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Abandoned Children in Literature: The Orphans in J.K. Rowling's

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.

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Abstract

Orphans and abandoned children have been a prominent motif in literature for centuries. In modern times, one of the most famous orphan stories is J.K. Rowling's book series about Harry Potter, who is an orphaned wizard. The aim of the following essay is to show how three orphan characters are characterized in Rowling's book *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone,* namely Harry Potter, Voldemort and Neville Longbottom. The focal center of interest of this essay is how these three different characters' personal developments vary as a consequence from their respective situation in infancy.

Contents

Introduction

Abandoned children and orphans have been a prominent motif in literature for centuries, and they can be found in classic examples such as *Cinderella* (1697), *Hansel and Gretel* (1812) and *Anne of Green Gables* (1908). The theme of abandoned children is especially frequent in children's literature. The protagonists in these stories are often children who grow up outside of the nuclear family without affinity with and confidence in adults. The way in which the protagonists are portrayed creates a feeling of sympathy and admiration with the vulnerable children, which arguably many people find intriguing and relatable. A common denominator for the orphan characters is how they often go from being oppressed outsiders into becoming triumphant heroes and heroines.

One of the most famous contemporary works adopting this theme is J.K. Rowling's roaring success *Harry Potter*. The first book *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was published in 1997. In her series of seven books, Rowling uses an orphan as her main character, just as many writers before her have done. There are several stereotypical elements in her books. The first book, which is the main source of this essay, introduces the reader to a young boy who is unaware of his magical power and greatness. He spends his days in an ordinary suburb in England with his callous relatives, the Dursley family. Rowling shows Harry's alienation and desolation by depicting him almost like a leper who is constantly left out in the cold by his so called "family" whilst being abused by his cousin. As the story progresses, however, he rises above his oppressed childhood and becomes a triumphant hero who achieves greatness despite all of his sorrows. He is a character to relate to and sympathize with and someone who shows how good overcomes evil.

Even though Harry is the main character and protagonist, he is not the only abandoned child in the story. One of Harry's friends at Hogwarts, Neville Longbottom is another character who has grown up without parents. This is also true about the character who is portrayed as evil itself and Harry's enemy, Voldemort. Rowling shows how their different upbringings as orphans have shaped their lives in different ways. Harry and Voldemort come from similar family backgrounds where their parents died very early in their lives. This leads them both to childhoods in isolation where people bullied them for being different. Voldemort grows up to be a coldhearted murderer who uses his anger and power to make life miserable for other people because of his own lonely and miserable life, whereas Harry uses his power for something good and he soon becomes the hero of the story. They are each other's opposites as the hero and the villain. Neville on the other hand is a rather reserved and

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introvert character who matures with all the challenges he is put up against in the progression of the story.

The object of this essay is to examine how orphans and abandoned children in the first book of the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* are characterized and depicted by the author. The main focus of the essay is to show how these three characters' different starting points and upbringings influence their personal developments.

Orphans in Literature

Orphan stories have played a major role in children's literature since the genre was founded. Cultures and societies across the world somewhat differ from each other regarding the definition of "orphan". UNICEF defines an orphan as "a child who has lost one or both parents". A child who has lost one parent is defined as a "single-orphan", whereas someone who has lost both parents is a "double-orphan". However, UNICEF also mentions that in some countries both parents must be lost in order for a child to be classified as an orphan, which shows the contrasts concerning different definitions of the term.

In fictional orphan stories there are occurrences of single orphans, as well as double orphans. The general agreement of single orphan stories, such as *Cinderella* and *Snow White* is that the mother usually dies leaving the child with the father who often remarries a woman who becomes the evil stepmother. The outcome in double orphan stories, such as *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations* is generally that the orphan is left in custody with mean relatives who neglect and mistreat the orphan. However, apart from being classified as single orphan or as double orphan, the orphans are generally similarly characterized. The orphan is often a self-sufficient and introvert character without a strong familial background with responsibilities and guidance, which leads him/her into more adventurous lives since there is no consistent parental supervision. The feeling of being unsupervised creates a sense of independence. In Virginia A. Walter's article about abandoned children she discusses fictional orphans' perception of the world and how they manage to grow up: "It is a voyage of self-discovery in which the children learn the follies of regression and denial and discover the empowerment of self-reliance and independence" (205). These children are deprived of their childhood because of the absent parental figures. Furthermore, Melissa B. Wilson and Kathy

G. Short point out the importance of parental figures in a person's childhood in order for the person in question to be able to mature. They argue that "a failed home is one in which the child protagonist doesn't feel loved, safe, or free to develop a sense of self. One of the defining aspects of childhood is the child's need to be cared by an adult" (135). To have parental guidance growing up is an important factor for the child in order for him/her to be able to mature and create an identity. Too much freedom will inhibit the child rather than help him/her develop.

