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HARRY POTTER AND THE EVOLVING HERO ARCHETYPE

**A thesis submitted to
Regis College
Honors Program
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For Graduation with Honors**

By

Kellynn Gates

May 2009

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I have loved the *Harry Potter* series from my introduction to it. This project was born of that love and my love of people giving a damn about the world around them. The world could be such an amazing place if we all shook off our apathy and did what we thought was right instead of what we “have time for” or think is cool. I love this crazy, mixed-up world we live in – don’t get me wrong – but we all need a wake-up call every once and a while. This thesis is a gift to myself, and to you. At least I wrote, what are you going to do?

I would like to thank Dr. Lara Narcisi, first and always, for keeping me focused, sane, and productive. She really is a superhero, can’t front on that. Thank you to Dr. Dorman, for being an anal ex-English teacher (though “ex-English teacher” is a bit of an oxymoron). Beth, can I call you Beth?, you are an inspiration and an amazing educator. Dr. Bowie, you know you’re the coolest cat around, thank you for letting me meander along this path. Thank you to my mother for helping me with “research,” to my father for nudging me against procrastination, to my sister and sisters for being, and to Dan, because you are the biggity baddest. I love you all, thank you.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

SS: HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCEROR'S STONE

CS: HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

PA: HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

GF: HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

OP: HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX

HBP: HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE

DH: HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS

INTRODUCTIONS:

My name is Kellynn, and I am a Harry Potter addict. I am not the only one with this affliction. J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is one of the most widely published and read series of all time. *Harry Potter* does not remain limited to the world of literature; the Harry movies have made millions of dollars and will continue to do so throughout the last three films. While the books are technically "children's literature," children, young adults, and adults from all over the world read and view the Harry Potter world. The cultural impact is significant, not only in a common language including such words as "muggle" and "Voldemort," but also in the way our archetypes have changed. As the world shrinks due to globalization, we gain a more universal view of the hero, or heroes, as the case may be.

I read *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* the summer after my sixth grade year and have devoured the remaining books ever since. I am one of those fanatics that waited in line for books five, six, and seven. I purchased them at midnight and stayed up all night gorging myself with fantasy. I have read the entire series multiple times, listened to them on CD, read them in Spanish, and own all of the movies thus far. I am a little obsessed. So obsessed in fact that I began to wonder why I could not get out of J.K. Rowling's world.

There are, of course, many answers to this question. Magic is the most obvious answer. I would love to be shipped off for nine months at a time to learn magic. Who wouldn't want to blow up an evil relative or turn a porcupine into a pin cushion? I would love to see pumpkins float on Halloween and meet a centaur. Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry creates an ideal learning environment: one with amazing educators, flying sports, and competition. Trickery is often rewarded, but so are cleverness and bravery. Hogwarts makes a place for everyone when they are at an age desperate to fit in. Magic builds a bond and an identity for all who possess it.

Despite my love for the novels, however, I do not like Harry himself much by the end of the series. I love the books but do not love the hero. Is Harry even a hero? How can one be a hero if one is wholly dependent on others to succeed? Harry needs Dumbledore, Hermione, Ron, Sirius, Molly, Ginny, Lupin, and on and on and on in order to achieve his heroics. Does this dependence subvert Harry as a hero or does it subvert how the world views a hero? With the help of Jung, Campbell, and Lynch, I intend to analyze the heroics of Harry and how his heroism shapes the way our culture views the hero archetype.

The hero archetype aids humanity in making decisions about good and evil, action and inaction, destiny and free will. Harry Potter is part of a growing movement towards a dependent hero, one that includes the television show *Heroes* and the most recent Batman movies. Harry would fail time and time again if it were not for sheer luck and cleverer friends. Even his teachers notice

his obvious normality. Professor Snape tells Dumbledore that "it became apparent to me very quickly that he had no extraordinary talent at all. He has fought his way out of a number of tight corners by a simple combination of sheer luck and more talented friends. He is mediocre to the last degree" (*GF* 10). Harry shows weakness and humanity; his most valuable weapons are not superhuman strength or unceasing courage, but empathetic love and deep compassion. Harry separates himself from the classic idea of hero by his dependence on others. Yet, is dependence a poor quality to have in a hero? The *Harry Potter* series illustrates the reality that there is no single Superman to come and save us all. We must all stand up to battle the evil in the world.

Harry makes his stand in the seventh and last book in the Harry Potter series. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, which illustrates Harry as an individual hero for the first time. The entire book shows Harry struggling with the conundrum of whether to act alone or to trust in the aid of his friends. Harry's journey in the last book is not the typical hero's journey. He eventually leaves his friends behind to face his fate, which is death not victory. Harry steps into the Forbidden Forest alone, the hero at last.

Due to key characteristics, Harry illustrates the new breed of heroes, one who is dependent and more realistic. Harry is not the only "new hero," however, our culture is shifting to the idea of this new hero. Harry Potter does not have superpowers. He can create a corporal Patronus charm, but he cannot create an antidote. Harry stumbles through his magical education with the help of

Hermione. He is not the perfect wizard that Dumbledore and Voldemort were at school, but yet somehow he manages to do what Dumbledore could not.

Voldemort falls to Harry, an average wizard of average talent and strength?

Harry gives the average human hope that he or she can succeed in doing great things against all odds.

C.G. Jung developed the theory of the collective unconscious to explain the way “modes of behavior . . . are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals . . . [they are] identical in all men and thus constitute a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us” (Jung 4). Jung’s theory suggests that all of us have a set default idea that we revert to. That is, we all think about new data in the same sort of way. Furthermore, we sort those data into what Jung called archetypes. Archetypes encompass a plethora of ideas used in an equally enormous collection of stories, movies, novels, poems, etc. There are archetypes for action, like rebirth, and archetypes for characters, like mother and (you guessed it) hero. Jung argues that all of us, men and women, revert to the same ideas of what a hero is. Our stories reflect this theory; take the similarities between Hercules and Superman. It is for this reason that the shift of hero in pop culture is so important to note and track. One culture changes another until our entire collective unconscious shifts – potentially to a more Harry-like hero.

So, is the new image of the hero a positive change or a negative one? I will argue that it is positive. A hero who that is more common, realistic, and

human makes it easier for us all to be heroes. If we all believe that we are capable of embodying a hero, or being part of the collective that makes a hero's actions possible, then our actions make a difference. If our collective unconsciousness tells us that we are capable of changing the world, then it is hard to be cynical. For example, we might learn to focus on all the people who helped in Calcutta instead of just the hero that Mother Theresa was. This statement is not made to belittle Mother Theresa's actions, but her actions were only achievable due to the help of others. Gandhi was an amazing man, but he also had a wife and supporters that made his heroism feasible. The Civil Rights Movement in the United States had Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., but without the collective of protesters the same impact would not have been possible. We are all capable of being the helper hero.

In the first chapter I explore the validity of the *Potter* books as literature. I use a particular framework to argue for Rowling's works, illustrating how these novels add to our understanding of reality. The second chapter focuses on how Harry fits into our "modern hero" archetype, using Jung as a framework for this argument. In the third chapter I use Campbell to analyze Harry's hero's quest and how this defines his self-sacrificing heroics. The final chapter focuses on the impact of the evolving archetype on society from a social justice perspective.

Chapter One: Harry Potter and the Quest for Validation

J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series upsets and delights people of all ages around the world. The books have sold over 400 million copies and been translated into over sixty-five languages. The cultural phenomenon of *Harry Potter* continues to grow into new Medias and new controversy. In 2009, a Harry Potter Exhibit will open at the Chicago Museum of Science and Technology. The *Harry Potter* movies continue to gross billions of dollars and attain box office records. Yet, the Boy Who Lived continues to cause controversy and dissent among readers, fans, critics, and religious groups. Not everyone loves and respects these novels as much as I do. In this chapter I will explore the validity of these texts in both a religious and canonical context.

Given this controversy, how can we judge the value of these extremely popular texts? William Lynch, S.J., literary critic and philosopher concerned with the validity of media, offers a solution. In his texts he suggests we should use critical thinking and judging without a polarized conclusion into two categories – judgments often used when most people encounter the *Harry Potter* books. The vast majority of morality-based criticism against the books stems from a polarized judgment, or what Lynch calls the “absolutizing instinct.” We are often too quick to judge texts in absolute terms due to their fantastic, polarizing, and addictive nature. To better understand the positive and negative aspects of *Harry Potter*,

one must closely examine the books and resist the urge to place them quickly in the “good” or “evil” columns.

Defining what the “absolutizing instinct” means will help us avoid getting trapped in an early or uninformed judgment. Lynch defines this term as “something very literal and nothing complicated. . . the instinct in human beings that tends to absolutize everything, to make an absolute out of everything it touches” (*Images of Hope* 105). This seems like an easy concept to grasp, but the absolutizing instinct can have a very large influence. I, for example, tend to view any book I am reading as amazing until I finish the book and engage in some serious critical thinking. When I go to movies, I often put them in “this is horrible” or “best movie EVER!” slots without engaging in what makes me decide *why* they were good or bad. Lynch condemns these binary responses as detracting from reality and moving us away from necessary engagement with the world.

