

Societal Themes in the Harry Potter Novels

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Abstract: In this London HUA Center experience, 19 WPI students and I worked together to explore and understand various aspects of the humanities and arts within specific historical contexts. My capstone project focused on Harry Potter in London. The paper argues that J.K. Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter series, demonstrates ideas about politics, morality, and religion, which are sometimes reflective of Rowling's personal life but are not forceful. She did not intend for the series to shape political discourse.

The Harry Potter series, though loved by a lot, has faced much controversy in topics of religion, morality, and politics. Many authors use their works to take a specific stance on such issues, whether those be popular or unpopular. J.K. Rowling, the author of the series, did not write the novels as a political discourse, she had no intentions of promoting or degrading any kind of religion, but uses her novels to demonstrate a kind of framework of morality from various characters but most prominently mothers. Critics have both agreed and disagreed with these statements and this paper will analyze how these types of conclusions can be drawn through these critiques.

Politics can always be an area of great controversy. Lionel Shriver, an American novelist, has stated that “All novels aren’t political statements. But they’re no apolitical, either.” This can be a dangerous thing and readers often provide a lot of criticism. Politics appears to be an area where Rowling faces a lot of controversy. Critics have said that Rowling had certain negative political motives behind Harry Potter. They claim that Rowling promotes racism, subversion, homosexuality, black magic, and anti-government, anti-globalist, anti-capitalist, and pro Third World sentiments in the novels. In contrast, Rajendra Dash, author of “Chasing the Shadow: Is the *Harry Potter* Series a Political Discourse?” argues that the novels aim to establish Harry Potter as a child hero and thus an ideal role model for children. It has been said that because of Rowling’s “life-like” villain Lord Voldemort, she appears to be “doing politics” (Dash, 460). The character is completely centered around power and does everything in his power to obtain such, even at the cost of himself. Dash believes that “there is no good and evil in this world, only power and those too weak to seek it” (460). Political endgame is displayed on a large scale between Voldemort and Dumbledore, and the maneuvers between the civil ministry and the ministry of magic. This image of Voldemort is basically that of a power-hungry tyrant who hates

those who are not pure blooded (those who do not have both parents and ancestry of magic) but he is no ordinary mortal; his aim in life is to be immortal. Since he considers Harry to be his arch-enemy the role of true hero is bestowed on Harry. Rowling has directly commented on the death of the villain stating that he was truly “power hungry” and “really racist” and “these type of people treat the idea of life really lightly”, which is why his death needed to be so dismissive (*Time Magazine*, 2000). In this case, critics seem to be correct in saying Rowling has presented the public a “political discourse,” Dash argues that though they “*seem*” to be correct they are not (461). Dash doesn’t believe in the political discourse debate because he finds the argument to be weak and essentially non-existent.

While examining politics in children’s literature it is important to answer the question of Is this series truly “Children’s Literature?” The series can definitely be classified as such. Dash explains the novels directed towards children through the character analysis of Tom Riddle and Harry Potter. The character of Tom Marvolo Riddle (Lord Voldemort) was born and raised in a Muggle (non-magic) orphanage, but eventually attended Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The boy was brilliant and upon arrival was sorted into Slytherin house (one of the four houses of the school). At the time he was considered to be the most talented pupil to attend the school. While at school he was known to be handsome, talented, and polite, but the reality was that Riddle was cruel, arrogant, sadistic, manipulative, and sociopathic. His grades seemed to be exceptional and he even held an employment for a time. Rowling takes this boy and shows the reader a path of evil with his eventual turn into Lord Voldemort. Harry is given a similar background but takes the path of good rather than the path of evil. Essentially, the novels as a whole tell the stories of growth of two children, Harry and Tom, toward manhood. Their backgrounds are incredibly similar, having neglected childhoods, isolated, uncared for, and

disgruntled, but Harry comes to embrace love, while Tom embraces his ambition to rule other and hunger for power. Therefore, the series defends its tag of “Children’s Literature” (Dash, 462) and can be examined from a children’s literature perspective.