There are a couple of important factors when it comes to behaviorism of abandoned children that a number of researchers within this field are in agreement on. Firstly, children need a secure base in infancy in order to develop and mature when growing up. Secondly, the attachment to the parents, in particular the mother, in early infancy is highly important because if the attachment fails the child runs a higher risk of failing later on in life. Researcher John Bowlby argues in his book *A Secure Base* (1988) for the importance of making the maternal attachment in infancy in order for the child to develop. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of the theory of attachment if a parent dies because the attachment the child has made to the mother will still help the child's development even after the death of the mother. People have a responsibility to children which is to nourish and care for them. However, society is sometimes lacking in the matter of childcare. The evil and mean people who are depicted in books do, indeed, exist in real life as well.

Poverty, isolation and despair mark the orphans' upbringings. The lives of fictional orphans are often depicted as lives in coldness, cruelty, neglect, starvation and imprisonment. These poor conditions push the characters into becoming something more, something better in order to prove to themselves that they are capable of surviving and succeeding. They are able to overcome difficulties and create lives of their own. Furthermore, Wilson and Short argues how fictional orphans "[…] must set out to make sense of the past in order to construct a better home, a place of their own" (134). The search for a real home, thus, becomes the mission of the children's lives.

The orphan's journey is a common plot for many orphan stories. The orphan generally has to face various obstacles along the way in order to overcome his/her tragic childhood which generally is marked by mistreatment and neglect. During the journey the orphan begins to find him-/herself anew and their journey ends with a happy ending, where the orphan is able to find completeness in a new home. Wilson and Short's definition of a "happy ending" in orphan stories is "[…] when home is achieved" (132). The journey that the

orphans embark on is a way for them to set free from their tragic past, as well as a way for them to mature and develop along the way. When the orphans have reached the end of the journey, they have often found their own way in life and found a new home in a safe and secure environment where they are able to start over.

Melanie A. Kimball demonstrates the connection between heroes and orphans in literature. She is of the opinion that since heroes often act in isolation the orphan character becomes the perfect hero figure since he/she is particularly lonely and isolated. Stereotypes of typical orphan hero figures can be found in literary classics such as *Oliver Twist, Tom Sawyer* and *Great Expectations,* as well as in modern works such as *Spiderman* and *Superman.* These characters all rise from their rough backgrounds as outsiders into becoming the hero, the "chosen one". Other famous orphans in literature such as Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, Pippi Longstocking and Jane Eyre all acquire money and wealth sooner or later and the rough and painful infancy is thus conquered by the promising future. They are, to begin with, depicted as insignificant to the rest of the world, especially to the "evil" adult world. They grow up in families without love and affection. Orphans are the true outcasts of society whom nobody wishes to acknowledge at first, but usually through wit and creativity the good overcomes evil in the end. Cinderella gets her Prince Charming, Jane Eyre marries Mr. Rochester. Hansel and Gretel are reunited with their father who now loves them after the death of their evil stepmother, and Pippi finds a family in her best friends, Tommy and Annika. Kimball continues to argue that the orphan stories developed from the folkloric elements: "The outcast main character; the secondary characters who affect the orphan for both good and evil; the task or quest that the orphan must perform; the usually happy resolution with the orphan finding through marriage, wealth, and position; and the punishment of those who mistreated the orphan" (567). The oppressed children take control over their own lives and become the conquering heroes/heroines who overcome the people who mistreated them. Orphans stories, thus, seem to follow a general pattern when it comes to the lives of the orphan characters since elements such as, the quests, the happy endings, and the punishments of the evil people can be found in many orphan stories, in classic ones as well as contemporary ones.