“We must be critics!” Lynch seems to cry throughout his discussions of cultural texts. He fears the imaginary world that keeps one bound into a single mindset, a perspective which takes away from the beautifully messy world around us. The absolutizing instinct removes our reality and creates a world of fantasy where:

Each thing loses its true perspective and its true edges. The good becomes the tremendously good, the evil becomes the absolutely evil, the grey becomes the black and white, the complicated,

because it is difficult to handle, becomes, in desperation, the completely simple. The small becomes the big. (*Images of Hope* 106)

In an absolutized world, one ignores complications and jumps quickly from an idea to a conclusion. This instinct invalidates critical thinking. Though as humans we like to make judgments, we hate to be the judged. I would hate to be reduced to a single aspect of myself in anyone's eyes – like being the “Chosen One” or a book that happens to have magic, for example. Lynch states, “The absolutizing instinct has nothing but contempt for her reality” (*Images of Hope* 107). He illustrates the negative psychological effects of making absolute judgments without deep engagement. To understand anything, we must engage in analysis and critical thinking, remaining wary of the instinct to move too quickly from the many to the one, from a broad perspective to a generalization.

I am not innocent of this crime, especially in the realm of Harry Potter. After learning of Lynch's theories, I began to question my absolute love books. I must admit that my automatic instinct is to place Harry Potter in the “AMAZING!” column quickly without really delving into why exactly I am so impressed with these children's books. In Lynch's terms, I moved Harry from reality “to the status of a dream” (*Images of Hope* 107). I may have initially judged Harry in a way that created a fantasy and a distortion rather than engaging with the texts in order to understand their positive qualities and how they help me better understand reality.

I am not the only person guilty of these assumptions. One must always be wary of texts that lead to the kind of fanaticism seen around Harry Potter. As an example of this fanaticism, a minister in New Mexico held a “holy bonfire” on Sunday after Christmas 2001, “at which he publicly torched the Potter books, declaring them ‘an abomination to God and to me’” (Killinger 13). Lynch would condemn this behavior as excessive; we know we have moved into absolutes when the word “abomination” is thrown around. Even if the books do not wholly add to our understanding of reality – which they do – one should stop and reflect and think critically before lighting a bonfire. In such a violent reaction we can easily see the problems of absolutizing.

One of the major fears which causes this binary polarization of texts comes from the use of magic and the premise of magical education. *Harry Potter* cause fear in a large number of people – especially conservative Christians, not least of which are the book burning ministers. This fear stems from what was “uncovered” by The Barna Research Group, a marketing research firm serving Christian ministries, which polled 612 teenagers between the ages of 13 and 19. The results:

Teenagers who have read *Harry Potter* books or have seen the *Harry Potter* movies were more likely to have experimented with psychic or occult activities than those teens who had not ... the study revealed that 41 percent of teens have seen the Potter film or have read one or more of the Potter books. As a result of watching

the movie or reading the books, 12 percent said they were more interested in witchcraft. (Mallory, www.librarystudentjournal.org)

While these findings are interesting, we must take them with a grain of salt. First, consider the source: we must account for bias when the source is a Christian research group. Second, the sample size of 612 cannot be assumed to reflect the entire population of teenagers in our country. But the study accurately reflects the fear of this specific population. For example, my fundamentalist Christian aunt refuses to let my adolescent cousins have access to *Harry Potter* because she doesn't want her kids to get into the occult. Is this a reasonable fear based on a Lynchian critical analysis of the merits and reality of the books? For my aunt, I know the answer is no; she made this decision due to what her minister said. But to assume that it is the same for all who fear this pagan repercussion would prove me guilty of absolutizing as well.

Not all conservative Christians find that Harry detracts from their religious beliefs. In fact, one of the most religiously compelling defenses of *Harry Potter* comes from John Killinger, a Presbyterian minister. Killinger argues that far from leading children away from Christianity, *Harry Potter* influences readers to follow the teachings of Jesus. He cites a plethora of *Potter* passages that cannot be understood without the structures of Judeo-Christian theology. Using Dumbledore as an example, Killinger argues that the good wizards fight for love and unity in the same way Christians do (Killinger 62). He sees the *Harry Potter*

books as adding to an understanding of the Christian faith and ideals, especially for children, much like the Narnia books do.

Killinger continues to cite an interview of Mrs. Rowling herself in which she discusses one of her favorite paintings, Carvaggio's *Supper at Emmaus*, stating "I love it. Jesus looks very likeable – soft and rounded – and the painting captures the exact moment when the disciples realize who this man is, blessing their bread" (157). Killinger makes the point that, though she never came out before the last book was published, Rowling is in fact a Christian – Church of Scotland to be exact. She later added that she thought revealing her faith would give away the story. The Christian ideal of self-sacrifice would have given away what Harry had to do in the final book. Killinger illustrates Rowling's "reverence for the resurrection and all it stands for" (157). He believes, and I agree, that these books have in fact very Christian, drawing on themes of mercy, sacrifice, compassion, and forgiveness. *Harry Potter* serves to further illustrate Christian ideals, not subvert them as many fear.

Lynch's concerns focus more on literature's ability to add to a reader's understanding of reality. He writes of this conflict between fantasy and reality in his book about cinema, *The Image Industries*. In this book he states that "The proper balancing of these two forces is always the most serious question confronting any civilization. For they are more than an affair of the personal life...They are also of the deepest concern for the cultural and political life of a nation" (22). Lynch names our central struggle as that between fantasy and

reality; deciding as a culture to move more towards reality means changing our art, including children's literature. Lynch does not condemn fantasy as long as we "know when we are playing, when we are dreaming, when we are sentimentalizing" (28). By definition, a fantastical premise for a novel falls into the realm of fantasy, but as long as the reader recognizes this fact, the danger of losing touch with reality disappears. Parents must impart to their children the ability to be critics, to distinguish dream from reality. Children should still be allowed to use their imaginations and pretend to play Quidditch, but they should also know that they will never be able to make a broom fly or catch a golden snitch in real life.

The Harry Potter Series center largely on Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, where children learn magic. Many religious critics base their judgment of Harry Potter on this fact alone. The main fear tends to be that children will want to learn magic and therefore become interested in the occult and Wicca. Well, I cannot say the books did not make me wish I could use a wand to levitate or turn water to wine. I can, however, say that I understood while reading these books that such things are impossible. Even in the novels, the children receive letters from the school distinguishing them as magical. Children with any concept of reality will not believe that they can turn into Harry or Hermione just because they read it in a book.

Negotiating the waters between fantasy and reality can be tricky. The *Harry Potter* series bases itself in a fantastical world which will never and can

never occur (trust me, if there were a Hogwarts I would be there already). Yet, this does not mean that the books do not have any aspects that add to our experience of reality. Harry Potter, both the boy and the books, teaches the reader how to deal with pressure and fame. They teach us to be kind, to allow people to change, to trust the wisdom of others, and to be a moral person no matter the situation. Harry faces a number of improbable situations throughout his life, but he maintains a grip on reality and acts in a human way. Harry combats a number of adversaries, but never tries to kill them, adhering to a Christian moral code. Harry stays close to reality and morality in his actions, despite the fantastical circumstances in which he finds himself.

The messages of *Harry Potter* root themselves firmly in the realm of the real, grounding themselves in the finite. When we use Lynch's ideas that we've just developed, we begin to see the infinite lessons Rowling provides the reader in each of the *Harry Potter* installments. With Lynch as a lens, it is easy for us to see the Christian morals, realistic situations, and human understanding both we and Harry gain in each novel. Every *Harry Potter* book imparts on the reader a better understanding of morality and reality. It is crucial that we, as readers, understand and recognize those messages.

In the first of the series, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, Harry learns of his fame in the wizarding world but reacts with humility rather than arrogance. He yearns to get out of the spotlight, and in this shying away he finds true friendship in Hermione and Ron. In this first book, Harry learns about

Voldemort and then faces him in the final chapter of the book. Harry protects the Stone from Voldemort with his ability to care for others more than for his own personal gain. Rowling illustrates in this first installment the importance of humility, a message that follows real (and Christian) principles.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets illustrates the problem of jumping to conclusions without critical thinking. First, discrimination occurs when the school assumes that Harry is the Heir of Slytherin based solely on the fact that he is a Parselmouth, meaning he can talk to snakes. Harry assumes blindly that Draco Malfoy must be the Heir because Harry harbors a deep hatred for him. Yet, both of these assumptions are incorrect. Hermione becomes the champion for using her brain to solve a problem that even the teachers cannot figure out. She utilizes her ability to analyze information to discover what kind of creature is attacking students and where the Heir is hiding it. Harry teaches us to show faith in people who are sometimes more capable than you are, to ask for help when it is needed, and to show courage even in the most terrifying situations (fighting a giant snake that can kill you by looking you in the eyes definitely qualifies as terrifying).

