...] a better wizard, a better man” to Voldemort in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (*DH*, 605). The latter was said mere hours after Harry had learned that Dumbledore had in fact been planning and conspiring for Harry's death for a long time, a scene from chapter 33 in *Deathly Hallows, The Prince's Tale*:

‘Tell him that on the night Lord Voldemort tried to kill him, when Lily cast her own life between them as a shield, the Killing Curse rebounded upon Lord Voldemort, and a fragment of Voldemort's soul was blasted apart from the whole, and latched itself on to the only living soul left in the collapsing building. Part of Lord Voldemort lives inside Harry, and it is that which gives him the power of speech with snakes, and a connection with Lord Voldemort's mind that he has never understood. And while that fragment of soul, unmissed by Voldemort, remains attached to, and protected by Harry, Lord Voldemort cannot die.’

Harry seemed to be watching the two men from one end of a long tunnel, they were so far away from him, their voices echoing strangely in his ears.

‘So the boy ... the boy must die?’ asked Snape, quite calmly.

‘And Voldemort himself must do it, Severus. That is essential.’

Another long silence. Then Snape said, ‘I thought ... all these years ... that we were protecting him for her. For Lily.’

‘We have protected him because it has been essential to teach him, to raise him, to let him try his strength,’ said Dumbledore, his eyes still tight shut. ‘Meanwhile, the connection between them grows ever stronger, a parasitic growth: sometimes I have

thought he suspects it himself. If I know him, he will have arranged matters so that when he does set out to meet his death, it will, truly, mean the end of Voldemort.’

Dumbledore opened his eyes. Snape looked horrified.

‘You have kept him alive so that he can die at the right moment? [...] I have spied for you, and lied for you, put myself in mortal danger for you. Everything was supposed to be to keep Lily Potter’s son safe. Now you tell me you have been raising him like a pig for slaughter –’ (*DH*, 560–561)

It is in this moment that both Harry and the reader are first shown how much Dumbledore has known, seemingly from the start, and how calculating, manipulative, he has been throughout Harry’s journey. Dumbledore confesses that he has protected Harry “because it has been essential to teach him, to raise him, to let him try his strength”, and by Snape’s admission, Dumbledore has manipulated him as well, using his love for Harry’s mother as leverage, without revealing the ultimate plan of having Harry killed. The contrast between the gentle, grandfatherly persona we have known until now and this cold and calculative man is stark, especially when comparing his attitude to Snape’s, who admits he does not even care for Harry personally. Snape is “horrified” by this revelation, putting into words the callousness of Dumbledore’s plan when he says he has been “raising him like a pig for slaughter”.

After exiting the memory, Harry finds himself contemplating the news he has just received. After showing loyalty to Dumbledore for the entire time he had known him, his sense of betrayal is easy to understand, as he looks back on his last mission from Dumbledore and realises how calculated it all had been.

Dumbledore’s betrayal was almost nothing. Of course there had been a bigger plan; Harry had simply been too foolish to see it, he realised that now. He had never questioned his own assumption that Dumbledore wanted him alive. Now he saw that his lifespan had always been determined by how long it took him to eliminate all the Horcruxes. Dumbledore had passed the job of destroying them to him, and obediently he had continued to chip away at the bonds tying not only Voldemort, but himself, to life! How neat, how elegant, not to waste any more lives, but to give the dangerous task to the boy who had already been marked for slaughter, and whose death would not be a calamity, but another blow against Voldemort.

And Dumbledore had known that Harry would not duck out, that he would keep going to the end, even though it was *his* end, because he had taken the trouble to get to know

him, hadn't he? 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. (*DH*, 565)

This is the last time Harry thinks of Dumbledore before he goes to die at Voldemort's hand. He ends up talking to a version of Dumbledore in the moments after his death and before he is resurrected neither he nor the reader can be sure on whether it is the actual Dumbledore or simply a figment of his imagination (*DH*, 591). As previously shown, after this interaction (be it a real one or not) Harry is once again calling Dumbledore "a better wizard, a better man" (*DH*, 605), and in the epilogue of the book it is even revealed that he named his own son after Dumbledore (*DH*, 619). The easy acceptance on Harry's part echoes the dangerous rhetoric of ends justifying the means, which Rahn (2016, p. 166) has deemed an immoral lesson to teach children.

Now, as for what kind of message the younger readers can take away from this kind of rhetoric surrounding Dumbledore is not a particularly good one, or one we might want to part on to children. While Dumbledore is charismatic and jovial, his actions include negligence for his students safety (*PS*, 136, 185, 325; *CoS*, 153–154, 345, *PoA*, 418; *GoF*, 194, 297–301, 417–424, 523–534; *DH*, 557), manipulating both Harry and Snape to put them in dangerous situations (*DH*, 553–554, 557–561), and planning pre-emptive murder by proxy when it comes to Harry (*DH*, 565). Apart from the manipulation and planned murder, none of these instances receive much acknowledgement, and if they do it is fleeting and merely a sentence or two long. It is only in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* when Dumbledore's actions are brought into question, first by Rita Skeeter, a journalist, in her book (*DH*, 289–293) and later in the scenes I have already analysed above. Skeeter's words, while they weigh on Harry's mind for a while, are swept aside in the end as hateful, while Harry's own sense of betrayal seemingly vanishes within moments with no explanation.

According to Rowling's rhetoric, because Dumbledore is charismatic and likeable, he is allowed to perform acts that would be considered at the very least morally and ethically reprehensible even in the magical world, and in some cases outright criminal. As long as his actions serve the "greater good", he is deemed to be on the good side, and deemed to be a good person. His actions are brushed aside because of the language used to describe him, as well as the opinions Harry and the other characters offer.

## 3.2. Sirius Black

Here I will look at the character of Sirius Black, Harry's godfather. I will first show the literary devices and language used to make him the metaphorical "good guy", before then looking at the less than stellar actions the rhetoric seems to gloss over and underrepresent. I have chosen Sirius for many reasons, as he was a very complicated character with both his good and bad sides, not many of which were hidden. However, it is exactly because Rowling did not shy away from discussing Sirius' flaws that it becomes blatantly obvious that all his transgressions and acts are forgiven simply because he is likeable and part of the "good" guys. He was also chosen as an example on how outward appearance tends to dictate whether the person is counted amongst the good or the bad in Rowling's writing.

