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## An Analysis of Power in “Harry Potter” Movies

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### ABSTRACT

Harry Potter was first introduced in Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone as a guardian aunt, uncle, and their son abuse an orphan who is in their care. He lost his family because an evil wizard named Voldemort kills them. Voldemort tries to kill Harry Potter as well but he cannot. Moreover, Voldemort does not die from the killing curse without knowing that a part of Voldemort’s powers are transferred to Harry, which Harry gets in addition to the scar. The aim of this study is to investigate the issues of good power and evil power in the Harry Potter films. The issue of power is approached mainly through the concept of power in terms of domination and oppression.

## INTRODUCTION

The Harry Potter novel was written by Rowling<sup>[1-7]</sup>. Although, the Harry Potter books are aimed at children, adults appreciate them nearly as much as kids do because they are so expertly written and maintain the reader's attention. The novels have parts of gothic, fantasy and horror literature. The fact that the novels combine fantasy, magic and adventure with realism by describing Harry's typical school life and examinations as well as human interactions like fights with family and friends, infatuations, etc. is another factor contributing to their popularity and engaging nature. Harry Potter has been successful in achieving its level of popularity because of its characters, location, easy-to-read novels and magnificently produced movies. The wide variety of merchandise and real-life attractions also contribute to the series' success.

Harry Potter is a film series based on the fantasy novels by J.K. Rowling. It is produced and directed by Warner Bros. Pictures with eight films, beginning with Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone in 2001 and ending with Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2 in 2011. The first book in J.K. Rowling's planned series of seven Harry Potter novels arrived in late 1997 at the London offices of movie producer David Heyman. Although, Harry Potter has seven books, the last one (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows) split into two parts<sup>[8]</sup>.

Harry Potter was first introduced in Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone as a guardian aunt, uncle and their son abuse an orphan who is in their care. He lost his family because an evil wizard named Voldemort kills them. Voldemort tries to kill Harry Potter as well but he cannot. Moreover, Voldemort does not die from the killing curse without knowing that a part of Voldemort's powers are transferred to Harry, which Harry gets in addition to the scar.

The aim of this study is to investigate the issues of good power and evil power in the Harry Potter films. The issue of power is approached mainly through the concept of power in terms of domination and oppression.

### Research questions:

- What are sources of power in Harry Potter Movies
- Who are the dominant groups
- Who are oppressed
- What are the outcomes of domination and oppression

### Power: Definition of power:

- **HAGRID:** "No. can't nothin' interfere with a broomstick except, powerful Dark magic. No kid could do that to a Nimbus 2000"<sup>[4]</sup>

- **VOLDEMORT:** "That's it, Harry. There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it. Together, we'll do extraordinary things. Just give me the Stone"<sup>[4]</sup>
- **TOM RIDDLE:** "Because I told her to. You'll find that I can be very persuasive. Not that she knew what she was doing. She was, shall we say, in a kind of trance. Still, the power of the diary began to scare her. And she tried to dispose of it in the girl's bathroom. And then, who should find it but you? The very person I was most anxious to meet"<sup>[5]</sup>

The root of the word "power" comes from the Latin word as a *potere*, which means "to be able". But things that are included in this word are much more than able to do and it can say that they are able to exert a lot of force.

According to Cambridge Dictionary, "power is the ability to control people and events and/or the amount of political control a person or group has in a country." Collins Cobuild stated that power is: If people take power or come to power, they take charge of a country's affairs. If a group of people are in power, they are in charge of a country's affairs and/or "power is energy, especially electricity, that is obtained in large quantities from a fuel source and used to operate lights, heating and machinery", moreover, "you can use power to refer to a country that is very rich or important, or has strong military forces." Meanwhile, Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, "power is the ability to control people or things."

As mentioned above, from the movie script, the power in Harry Potter can be divided into various sources. It can be a good or evil witch and wizard, classes, gender, races, belief, political, character, money, blood, etc., Another issue of power in Harry Potter films namely racism and speciesism in the world of Harry Potter on exploring how racism and speciesism are means of using power against those without power.

The main focus is indeed to demonstrate how J.K. Rowling incorporates concepts of power in her description of power in the wizarding world<sup>[9]</sup>. The fact that issues of power, evil and evil power in the world of Harry Potter are both viable and worthwhile investigating is that the difficult issues related to both power and evil in the wizarding world are presented in all the complexity of the real world.