A common denominator among many writers who write about orphans and abandoned children is that they are orphans themselves, in one way or another. Some have lost one parent, some both of them, and some have been abandoned by one or both parents. To mention a few, the Grimm brothers, Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë and Hans Christian Andersen are all writers who were abandoned as children or lost one or both parents. Their works are arguably influenced by what happened in their infancies and it could

be argued that it is no coincidence that their stories involve orphans and abandoned children. Charles Dickens was abandoned by his parents at the age of 12 when his father was imprisoned, and his mother took his youngest brothers and sisters with her to live with their father, which meant that Dickens quickly had to grow up and take responsibility for his family by working and earning money when he was still just a child. These experiences have shaped his stories. Charlotte Brontë lost her mother at the age of 5 which makes her a "single-orphan". She also lost two of her sisters at an early age. Her sorrows and experiences can be found in her most famous novel, *Jane Eyre* (1848). Eileen Simpson writes in her book about orphans that "[o]rphans became heroes and heroines whose feelings readers could identify with, whose orphanhood was not merely stated […] but described as if from the inside" (181-182). Perhaps the author's own experience means that he/she is particularly capable of conveying the situation and the feeling of the orphan child.

Kimball argues that "[w]hen orphans succeed against all odds, their success ultimately becomes ours" (559). A great many people find the feeling of abandonment relatable and that could be one reason for the major occurrences of this theme in literature. Orphans have been an ideal motif in fictional stories for centuries due to the fact that orphans have been a common problem in society since a long time back in history because of wars, epidemics and diseases. Even though orphans are not even remotely close to being as common today as they were a few centuries ago it still is a frequent and recurrent theme in modern literature. According to Louise Tilly who discusses child abandonment in her article 'Child Abandonment in European History: A Symposium', children were often abandoned because of poverty and decease. The reason why ordinary people adopted abandoned children was because children were a necessary factor for the economy. Everyone from shepherds and slave buyers to foundling homes, were provided for the abandoned children. Tilly describes child abandonment as a mechanism which used to be such a common occurrence in society that no one paid it any notice. A great many authors therefore used the theme of abandonment, and the abandoned children's journeys in society became a common theme in literature.

Harry Potter

When J.K Rowling was writing *Harry Potter* her mother died at the age of 45, which made her own personal feelings come through in her writing. Rowling was arguably affected by this tragedy and the pain she experienced came to set the tone for her story, which, according to herself, turned out much darker and more melancholic than what she had in mind when she began her writing. *Harry Potter* became a way for Rowling to deal with the loss of her mother. Rowling can hardly be classified as an orphan herself, since she was an independent grown-up when her mother passed away, but her deep sorrow was nevertheless transferred onto her main character, Harry Potter, who is an orphan.

The first book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* begins with the depiction of Harry Potter who is left on the doorstep of his future family, the Dursley family, due to his parents' death. The journey of Harry Potter, thus, begins in a mundane English suburb where Harry is living a typical life as an ordinary 11 year old boy with his unpleasant relatives. Julia Boll argues that "a future hero is placed into an ordinary world he does not fully belong to" (85), when Harry is left to live with his relatives. Harry lives his life in complete social exclusion as many orphan characters often do in literary stories. His aunt and uncle neglect him and treat him more as an animal than as a human being. He sleeps in a cupboard under the stairs, and he is only wanted when his so-called family needs anything. Harry's function is merely to be a servant in the household. In this way he resembles *Cinderella,* an orphan who is a servant of the house of her wicked stepmother. Mistreatment of the kind that Harry endures in the home of the Dursley family creates compassionate emotions inside of the readers, and makes Harry a character to feel sympathy with. Rowling points out what lies ahead of Harry in the very beginning of the book though by referring to him as the hero of the story who one day will become one of the greatest wizards of all time. Harry is the legend who will have books written about him and everybody will know who he is: "He'll be famous – a legend – […] there will be books written about Harry – every child in our world will know his name!" (20). Harry, thus, becomes the typical fictional orphan from the start, since a hint about his future greatness is provided for the reader from the beginning of the book.