The third installment, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, teaches the reader to be wary of acting without understanding, echoing Lynch's lesson of moving too quickly from the many to the one. Harry Potter learns that his godfather, Sirius Black, revealed his parents' location to Voldemort, an action which caused their death. Harry, upset by this information, vows to kill Black if

he gets the chance. Obviously, this is not the best reaction, but it is a natural one. Harry's emotions overthrow his sense of morality. Yet, as the novel progresses, Harry comes face to face with Sirius and learns that it was Peter Pettigrew, not Sirius Black, who betrayed his parents. Had Harry killed Black, he would have lost his godfather to an emotional assumption. But, Harry chooses to save Peter Pettigrew's life, understanding at an early age the moral consequences of killing someone, even when the motives are understandable. Harry teaches the reader the lesson of striving for objectivity and never allowing one's emotions to dictate one's actions.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire progresses the messages of the first three novels and adds another layer – constant vigilance. The novel illustrates Harry's struggle to maneuver the waters of critical thinking as the world around him shifts. The wizarding world slips further into Voldemort's grip as he returns to his body and attempts to kill Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived. Harry again proves courageous in battle, standing up to Voldemort despite the enormous odds against him. Yet, Harry misjudges one of his teachers: the man he thinks is Mad-Eye Moody is actually the Death Eater Barty Crouch, Jr. Crouch lulls Harry into a sense of security, telling Harry he should look in to becoming an Auror, the magical equivalent of a police officer. Crouch sets Harry up to be killed, and when Voldemort fails, Crouch tries to kill Harry. Harry survives and learns that though it is best to give people the benefit of the doubt, you must also remain wary when you have as many enemies as Harry Potter. The reader learns about

the massive grey area between the black and white absolutes presented when we are young.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix illustrates a massive amount of teenage angst and a Harry without any common sense. He is smarmy, self-righteous, self-involved, and malicious to everyone who cares about him. Yet, Rowling illustrates a typical teenager in this portrayal, shining a harsh mirror on older readers and flashing a warning signal to children. Harry alienates everyone who loves him and assumes that the world is out to get him. He refuses to see reason and use his common sense, allowing Voldemort to manipulate him into going to the Ministry Building and putting all his friends in mortal danger. Rowling teaches her readers to analyze and think critically about decisions, especially those that may cause harm to oneself or loved ones. She illustrates the negative consequences we encounter when we do not think before we act. The Mishap at the Ministry teaches Harry and the reader that brash action is not heroic, it is just stupid.

In the sixth installment, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Harry starts to take steps towards his final heroic destiny. He learns the measures necessary to defeat Voldemort. Harry adheres to his instinct about Draco Malfoy, even though his friends and Dumbledore insist that his instincts are wrong. Continuing to stand up against both Voldemort and the government, Harry refuses to be the poster boy for the corrupt wizarding institution. The novel concludes with Dumbledore's death, which Harry witnesses. Dumbledore dies

with quiet dignity, allowing himself to meet his end without fighting the inevitable. Rowling gives her readers a terrible and sorrowful moment and allows us to cope with death in a healthy manner. This lesson echoes Lynch's sentiments of death. He would agree that we should not shelter children from the inevitable conclusion of our lives; to do so would be to step into the realm of fantasy.

The final Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, follows Harry as he sets out on his actual hero's quest, searching out Horcruxes, Voldemort's ties to immortality. Harry faces a number of fantastical situations, but he stays true to the humble and moral person he has almost always been. Harry sacrifices himself in order to save the wizarding world. Though there are very few situations that would warrant such drastic measures, self sacrifice is a noble and very Christian ideal. Most importantly Jesus sacrificed himself to save us all. Harry does not make a perfect Christ figure, but his actions of self-sacrifice and resurrection mirror Jesus'. Harry comes back to Earth in order to banish Voldemort completely. The final battle between Harry and Voldemort does not consist of an epic match. Harry even offers Voldemort mercy, telling him that if he shows any remorse, he will be spared. Rowling teaches her readers the importance of mercy and altruism, echoing Christian ideals; she brings us back to the mucky reality Lynch values so much – real choices in real crap situations.

The majority of religious or morality-based critics miss the messages of the novels. These books are not about how to levitate a feather or ride a

broomstick; they are about how to be a good and moral person. It is the presentation that causes most to miss the message. Lynch was not someone who got caught up on the issue of method: “speaking about ‘realism’ Lynch never envisioned such a narrow form of artistic expression . . . He knew the farce and satire, the grotesque and the picturesque, symbolism and even fantasy could all serve the broad purposes of the realistic imagination” (Kane 125). Lynch understood that even though the premise and method of delivery for a text may not be based in reality, it can still lend itself to developing a realistic imagination. Fantasy may be considered one of the lower forms of literature, but the Harry Potter stories add layers to the reader’s imagination, bringing new dimensions to our understanding of life and self.

But religious critics are not the only ones who speak out against Harry Potter. Many argue that the novels fail to impress as literature, citing the language as plebian and the plot lines as obvious. I agree that the language hardly reaches a fifth grade level, but this is only appropriate as it is children’s literature; one can hardly fault Rowling for writing to the age group she had in mind. Another related argument which causes the polarization of the Potter series comes from Nicholas Tucker, child psychologist and critic, who holds a less than ideal view of Harry. He writes in his article “The Rise and Rise of Harry Potter” that the books are “good rather than great literature. They whisk readers along without hinting at any particular depth in argument or description. They entertain richly, but rarely provoke, question, or inform” (228). Tucker suggests

that while the books drive the reader onward, they rarely make the reader think. I respectfully disagree. As previously illustrated, the novels inform the reader of reality and morality; they teach us how to be good, critical people.

Also, the books “hint at depth” in almost every installment, but one particular instance occurs in *The Order of the Phoenix* which gives the reader a plethora of depth into the characters of Harry and Sirius. The reader must make judgments on Harry’s actions and conclusions as well as Sirius’s drive to escape the home of the Order. Rowling forces the reader to look at two sympathetic characters with judgment and criticism. The reader must actively engage with the text, make predictions about the future, and question the characters’ motives. We see the deterioration of Sirius from protective and fatherly to trapped and slightly delusional. We, like Harry, want desperately to believe the best of Sirius, but it becomes more and more apparent that we must judge his actions, question his motives, and place less and less value on his decisions.

Tucker may not see much value in the *Harry Potter* books, but if we again use Lynch as a lens, we begin to see the value of this literature beyond that of fun children’s adventures. Lynch does not specifically delve into the realm of children’s literature, but he does work deeply in literature as a whole in his book *Christ and Apollo*. The first chapter of this book, “The Definite,” asserts Lynch’s criteria for “good” literature, where “good” means that it adds to the realistic imagination, where imagination means our ability to visualize and conceptualize the world. For Lynch, good literature starts from a serious dealing with the

definite. He writes of four distinct kinds of literature he describes as “not good”: the double vacuum, the finite with little to no infinite, the infinite with little to no finite, and hell-revisited-without-bouncing-back-if-you-are-honest. I find that Harry Potter safely evades these categories and falls into what Lynch would describe as “good” literature.

Lynch argues that literature must travel through the mucky, dark, and sometimes no-so-fun finite in order to attain any sort of reality. Lynch refers to the dealings with the finite as the “descent.” He discusses this as:

when we are giving advice (‘directions’) to errant characters who are getting nowhere (have no real insight). People tell them to come down to earth, to get down to business, to come out of their ivory tower, to come down before they go up, to learn the hard way, to make haste slowly, to stop thinking and start doing, to put up or shut up, to put in details if one wants the whole. (*Christ and Apollo* 27)

Lynch asserts the need for finite grounding in literature, because without it the character makes no real sense. There can be no practical application to the realistic imagination if the character is completely detached from reality. Yet, there must also be some movement towards the infinite, or there is no point to the literature.

Harry Potter attains this level of literature. The books ground Harry in reality before he moves toward the infinite. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*

illustrates this point more than any other, though I could use any member of the series. *The Deathly Hallows* shows the reader the world as it would be if we were entrenched in a battle against evil. The cadence of the novel, torturously slow and dull and then a jolt of action, lends credence to the story's reality. Harry, Ron, and Hermione do not luck upon Horcruxes at every turn, but must sit, starve, and brood over the lack of action that seemed inevitable from the onset of the novel. Ron even leaves his friends due to the stress of the life they lead, always on the run from Snatchers and trying to kill Voldemort. The action in the novel stays grounded in the finite, illustrating the struggle Harry undergoes for the betterment of the wizarding community.

Lynch uses man, things, and self to describe the finite. Harry delves into these aspects throughout the series. He deals with a corrupt government which bases rights on purity of blood. Struggling as an adolescent, Harry has to learn who he is and develop his own sense of morality. He must overcome a less than ideal family and the loss of father figure after father figure. Rowling crafts the world around Harry Potter to reflect the world as it exists around us, so the fantasy of magic does not remove the stories from the finite. The characters struggle, overcome losses, and deal with heart-wrenching situations. Harry remains human even as he gets tossed into impossibly difficult situations. He, unlike Voldemort, can love, feel regret and remorse, and does not view emotions as weaknesses.