Rowling did not intentionally incorporate politics in her novels but did so for real-life purposes. When directly asked about the political message behind Harry Potter, Rowling herself stated that she wanted “Harry to leave our world and find exactly the same problems in the wizarding world. So you have the intent to impose hierarchy, you have bigotry, and this notion of purity, which is this great fallacy, but it crops up all over the world. People like to think themselves superior and that if they can pride themselves in nothing else they can pride themselves on perceived purity. So yeah that follows a parallel to Nazism. It wasn’t really exclusively that. I think you can see in the Ministry even before it’s taken over, there are parallels to regimes we all know and love” (Rowling Entertainment interview, 2007). Rowling furthers her real-life politics in the novels by saying one “should question authority and should not assume that the establishment or the press tells one all of the truth.” By this statement, she is expressing the fact that in one should consider all sides in everyday life and there should be a similar standard in the wizarding world. Dash comments on this stating that the message Rowling is getting at is that politics has become a part of modern life, but tends to be the root of all problems, not solutions.

There is no question that Rowling deals with politics in the series at hand, but there is not a relevant political message. An example Dash discusses is that of Dumbledore’s friend Grindlewald, he pleads for the use of the magic is might weapon with the defense that anything is able to be done for the greater good. Even a great wizard like Dumbledore falls for the prey to such a tempting campaign, nonetheless he is quick to discover the scheme of his friend and later

becomes a foe and Dumbledore defeats him. In a similar fashion Tom Riddle through the powers of magic grows into Lord Voldemort and wished to be immortal, he is “racist” and want to promote “pure bloods: to wipe out half-bloods and muggles (465). Dumbledore attempts to risk his own life to rid the world of Voldemort but as the reader finds out through the prophecy only Harry is able to do so, thus Dumbledore becomes teacher and mentor to Harry showing him how to use charms and other magical devices, however the greatest lesson he teaches Harry is the initiation in the “most mysterious power—Love” (466).

Dash furthers arguments by discussing how Rowling impels the readers to reflect upon the condition of modern man through the character of Voldemort. Voldemort has split his soul into seven pieces putting each portion into different objects called Horcrux, in an attempt to become immortal. This is relatable to the everyday man who often has a split personality. Dash explains that Rowling is offering a critique of the post-modern man who has forgotten the magical power of a united soul. Harry’s task at hand is to destroy the Horcruxes to destroy Lord Voldemort, while doing so Harry learns he also must die for this to happen. Such a sacrifice for others, accelerated by love and empathy, is what ultimately distinguishes Harry from Voldemort. Once Harry discovers that his death is the final piece of the Voldemort’s soul, he knows he must die in order to kill him. In the novel this is exactly what happens and upon the revival of Harry, Voldemort gets himself killed when his fatal curse inflicted against Harry rebounds and kills him. The seventh novel closes with Harry living happily ever after. “All was well” (final line to *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*). In the end, the series is known to have an apolitical core message: Love is greater than magic. Analyzing the series as a political discourse is baseless and is essentially equated to chasing a shadow.

Rowling uses the politics of terror in the novels to help pre-adolescents cope with such horrific events. Courtney Strimel, the author of the article “The Politics of Terror: Rereading Harry Potter,” investigates this idea. According to Strimel, the Harry Potter series, with its use of scary storylines and its use of magic, can be beneficial to children who are dealing with issues related to terror and terrorism. The September 11th attacks occurred during the release of the fourth Harry Potter novel, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. The world was in turmoil and many had thought that the series had reached its peak and would now fall due to the changing political world however the opposite happened. Children developed a need for darker material however it was quickly concluded that this need for “darker” children’s novels had developed before the September 11th attacks. Rowling’s central themes in the novels reached all children who experience all types of terror and witness battles between “good” and “evil” every day (Strimel, 40). Although Rowling had no terror coping intentions, her creativity on the subject matter proves to help children deal with topics they aren’t normally comfortable with, such as terror and terrorism, which are intentional themes presented in the books.

It can be argued that Rowling presents the issue of terrorism in many different ways throughout the novels which children can relate. There is an idea of terror centered around that of childhood bullying but terrorism is most predominantly centered around the tale of the rogue wizard Voldemort, the threat of his past and future reign of terror on the magical community and how a young boy, Harry Potter, is able to cope and defeat such a threat. Rowling uses such realistic terrifying situations, that allow for many lessons for young readers to learn. She uses magic as “psychologically safe vehicle” that is intended to help readers have a safe journey throughout the terror the novel brings (Strimel, 37). Through the novels Rowling shows that when faced with extreme terror there are outlets that can be turned to and no one is alone. She

shows this through her characters and the tragic events they endure, which are relatable to children.