Boll argues that, "[w]ith other literary prototypes Harry shares the role of the legendary 'lost prince' whose destiny has been predefined and who sets out to fulfill this destiny and discover the truth" (89). This is what Harry's inner journey is going to revolve

around, finding out the truth about his parents in order to become whole and find completeness. Every decision, every action readers see Harry make is, in essence, a way for him to deal with the loss of his parents. Harry is marked for life by his tragic past, both figuratively and literally, as he has a scar on his forehead as a constant reminder of the day he became an orphan.

The typical journey of fictional orphan characters is generally a journey towards finding oneself, and to feel completeness in the end. Boll argues that, "[t]he hero's journey is, in essence, a rite of passage. […] the movement of the monomyth corresponds exactly to the master plot of children's fiction (home – away – homecoming)" (87). Harry's journey is that of a typical fictional orphan story, in which the protagonist goes from being an oppressed outsider in a callous family, to go on an adventurous quest in order to find out the truth about his past and, as a result, feel inner peace and completeness when the reward has been achieved. Harry has to defeat a troll, get past a three-headed dog, deal with the Devil's Snare, the flying keys and the magic chessboard in order to defeat the enemy and, finally be rewarded at the end of the story.

However, *Harry Potter* differs from the "superhero" which can be found in many literary works. The "superhero" generally saves the world alone, whereas in *Harry Potter's* case he has helpers who assist him on his way to success. One of the most important factors for Harry is the collaboration between him and his friends. However, Harry wishes to operate in secret, since he does not wish his newfound friends to get in trouble because of him. Still, Harry's final reward could not have been achieved without the help from his friends. Without Hagrid they would never have found out how to put the three-headed dog to sleep; without Hermione they would not be able to pull themselves free of the Devil's Snare, or get through the purple flames; without Ron they would not have been able to get past the chessboard; and without Dumbledore Harry would, most likely, not have survived at all. Rowling thus points out the importance of having caring people around in order to succeed and accomplish what needs to be accomplished. Lena Steveker argues that, "[s]ince Harry is repeatedly presented as relying on his friends and family in his fight against Voldemort, his identity as hero clearly depends on the personal relationships he sets up with the people surrounding him" (69). Belonging to a group is important for many fictional orphan characters, hence the fact that these characters usually are in search of a caring surrogate family. Harry becomes very attached to several surrogate families: the Weasley family, the Quidditch team, the Gryffindor house, and his school, Hogwarts. These groups become his

safety and are where he feels at home. Harry's heroism relies, thus, a great deal on his social relationships, and without them he would not have been able to achieve his reward.

Kari Killén is a researcher within the field of childcare who argues in her book about mistreated children that the certainty of having a strong and well-functioning network is important for the development of the child. The idea of a surrogate family is not supposed to replace the biological parents, instead it is an aid for the child's development. Furthermore, it is important that the surrogate family does not neglect the biological parents since it is important for the child to deal with the tragic memories. The healing process will become more difficult for the child if the memories of the lost parents are ignored and neglected. In Harry's case, it is when he comes to Hogwarts and begins to create his surrogate family that his memories of his parents, which have been repressed during his upbringing, begin to come alive and he is able to commence his healing. Harry's pain and grief reach their peak when he discovers The Mirror of Erised, which is a mirror that enables people to see the reflection of one's greatest wishes and dreams. The night Harry first discovers The Mirror of Erised is Christmas night. This is a family holiday which is recognized for bringing up great pain and sorrow for the people who have ever felt loss, and Harry is arguably in a more vulnerable state at this time a year despite the fact that it "had been Harry's best Christmas day ever" (221). Since Harry's biggest dream is to be with his parents they are the apparition in the mirror when Harry looks in it. As a result he gets to spend Christmas with his family. Something most people who have felt a great loss might agree on is the fact that to be able to meet someone you have lost would be the greatest treasure of them all. Kimball's argument that "[o]rphans are a tangible reflection of the fear of abandonment that all humans experience" (559), is in agreement with the assumption that Harry's pain of being abandoned is a feeling that is buried inside of people all over the world. Harry's encounter with his parents becomes an obsession for him, and everything else becomes irrelevant when he finally gets to meet what makes his life worth living for: "He had a powerful kind of ache inside him, half joy, half terrible sadness" (226). Harry is facing a dilemma when discovering The Mirror of Erised since he is not able to control his feelings about seeing his parents alive, even if only through a mirror. The happiness of seeing his parents' shapes is taken over by the feeling of abandonment which is strengthened when realizing the impossibility of getting his parents back alive.