The books make movement toward the infinite as well. Harry struggles with real issues, like the burden of the hero and the return to the world he left, but he saves the world through the traits, characteristics, and knowledge he gains through his contact with the finite. The Harry Potter books leave the readers with insight after the stories have descended into the realm of man, self, and things. The insights listed early – humanity even in impossible situations, constant vigilance, trusting yourself, learning to think critically, and trusting friendship – are the infinities the books reach. Harry Potter delves into the human condition in order to attain some insight into how we ought to live.

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books are the most widely read children's books of all time. They induce fear in the hearts of some and furrowed brows from others. Yet after careful analysis of the texts, I can safely say that my critic's mind sees them as largely adding to my realistic imagination. One must acknowledge that they contain fantastical elements, but they also delve into the finite and human in order to illustrate insights about humanity. As a Christian, I can see why parents would be initially apprehensive about these books, but I would encourage them to read the books and look more closely at the positive messages and moral lessons the books offer. Lynch would appreciate the books' ability to illustrate the balance between the finite and the infinite as well as the books' illustration of avoiding the absolutizing instinct.

Harry Potter represents a shift in literary thinking; they are children's novels which achieve what all fiction hopes for – to be considered valid and

“good.” These books also cause a stir in the archetype world, as I will explore in the next chapter. Harry represents a “modern hero” who upholds the archetype, though not without some complications.

Chapter Two: Harry Potter and the Hero Archetype

Though the Boy Who Lived is scrawnier and younger than the average hero, he embodies the hero archetype in a variety of ways. In this chapter I will explore how Harry exemplifies the “modern hero” archetype defined in the introduction. Harry does not back down even as an eleven year old boy; he does not pass a year in school without facing some sort of mortal peril. Each encounter with danger illustrates a way in which Harry fits the hero archetype. The first books in the series build Harry as a “modern hero” while the later books exemplify Harry’s Hero’s Journey as defined by Joseph Campbell in *A Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

When the reader first meets Harry early in the series, he is unremarkable, scrawny, and an outcast. Yet, Harry sets himself apart from the others with his bravery and courage. He places the good of the world above his personal gain and illustrates selflessness in his first encounter with Voldemort. He yells at his friends for worrying about trivial school matters when there are actual dangers in the world:

There won’t be a Hogwarts to get expelled from! He’ll flatten it, or turn it into a school for the Dark Arts! Losing [House] points doesn’t matter anymore, can’t you see? D’you think he’ll leave you and your families alone if Gryffindor wins the house cup? If I get caught

before I can get to the [Sorcerer's] Stone, well, I'll have to go back to the Dursleys and wait for Voldemort to find me there, it's only dying a bit later than I would have, because I am never going to the Dark Side! I'm going through that trapdoor tonight and nothing you two say is going to stop me! (SS 270)

This passage exemplifies what it means to be a “modern hero.” Even at eleven years old, Harry is a hero: he understands his own mortality, what actually matters, and how he must act against evil. Harry shows his willingness to forego friendship and his own personal safety for what he believes is right.

Harry's peers accuse him of being the Heir of Slytherin and attempting to kill a bunch of muggles. He feels more hurt by this than any other accusation, because he abhors the Dark Arts. Harry makes it his personal mission to discover the true Heir of Slytherin, to both prove his innocence and to stop the attacks at his school. Harry again exemplifies the “modern hero” in his lack of wallowing in misery. He chooses to act rather than to acquiesce to the discomfort he feels at these accusations.

When Harry encounters the young Voldemort, Tom Riddle, he tells Harry that “It was clear to me that you were on the trail of Slytherin's heir. From everything Ginny had told me about you, I knew you would go to any lengths to solve the mystery – particularly if one of your best friends was attacked” (CS 313). Tom uses instinctive heroism against Harry, drawing on his love and sympathies to trap Harry in an impossible situation. Voldemort perceives Harry

as the Hero even as a weak twelve year old boy, and so do we. The reader can already see the archetype as Rowling carefully constructs it.

Harry shows his first real weakness in his particular susceptibility to Dementors. The Dementors bring hallucinations of Harry's parents' death at the hands of Voldemort. Harry's past becomes a proverbial Achilles' heel. Yet, Harry immediately does everything in his power to attempt to overcome this weakness. Harry learns of the betrayal that cost his parents their lives and experiences feelings of vengeance and retribution. He becomes trapped by the desire to gain revenge for his parents' deaths.

Yet, Harry also learns how a desire for revenge can twist a person. After he learns that it was Wormtail, Peter Pettigrew, who betrayed his parents, not Sirius, Harry keeps Sirius from killing Wormtail, realizing the toll that taking a life would have on Sirius, his godfather. He states, "I do not think my dad would want you two to become murderers" (*PA* 349). Harry begins to form a strict moral code of forgiveness and mercy to which he continues to adhere, recognizing that people are not always who they seem, and that redemption is always possible.

Free will plays an enormous part in how Harry views the world. Harry chooses to go into Gryffindor house instead of Slytherin, to befriend a muggle and blood-traitor instead of Malfoy, and to fight on Dumbledore's side instead of Voldemort's. In Harry's world, seemingly everyone makes active decisions which

place them on the side of either good or evil. Choice separates Harry from the Dark Arts, from murder, and from Voldemort.

Like a true hero, Harry decides to fight rather than flee from imminent death, thinking “[I am] not going to die crouching here like a child playing hide-and-seek; [I am] not going to die kneeling at Voldemort’s feet... [I am] going to die upright like my father” (*GF* 662). Harry realizes that he must fight, even when it seems like fighting is impossible. At times, Harry does not feel like a hero. He cannot save Cedric; he can barely save himself. Yet, he again exemplifies all the qualities of a “modern hero” by refusing to acquiesce to impossible odds. Harry survives impossible odds through fate and luck but embodies the “modern hero” in his refusal to quit.

Harry then joins people actually working for the protection of humanity against evil. Through these relationships, Harry learns to discern who and what good and evil are, even when one masquerades as the other. He also faces people who align themselves with whichever side gives them the most power, whether to remain in command or to aid their own prejudices. Fudge, the Minister of Magic, refuses to fight Voldemort because he does not want to lose the power of his position:

“You are blinded,” said Dumbledore, his voice rising now, the aura of power around him palpable, his eyes blazing once more, “by the love of the office you hold, Cornelius! You place too much importance, and you always have done, on the so-called purity of

blood! You fail to recognize that it matters not what someone is born, but what they grow up to be!” (GF 36)

Harry learns through his teacher Dumbledore how power and fear can make a person evil, even when they believe they are good. Harry learns how to discern motives and integrity in others.

Harry also learns that by facing evil he can take away some of evil’s power. Harry forms “Dumbledore’s Army,” a group of students who refuse to give up the fight against the evil that is growing and lurking all around them. Harry faces off against every institution around him rather than give in to evil. Because he never quits, never gives up, no matter how much the odds are stacked against him, Harry exemplifies the “modern hero.” He will face Voldemort, Death Eaters, the Ministry, and his teachers to do what is right.

When Harry witnesses Dumbledore’s death, he learns the lesson of dying with dignity. Dumbledore’s death illustrates the importance of willingness to sacrifice in the battle of good versus evil. Harry discovers the importance of seeing the bigger picture of the greater good. This discovery plants Harry firmly in the “modern hero” category. He accepts his mortality and sees that death can be used to help others. Han Solo, Batman, and the characters on *Heroes* all accept that they may have to sacrifice themselves to save others, and they choose to fight anyway. Mortality does not often enter Superman’s or Hercules’ heads, but for the “modern hero,” death is always at the door. “Classical heroes” do not face their own mortality in every battle due to their super-human qualities,

but the “modern hero” is only mortal. Batman and Harry’s decisions to place themselves in mortal peril is part of what makes them “modern heroes.”

Harry accepts his own weaknesses, plays to his strengths, and understands his mortality. These qualities add Harry to the list of “modern heroes” and the new hero archetype. Harry, like Batman and Han Solo, places the good of others over his own needs, wants, and safety. He follows in the footsteps of these heroes, accepting his call to action, beginning his hero’s journey.

Chapter Three: Harry Potter and the Hero's Journey

Harry fulfills the requirement for a “modern hero” as illustrated previously. In this section I explore how Harry fulfills the Hero's Quest. Joseph Campbell, in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, illustrates the Hero's Journey in a step by step manner. Harry seems to follow each step; he walks the line of the established hero archetype. The steps of the Hero's Journey, as defined by Campbell, are as follows:

1. Departure

- 1.1. Call to Adventure
- 1.2. Refusal of the Call
- 1.3. Supernatural Aid
- 1.4. Crossing the First Threshold
- 1.5. The Belly of the Whale

2. Initiation

- 2.1. Road of Trials
- 2.2. Meeting with the Goddess
- 2.3. Woman as the Temptress
- 2.4. Atonement with the Father
- 2.5. Apotheosis
- 2.6. The Ultimate Boon

3. Return

3.1. Refusal of the Return

3.2. The Magical Flight

3.3. Rescue from Without

3.4. The Crossing of the Return Threshold

3.5. Master of Two Worlds

3.6. Freedom to Live

Harry's Journey begins in *Order of the Phoenix*, though Harry repeatedly goes through the first phase, the "Call to Adventure," in the first four books; he does not cross the threshold until later in his life.