Rowling is perceived to show her politics throughout her works in other ways as well. She has spoken out about her politics stating that she is part of the British Labour Party and its American counterpart the Democratic party. Many would argue that Rowling wasn't deliberately making a political statement through her party affiliations; however, this party is currently the driving force for women equality. Rowling shows her politics through her use of strong female characters, which leads readers to a different "normal" (Cherland, 273). Though the main character of the series is a boy, he is no way the most intellectual. She chooses Hermione, one part of the main trio, to be the most knowledgeable. Rowling uses strong female characters throughout the novels to boost feminist movements. The fight for women equality is a battle that is over a century old and Rowling has provided young girls with a message that shows the fight isn't over for women, it is just beginning. Women are capable of doing anything a man can do and can even do it better in some cases. Rowling is trying to relate to the young people of the century through these messages. Authors should remain unbiased in their works. Themes and characters can and should reflect certain beliefs, but the authors should leave interpretations of their work to readers.

Though it seems that politics can be a core theme of the series, it is not what is trying to be expressed. Critics have misinterpreted Rowling's core theme of politics. The politics of the stories is simply there for a realism factor. The core of the story is that the greatest magic in the world is love. Dash explores this through the comparison of Harry to his enemies. The largest difference between Harry and his enemies is that of love. Harry is surrounded by endless amounts of love and friendship which sets him apart from the evil forces and is what ultimately

makes him invincible. He carries the love from his deceased parents and is taught this fundamental lesson of love but Dumbledore himself teaches Harry of the power of love.

Though the series explores themes of terror and feminism the plot is easy enough for children to follow. However, it has been condemned as wildly inappropriate by many conservative Christians. They claim that the story leads children into witchcraft and contains a relative morality. Rowling was raised an Anglican Christian and now attends the Church of Scotland and has never commented on religious correlations of the series.. She was looking to write fantasy and did just that. Leanna Simmons, the author of the “The Perils of Shape Shifting: Harry Potter and Christian Fundamentalism,” has an interesting take on the subject matter stating that “The divide between the world of Harry Potter and that of fundamentalist Christians is really a struggle over the appropriate shape of the human personality (Simmons, 54).” Simmons argues that the idea that fundamentalist Christians have a different perception of appropriate selfhood. One practicing witchcraft is inappropriate, thus the readings of the practice is not in the condoned by Christianity.

The series created debate in the literature-religion world and has been banned in some Christian churches and burned in others. Such concerns have lifted the book from mere children’s literature into the arena of public moral debate. Simmons argues that when Rowling’s works are “rightly understood” as an assortment of symbolic metaphors for self-empowerment and identity formation, it becomes evident that the series is not simply “witchcraft repackaged” but rather psychology repackaged (54). Simmons claims that this issue of human identity separates Harry’s world and that of fundamentalist Christians (55). She furthers this argument by stating that Rowling has offered us a mythological champion of “centered selfhood” in a

fragmented and secular age (62). Whether Rowling had any religious intentions in the novels is unknown and not researched by experts.

Harry's disregard for rules, social conventions, and institutional restrictions, which offended fundamentalist readers. Rowling stresses the fact that Harry's rule breaking stems from a very positive ethical core in his personality. In the fifth installment of the series Rowling divulges that Harry is centered by an ability that he inherited from his mother- the ability to love. Simmons points out that love-motivated rule-breaking shouldn't seem to foreign to those whom Christ decided to heal on the Sabbath. He eventually concludes by stating that the controversy over Rowling's work is just another front in the "identity wars," the struggle to inhibit, define, and restrict the flexibility of the self and the future of American identity (68). Given that the task seems impossible, Harry Potter may be the least of the challenges facing fundamentalist Christians. The series doesn't seem to have enough support to be completely challenging Christianity.