Jeffrey W. Hull argues that "[m]uch can be said of the archetypal resonance of Rowling's main character being born an orphan: Harry is without roots, unburdened by

family, culture, genetics. He is without history, and as such, with no story to live up to or to carry on, he is free to create himself afresh, to paint his own picture of who is to be and how he is to live" (8). Hull might be right with his assumption that Harry is unburdened by family considering his independence and lack of familial support. Moreover, many researchers would agree with Hull on the fact that Harry is free to develop on his own due to the lack of a strong and secure familial background. However, there is an inconsistency with Hull's argument. Harry is not really without roots, or history. On the contrary, his entire life is marked by his past. It takes him through life and shapes him into the person he is and who he strives to become. Harry is destined to become the savior and hero of the story, because of his past. He has been "the Chosen One" from the day Voldemort made Harry an orphan by murdering his parents. This event has shaped Harry's life and determines to a large extent who Harry grows up to be. Another critic, Kim Nguyen, argues that "Harry is figured as and accepts his role as "the Chosen One" who is to act on behalf of the institutions in place, thereby mitigating the pain of too much freedom that is involved in being orphaned from his parents and institutions" (10). The possibility of finding a new place in society takes away the feeling of having been abandoned since this is a way for Harry to start anew. Harry is still marked by his tragic past, however, he is able to learn from it rather than make it an obstacle to his life.

The longing of a "normal" and safe life wakens inside of Harry when he comes to Hogwarts and sees his friends' family relationships. Harry wants to do something good with what is trusted upon him. A determination wakens inside of Harry as he realizes that his parents died for him, and he decides to live up to their reputation and become the greatest wizard of them all. It is usually when the fictional orphan/s finds something that is worth living for that the inner journey truly begins inside of the character/s. Harry's journey from being an oppressed outsider into becoming a rewarded hero takes place over the period of a school year in this first book. During this year Harry not only learns what true friendship and family feels like, but he also creates an identity of his own. He learns more about himself and where he comes from. He is able to do something not only for his own benefactor but for others as well. He becomes the legend he was destined to be from the day he was born, the person who one day will defeat his archenemy, Voldemort, and this is closely connected to him being an orphan.

Voldemort

Harry Potter's archenemy Voldemort is also an orphan, who spends his childhood in an orphanage after the abandonment by his parents. Voldemort spends the first 11 years of his life in utter social exclusion which, consequently, has major influence on his development. His abnormal behavior and cruel mind make him an outsider who no one wishes to acknowledge. This recurrent feeling of abandonment Voldemort experiences, firstly by his parents and secondly at the orphanage, puts him in a situation where he is incapable of feeling trust in people, especially in the adult world. Many researchers, such as Bowlby and Killén who works in the field of childcare stress the importance of being cared for and appreciated as a child in order to be able to mature and develop properly. A great many orphan characters in literary works, such as Hansel and Gretel, and Cinderella, generally learn to deal with their past when reaching adulthood, and after finding their identity and their home. Boll argues that, "Voldemort as the shadow archetype embodies the dark reflection of Harry's own desires: equally an orphaned child, Voldemort never evolved but is left stuck in the mindset of having been abandoned" (90). Voldemort is not capable of finding his inner peace because he has never been able to move on from the fact that he was undesirable since his parents chose to abandon him, unlike Harry whose parents did not want to leave him.