**Class and gender:** The aim of this chapter is to describe and analyse the class structure in the wizarding world as opposed to the British class system. Both class and gender are extremely important issues in relation to power. Traditionally, the upper class always discriminates against the lower classes in

various ways and emphasises its superiority whereas, the male gender dominates and is considered as superior to the female one in all areas of life. Therefore, one of the purposes of this chapter is to explore whether these traditional views of class and gender are supported in the movies.

The class system in the world of Harry Potter is rather much like the one of the real world. The rich have power, whereas the poor are frowned upon. The upper class is superior to the lower class. Both in British society (and other societies) and in the wizarding world, the strongest determinant of nobility is the purity of blood: Noble people are only supposed to marry other noble people, thus breeding noble children. However, the wizarding class system can also be considered as rather different from the real world, as in the wizarding world, there are essentially only two classes: Noble and not noble. Thus, the most important aspect of the wizarding class system is that there is no real middle class in the wizarding world: there are only noble people and not noble people, nothing in between. Furthermore, the issue of purity of blood and mudblood permeates both social classes and not just the nobility as in the real world. In the real world, the status of the working class and middle class people is determined solely on their job that they have and how much money they earn and one's blood is not an issue, whereas in the wizarding world money and professions are of secondary importance.

- **DRACO:** "No one asked your opinion, you filthy little Mudblood"<sup>[5]</sup>
- **HERMIONE:** "It means dirty blood. Mudblood's a really foul name for someone who was Muggle-born. Someone with non-magic parents. Someone like me. It's not a term one usually hears in civilised conversation"<sup>[5]</sup>

It is well known that the series, written by a female author who claims to be feminist, has a feminist viewpoint. However, when we analyse the texts, we see that there aren't really that many feminist elements. We observe powerful, independent-seeking women playing mainly supporting roles for male protagonists or antagonists<sup>[10]</sup>.

The first character to be analysed is Prof. McGonagall who has a powerful, dominant, independent character. She nearly always shows her inner strength both in her attitudes to other students and to other teachers of school who have a high respect for her. She fights to protect the students and the school, punishes the misbehaving students.

However, she does not work or fight for her personal matters, either. She works for Albus Dumbledore who is the master of Hogwarts school, she

helps him to manage the school and fights for the war of Harry Potter to protect him and the wizard community.

Another woman, Molly Weasley, mother of Ronald Weasley and his six siblings, is a completely socially-structured-mother. She is always depicted with her cooking ability, concern and worries about the children and her husband, in her lower-class housewife outfit on every page that she takes part. Even the mothers of upper-class mothers are depicted as mother stereotypes. The example of this is Narcissa Malfoy, who is a death-eater, on the side of Dark Lord Voldemort, has serious concerns about the wellbeing of her husband and her son Draco Malfoy. She is even ready to turn away from Dark Lord Voldemort to protect her family.

**Race:** There is no good and evil, there is only power and those too weak to seek it (Stone, 211.)<sup>[4]</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to explore the concept of racism in the world of Harry Potter. Racism in the wizarding world is not related to race, as it is not about skin colour or culture but it is a matter of purity of wizarding blood: Racism is directed towards Muggles, Muggle-borns, mudblood, half-bloods, Squibs and half-breeds. The racism of the wizarding world is a matter closely related to power, i.e. those in power discriminating against those without power, in a very similar manner as in the real world.

**VOLDEMORT:** "Crucio!"

Harry TWISTS in pain. Voldemort studies him eyes narrowed, face dispassionate then gives a SHARP PLICK of his wand, ending the curse. Harry goes limp, chest heaving, then puts his fists to the ground, pushes himself to his feet.

**VOLDEMORT:** "Atta boy.

Harry . Your parents would be proud. Especially your filthy Muggle mother".

To return to Draco's racist ideas, he expresses his opinion of Muggle-borns even more clearly and very nastily at that in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, when Hermione reprimands him:

**DRACO:** "No one asked your opinion, you filthy little Mudblood."

Hermione becomes very angry with Draco and is ready to punch and curse him, as the term "Mudblood" which he uses is extremely insulting. There are some wizards like Malfoy's family who think they're better than everyone else because they're what people call pure-blood" (Chamber, 89). Draco continues his insulting comments about Muggle-borns, for example,

“Want one, Granger, said Malfoy, holding up the badge to Hermione. I’ve got loads. But don’t touch my hand, now. I’ve just washed it, you see, don’t want a Mudblood slimming it up” (Goblet, 262) and “If you’re wondering what the smell is, Mother, a Mudblood just walked in” (Prince, 110).