Morality is another controversial topic present throughout the series. Many critics have argued that the novels serve as a driving force for children's social and moral development. Rowling gives the reader a story with moral certainty. Throughout the series the stories have a simplistic morality. There is a clear black and white distinction between good and evil. In true "moral" fashion this evil and greed is overpowered by love, friendship, and courage. Binnendyk, one of the co-authors of the article "Harry Potter and Moral Development in Pre-Adolescent Children," explains that novel after novel proves that Harry has no trouble understanding what is right from wrong, but this is not possible without his two best friends and the loving memory of his deceased parents. Rowling then makes it difficult to relate to evil characters and makes it clear which side the reader should be on. Although this is a valid point, the characters are

relatable. It is not preferred but manageable to relate to characters like Draco Malfoy, the school bully who is eventually led into a deep depression corrupted by his surroundings, and Professor Snape, the hated potions professor. Both of these characters are not commonly known as “relatable” characters but rather the “bad guys.” Rowling uses these characters as a sort of test to morality. The reader is led to believe that there is a definite side throughout the novels and that there really is a large bold line between good and evil. However, this could easily be misinterpreted. For example, Snape is initially described in a grimacing manner and portrayed as someone the reader should be looking out for (not in a positive way) but through further investigation in the novels the reader discovers he was in love with Harry’s mother. This shocked readers and further explained why Snape had been as “cruel” to Harry as he was. He was trying to keep a watchful eye and essentially served as a double agent. This warmed the hearts of many readers. Though Snape was an “evil” character he had many dimensions and in the end was “good.” A similar analysis pertains to the school bully Draco Malfoy. He is on the “evil” side of the story but starting the sixth novel the reader is introduced to a new side of Draco. A side that shows an almost ascension into madness. Rowling does this to show that morality is not black and white but rather conditional.

Moral development is something that is presented throughout the novels that can be passed to its readers. According to Binnendyk the stories could be used as a tool to promote moral development in pre-adolescent children. Through this comes the idea of friendship and how that theme of friendship adds to the positive morality Rowling uses in the novels. Hogwarts, the wizarding institution where the story predominantly takes place, uses a point system amongst its houses. Once the year starts each house starts with zero points and points can be accumulated through one’s individual’s actions, group actions, and Quidditch matches. Rowling uses this to

show how children can work together and develop a conscious awareness of their actions and their effect on their peers in the community. Students are motivated to work together and accomplish great things. An example of this is the character Ron, Harry's best friend. Ron faces many dilemmas when with Harry and is often stuck between choosing following the rules or helping his friend. Binnendyk goes on to use a specific example from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. In the novel there is an incident involving dark evil and students are ordered to stay in their dorms unless in class. Harry, however, has an inclination to go and talk to the grounds keeper, Hagrid, who lives in a small cottage away from school. When Ron finds out that Harry is leaving the dorms he tries desperately to inform him of the rules set in place by the professors. Despite this attempt and the rules, Ron decides to accompany Harry anyway. According to Binnendyk, such a dilemma could be used as an entry point into a moral discussion about what would be more morally sophisticated decision: abiding by the rules or appeasing a friend. With this idea in mind, Teachers could challenge students to think beyond their current level of moral reasoning, thus the novel enhancing moral development. Rowling knew exactly what she was doing here showing that there is no definite to morality but rather an ability to make a right choice in a tricky situation.

While Binnendyk suggests the benefits of using the series as a tool for moral education, she also explores the limitations of using such. The largest issue is the moral reasoning displayed by the title character Harry himself. It is not entirely realistic for a child of just eleven years old to be able to reason at such a high level. However, those with a level of reasoning well below Harry's still identify with him. Binnendyk cites Tucker as claiming that this is because "Harry's adventures are not a result of inner exploration or reorganization of values and priorities, but instead a result of pressures largely external to himself" (Binnendyk, 122). In contrast, the

scholar Bear argues that this is a result of situational factors; emergency circumstances that morally spur Harry to respond somewhat automatically with altruistic actions. Bear suggest that there actually isn't much critical thinking in Harry's decisions of morality because of their urgency so how can he really be considered to be demonstrating morality.

Another limitation of using these novels as a tool to promote moral development is that it can be hard to judge hypothetical situations. Walker argues that reasoning about real-life dilemmas is a better predictor of moral behavior than reasoning about less relevant hypothetical dilemmas (Walker). Having an idea like this in mind, the stories of Harry Potter could be used as a "springboard" for the discussion of the real-life moral dilemmas that students confront in everyday experiences (Binnendyk, 122). These stories can be used as a motivational tool to engage pre-adolescent children in discussions of morality because of their mental and psychological significance. Binnendyk suggests that these dilemma discussions can then be followed by discussions of more contemporary issues such as pressure to use drugs or alcohol, or the effects of parental divorce. For instances like so it would be the role of the teacher to urge each student to go beyond their current level of moral reasoning and hope it leads to subsequently higher levels of moral behavior.