Order of the Phoenix illustrates the beginning of Harry's largest and most demanding hero's quest. The Hall of Prophecy contains Harry and Voldemort's fate. Voldemort never hears the conclusion of the prophecy that causes the death of Harry's parents, but Voldemort understands that Harry is the key to Voldemort's destruction. The Prophecy "neither can live while the other survives" functions as "The Call to Adventure" for Harry. Campbell defines this first step in the Departure cycle as "[signifying] that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown" (Campbell 58). Harry hears the prophecy and knows that it is only he who can bring about the downfall of The Dark Lord. This "Call to Adventure" pulls Harry out of the comfortable niche he has established for himself and into a realm of dire escapade. Harry can no longer remain in the

comfortable detachment of Dumbledore's shadow but must step out to face his own destiny.

Half-Blood Prince illustrates Harry's second step in the Hero's Journey as defined by Campbell. Harry does not rush into action to bring about the death of Voldemort, but instead remains in the protection of Dumbledore throughout the book. This inaction is defined as "The Refusal of the Call." Harry suffers the loss of Dumbledore because he refuses to answer "The Call to Adventure." The return to the known causes much suffering in both the society and in the hero. The deterioration of the magical community around Harry further illustrates the suffering that accompanies Harry's refusal to fight Voldemort directly.

The next step in the typical Hero's Quest is one Campbell describes as "Supernatural Aid," defined as an encounter with a protective figure (often elderly) who provides special tools, such as an amulet or weapon, and advice for the adventure ahead. Dumbledore serves as the protective, elderly figure who provides Harry with a weapon, which is not an amulet, but knowledge of the enemy Harry must face. Dumbledore and Harry delve deep into Voldemort's past in order to understand better the task Harry must undertake in the future. They follow Voldemort's path from child to evil, vicious, and devilicious tyrant. Voldemort's immortality depends on Horcruxes, which Harry must destroy in order to bring about Voldemort's downfall. Harry's knowledge of Voldemort's weakness, attained through Dumbledore, provides the opportunity for Voldemort's downfall.

Harry attains the knowledge to defeat Voldemort and “Crosses the Threshold” into the world of the warrior hero when he and Dumbledore adventure to the hiding place of the locket Horcrux. This journey illustrates to Harry the deep magic and deadly means with which Voldemort protects the pieces of his soul. Dumbledore nearly dies due to the stress placed upon him whilst Harry and he are in the cave: he drinks a potion which nearly kills him and forces him to relive the worst moments of his life. This horrible endeavor serves as Harry’s introduction to the world of hunting Horcruxes. Harry crosses the threshold into the hero realm.

Dumbledore dies upon their return to Hogwarts. Harry watches as Snape kills his mentor and father figure. This event serves as Harry’s voyage into “The Belly of the Whale.” Campbell defines this step as when “appearing to have died by being swallowed or having their flesh scattered, the hero is transformed and becomes ready for the adventure ahead” (92). The world of the hero swallows Harry as all responsibility to save the wizarding world falls upon his shoulders. Harry must now take up his title as “The Chosen One” and battle to save the world without his mentor.

Dumbledore’s death serves as a catalyst for the specific piece of the hero’s journey Harry begins in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Harry realizes he must step into the role of hero of the British Wizarding world. He waits until after Fleur and Bill’s marriage, proving that there really is no way out of weddings. Harry clings to the family he has found in the Weasleys, yet he knows

that he must strike out in search of the Horcruxes. Ron and Hermione refuse to be left behind in this finale, despite Harry's continued protestations against their involvement. He yearns to keep his friends away from danger, but he does not stop them.

Campbell outlines the next section in the hero's journey as "Initiation." Harry leaves the Weasleys' to embark on a series of adventures interspersed with anticipation and waiting. After passing the threshold into the Hero's Journey, he must "survive a succession of obstacles and, in so doing, amplifies his consciousness" (Campbell 92). Harry encounters Death-Eaters, Snatchers, dragons, et cetera throughout his quest to destroy Horcruxes. Campbell also discusses the existence of a supernatural helper in this phase of the journey, which in Harry's case could be Aberforth Dumbledore or Severus Snape. Harry learns throughout these trials what he must do in order to face Voldemort.

"The Meeting with the Goddess" marks the next step in the Hero's Journey. Campbell defines this step as "The ultimate trial . . . represented as a marriage between the hero and a queen-like, or mother-like figure" (Campbell 104). Harry's experience of the female occurs with one Bathilda Bagshot. In Harry's mind, Bathilda represents a maternal figure who will give him the sword of Gryffindor and send him on his way to defeat darkness. Harry and Hermione trust Bathilda to give them help and aid them in their journey.

Yet, Bathilda proves to be less than helpful. Campbell refers to this step as "Woman as the Temptress," defined as a "revulsion or rejection of the female

based on a disunity between truth and [the hero's] subjective outlook" (Campbell 121). Harry and Hermione go to Bathilda's seeking her aid, but instead find that she has been inhabited by Voldemort's snake. Obviously this is not the ideal situation for Harry and Hermione. Harry rejects the feminine figure, continuing on his quest without the maternal knowledge he could have gleaned from Bathilda.

The "Atonement with the Father" step during Harry's hero's quest occupies a large portion of the novel. Harry learns of Dumbledore's less than perfect adolescence before he even ventures out upon his Horcrux quest, but he does not reconcile with Dumbledore until after Harry sacrifices himself to Voldemort. Harry balances his fear and hatred towards the way Dumbledore once was with trust in the Dumbledore whom Harry knew and loved. Harry decides to follow the instructions he was given prior to Dumbledore's death. Harry chooses the Horcruxes over the Hallows, atoning himself most firmly with the "father."

Harry's realization that he must sacrifice himself first occurs in the graveyard of Godric's Hallow. Rowling presents Harry's inner monologue, in which he questions the death of his parents instead of Neville's parents. Harry's "Apotheosis," as Campbell calls it, occurs with Harry's realization that every pain, every family torn apart, every parentless child of the war occurs because of Voldemort. Throughout this section, Harry circles back to the truth: "neither can live while the other survives" (*OP* 439). Harry awakens to the fact he must be

willing to sacrifice anything to stop the ultimate evil of Voldemort, though this sacrifice remains and abstraction.

Harry's apotheosis takes him down the Horcrux path, breaking into Gringott's wizarding bank and returning to Hogwarts not for the "Elder Wand," but to destroy Voldemort's last ties to Earth. Harry chooses Horcruxes instead of Hallows, the good of the world instead of personal gain. He quests off and risks safety for harebrained and ill-planned schemes that barely work due to Harry's magical improvisational skills. All of these choices do not directly benefit Harry, underlying the hero theme. If he were a lesser man he would curl up in a ball and hide, as Aberforth later advises him to, but Harry Potter sacrifices his safety and the safety of his closest friends for the benefit of the society he left behind.

Harry then begins the "Return" section of the Hero's journey. The first step, "Refusal of the Return," Campbell defines as when the hero, "having found bliss and enlightenment in the other world . . . may not want to return to the ordinary world to bestow the boon onto the fellow man" (Campbell 154). Harry returns to Hogwarts, but cannot finish the task of searching out and destroying Horcruxes. He escapes instead into the memories given by Snape during his dying moments. Through his memories, Snape teaches Harry about his true nature; he loved Harry's mother and sacrificed his life to make sure Harry was safe, only to provide the last shocking realization – Harry must be sacrificed. Realizing he must die to save the world, Harry, as if in a daze, reluctantly wanders out to meet his fate.

Campbell defines the next step in the “Return” section as “The Magic Flight . . . when the boon’s acquisition comes against opposition, a chase or pursuit may ensue before the hero returns” (Campbell 204). Harry’s magical flight consists of sacrifice. He attains the boon of knowledge, how to kill Voldemort once and for all, but must pass through the challenge of death before he can return to the world. Sacrificial death proves essential in protecting the wizarding community from Voldemort. Harry mirrors his mother’s choice, offering his life as protection, through the deep magic of love.

Campbell defines “Rescue from Without,” the third step in the “Return” section of the Hero’s Journey as when “the hero may need to be rescued by forces from the ordinary world . . . the hero loses his ego” (Campbell 253,254). When Harry dies, he enters a midway point between the ordinary world and afterlife. Harry meets Dumbledore there and sees what has become of Voldemort’s soul. Dumbledore explains everything to Harry: the truth about the Deathly Hallows, his past, Voldemort’s weaknesses, Harry’s options, and what will happen if Harry stays dead or goes back to life. Harry chooses life. He knows that his return will cause him great pain, but he also know that only he possesses the ability to kill Voldemort, once and for all. Harry completely loses his ego, choosing the community over himself.

The next step Harry takes in the “Return” phase is “The Crossing of the Return Threshold.” Campbell defines this step in the “Return” cycle as “the hero returns to the world of common day and must accept it as real” (Campbell 262).