Before knowing about Voldemort's past it might be difficult to distinguish where his cruelty and anger derives from, however, after finding out about his parentless and loveless childhood it becomes clearer as a reader to understand his aversion towards social relationships. It is possible to see how Voldemort's malignity stems from jealousy towards people who have experienced the feeling of love that he never experienced. In accordance with this assumption, Wendy Stainton Rogers emphasizes Bowlby's discussion about maternal attachments in her article by pointing out the importance of giving children the love and understanding they need in infancy in order to be able to develop. Rogers is of the opinion that if these attachments fail at this crucial period of a child's life it is probable that the child in question will grow up to be a social failure: "If children do not have sufficient close contact with their mothers during the critical early stage of their development […] then they are likely to grow up into a dysfunctional adult, prone to criminality, unable to form close relationships and incapable of functioning as a well-adjusted member of society" (145). Voldemort seems like the prototype of Rogers' statements since he was failed by his mother during his "critical period", which is a major keystone to Voldemort's social development. Voldemort's upbringing was lacking important factors such as love, understanding, affection,

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moral and maternal security. Since Voldemort had none of these, Rowling gives the readers a clear image of how Voldemort is a prototype of someone who is failing in all that has to do with relationships. Voldemort simply does not know how to act in social environments. Voldemort becomes the image for the darkness of society. No matter how hard he tries to overcome the betrayal by his parents he is not able to move on from the feeling of having been abandoned.

By refusing to deal with the grief and inner void, Voldemort is, according to Simpson, unable to form any kind of social relationship. Simpson points out the importance of being able to mourn and accept death in order to be able to move on and become a functioning adult later on in life: "Only when they [orphans] have accepted the finality of death will they be free to establish a relationship with a surrogate" (152). Loss is part of everybody's lives which no one can escape from. However, when a child loses his/her parents they are put in a vulnerable situation since the dependence on the parents is so crucial in a child's life. Without the security that parents evoke for their children it is probable that the children will struggle growing up. One of the most critical elements when dealing with loss is, according to Killén to deal with the grief while it is prevailing. Dealing with the pain rather than ignoring it will increase the child's chances of being able to accept his/her situation. Liberation from the internal pain will not be possible if a child is not capable of mourning the loss of a parent. If the grief and pain is not dealt with from the start it is more likely that the child will develop an abnormal attitude and relationship with society. Voldemort never dealt with the loss of his parents which could arguably be the reason for his social exclusion and aversion towards other people. Voldemort was a neglected child during his entire childhood, both at home and at the orphanage, and rather than working with his internal struggle he kept all his emotions inside and tried to forget his past.

Psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott argues in his book *Deprivation and Delinquency* (1984) that it is possible for an orphan to stop having feelings for what happened to the parents if the memories are not kept alive. He continues to argue that a consequence of neglecting what has been will only leave the child with the frightening feeling of being alone in the world. Voldemort has no memories of his parents since his memories have been repressed and neglected all of his life. As a consequence he has nothing to live up to. Therefore, he is forced to create a life of his own. In researcher Nguyen article he argues that Voldemort's anger derives from the lack of parental love: "A never loved Voldemort is motivated by the lack of maternal sacrifice and paternal abandonment" (17-18). Voldemort is

not capable of moving on from his past because of the fact that he is not willing to forget what his parents did to him. The anger of being abandoned and unloved is the driving factor for Voldemort. It shapes him into the person he grows up to be. It is agonizing to see other people's happiness, which drives him even further into his insanity. Nguyen continues to argue that, "[h]is [Voldemort's] acts, his character, and his motivations are treated as if they are all due to maternal dereliction and paternal/institutional hatred" (21). Voldemort's anger and hate are consequences of the failing parental attachments in infancy.

Voldemort is afraid of being let down and abandoned again and, therefore, he uses terror in order to make people stay by his side. Voldemort becomes vindictive towards the people who have experienced what he never got to experience, which is love. As mentioned before, the ultimate reason for Voldemort's aversion towards Harry is arguably the love Harry's mother felt for Harry. Voldemort has never in his entire life felt a love as strong as the one Harry's mother felt for Harry, and Voldemort is therefore jealous of Harry. Even though Voldemort has deprived Harry of everything he had, he has not been able to take away the love Harry's mother felt for Harry when she died.

> 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 your very skin. (321)

Rowling points out the importance for a child to create the maternal attachment in infancy in order to be able to understand the meaning of love and affection towards others. This shows how damaged Voldemort is when it comes to social relationships. He cannot know what he never learnt from his mother.