The novels also hold characters who demonstrate and influence morality. Rowling provides a moral framework through her characters. There is a direct correlation between mothers and morality presented in the series, which reflects Rowling's personal feats. The role of mothers and their influence on morality is quite extensive in the novels. Mothers serve as moral role models and are continuously seen doing the right things throughout the series. Margaret Mauk investigates this topic in her journal "'Your Mother Died to Save You': The Influence of Mothers in Constructing Moral Frameworks for Violence in Harry Potter." In this work Mauk

explores the idea of violence throughout the series and how violence is permissible when there is immediate danger and can be considered defensive, she does this through the exploration of mothers. Mrs. Weasley (mother of Ron and the rest of the Weasley clan) is the universal mother of the series. She is constantly scolding, and nurturing the characters around her, more specifically the youth around her. As Mauk puts it, “she acts as the emotional foundation for the gang” (Mauk, 123). Mrs. Weasley appears to assume this role of motherhood from the first time we see her help Harry get to the Platform 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$. All seven books consistently depict this image of Mrs. Weasley and readers readily identify her as “a mother first and foremost” (Mauk, 123).

Motherhood is often looked over, but typically proves to be a vital role helping characters and their dealings with morality. Mauk explains that the external influences of such a role are the only things taken into accounts by critics and fans, they rarely take a look at the political role of mothers within the text. Rowling was a single mother which is a main point discusses when talking about her politics and focus on public welfare. Rowling had a sort of “Cinderella story” of maternity and went from “rags-to-riches—her rise from single mother on welfare to best-selling author—corresponds nicely with what audiences expect when it comes to princesses living happily ever after” (Mauk, 124). The hardships Rowling faced are presumed to be reflected in her work. She worked extremely hard to be a good mother and hoped she was. She uses a character like Mrs. Weasley to show what a mother is and how their role effects youth. However, critics rely on Rowling’s biographical details, claiming her role as a mother should have made certain “socio-political demands” on her content and even going so far as to assert this certain “motherly stereotype” (Mauk, 124). In other words, critics believe that the readings bring certain assumptions about motherhood and family and such expectations shape their relationship to the narrative, which can be dangerous.

Rowling's idea of a traditional family is evident in her novels. The Potter universe typically shows genders in traditional categories of labor. Mothers, such as Molly Weasley, Narcissa Malfoy, and Nymphadora Tonks, are presumed to be homemakers taking care of the children while the men, such as Arthur Weasley, Lucius Malfoy, and Remus Lupin, are seen working. All of which leads to the generic nuclear family. The families in the world usually consist of this mother and father figure with a varying number of children. According to Mauk, though there this is idea of a nuclear family that is "fairly conservative" Rowling presents a "very limited understanding of family" (124). There is a complete absence of queer parents, step parents, and other alternative family structures, with the exception of the Dursley's guardianship of Harry, which is depicted as insufficient. Families like the Dursleys and Weasleys could be defined as a typical "normal" family, having financial security and mothers understanding the importance of children (Mauk, 124), which is not universally realistic.

Harry Potter is not a representative of a typical child, Rowling meant for him to be extraordinary. Harry experiences feelings that are unlike other children his age, he does not have parental figures he can rely on for emotional, physical, and financial security. Such an absence is common in heroes and is purposeful, it forces the child to assume the mantle of maternal independence and "responsibility to defend themselves and their community" (Mauk, 125). In the end this hero should resume a typical societal norm so the reader is reassured in that family structure can once again provide an expected security, all of which pertains the story at hand. Harry uses the absence of his parents to guide him through his trouble and push him forward towards his greatest accomplishments. By the end of the story he has created his own sort of nuclear family which provides a comfort to readers. Rowling is saying that a person determines their own fate by the choice they make.

Other Scholars have also looked into how Rowling's representation of family shows traditional notions of family and gender, little work has been done to examine how the traditional interpretation functions to create a wider moral framework that encompass not only domestic life but also political ideologies. One scholar, Nina Auerbuch, says that despite being an orphan there is a kind of yearning for a cultural community and "in our continual achievement of paradox, we have made of the orphan himself our archetypal and perhaps only ancestor" (Mauk, 126). Despite Harry being orphan, he has a clear set of inheritances outside his account at Gringotts. He is continuously referenced as having his mother's eyes, which is noticed by close to every character that knew both Harry and his mother, his father's hair, and a strong set of principles, similar to that of his parents. The other mothers in the text provide their own contextual ideas of influence. Their roles of maternal warriors at first appear surprising, but readers find it easy to accept Molly, Narcissa, and Tonks on the battlefield because of their need to battle for their children. This causes the text to have a moral framework for violence based upon maternity. With Harry the novels attempt to place an inherited moral framework that appears natural rather than constructed. Mauk shares that if a framework like so can be inherited, in a way that eye color can, it can then be considered as authentic, or more specifically, as essential.