While the first and second time Harry catches a glimpse of Sirius (*PoA*, 18, 40), Harry does not think he looks very nice, but the first time he sees a picture of him taken before his stay in Azkaban, he describes his face as "handsome, full of laughter" (*PoA*, 224). For the length of the time that Harry still believes Sirius to be a bad guy, he often describes him as "gaunt", with "waxy skin", yet not too soon after he decides that he likes Sirius, the descriptions become far more positive. When Harry finds himself in Snape's memory in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, he encounters a 15-year-old Sirius and gives him a flattering description:

Sirius was lounging in his chair at his ease, tilting it back on two legs. He was very good-looking; his dark hair fell into his eyes with a sort of casual elegance neither James's nor Harry's could ever have achieved, and a girl sitting behind him was eyeing him hopefully, though he didn't seem to have noticed. (*OotP*, 592)

Once Harry has become acquittanced with Sirius, he starts to see him as a father figure despite the lack of their interactions together. Apart from their meeting at the end of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, which brought forth the revelation that Sirius was in fact not a mass murderer and had not betrayed Harry's parents; a night filled with terror, werewolves, and Dementors, Harry associates Sirius with having a parent so early as the very beginning of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, after waking up from a nightmare:

Harry kneaded his forehead with his knuckles. What he really wanted (and it felt almost shameful to admit it to himself) was someone like – someone like a *parent*: an adult wizard whose advice he could ask without feeling stupid, someone who cared about him, who had had experience of Dark Magic ...

And then the solution came to him. It was so simple, and so obvious, that he couldn't believe it had taken so long – *Sirius*. (*GoF*, 19)

Despite Harry calling his solution “obvious”, this line of thinking shows better Harry's unreliability in how the narrative is shown through his point of view, than his actual connection to Sirius. As an abused and neglected child with very few reliable adult connections in his life, he has undeniably latched onto the first male adult figure to claim a familial connection. To further showcase this, mere minutes after confirming Sirius is in fact not a murderer, when the man asks Harry to move in with him, Harry immediately asks “Have you got a house? When can I move in?” (*PoA*, 402). While it would be teetering on the line to speculation, the fact that Sirius is the first adult to have tried to take Harry away from the Dursleys and the abuse (*PoA*, 402) – however unknowing he was of the latter – might have possibly contributed to the rapid connection Harry's feels between them.

Due to this connection, Harry tends to assign very little fault with Sirius no matter what he does. It is really only when he sees first-hand the way Sirius used to bully Snape that he questions him at all, and even then he focuses on his own father (a more distant figure) in the situation, assigning most of the blame to him: “- he [James Potter] just attacked Snape for no good reason, just because – well, just because you [Sirius] said you were bored,’ he finished with a slightly apologetic note in his voice” (*OotP*, 618). That Harry feels apologetic in assigning any part of the blame on Sirius shows, not that Sirius is innocent in the case, but Harry's own bias and the familiar circular rhetoric: Sirius cannot be blamed because Sirius is good, and Sirius is good because he is innocent. In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, when Harry finds out Sirius tried to have a werewolf attack Snape, despite having known the former for mere minutes, he assumes Snape's anger is an over-reaction:

‘Professor Snape was at school with us. He fought very hard against my appointment to the Defence Against the Dark Arts job. He has been telling Dumbledore all year that I am not to be trusted. He has his reasons ... you see, Sirius here played a trick on him which nearly killed him, a trick which involved me –‘

Black made a derisive noise.

‘It served him right,’ he sneered. ‘Sneaking around, trying to find out what we were up to ... hoping he could get us expelled ...’ (*PoA*, 378–379)

‘YOU'RE [Snape] PATHETIC!’ Harry yelled. ‘JUST BECAUSE THEY MADE A FOOL OF YOU AT SCHOOL YOU WON'T EVEN LISTEN –‘ (*PoA*, 383)

Sirius not only admits to this deed, he shows no signs of regret and even seems aggrieved the attempted murder did not succeed. As Palmer (1992, p. 62) has pointed out, readers see people (and thus characters) “‘in’ their actions, such that what they do expresses what they are and how they see things”. The way Sirius reacts to Snape shows that he stands behind his actions, and Harry’s reaction to this revelation works as empathetic rhetoric to make the reader believe Sirius’ actions are at the very least forgivable, if not outright agreeable. When Harry, Ron and Hermione have accidentally slammed Snape into a wall, most likely giving him a concussion, and the entire group is on its way, Harry notes that Sirius, whose job is to transport an unconscious Snape, lets him get injured even further during the walk (*PoA*, 401). As Harry dislikes Snape and has already formed a curious connection with Sirius (as a child, with no parent-like adults in his life, finding his godfather would understandably cause a need for said connection), he barely acknowledges this and definitely finds no fault with it. Harry’s bias rears its head, as not long after, when the two men’s positions are reversed, Snape conjures a stretcher and gently guides Sirius to Hogwarts (*PoA*, 438), yet Harry, and thus the text, shows no indication that one or the other of these behaviours is in any way better or worse.

While the narrative does use Sirius as a warning example in many instances, referring to him as “reckless” and such, the biggest character flaws are brushed aside or forgiven. As already noted above, Sirius has an unsympathetic nature that does not allow him to see people that he dislikes as anything worth his time or sympathy; Snape being a prime example of this. It is however his treatment of the house-elf, Kreacher, that sent a morally wrong message to the readers. In chapter 2, I already went over some of the aspects of Kreacher’s character, and as such will only give a quick overview here.