Children are highly dependent on the social environment which means that if the social environment is failing, it is most likely that the child who grows up in this environment will fail as well. Social relationships within the environment shape people into who they will become. Voldemort grew up without a stabile social relationship with the adult world, and therefore he turned into an outsider in society due to his lack of knowledge. Since Voldemort

had nothing to fall back on he ultimately was pushed towards a life in social exclusion. Voldemort never had any guidance on how to behave and act around people and, consequently, he turns out to be the failed orphan. Killén argues in her book that society often classifies them as "difficult children". It is, thus, the grief and pain that separates the orphan from the rest of society since both the adult world as well as other children have a strange perception of the orphan. The orphan is destined to live a life as an outsider. Every child is different and every child handles grief and loss differently. It is therefore important for children to have adult support to help them get through the grieving process otherwise there is a high risk that the children will become introverted and socially disabled people later on in life.

Voldemort, as well as Harry, is on the one hand a stereotypical fictional orphan in a great many aspects. His childhood is filled with neglect, despair, coldness and cruelty, which are elements a great many writers tend to use when writing about orphans. But on the other hand, Voldemort does not share the heroic imagery many orphans achieve during their journey. He is, instead, the archetype of the evil and dark character of the story whose orphanhood has shaped him into becoming a torn human being. Voldemort is on a quest for revenge rather than trying to achieve the reward that the majority of fictional orphans are searching for. The default template for fictional orphan characters' reward is achieved when love, inner peace, or happiness is found. Voldemort, however, is not after the same reward. His idea of a happy ending is when he becomes the immortal master of the entire world. One possible reason for Voldemort's megalomania is that his life goal is avoid being abandoned again and therefore by becoming the ruler of the world he has complete control and will therefore not let people abandon him again. The power will be in his hands and he believes that people will have to obey him. Voldemort did not choose to be abandoned, or to have a shattered childhood, and since he had no influence over his early part of his life he becomes determined to have complete control when he is old enough to take care of himself.

Neville Longbottom

Harry and Voldemort are the two orphan characters who have received most attention from critics. However, there are other important orphans in the novel as well. One of these

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characters is Neville Longbottom. Neville is not an orphan per se, since his parents are still alive. However, they are incapable of taking care of him since they are mentally ill, and consequently, he is classified as an abandoned child rather than an orphan. At the first encounter readers have with Neville he is depicted as a rather anxious character. Anxiety is a common feeling that many abandoned children experience, which in many cases can make the children inhibited later on in life. According to Simpson, children who are abandoned by their parents in infancy run the risk of becoming reserved and diffident people later on in life, and consequently turn into people who are easily forgotten and neglected by the adult world. Neville is such a reserved character from the beginning of the novel who seems to reconcile himself with the thought of being dejected by both people of his own age, as well as by the adult world. This could be seen as a consequence of not being able to form the essential maternal attachment in infancy since he was taken away from his mother when she became unable to take care of him.

Neville's past is not too different from Harry's and Voldemort's. Neville's childhood was a childhood of neglect, and his confidence and belief in himself was continually lowered by his grandmother, who brought him up. Neville's past without strong and secure parental influence shaped his life and personality. The portrayal of Neville is of an introvert and shy character without faith and trust in himself. Neville Longbottom is not one of those characters who lets his emotions show to those closest to him. Instead, Neville is one of those characters who disguises his inner struggle because he does not wish for other people to be bothered with his problems. Neville's emotions are hidden behind a shield of quirkiness and clumsiness. This is a consequence of the lack of adult support during Neville's upbringing where he did not receive the care and love that he would have needed in order to become safe and secure within himself. Killén argues about the importance of the parents', or caretakers' perception of the child. If adults show love and respect for the child it is more likely that the child will grow up with confidence and self-respect. Children who grow up in uncaring homes run a higher risk of creating a distorted self-image. Neville's abandonment turned him into a cautious person who is unaware of his prospective future that lies ahead of him. Neville's neglecting grandmother strengthens his insecurity which, according to Killén, turns him into an introvert person with little, if any, self-respect.