Each family in the series displays their own type of moral framework, which appears to be passed along. This allows one to believe that family creates an "essentialized morality presents cultural ethics not as constructs but as biological imperatives" (Mauk, 126). Having mothers and families create such a morality allows for characters and readers to justify actions as moral without any critical consideration. Additionally, it then allows those who operate outside of this framework to be positioned as inherently unhuman, immoral, and unnatural. This type of moral framework is problematic in literature as it only tells one side of the story. With this

being said it is still able function with readers approval because of the way it replicates and propagates established cultural values.

The mothers of the series are care contributors to moral frameworks and lessons of morality. The series establishes that a mother's love is not only assumed but "valorized for its ordinariness, and as a result, readers assume that a good mother will do anything for her child regardless of any consequences" (Mauk, 130). Despite this, there is a large range of mothers that is shown throughout the series some enabling, self-sacrificing, abusive, loving, or non-biological. The mother is one of the most significant roles in the novels because they are the makers of the series morality. At the end of the first novel, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, there is a hint at this powerful protentional of motherhood. Dumbledore explains to Harry, after just having weakening Voldemort,

"Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign ... to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever. It is in your very skin" (Sorcerer's 299).

This line confirms the idea that the power of motherhood includes that of safety and restlessness to ensure their child's safety, that is echoed throughout the rest of the series.

Presenting the power of motherhood, Mauk shares specific examples from the text of a mothers morality. Mothers are the important markers for the novels morality and characters actions, whether those actions are good or evil, are in some way justified by their relationship with their mothers. Dumbledore appears to be unable to escape the influence of the maternal

despite being the leading figure of the resistance and major patriarch for the novels. Kendra, Dumbledore's mother, is portrayed as a bad mother which cast a sort of doubt upon the character of Dumbledore, in a certain way his muggle-attacking father does not. Dumbledore does not seem to face any sort of criticism throughout the series, but his reputation does become suspect to Harry when he discovers rumors regarding Kendra's poor treatment of her daughter Ariana and Dumbledore seeming continuation of his mother's actions. This perfect picture of Dumbledore was smeared, and Kendra given the judgment of bad mother, which distorts Harry's view of his deceased mentor and shifting his memories of the man. Harry "allows the trope of a mother to brand someone's morality even when his own experiences counter the claims" (Mauk, 131). In a rippling effect the reader then has a lapse in judgement of Harry, but do not necessarily question the alleged influence of a mother. Characters such as Hermione are used to question the validity of the information rather than challenging the potential effect of a bad mother. The characterization "is deemed false because the information is false—not because mothers and their influence should not be markers within this framework" (Mauk, 131). Thus, mothers are the main markers for moral framework in the novels.

The absence of Harry's mother is strongly felt throughout the beginning of the series. It seems to be reflective of the loss Rowling experienced in her life once her mother passed (Oprah Interview 2015). Harry seems to be at a loss when looking upon the families of his peers, but is quickly taken in by these families, especially the Weasleys. While Harry's loss of a mother doesn't initially evoke a violent nature in him, it is evidently one of the reasons he seeks to kill the Voldemort. The violence is inevitable and while the memory of his father pushes him to reflect on his lasting reputation and his own terms, the memory of his mother pushes him to

focus on how his actions affect those around him, proving that the idea of motherhood and maternity is a true influence of morality.

Though there is much controversy surrounding societal themes presented in the *Harry Potter* novels, Rowling had no intention of writing a political discourse, no intention of being offensive to religions, but did provide a moral framework that is established through motherhood and family relationships. The novels were written from her imagination with only creative intentions. Rowling explores themes like terror, family, motherhood, politics, and religion, to establish that the wizarding world is just like the real world. Nonetheless, Rowling succeeded in creating a series for all ages that contains relevant relatable themes.

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