Kreacher is the house-elf serving the house of Black, and Sirius (when he was still alive) was his master. Kreacher has likely been alone for several years when Sirius comes into the house, and before that he belonged to Sirius’ family, who can be inferred to have been bigots. As such, the house-elf tends to use slurs, and echoes the opinions of his former masters. Instead of helping him, Sirius treats him like an unwanted slave, easily issuing threats of death and bodily harm (*OotP*, 101), and in some instances even acting on them (*OotP*, 108). While Hermione calls him out on the behaviour over a year after his death, saying to Harry that “Sirius was horrible to Kreacher” (*DH*, 160), and while Harry does not deny this claim, neither is there any sort of agreement. Despite the negative connotations in the language in Hermione’s sentence, the context allows the fact to be left as something neutral, neither positive nor negative. Harry’s positive emotional connection to Sirius makes him biased against Kreacher (Barker, p. 117),



regardless of the fact that Sirius' and the house-elf's relationship could be objectively be described as abusive

The Harry Potter series is a home for many hypocritical characters who judge others for things they themselves do. As already shown, Harry, through whom the narrative is internally focalized, belongs into this group, along with many others, such as Dumbledore, Snape, and Sirius. As one of the important parental figures in Harry's life, Sirius' job is to impart wisdom to Harry, and to lead him to make morally and ethically right choices. One of the lessons Sirius teaches, and a quote many Harry Potter fans have repeated since is how to judge a person:

‘If you want to know what a man's like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals.’ (*GoF*, 443)

The books are filled with inspirational and wise quotes such as this, that on their lonesome could teach a younger reader morals, as the author's responsibility would suggest, yet when the character who says such a thing acts against it, the rhetoric fails. In the context, the quote is referring to how wizards treat their house-elves, and the “man” in question is Barty Crouch, an already disliked character. As such, it is perfectly natural to condemn him for his actions. Yet less than a year later, Sirius, who condemned Crouch, treats his own house-elf even worse, and neither he nor Harry, as the offered point of view, see anything wrong with that. The already common trope of the Harry Potter series, where blame can only be assigned to someone we dislike, someone “evil”, rears its head once more. The rhetoric would have child-readers forgive Sirius' transgressions as he is kind to Harry, yet condemn Crouch simply because he is not.

### 3.3. Gryffindor House and the Weasleys

Harry Potter is a Gryffindor, his parents were Gryffindors, Dumbledore is a Gryffindor, and most of his dearest friends and parental figures are Gryffindors. Gryffindors and Slytherins have an ongoing feud, and as the Slytherins are the “bad guys”, that automatically colours the Gryffindors into the good guys. The language used to describe Gryffindor is most of the time almost overwhelmingly positive, and even the arguably most objective character of the series, the Sorting Hat, assigns them positive adjectives:

‘You might belong in Gryffindor,  
Where dwell the brave at heart,  
Their daring, nerve and chivalry

Set Gryffindors apart' (*PS*, 126)

Unlike Slytherin, who are assigned neutral attributes, such as “cunning” and “ambitious”, Gryffindors are called “brave”, “daring”, and “chivalrous”. Their Common Room is “a cosy, round room full of squashy armchairs” (*PS*, 138), and one of the first things he hears about the House is that “it sounds by far the best” (*PS*, 113). Adding onto this the fact that Harry’s parents, who appear almost saint-like in the earlier books, were both in Gryffindor, alongside Dumbledore, who is portrayed as a paragon of goodness, it is made clear very early on that Gryffindor is supposedly the best House out of all four.

Harry, as a Gryffindor, also gets a good look at the inner workings of the House, which include warm evenings by the fire, great parties after Quidditch matches, and the most rounded characters. One thing to note is that all the Weasleys are Gryffindors, and Harry is practically adopted by the family (*GoF*, 518; *OotP*, 83), and he gets to know them well, there ends up forming a connection between Weasleys and Gryffindor that basically equates the two. All the other characters Harry befriends in Gryffindor also contribute to the overall picture the House presents, or at least their positive aspects do.

Harry himself is brave, noble and chivalrous, as all his numerous adventures would suggest. Ron is a loyal friend with a witty humour, generous heart, and as he follows Harry on his adventures he can be seen as almost equally brave. Hermione, while possessing many typically Ravenclaw qualities, has a kind and empathetic heart, a strong will, and a burning need to help those in need. They all have their faults, yet these faults are considered by the narrative to be individual, separated from the House, while the positive attributes all add onto Gryffindor’s reputation. Similarly the Weasley twins, Fred and George, who are seen as tricksters, with brilliant minds, protective and loyal actions, and a great sense of humour, while only two characters, seem to represent Gryffindor on the whole, despite none of the mentioned characteristics being mentioned by the Sorting Hat.

Gryffindor not only has the superior descriptions, but the narrative also provides a clear bias within the characters’ opinions. At the end of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, when Slytherin loses the House Cup and Gryffindor wins, not only does the Gryffindor House celebrate, but so do the Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws. As Harry has already been established as the hero of the story, and as he brings Gryffindor to victory, the rhetoric makes it clear that alongside Harry, the entire Gryffindor House can be considered heroes. With most of the main “good guys” being in, or having been in Gryffindor, such as Dumbledore, Sirius, Lupin,

Hagrid, Harry's parents, and so forth, the narrative sets the Gryffindors up to be the best house. Apart from a single exception, Peter Pettigrew, all Gryffindors are seen as good, which once more turns into the circular argument mentioned in the previous sections.

As the paragons of virtue, Gryffindors get away with things, that, if performed by other students (especially in the case of Slytherins), would be considered terrible and morally wrong. Weasley twins are such examples, as they tend to pull many pranks, sometimes causing undue damage, and at least in one case endangering another student's life:

'Yeah, Montague tried to do us [dock house points] during break,' said George.

'What do you mean, "tried"?' said Ron quickly.

'He never managed to get all the words out,' said Fred, 'due to the fact that we forced him head-first into that Vanishing Cabinet on the first floor.'

Hermione looked very shocked.

'But you'll get into terrible trouble!'