Harry awakes from death and must assess and cope with the real world. Neville kills Nagini, Voldemort's snake and last Horcrux. The battle continues around Harry, but no one dies due to Harry's sacrifice. Not until Bellatrix Lestrange threatens Mrs. Weasley does Harry even think to act.¹ Harry realizes that he belongs and must act in the real world, even though he just "died."

Harry throws aside his Invisibility Cloak and transforms into the "Master of the Two Worlds," defined by Campbell as when "the hero . . . [perceives] both the divine and human worlds because of the boon or due to his experience" (Campbell 314). Harry faces Voldemort, finally armed with both the boon of knowledge and the advantage of his death experience. He knows Tom Riddle's weakness, his flaws, and his ignorance. Even at this crucial final moment, Harry does not move to kill Voldemort; he knows Voldemort's death must come from Voldemort's rebounded curse. Harry shows mercy to the most evil man and darkest wizard the world has ever known, when he says "Come-on Tom, try for a little remorse" (*DH* 652). Voldemort obviously contains not even an iota of remorse, causing his own downfall. Harry proves himself "The Master of Two Worlds" by conquering Voldemort; he rises, knowledge in hand and Horcruxes destroyed, to become the hero the quest defines him as.

Having gifted the world with the possibility of peace, Harry can now enter the final step of his Hero's Journey, the "Freedom to Live." Harry rejoins the wizarding world. Rowling gives the reader the perfect ending of Happiness for

¹ Best line ever: "Not my daughter, you bitch!" Okay, maybe, "I've got an unbeatable wand, come and have a go if you think you're hard enough" is better.

Harry: a family. The epilogue “Thirteen Years Later” illustrates Harry’s future life, married to Ginny Weasley with three children: James, Lily, and the incredibly unfortunately named Albus Severus. Ron and Hermione marry and have children of their own, Rose and Hugo (another unfortunate name). The wizarding world now exists in peace; even Draco Malfoy has a son, Scorpio (even worse name, these poor children). Harry takes up his position as an Auror with Ron, Hermione changes the face of the Magical Law, and all is well in the world. Harry’s scar never hurts again, signifying the completion of his Hero’s Journey.

Harry obviously works well in the “modern hero” schema as it now exists: he fights for what he knows is right, he forgoes personal needs for community needs, and he leaves his comfortable life to stop evil in its tracks. Yet, Harry has qualities and a community many “modern heroes” lack. The next chapter focuses on the ways Harry subverts and evolves the archetype.

Chapter Four: Harry Potter and the New Heroics

The hero illustrates the ideals of a culture. The hero archetype shows the similarities that the collective unconscious holds. Jung developed the archetype to show how all cultures have essentially the same ideas about what it means to be a hero, a mother, a trickster, etc. Jung gives the basis for the uniting of all cultures despite language, location, or religious differences, because the collective unconscious brings together all humanity. Jung's archetypes show that we all think of basically the same thing when thinking of the hero. But the hero is not static; the hero evolves. Harry Potter upholds the archetype of the "modern hero," but he aids in its evolution as well. He subverts the archetype in his need for others, his lack of natural ability, and (eventually) his critical thought before action.

We do not think the same way about heroes as we once did. The hero archetype has been slowly changing to accommodate our collective shifts in consciousness (Jung 36). The hero began long ago: I am sure, though I have no evidence, that there were hero tales before there was language: the one man who could charm lions or kill the most deer or impregnate women repeatedly or whatever. The most familiar heroes to me are the Greek and Roman mythological heroes. One often thinks of Hercules as the ideal hero: strength of the gods while still human and vulnerable. Superman is another example of this

ideal hero. Hercules and Superman can be defined as “Classical Heroes.” They were born with innate abilities that place them above the norm in their world. Hercules steps above the human population due to his parentage, specifically half-god, half-mortal. Superman comes from another planet, Krypton, to Earth. His powers would be considered normal on Krypton, but separated from his birth place, he becomes a hero. These two are born to be heroes because something makes them different. Hercules is the son of Zeus; Superman is an alien. Birth traits, such as physical prowess and being very difficult to kill, are not the only reasons Hercules and Superman are heroes, but they would not be heroes without these traits.

During the last few decades, the hero archetype has begun to shift from the classical hero to a more collective hero. Comic books such as *The Fantastic Four* show that heroes can work together to achieve something greater than they could individually. The television show *Heroes* takes this view as well; people are still born with superpowers, but they can achieve more by working together. This step of communal “Classical Heroes” is essential in the evolution of the hero to pave the way for the likes of the “Modern Hero.” Bruce Wayne/Batman is regular person, for example, born no different than the average Joe, but his personal circumstances set him apart to be a hero. Bruce witnesses the death of his parents and vows revenge. He uses his mind and his connections to develop a way to fight evil without super powers. Han Solo of the original *Star Wars* trilogy also represents a “Modern Hero.” He does not possess the parentage of

Luke and Leah, but he rises to the level of a hero based on his situation and ties to the people and world around him.

These may seem like small distinctions, but they make a world of difference in the archetype. The *Harry Potter* series changes the hero archetype, shifting the “Modern Hero” to a level different from that of Batman or Han Solo. Harry possesses many of the qualities one expects in a modern hero, but also shifts them. He has Batman’s wish for retribution and Han Solo’s intense loyalty, but Harry acts out of a deep desire to be good. Harry would be the first to deny his status as a hero, giving plenty of credit to his friends and allies. Yet, he stands out among them. The Harry Potter stories seem fantastical, impossible, and downright ridiculous at times, but as Harry always says in reference to saving lives, “things like that always sound a lot cooler than the really are” (*DH* 342). Rowling demonstrates the world through Harry’s view, which is often littered with self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy. Harry shows more insecurity than many other heroes we have seen. If Harry cannot call himself a hero, can we call him one?

Harry is not a demigod among men. He shifts the “modern hero” in a new direction. Rowling separates Harry from the “Modern Hero” by his reliance on others, his lack of talent, his simple, dumb luck, and his choices to be good. When Rowling introduces Harry to the reader, he is nothing more than an average boy. He remains unremarkable as a wizard until he makes choices which separate him from other wizards. Throughout the series, Rowling echoes

the “normality” of Harry in his own world. As we look again at each book, we can see the ways in which Harry depends on others and lucks into his position as a “Modern Hero.”

In *Sorcerer’s Stone* Harry makes his first choice for the side of good when he refuses to forsake Ron to go hang with Draco Malfoy. This choice may seem like a minor one, but the choice to not make blood-based distinctions is a huge divergence between Harry and the Dark Lord. The Sorting Hat presents another choice Harry makes to separate himself from evil; Harry chooses to become a member of Gryffindor house, to which his parents belonged, rather than Slytherin, to which Voldemort belonged. The motivation for this choice bases itself in fear, but the outcome remains the same: Harry does not enter Voldemort’s house. The choice Harry makes at the climax of the novel surpasses the others in meaning for Harry’s evolution as the hero archetype – he forsakes the importance of his personal world for the sake of communal good. Harry tells Ron and Hermione:

Losing points doesn’t matter anymore, can’t you see? D’you think he’ll leave your families alone if Gryffindor wins the house cup? If I get caught before I can get to the Stone, well, I’ll have to go back to the Dursleys and wait for Voldemort to find me there, it’s only dying a bit later than I would have, because I’m never going to over to the Dark Side! I’m going through that trapdoor tonight and nothing you two say is going to stop me! (SS 270)

Harry illustrates true heroism in his decision to face certain danger rather than trying to save himself from peril and punishment.

Harry's next large heroic choice comes in *Chamber of Secrets*. Harry shows his willingness to face death to save others. The Heir of Slytherin takes Ginny into the Chamber of Secrets to kill her. Harry and Ron first go to Professor Lockhart to help him combat the Heir, but discover instead that Lockhart is a cowardly git. Harry and Ron then choose to go save Ginny themselves. While in the Chamber of Secrets, Harry defends Dumbledore to Tom Riddle, the young Voldemort, "Sorry to disappoint you and all that, but the greatest wizard in the world is Albus Dumbledore. Everyone says so. Even when you were strong, you didn't dare try and take over Hogwarts. Dumbledore saw right through you when you were at school and he still frightens you now." (CS 314). Harry chooses loyalty over despair, making a conscious decision to remain bold in the face of imminent death, showing true heroism. Harry places his friends, even at this early stage, above arguing to save his own life. Harry stays cool in the face of danger, challenging the person who killed his parents. All heroes make choices, but Harry remains unique because he does not seek danger, danger finds him.

The world continues to thrust Harry into danger. In *Goblet of Fire*, Harry ends up competing in the Triwizard Tournament, facing a Hungarian Horntail, surviving underwater for an hour, and facing Hagrid's Blast-Ended Skrewts. These are no small feats, but Harry makes no active decisions, meaning he just reacts as danger comes his way, until he is taken to Voldemort. While in the

graveyard, Harry chooses to face his death rather than to die as a coward, running from the Dark Lord. This choice pushes the hero archetype by showing a hero who does not fear death; Bruce Wayne and Han Solo would not be so open to this prospect. Harry makes a distinct separation between acceptance of mortality and giving up; he walks a thin line, but remains true to the hero who does not fear death, as illustrated in this passage:

Harry crouched behind the headstone and knew the end had come. There was no hope . . . no help to be had. And as he heard Voldemort draw nearer still, he knew one thing only, and it was beyond fear or reason: He was not going to die crouching here like a child playing hide-and-seek; he was going to die upright like his father, and he was going to die trying to defend himself, even if no defense was possible. (*GF* 602)

This lack of fear contrasts with Voldemort's horror at the idea of death and the measures he takes to avoid the end of his physical being. Harry would rather die facing his enemies like a man than live the longer life of a coward. Harry demonstrates true heroism in this choice to stand and fight his enemy against all odds.