In addition to Muggles or Muggle-borns, they also get their share of racist wizarding attitudes. The term Muggle refers to someone who was born to a wizarding family but hasn’t got any magic power with them.

Racism and speciesism also run very deep within the wizarding society, as they are embedded even in the wizarding laws. House-elves and goblins (i.e. non-human creatures) are not allowed to carry or use wands and “Law Fifteen B” (Order, 665) refers to centaurs as having near human intelligence, even though they are much wiser than humans.

The wizarding world has produced a horrible, vicious and evil creature named Voldemort by rejecting Muggle-borns and half-bloods and by excluding and insulting wizarding families without magical abilities. Thus, a failure in the wizarding society itself is the root cause of Voldemort and his Death Eaters’ beliefs.

### Evil power

#### **The battle between the good Harry Potter and the evil**

**Voldemort:** The aim of this chapter is to analyse the battle between the protagonist Harry and his antagonist Voldemort. In addition, the similarities and differences between Harry and Voldemort are explored. The battle between Harry and Voldemort is an ongoing theme throughout the films that it is Harry’s job to defeat Voldemort for various reasons.

With Harry’s personality, Rowling is essentially challenging the morality of herotypes and pointing out that, although being deeply fulfilling psychologically, vengeance is always immoral, however, it may be argued that Harry’s need to kill Voldemort was more motivated by self-defence than by a desire for retribution: Harry must kill Voldemort or Voldemort will kill him. Thus, reminding out that Harry’s need to kill Voldemort is a matter of self-defence, which is ethically acceptable, Rowling avoids the moral issues associated with murder and retaliation.

Another very interesting conversation occurs between Harry and Professor Dumbledore in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, when Harry is concerned about how similar he is in fact to Voldemort:

Professor Dumbledore... Riddle [in other words, young Voldemort] said I’m like him. Strange likeness, he said:

‘Did he now?’ [...] ‘And what do you think, Harry?’  
‘I don’t think I’m like him!’ he said more loudly than he’d intended. ‘I mean I’m – I’m in Gryffindor, I’m ...’  
But he fell silent, a lurking doubt resurfacing in his mind. ‘Professor the Sorting Hat told me I’d have done well in Slytherin. Everyone thought I was Slytherin’s heir for a while because I can speak Parseltongue  
‘You can speak Parseltongue, Harry’ said Dumbledore calmly, ‘because Lord Voldemort who is the last remaining ancestor of Salazar Slytherin can speak Parseltongue. Unless I’m much mistaken, he transferred some of his own powers to you the night he gave you that scar. Not something he intended to do, I’m sure’  
‘Voldemort put a bit of himself in me? [...]’  
‘It certainly seems so.’  
‘So I should be in Slytherin, Harry said, looking desperately at Dumbledore’s face.  
‘The Sorting Hat could see Slytherin’s power in me and it’  
‘Put you in Gryffindor,’ said Dumbledore calmly. [...]’  
‘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.’ (Chamber, 244-5.)

The fact that it explains how Voldemort has given Harry some of his powers and that this is the reason Harry can speak Parseltongue makes this dialogue both interesting and important. It also draws the attention to the fact that Harry and Voldemort are similar in many ways. It can be interpreted that there is actually “a small Voldemort” residing inside Harry? but Harry and Voldemort are certainly very different from each other as well.

The battle between Harry and Voldemort is a battle between two opposing forces: The forces of good and the forces of evil. Dark arts are used by the forces of evil, whilst defence against dark arts is employed by the forces of good. “It was important, Dumbledore said, to fight and fight again and keep fighting, for only then could evil be kept at bay, though never quite eradicated” (Prince, 601). Thus, the battle between the forces of good and evil is eternal.

## CONCLUSION

The study title “ An Analysis of power in “Harry Potter” Movies” found that the conduction class, gender and race are related to power. From the depictions of characters, it could be anti-racism, anti-class, anti-gender in the series. Considering that the only people of superior authority who have the most powerful-Harry Potter, Dumbledore and Voldemort- researcher found that they are white, upper-class, pure-blood-or claiming to be pure-blood-male characters. Even if women are given authority, it is secondary. There is a homosexual man-again, not a woman.

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