'Not until Montague reappears, and that could take weeks, I dunno where we sent him,' Fred said coolly. (*OotP*, 578)

'Montague told me that when he was stuck in the Hogwarts one, he was trapped in limbo but sometimes he could hear what was going on at school, and sometimes what was going on in the shop, as if the Cabinet was travelling between them, but he couldn't make anyone hear him ... in the end he managed to Apparate out, even though he'd never passed his test. He nearly died doing it.' (*HBP*, 488)

At the time when the twins first talk about the incident, Montague's fate is played as a joke, and even Hermione, often the voice of reason, seems more worried over the twins getting into trouble than whether the victim will be okay. When Malfoy speaks of the incident, a thousand pages, a whole book, and more than a year has passed between the moments, and even though the horrific truth is revealed, in context it is quickly brushed aside for other revelations, and in either case the twins never get punished for their actions.

In the same year as the twins endanger Montague, they also begin testing their inventions on other, often younger students. This too is played for laughs in the books, and while Hermione does protest against their actions, she is portrayed as uptight in the situation (*OotP*, 234–236). In both cases of the twins' misdeeds, as they are viewed by Harry in a favourable light, and thus deemed "good" by the narrative, their moral transgressions are more easily forgiven (Barker, p. 118). The twins are however not alone in representing Gryffindor, and throughout

Harry's adventures, as the social tides turn, he ends up being either the golden celebrity, or a social pariah. Gryffindor, while often portrayed as loyal, almost always turn their backs on Harry (*PS*, 263; *CoS*, 222; *OotP*, 200–207), not only not standing by him, but joining in the ostracising and spreading of rumours. Each time the House is forgiven by Harry with barely a thought.

The Harry Potter books are written with a very black-and-white worldview, where good and bad are clear and easy to spot. While the books do evolve somewhat, and the reader, alongside Harry, is even allowed a peek into Voldemort's past and given the opportunity to feel sympathy for him, to have one of the most hated characters, Severus Snape, to be redeemed in a surprising twist, and showing the humane, vulnerable side of Harry's biggest rival, Draco Malfoy, the basic rules of the narrative apply nevertheless. Almost all the villains are from Slytherin (with the notable exception of Peter Pettigrew), and almost all the heroes are from Gryffindor. Pettigrew too is not viewed as a true Gryffindor by the narrative, as he has none of the qualifications given by the Sorting Hat. Bravery and determination are never portrayed in a truly bad light. While they sometimes carry the attributes of recklessness and stubbornness, they are never written into the rhetoric as anything inherently bad. After all, Gryffindors are the good guys, and as such cannot do anything bad, and as they cannot do anything bad, they must then be the good guys.

## 4. Judging Evil Through the Eyes of a Child

In the following chapter I will do a similar analysis to the previous section, though instead of fighting against a positive bias, I will be fighting against a negative one, trying to find an objective truth, hidden within the narrative rhetoric. I will discuss Slytherins as a group, and afterwards focus on the singular character: Draco Malfoy. While Severus Snape is a widely debated character, it is precisely why I will not be giving him his own section, though he is included in the analysis of the Slytherins.

Similarly to the previous sections, I will look at the language describing the characters and what kind of opinions other characters have on them. I will also heavily focus on the narrative bias, as the books are written from Harry's point of view, and he has a strong hatred for both Draco Malfoy and the Slytherin House as a whole. Finally, I will look at the way the characters act, and how much agency they are given within their own narrative compared to characters that Harry *does* like.

### 4.1. Slytherins

In the Harry Potter books Slytherin's are almost universally perceived as evil. The very first time Slytherin is mentioned is from the mouth of Draco Malfoy in Diagon Alley, who has already been described unfavourably by Harry, and who clearly wants to be one (*PS*, 83). The second time Slytherin is mentioned and even explained is only a few pages later, by the very favourably described Hagrid: "There's not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn't in Slytherin" (*PS*, 86).

The first two instances where this Hogwarts House is mentioned are vastly different from each other. The first being one where a "bad" character describes it in a positive light, and the second where a "good" character describes it in a negative light. The rhetoric has made the message quite clear: Harry, and by extension all the readers, should be against Slytherin (after all, You-Know-Who was in Slytherin and he was a mass murderer). Harry, as well as the readers, is new to the wizarding world, the culture, and at least in Harry's and a child-reader's case: life in general. Separating individuals from the collective is a life skill we should by all accounts be

teaching to children, not enforcing the thinking that puts everyone in boxes, causing prejudice and unjust hate.

Of course, later we come to read more and more negative things about Slytherins. Harry's best friend Ron seems adamantly against the house (*PS*, 114), and he himself seems to perceive the group in a negative light the first time he sees them: "Perhaps it was Harry's imagination, after all he'd heard about Slytherin, but he thought they looked an unpleasant lot" (*PS*, 128). This sentence showcases a common bias humans have when it comes to new information. Zunshine (2006, pp. 48–50) has remarked that when someone states an opinion or fact, we retain the information, and depending on the circumstances, or our relationship with the person we are speaking to, we either take the statement as fact or at least wait to form our own opinions. As Harry likes Hagrid and Ron despite their short acquaintance, he already holds a set opinion on Slytherins solely due to their words: "after all he'd heard about Slytherin".

Even the Head of Slytherin House, Severus Snape becomes an immensely disliked character during his very first interaction with Harry, due to his personal animosity towards Harry (*PS*, 145–149). Not to mention, the previously mentioned Draco Malfoy is sorted into Slytherin and immediately becomes Harry's greatest rival and nemesis (*PS*, 153), driving a further wedge between Slytherins and those Harry deems to be good.

At the end of the first year, Dumbledore gives Gryffindor house 170 last minute points just so they can beat Slytherin in the celebrated House Cup, further proving to the readers that evil has been defeated (after Voldemort, the poster boy for Slytherin, has been banished once more). Looking at the scene as an adult, from a more objective viewpoint, the show of favouritism is clear. The cup had clearly ended and by the look of decorations in the Great Hall, we can see that the Slytherin's had all but been verbally announced the winners: "It [the Great Hall] was decked out in the Slytherin colours of green and silver to celebrate Slytherin's winning the House Cup for the seventh year in a row" (*PS*, 327). To snatch that victory right at the end in a show of justice and victory, followed by the phrase "even Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff were celebrating the downfall of Slytherin" (*PS*, 330) as good as cements the notion that Slytherins are evil and need to be taken down in the mind of a young reader.