Yet, Harry's decisions are not always heroic by our new and evolving definition. *Order of the Phoenix* illustrates a decision one would expect of a "Classical Hero," running into the face of danger without a second thought. This decision leads Harry's friends to mortal peril and causes Sirius's death. Harry

develops what initially seems to be a supernatural sense for when Voldemort does something particularly evil, demonstrated in Harry's vision of Nagini, Voldemort's snake, attacking Mr. Weasley. Harry saves Mr. Weasley's life by reporting this vision. Harry later has a vision of Voldemort torturing Sirius, his godfather, and does the seemingly heroic thing by rushing off to save him.

We quickly learn that this brand of rash heroism does not have the same value as critically planned heroism. Voldemort manipulated Harry's mind in order to make Harry vulnerable to attack. Harry falls into a trap, dooming himself and all those dearest to him. Harry does not want "to hear what Ron had to say, did not want to hear Ron tell him he had been stupid. Or suggest that they ought to go back to Hogwarts. But the heat was rising in his face and he felt as though he would like to skulk down in the darkness for a long while" (*OP 779*). Harry lets everyone down by reacting too quickly to information. Sirius dies as a result of Harry's rash heroics. Rowling tells the reader that real heroes engage in critical analysis before action, illustrating a shift from other heroes who rush into action, much to the joy of college professors world-wide.

From the death of Sirius onward, Harry engages in critical thought before acting, with a few exceptions (apparating in to Hogsmeade, for example). Harry makes his most critical choice in his decision to die; he analyzes all the evidence before him, utilizes his resources, and boldly walks towards death. Harry makes the most heroic choice possible for the "Modern Hero"; he lays down his life for

the sake of his fellow man (and people call these books anti-Christian?). Rowling includes self-sacrifice as part of her definition of hero.

Yet, Harry only lives long enough to “sacrifice” himself due to his friends and his luck. We learn early on that Harry is not a remarkably talented wizard. Professor Snape refers to Harry as “mediocre, arrogant as his father, a determined rule-breaker, delighted to find himself famous, attention-seeking and impertinent” (*DH* 679). Snape may be a slightly biased source, but he paints an accurate portrait of Harry’s lack of inherent talent in every magical field, with the exceptions of Defense Against the Dark Arts and Quidditch. Harry struggles through his subjects and even fails two of his O.W.L.s. Christ, on the other hand, schooled his own professors as a pre-teen. Harry does not have the same innate knowledge and talent as Jesus displayed.

Harry also struggles with issues of morality, anger, and vengeance. *Prisoner of Azkaban* shows Harry as willing to kill a man in order to avenge his parents’ death. When he discovers Sirius’s (supposed) crime, Harry feels as if “a hatred he had never known before was coursing through [him] like poison. He could see Black laughing at him through the darkness, as though somebody had pasted the picture from the album over his eyes” (*PA* 213). Harry becomes obsessed with his hatred for the man who supposedly facilitated the murder of his parents. This response illustrates Harry’s humanity and fallibility. The bible shows Jesus as a little upset when he throws people out of the temple, but I seriously doubt He was on the verge of murder. Harry remains a relatable

character throughout most of the books because he is so essentially human. In *Order of the Phoenix*, Harry embodies a moody, angst-ridden teenager so well I wanted to jump in the book and kick him in his whiny arse (now that's character development). Harry cannot act as a Christ-figure in the same way as Aslan from *The Chronicles of Narnia* because Harry is far too human. Harry departs from the typical fantasy archetype, dividing himself into a new category. This humanity becomes part of his strength, though, because it helps him to develop such intense and loyal friendships.

Harry would be dead many times over if it were not for his friends and his luck. In fact, Harry would never have made it out of infancy were it not for his mother's sacrifice. Lily Potter gave up her life in the hope of saving her son. Rowling instills in the reader an awareness of sacrifice for the good of others throughout the first Potter installment; she sets up this theme early and the reader can track its progression through the series.

This theme continues with Harry's friends. Ron and Hermione play a huge role in Harry's life and in his ability to somehow manage to stay alive. The first example of this occurs in *Sorcerer's Stone*; Harry convinces Ron and Hermione to choose societal good over possible expulsion, but once through the trapdoor, Harry would be dead if it were not for Hermione. Harry and Ron fall into Devil's Snare, a plant that slowly entangles and strangles. Only Hermione knows how to defeat the plant. Harry, Ron, and Hermione then continue through what can only be described as a magical obstacle course. Ron, not Harry, defeats the giant

chess game. Hermione, not Harry, solves the potion riddle. Rowling undermines the hero archetype from the very onset of the series.

Order of the Phoenix illustrates another instance of Harry's life depending upon his friends. Harry mistakenly storms the Ministry building with Luna, Neville, Hermione, and Ron in tow. They soon discover they have fallen into the Death Eaters trap and a chase ensues. Everyone almost dies at some point. Harry survives because the Order of the Phoenix shows up in the nick of time to save them. Harry chases Bellatrix and finds himself alone with her and Voldemort. Dumbledore arrives just in time to save him. Harry approaches his own death repeatedly, but at every instance, someone appears to save him. It is easy to see why Voldemort asks "Who are you going to use a shield today, Potter?" when they face-off in the final book (*DH 737*). Harry allows other people to take hits for him throughout his life, whether he wills it or not.

Half-Blood Prince contains the most heartbreaking instance of someone saving Harry. Dumbledore keeps Harry immobile and invisible on the top of the Astronomy tower in order to save Harry from the Death Eaters who have infiltrated the castle. Dumbledore sacrifices his ability to defend himself to keep Harry safe and out of sight. Harry must watch as his mentor dies at the hands of Snape. This experience teaches Harry how to die with dignity and protect others from harm, two lessons which prove essential in the seventh book.

Harry's reliance on friends represents a separation between himself and other "Modern Heroes." For example, the new Batman series illustrates how the

hero must operate alone, letting no man, woman, or child accept a threat when the hero can face it. Han Solo fights because of his friends, but he saves them, (with the exception of the time he is frozen in the carbon shell). *Star Wars* illustrates a community of heroes in a similar way to the *Harry Potter* series, but Harry falls into the gray area between Han Solo and Luke Skywalker. Luke, conversely, gains his position through the “force” he is born with. Harry changes the archetype to self-sacrifice and community effort, not just one or the other. The synthesized hero archetype shows up in *Heroes*, the television program, as well. The heroes are all uniquely gifted, but they must work together to overcome their enemies: the entire world hangs on their ability to work in cooperation.

The synthesis between these two seeming opposites makes Harry my ideal hero, (but still a git), though Han Solo and Batman still hold a special place in my heart. Harry Potter maps out how to be a hero, but also how to be a “helper-hero.” As illustrated above, the Harry hero archetype cannot exist without the aid of others. The Harry archetype allows a place for everyone in the changing of the world, teaching us all that we can make a difference if we stand up for what we believe is right.

Rowling illustrates the ability of everyone to aid the hero in her characters Neville Longbottom and Luna Lovegood. These characters may seem insignificant, but they are the most crucial piece to the evolution Harry provides in the Hero archetype. Luna and Neville prove that everyone has the potential to

be a hero, to fight against evil, to work for justice. Rowling teaches her readers, through these characters, that no matter how insignificant and out of place we feel, we can make a difference in the world around us. *Sorcerer's Stone* first introduces the reader to Neville Longbottom as a forgetful boy who cannot locate his pets or remember what he should. He becomes a target for the bullies of the school and finds himself subjected to all kinds of malicious condescension from Professor Snape. Yet, Neville learns to stand up for what he believes is right; he stands up to Malfoy, Goyle, and Crabbe at the Quidditch match, shouting "Malfoy, I'm worth ten of you" (198). Later, he stands up to Ron, Hermione, and Harry to stop them from breaking rules, an act which Albus Dumbledore deems both courageous and deserving of recognition.

Neville begins to embody the "helper-hero" in *Order of the Phoenix*. He joins Dumbledore's Army and helps Harry to infiltrate the ministry of magic. Though, Neville remains far from a talented wizard, but he begins to show his daring; he refuses to give in to the Death Eaters, even when his life is on the line, telling Harry not to give the prophecy to Lucius and Bellatrix:

'No, no, no,' said Bellatrix. She looked transported, alive with excitement as she glanced at Harry, then back at Neville. 'No, let's see how long Longbottom lasts before he cracks like his parents... unless Potter wants to give us the prophecy.'