As a child, this black-and-white type of thinking was easy and clear-cut, but the problems arise when we think of the entire house system logically. Hogwarts has four different houses, which the students are sorted in by a magical hat that can apparently read their personality traits and

put them in groups of likeminded people (*PS*, 125–126). Disregarding the fact that putting likeminded people together will only increase their ideas and opinions while never providing healthy conversation and debate, and disregarding the fact how improbable it is that the students all manage to neatly fit into a single house, and that they are *evenly* distributed to said houses, we must remember that nowhere in the official house descriptions is Slytherin said to promote “evil”. Indeed, in the Sorting Hat’s song he makes no such statement:

Or perhaps in Slytherin  
You’ll make your real friends.  
Those cunning folks use any means  
To achieve their ends. (*PS*, 126)

Generally the most objective truths about Slytherins mentioned in the books are that they are “resourceful”, “cunning”, and “ambitious”. Yet somehow these traits are always seen in a negative light when displayed by a Slytherin or a more disliked character (such as Percy Weasley), but also in a surprisingly positive light when displayed by Gryffindors (Harry, Hermione, Dumbledore, etc). This once again shows the flawed logic of the books, that an action can be judged as good, not because it inherently is so, but because the person performing the action seemingly is (and vice versa).

Another message in the books that can negatively affect children is equating goodness with bravery. Bravery, above all else, is the trait that is praised and rewarded the most in the books. Putting other before yourself, throwing yourself in danger without thought or care about consequences is seen as the good thing to do, the right thing to do. Even Severus Snape, the most conflicting character of the series, and the most debated one as well, is seen as inherently bad, mean, and borderline evil for as long as he displays his Slytherin qualities. Even after it is revealed that he has been working on the light side the entire time, against Voldemort, it is not his amazing cunning and resourcefulness that is praised. It is not his intelligence and acting skills in the face of one of the greatest legilimens<sup>7</sup> in the world that gets him recognition. Instead, when Harry’s young son worries about being sorted into Slytherin, Harry takes him aside and calms him with the following:

“Albus Severus,” Harry said quietly, so that nobody but Ginny could hear, and she was tactful enough to pretend to be waving to Rose, who was now on the train, “you were

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<sup>7</sup> A legilimens is a witch or wizard who is accomplished in the mind-reading technique “legilimency”, such as Voldemort or Albus Dumbledore (*OotP*, 490).

named for two headmasters of Hogwarts. One of them was a Slytherin and he was probably the bravest man I ever knew. (*DH*, 619)

It is only when Snape, and Slytherins in general, acts bravely that they are recognized as something good. Dumbledore too parts, what according to the rhetoric would be a compliment, a comment on Snape after one of their talks, stating that Snape is “brave” and continuing with “I sometimes think we Sort too soon ...” (*DH*, 555). This is not a message that should be taught to children, especially children in Harry’s situation, where bravery can very easily lead to death or injury. Self-worth should not be tied to how much and how easily you’re willing to sacrifice yourself for others, yet this is what the rhetoric of Rowling’s books seems to state. Even in the very first book, when Dumbledore gives Harry and his friends points after their adventure, Ron gains 50 points for having a strategic mind, Hermione gains the same amount for being smart and having a quick wit, yet Harry gains 60 points for “pure nerve and outstanding courage” (*PS*, 329). Being smart, or cunning is not seen as desirable or admirable as being brave.

Especially in the earlier books (read mostly by a younger, more easily influenced audience) Slytherin is almost directly equated to evil. Hagrid’s comments about all Slytherin being evil are echoed throughout the books, and it has permeated the book series so deeply that even years after the story ended, people still seem to equate a sense of “evil” to Slytherin, whether they’ve read the books or not. One of these defining moments, where the Slytherins were once again assigned to be equated to evil can be found in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, during a conversation between Harry and Dumbledore after the former has once again defeated Voldemort:

‘So I *should* be in Slytherin,’ Harry said, looking desperately into Dumbledore’s face. ‘The Sorting Hat could see Slytherin’s power in me, and it –’

‘Put you in Gryffindor,’ said Dumbledore calmly. ‘Listen to me, Harry. You happen to have many qualities Salazar Slytherin prized in his hand-picked students. His own very rare gift, Parseltongue ... resourcefulness ... determination ... a certain disregard for the rules,’ he added, his moustache quivering again. ‘Yet the Sorting Hat placed you in Gryffindor. You know why that it. Think.’

‘It only put me in Gryffindor,’ said Harry in a defeated voice, ‘because I asked not to go in Slytherin.’



‘*Exactly,*’ said Dumbledore, beaming once more. ‘Which makes you very *different* from Tom Riddle. It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.’ (*CoS*, 351–352)

While “it is our choices [...] that show us what we truly are, far more than our abilities” has become an iconic line from the series, and has been quoted multiple times as a good lesson, the context in which it is said leaves once again much to be desired. In context, the words praise Harry for turning his back on Slytherin and choosing Gryffindor, belying the idea that the rhetoric in the books keeps pushing: Gryffindors are good and Slytherins are bad. The language, and the chosen character to impart this lesson are crucial in how it is received, and as I have established before, offering an unreliable point of view, Harry trusts Dumbledore implicitly, and thus his words as well, whether they be true or not. Another point to take away from the quote above is how the Slytherin qualities in Harry are not deemed bad in and of themselves. It is only when Slytherin qualities are placed *within* the Slytherin House that they are considered bad or evil.

Intergroup conflicts have been shown to happen quickly (Beers & Apple, 2006, p. 36), even when the groups are completely randomized. According to Beers & Apple (2006), in a study conducted by Muzafer Sherif, a social psychologist, children were put in randomized groups, and made to compete with each other. The children in the groups quickly became antagonistic towards other groups, teasing and even fighting each other. Despite some children having pre-existing friendships between them, the groups seemed to take precedence over these (Beers & Apple, 2006, p. 36). Beers and Apple focus further on the Harry Potter books, and how the school system of Hogwarts seems to be geared towards maximising intergroup conflict. Due to the clear group formations and both the House Cup and Quidditch Cup encouraging the different groups to fight against each other, it becomes very easy to assign simplistic and stereotypical properties to each group, putting all the members of that group (despite there being around a hundred of them) into the same box. Unlike Gryffindor, where Harry himself is situated and thus has an easier time to recognize the individual characters and their differences, he assigns all Slytherins as “evil” and leaves it at that (Beers & Apple, 2006, pp. 37–38).

Harry, as a child, tends to interact with only his own year-group of Slytherins, and deciding on these few interactions what they all must be like. Even from amongst his year-group he tends to interact almost only with Malfoy, who he has an intense rivalry going on with, barely

acknowledging the other Slytherins. Even in the later books, where Rowling has clearly made an effort to show that not all Slytherins are completely terrible, she creates yet another instance that equates a single student to the House, and thus equates the House to be evil:

Then a figure rose from the Slytherin table and he recognised Pansy Parkinson as she raised a shaking arm and screamed, ‘But he’s there! Potter’s *there!* Someone grab him!’  
[...]

‘Thank you, Miss Parkinson,’ said Professor McGonagall in a clipped voice. ‘You will leave the Hall first with Mr Filch. If the rest of your house could follow.’ (*DH*, 497–498)

What is notable here is that Pansy Parkinson is alone; no other Slytherin has made a move to help her or show support. Parkinson, like Malfoy and Snape before her, is a single unpleasant individual, who forces the rhetoric to equate her to her House, thus making it seem as the entire House is at fault. McGonagall continues following this narrative by not only forcing Parkinson out of the Great Hall, but making it clear the rest of Slytherins should follow her, not giving them a chance to prove this initial assumption, that they are all the same, wrong. Just like Gryffindor, with its rare, few exceptions, is seen as a singular force of good, Slytherin is seen as tolerable at best and a direct threat at worst. It is only when Slytherins act like Gryffindors that they are considered an exception to the rule, and the very argument I have made in this paper is that this type of rhetoric in a children’s book is dangerous and harmful. To argue that a cunning, resourceful and ambitious child is evil simply because of these characteristics, would be to isolate (according to the Sorting Ceremony) a fourth of all people.

## 4.2. Draco Malfoy

In this section I will look at the character of Draco Malfoy. I will first show the literary devices used to make him a metaphorical “bad guy”, before then making a case for how the subjective view of Harry, and the rhetorical devices used by the author turn a normal (if not slightly conceited and pampered) boy into an apparent evil incarnate. The reason for looking into Malfoy’s character is once again because of the author’s responsibility. Teaching children that someone is evil simply because you may not like them, goes against that responsibility.

The first time Harry encounters Malfoy is in Diagon Alley, both boys shopping for robes for their first year at Hogwarts. Malfoy is described to have a “pale, pointed face” (*PS*, 82), and after he mentions wanting his father to buy him a racing broom Harry immediately decides he

reminds him of Dudley: a boy we have seen hitting Harry (*PS*, 21), hitting his father (*PS*, 38), kicking his mother and throwing a tortoise (*PS*, 40), being pampered beyond belief (*PS*, 22), and overall acting terrible. According to the narrative, connecting Malfoy to Dudley makes it clear that this is an unlikeable character. That he wishes to become a Slytherin, when only a few pages later Hagrid explains that all bad witches and wizards come from Slytherin (*PS*, 86), further cements this conclusion. To those familiar with French, the name Malfoy might further incite a sense of distrust, as it translates into “bad faith” in English. As Keen (2006, p. 216) has pointed out, “naming [...] may be assumed to contribute to the potential for character identification and thus for empathy”, though in Malfoy’s case this is of course used to provoke a *lack* of empathy in the reader for his character. Within a few pages, the rhetoric has managed to make this 11-year-old boy someone both Harry and the reader will distrust and dislike in all future interactions.

While Malfoy does in fact act antagonistic towards Harry throughout the books, the interactions are far from one-sided, and if the predisposition of Slytherin versus Gryffindor mentality did not exist, the rivalry might have even been considered friendly in the earlier books. While the language describing Malfoy is nothing quite as negative as the language used for Snape for example, it is made clear that Harry dislikes the other boy immensely, and even such simple things as Malfoy celebrating Slytherin winning the House Cup is described as a “sickening sight” (*PS*, 328). Rowling tends to describe characters and their actions quite a lot, and often keeps similar descriptions for specific characters. Malfoy is always described as pale, with a pointy face, and cold grey eyes, speaking with a drawl and often described as sneering, scowling or smirking, all aspects of character identification (Keen, 2016, p. 216). Even when there is a lack of description on Malfoy, Rowling makes sure the rhetoric stays the same, by having Harry or his friends react to him in a negative way.

As has been mentioned, Harry, has a habit of deciding his opinion on a character and sticking to it until *forced* to change it. As has also been mentioned, Harry tends to not interact with Slytherins outside his own year group, and thus tends to equate Malfoy and the Slytherin House as one. What this means is that during *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, when the basilisk hidden in the school starts attacking students, and the perpetrator calls themselves the “Heir of Slytherin” (*CoS*, 146), Harry immediately draws the conclusion that Malfoy must be the criminal in question:

‘Who can it be, though?’ she [Hermione] said in a quiet voice, as though continuing a conversation they had just been having. ‘Who’d *want* all the Squibs and Muggle-borns out of Hogwarts?’

‘Let’s think,’ said Ron in mock puzzlement. ‘Who do we know who thinks Muggle-borns are scum?’

He looked at Hermione. Hermione looked back, unconvinced.

‘If you’re talking about Malfoy –’

‘Of course I am!’ said Ron. ‘You heard him: “*You’ll be next, Mudbloods!*” Come on, you’ve only got to look at his foul rat face to know it’s him –’

‘Malfoy, the heir of Slytherin?’ said Hermione sceptically.

‘Look at his family,’ said Harry, closing his books, too. ‘The whole lot of them have been in Slytherin, he’s always boasting about it. They could easily be Slytherin’s descendants. His father’s definitely evil enough.’

‘They could’ve had the key to the Chamber of Secrets for centuries!’ said Ron. ‘Handing it down, father to son ...’

‘Well,’ Hermione said cautiously, ‘I suppose it’s possible ...’