'DON'D GIB ID DO DEM!' roared Neville, who seemed beside himself, kicking and writhing as Bellatrix drew nearer to him and his

captor, her wand raised. 'DON'D GIB ID DO DEM, HARRY!' (*OP* 598)

Neville refuses to give in to terrorist demands, embodying the “helper-hero” because he guides Harry’s decisions and aids him in every way that he can. Neville chooses to do what is for the greater good rather than what is best for himself.

Luna Lovegood illustrates a case similar to Neville’s. She does not fit in at school and experiences bullying constantly due to her and her father’s eccentric natures. Harry meets Luna for the first time in *Order of the Phoenix*, though she almost instantly becomes a part of Harry’s rebellion against both the ministry and Voldemort. Luna’s beliefs do not always line up with Harry’s, but she yearns to learn to defend herself against inevitable doom, whether from a Crumple-Horned Snorkack or Voldemort. Luna also accompanies Harry to the Ministry, fighting the Death Eaters and standing up for the greater good behind the banner of Harry Potter.

Half-Blood Prince brings these characters back into their helper hero roles. Harry and Dumbledore leave the castle to hunt a Horcrux; Harry leaves it up to the members of Dumbledore’s Army to protect the school against Malfoy and the Death Eaters. Luna and Neville are the only two who answer the call, precisely because they are unpopular. As Harry says, “only Neville and Luna would hold on to their DA coins, because they missed the DA the most” (*HBP* 568). These two characters make such excellent “helper-heroes” because they

find their niche in the world in that role. Their importance in the stories continues to grow due to their ability to aid when others cannot.

Deathly Hallows adds a different layer to the helper-hero theory. Harry, Ron, and Hermione go questing in search of Horcruxes, leaving Neville and Luna to fight the good fight at Hogwarts, which they do with ever increasing skill. Luna achieves a high level of rebellion due to her father's paper, the *Quibbler*, which tells the truth about Voldemort and the Death Eaters instead of spouting Ministry-approved propaganda. Luna gets taken by the Death Eaters due to her and her father's subversive acts, yet even in captivity Luna helps Harry. Harry ends up in the Malfoy dungeon and Luna is able to free Harry and Ron from their ropes. The helper hero not only holds up social resistance when the hero is gone, but manages through his/her resistance to be exactly where the hero needs him/her to be.

Rowling uses Neville to further develop the "helper hero" in *Deathly Hallows*. Neville manages to stay at Hogwarts, undermining the Death Eaters at every opportunity. Neville endures torture and attacks on his only remaining family just to maintain a rebellion at Hogwarts; he creates a hide-out for all of Dumbledore's Army, providing shelter and food to the resistance. It is no surprise then, that when Harry returns to Hogwarts, it is Neville who convinces Harry to let others help him to find the last Horcrux, "Why can't we help? We've been here fighting while you were off on your own . . . We've kept the DA going. We want to

fight!” (*DH* 568). Neville convinces Harry to share his burden, making the fight against Voldemort at the school possible.

Yet, the proudest moment of the “helper-hero” comes with Neville’s direct revolt against Dumbledore after Harry’s supposed death. Neville refuses to acquiesce to Voldemort’s victory over the resistance, but instead charges into the arms of apparent death, refusing to give in to Voldemort’s regime. He, yet again, endures torture and near death in order to uphold Harry’s cause; Neville does not die for Harry. Harry’s sacrifice protects Neville against Voldemort’s spells, leaving Neville to act upon Harry’s last wish: “kill the snake” (*DH* 582).

Rowling includes the “helper-hero” in the final necessary act before Harry can kill Voldemort. Harry would be unable to kill Voldemort were it not for Neville’s final actions. The snake, Nagini, binds Voldemort to life; Neville’s act makes Harry’s final heroic act possible. The “helper-hero” maintains an essential component of the evolution of the “Modern Hero.” Rowling changes the mythology to allow for all, even the least among us, to achieve greatness via the new hero archetype.

Rowling illustrates to us the need for a collective rather than a solo hero in every book of the Harry Potter series, and even in her *The Tales of Beadle the Bard*, the storybook inside the *Harry* books. Yet, no instance of this message drives the point into our hearts more clearly than Dumbledore and Harry’s adventure into the cave to retrieve the locket Horcrux. Dumbledore tells Harry “The protection was ... after all... well designed ... One alone could not have

done it" (*HBP* 577). As Voldemort views interpersonal dependence as a weakness, he sets up a task impossible for the lone wizard. Yet, Dumbledore and Harry (and we, the reader) understand the importance of help from others. Harry adds to the evolution of the hero archetype, teaching us all to be willing to help and be helped by others. The world can crash around you, create impossible odds, and present you with death at every turn, but together we can stand against injustice and make the world a better place by becoming a "helper hero." The evolving archetype changes the perception of personal and communal responsibility. The wizarding world comes together to defeat evil, racism, and injustice. If only our world could do the same.

Conclusions:

Now that we have tackled a massive amount of fascinating information about the Boy Who Lived, I hope you can also confess, and proudly, your own Harry Potter addiction. Harry Potter grabs the hearts and minds of people all over the world in every age group and demographic for good reason. Rowling constructs a beautiful and universal story for readers. From the start, she captivated her audience and continues to grab generations with her children's books.

Our concept of literature changes necessarily to accommodate "lesser" art forms, such as shifting from epic poetry to the novel. As we discovered through Lynch, we cannot judge a book by its genre. I hope that as the movies continue to be released and the books fade from heavy pop culture drama, more and more children will be allowed to read these books. In the duration of my writing this thesis, my conservative aunt allowed her daughter to read the *Harry Potter* books, which she has, more than twice.

The benefits of the Potter Phenomenon are innumerable. Not only are kids reading instead of watching TV, but my generation is learning how to care. I think one of the reasons I love these books so much is that they give us actual hope. It isn't the magic or the plot, but the idea that it is possible for a society to

rise up and care about the condition of the world around them, and then actually do something about it.

At this point you may be asking yourself, “So what? I am never going to chase Horcruxes, battle Voldemort, or have a magic wand.” The lesson of helping others is universal. We may never find ourselves in Harry’s unique position as the “Chosen One,” but we are always in the position of the helper-hero. Rowling’s idea of a “helper hero” makes us all heroes, but we are also all responsible for the condition of the world around us. We become accountable for allowing the bad things to continue, because as helper heroes it is possible for us to change things. The evolving hero archetype gives everyone a place in the fight against injustice and evil

As we look out to the world today, we see war, genocide, starvation, disease, and injustice. I am constantly asking myself, “What can I do?,” but everything I do seems small and insignificant to the woes of the world. We are fighting the proverbial “Dark Arts” which Snape describes as “many, varied, ever-changing, and eternal. Fighting them is like fighting a many-headed monster, which, each time a neck is severed, sprouts a new head even fiercer and cleverer than before. You are fighting what is unfixed, mutating, and indestructible” (*HBP* 177). Snape could easily be describing fighting for social justice in this passage. Injustice possesses all of these qualities; it will never be completely eradicated, and to fight it is to fight something ever changing.

Rowling does not coddle us with simple answers and easy solutions to the problems of the world.

Through reading the *Harry Potter* books we gain a deeper understanding of how we must struggle in the world for justice. The life that Harry, Ron, Hermione, Lupin, Tonks, the Weasley family, and the Order of the Phoenix lead is not an easy one. Yet, it is necessary to fight evil in our own world no matter how terrifying and inconvenient. Rowling allows for every position in the spectrum of fighters against evil. We do not need to sacrifice our lives, literally or figuratively, in order to fight for justice. I may not be in the position to go off with a hero like Hermione and Ron do. I may not be in the right place at the right time like Neville and Luna find themselves. Yet, we can all take the position of the average wizarding student at Hogwarts; when injustice comes to knock on our door, we fight. Or, we can be like the average wizard who does all he can to save the lives of his muggle neighbors by a simple act of kindness.

As a student of Regis University, I am aware of this concept in different terms. "How ought we to live" defines what Regis University thinks about social justice. We must imagine the ideal and do all we can to achieve it. There are no quick and easy solutions; we face a constant and uphill battle to attain a world even close to the world we ought to create. Every one of us faces an enormous amount of social justice issues at any given time in our lives. The helper-hero sees those issues and does everything he or she can to right that wrong. Hermione goes into a career of Magical Law because she can see the problems

in the system and has the courage of conviction to change them. Harry and Ron enter careers as Aurors so they can continue to fight the Dark Arts even after Voldemort's demise, because evil never truly dies. I am going to join the Peace Corps to help the countries with the greatest need.

Rowling challenges us to be the best, most moral, most aware person we are capable of being. These are not simple children's books that stretch our imaginations and give us a simple task of believing in ultimate goodness or fighting for our friends. Though these are facets of the *Potter* series, Rowling expands into a spectrum of good and evil, illustrating that indifference can be just as detestable as active evil work. Rowling teaches us that we must fight, struggle, and care no matter how unfashionable it is, no matter how overwhelming the odds. Harry fights. Mrs. Weasley fights. Dumbledore fights. Colin Creevy fights. We must fight, too.

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