‘But how do we prove it?’ said Harry darkly. (*CoS*, 167–168)

Even though Hermione is at first sceptical of the idea, she too becomes quickly convinced and the three plan to invade Slytherin Common Room to try and get a confession out of Malfoy. Harry has not only come to the conclusion that Slytherin’s Heir must be in Slytherin, a type of nature versus nurture opinion that is found everywhere in the books, but as Malfoy is the only Slytherin Harry and his friends interact with regularly, he must be the suspect. According to Palmer (1992, p. 62), Harry believing Malfoy to be the one behind the attacks can be seen as him believing Malfoy to be capable of murder, and thus equating him with evil. Malfoy is at the time 12 years old, and while he does repeat his parents’ bigoted views, he has shown no murderous tendencies, and indeed no violent ones either. However, the main characters have a tendency to blow many things out of proportion, as is shown by Harry’s comment on Malfoy’s father, Lucius: “His father’s definitely evil enough [to be Slytherin’s descendant]”. Having met the man once, this is a bold claim to make within the rhetoric where Slytherin equates evil and all things bad. Indeed the narrative rhetoric surrounding the character of Malfoy and his family seems quite circular: Malfoy is a Slytherin and he is evil, hence all Slytherin are evil, and as Malfoy is a Slytherin he must then be evil.

It isn't until *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* that Malfoy starts becoming a more rounded character with more emotional depth, separated from the mass of Slytherins, with his own motivations and personal struggles. At the end of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Malfoy's father, Lucius, gets arrested and is sent to Azkaban, the wizarding prison, and during the summer after, Voldemort decides to enact his punishment on Lucius by making Malfoy into a Death Eater<sup>8</sup> and giving him the seemingly impossible mission to kill Dumbledore (*HBP*, 29). While Malfoy is at first ready and almost excited by having Voldemort recruit him, as his mother, Narcissa, explains, this is because he is only 16 and does not understand what exactly it all entails (*HBP*, 28). He starts soon getting stressed and desperate, even his outward appearance changing.

A teenage boy with a pale, pointed face and white-blond hair appeared from behind the rack wearing a handsome set of dark green robes that glittered with pins around the hem and the edges of the sleeves. (*HBP*, 94)

Harry stared at Malfoy. It was not the sucking up that intrigued him; he had watched Malfoy do that to Snape for a long time. It was the fact that Malfoy did, after all, look a little ill. This was the first time he had seen Malfoy close up for ages; he now saw that Malfoy had dark shadows under his eyes and a distinctly greyish tinge to his skin. (*HBP*, 265)

The former paragraph is from the beginning of the book and the first time Harry sees Malfoy after *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. At this point Malfoy is still healthy and has not quite yet understood the magnitude of the task ahead of him. His description is normal and usual in the way Rowling refers to him: "pale, pointed face and white-blond hair", and while "pale" might usually indicate sickness and "pointed face" malnourishment, in the case of Malfoy this is not so. However, it is in the latter paragraph where Malfoy is described to have "dark shadows under his eyes" and a "greyish tinge to his skin", indicating lack of sleep, sunlight and nourishment. Even so, these descriptions are not inherently unpleasant, and are in fact used to evoke empathy in the reader for Malfoy (Keen, 2006, p. 216) – for the first time in all of the books. This sympathy is further brought forth later in the book when Malfoy finally has Dumbledore cornered and is supposed to kill him, yet shows clear reluctance to do so.

'So let us discuss your option, Draco.'

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<sup>8</sup> Death Eaters are the followers of Lord Voldemort, Malfoy's father himself being one.

‘My options!’ said Malfoy loudly. ‘I’m standing here with a wand – I’m about to kill you –’

‘My dear boy, let us have no more pretence about that. If you were going to kill me, you would have done it when you first Disarmed me, you would not have stopped for this pleasant chat about ways and means.’

‘I haven’t got any options!’ said Malfoy, and he was suddenly as white as Dumbledore. ‘I’ve got to do it! He’ll kill me! He’ll kill my whole family!’ (*HBP*, 491–492)

While one might argue that Rowling has now created a rhetoric to make Malfoy, if not good, then not bad either, we must also focus on the means she has done it with. It isn’t until Malfoy’s life is threatened by Voldemort, not until he has been almost completely broken, until the narrative allows us to empathize with him. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, when Harry, Ron and Hermione are captured and brought to the Malfoy Manor and Malfoy is asked to confirm their identities, he makes the choice not to do so (*DH*, 373–374), despite both his parents’ insistence. Once again, the narrative only shows his humane side in extreme circumstances, similarly repeated later, in the Battle of Hogwarts, when he tries to force Crabbe and Goyle not to hurt Harry (*DH*, 514–515).

If one tries to make a rounded, grey character, while leaving all the “good” points of the character to the very end, forcing the “good” in a way that has previously seemed unnatural for the character, the rhetoric of it becomes flaky. Malfoy as a character has throughout the books shown cowardly behaviour (*PS*, 268, 275; *PoA*, 102), which according to the rhetoric woven into the books is a negative trait, while also being resourceful, cunning and ambitious (*PS*, 170; *CoS*, 116; *PoA*, 129–131, 177; *OotP*, 577, *HBP*, 486–490), which on the other hand is considered negative as he is a Slytherin and a Malfoy.

Even though Malfoy is shown again and again to care for his Hogwarts House (*PS*, 328; *CoS*, 116; *DH*, 517–518), act loyal to his family (*GoF*, 172; *HBP*, 492), and as previously mentioned, he encompasses many Slytherin traits, he is only “redeemed” when he decides to put his life on the line and *choose* the good side (never mind that the choice had never been presented before). The rhetoric of the books is making a case through Malfoy that if the character is unlikeable, it must mean they are bad and evil. Only the characters we are allowed to empathize with are deemed good, or at least neutral. Malfoy is a perfect example of a characterisation which a young reader is made to interpret as evil, while a more experienced reader can see the

nuances and look at him in a more objective light. As the books are geared towards younger audiences, this is a bad precedence to have.

## 5. Conclusion

I began this thesis by looking at the different types of rhetoric used in the Harry Potter books to determine whether characters in it could be classified as good or evil. To do this however, I first needed to look at the ethical responsibilities that both the characters and the author are supposed to adhere to.

I first looked at an author's – in this case a children's author's – ethical responsibility, using the works of Rahn (2016) and Phelan (1996) to support my argument. I established that as children are still learning about the world, and are more easily influenced, authors that write for them have to make sure they do not accidentally teach the wrong lessons. Glorifying war and child soldiers, while disregarding child abuse and manipulation are all the very opposite authors writing for child-audiences should advocate for, yet Rowling has all of these in her writing.

After establishing the author's responsibility and deciding that Rowling does not uphold it, I took a look at what kind of moral and ethical rules the magical society would abide by, and how they looked next to our modern society's rules. I discovered that the ethical rules Rowling has written out into the books are somewhat more lax than those in our world, that the magical government is corrupt, and that punishments for crimes tend to be severe, bordering on cruel. I looked into these rules to see whether the characters I had chosen for my analysis deserved the consequences for their actions. As Sklar (2013) and Palmer (1992) had pointed out, we (and especially children) tend to treat fictional characters in a similar way to real people, and we judge people based on their actions. Thus, it is important to establish which actions are ethically right and which are wrong.

Next, I looked at the character of Harry Potter, as it is through him that the narration is internally focalized (Genette, 1983; 1988), and his point of view through which the reader gets to experience the story. Discussing his role in the narrative and empathic rhetoric was important, as he is the mouthpiece through which the narrator speaks, and as Nikolajeva (2002) has pointed out, focalizing the narrative through him easily manipulates the reader to believe he is the one telling the story. I showcased how Harry offered an unreliable point of view for the reader, by analysing him within the books and using Barker's (2016), Goodfriend's (2006), Hook's (2006), and Provenzano & Heyman's (2006) works. As Harry is the source for most of



the empathic and linguistic rhetoric, his feelings and opinions colouring all interactions, discussing him and his influence on young readers was important.

I also briefly touched upon the topic of plot holes, as they are practically unavoidable when analysing literary works such as the Harry Potter books. As I decided to focus more on the types of plot holes where the author's *intentions* had become unclear or where the narrative rhetoric failed, I left out temporal plot holes, and those Rowling has not given enough information on. While these types of plot holes did not fit directly within my topic, they provide a great source of speculation, and as Roine (2016) has pointed out, tend to give fans of the work a chance to speculate and create their own theories and works. As my analysis does bring up similar points to these theories, and as they have provided inspiration to this thesis, I believed it was imperative to mention them.

Finally, after I established my angle, I began analysing my chosen characters: Albus Dumbledore, Sirius Black, Gryffindors & Weasleys, Slytherins, and Draco Malfoy. In the case of Dumbledore, Sirius and Gryffindors & Weasleys, I looked at how the rhetoric of language and empathy – found in the descriptions and Harry's thoughts and opinions – very clearly made the characters out to be good, while a more experienced reader could see the flaws in the narrative rhetoric. Ethical transgressions and moral wrongdoings, no matter how terrible (even within the more lax magical society) were forgiven and down-played, and the characters did not face justice. This turned into a sort of circular argument that Rowling has used throughout her work: a good person can only do good things, and as this person only does good things, they must be good. As all these characters are introduced and established as good *before* Harry or the reader has witnessed many of their actions, the rhetoric arguing that they are good leaning solely on language and secondary opinions of other characters, it can be agreed that this argument fails.

I analysed Slytherins and Draco Malfoy in a similar way, though I took the opposite angle. The books used language and empathic rhetoric to cast the Slytherins and Draco Malfoy as villains, and as I showcased in my analysis, this kind of black and white rhetoric in a work like the Harry Potter series can be quite harmful. Slytherin traits, such as resourcefulness, cunning, and ambition are only admirable in Gryffindors such as Harry or Hermione, but if these characteristics in any way define someone, and thus would make them a Slytherin, they could be considered evil. The same circular argument as mentioned previously, only flipped around: a bad person can only do bad things, and as this person only does bad things, they must be bad.

The narrative allows discrimination and criminalization of these characters, and only allows them to “redeem” themselves through exemplifying traits traditionally seen as Gryffindor-like. Cowardice is not forgiven or allowed and treating someone bad simply because you do not like them is encouraged.

I set out to analyse the Harry Potter books and the rhetoric they showcase, in order to prove that said rhetoric is not only flawed but can be harmful for the children reading the books. One of the reasons for this is that I myself grew up with Harry Potter. I learned that Slytherins are evil, that Gryffindors are saints, that people like Dumbledore could never do anything wrong. I learned that being cunning and resourceful was bad, and that bravery (no matter how foolhardy at times) was the only way to be *good*, that being too afraid to do something made you inherently *less*. I learned that first impressions meant everything, and that those I did not like could do no good, and those I liked could do no evil.

Only as a more experienced reader can one see the flaws within the ethical rhetoric. An adult, and an experienced reader can appreciate the complexity of the characters within the Harry Potter books and see them as the grey characters they are. Of course, they always have been shades of grey, but as a child, the language and rhetoric used can make one see them only in the way the narrative treats them. Dumbledore, despite his numerous flaws and criminal acts is treated like an unblemished hero, while a whole group, like Slytherins, are condemned as evil because a few bad individuals happened to belong to the house. It is my firm belief, and the reason I have written this thesis, that just because a book is written for children or because it belongs in the fantasy genre, it should not receive the same amount of care and consideration as a book written for adults.

And finally: the fact that it is a fantasy does not absolve you from all the basic responsibilities. It doesn't mean that characters needn't be rounded, the dialogue believable, the background properly established, the plots properly tuned. The genre offers all the palettes of the other genres, and new colours besides. They should be used with care. It only takes a tweak to make the whole world new. (Pratchett, 2014, p. 86)

The numerous methods Rowling has used to make the rhetoric of the books as convincing as possible can easily unravel when read by an experienced reader, and can in themselves teach younger, inexperienced readers the wrong lessons. Writing a grey character into a black and white world is treating that character and the reader in an unjust way.

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