Neville's grief makes him a highly vulnerable character, in contrast to Harry and Voldemort who learn to use their grief actively in one way or another. The most difficult obstacle Neville needs to overcome is himself. He needs to find faith and hope in himself in

order to be able to achieve his reward. The mistreatment from the adult world needs to be conquered in order for him to become whole and find his completeness. McEvoy argues that Neville is the simpleton of the story who readers tend to pity rather than seeing as a prospective hero, and it is his past mixed with his appearance that make him the misfortunate character. The first step Neville takes in the direction of success is when he stands up for his friends. As a result from his childhood he has learnt never to question people around him, but when he sees that he is capable of raising his voice in order for justice to be shown he comes one step closer to his life goal. Furthermore, in the end Neville is the reason why Gryffindor wins the House Cup because of his courage to stand up to his friends: "It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends" (329). It is not until Neville receives acknowledgement from the adult world on Hogwarts that he begins to gain trust in himself and sees his value and importance in the world.

Neville, as well as many other fictional orphans, wants to become the person who would have made their parents proud. He lives for the few memories he has of his parents which leads him into the path of becoming the hero of his own life. After coming to Hogwarts and making new friends Neville begins to grow and find his place in a social environment. The support and acknowledgement from his friends and teachers help him mature and come closer to his happy ending. Neville, as well as Harry, wants to show not only himself, but the distrusting people around him that he is capable of taking care of himself and survive despite the lack of parental support. As the story progresses Neville goes from being a shy and introvert character into becoming more and more courageous.

Neville is depicted as the anti-hero of the story since he is depicted as the victim of the story rather than the typical hero-like character that orphan generally takes on. Moreover, his bravery and courage are not shown until the end of the story. Kathleen McEvoy argues that, "[b]y the close of the series, Neville has moved far beyond the fearful, clumsy boy readers met on Platform Nine and Three-Quarters […] and his transformation illustrates how even ordinary people can becomes heroes" (218). Harry takes on the role of the typical fictional hero whereas Neville serves the role of the everyday-hero who is one among all of the ordinary people. As a result, he becomes a character to relate to because he provides the readers with a glimpse of hope by becoming the hero of his own life against all odds. Neville, thus, goes through the different steps a child needs to go thorough in order to come to terms with his situation in life. He is able to mourn the loss of his parents and gradually he accepts

his inner pain, which makes it possible for him to move on and eventually create a life of his own.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Rowling uses rather stereotypical characteristics for her orphan characters in her novel. Harry, Voldemort and Neville are archetypes of fictional orphan characters. They are mistreated, neglected and excluded by the adult world in the early part of their childhood. They grow up in isolated homes as outcasts without love and affection, which resulted in distrust in the adult world. The orphans are therefore forced to grow up quickly. However, Rowling points out the difficulties of developing without adult support. As a result, the importance of having parental or adult support in one's upbringing in order to be able to mature and create a mind of one's own becomes poignant in the novel. The orphans need to become strong independent people in order to develop. Both Harry and Neville learn to rise above their sorrow in order to find their inner peace, and completeness. They turn their vengeance into love. The love for their lost parents, and the love for their friends. Voldemort, on the other hand, is sadly left stuck in the mindset of being an orphan and is therefore never able to move on. Voldemort turns his vengeance into hate. Since Voldemort is filled with hate, as a result from his past, he is therefore incapable of doing anything else but damage. This is the major difference between Harry and Neville, and Voldemort. Harry and Neville learn to use their grief and anger to do something good and self-fulfilling, whereas Voldemort sets out to destruct and destroy.

Harry Potter and Neville Longbottom are embodiments of the archetypal hero-figure. Harry Potter could be seen as the classic hero-figure who is the savior of the story, whereas Neville, on the other hand, is the typical anti-hero. Voldemort is the complete opposite of a hero. Rowling, thus, creates a balancing act between these three abandoned characters by making three different dimensions of the hero figure in a typical literary orphan story. All of these three follow the pattern of setting out on a quest in order to achieve the ultimate reward, which, for orphan characters at least, generally means to find a place in the world they belong to. Obstacles are put in the way to obstruct them from being rewarded too

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easily. These obstacles are often surmounted with help from their friends, or followers. The last stage of the orphan's journey is when the reward is achieved. In Harry's and Neville's case they are rewarded with the acknowledgements from their newfound friends and teachers. Moreover they also found a place they belong to, Hogwarts. Voldemort on the other hand is without a reward, therefore, he must continue the search for his happy ending.

One reason for the major influence might be that it is highly relatable to many people around the world. The feeling of abandonment is something most people feel at some point is their life, and then to be able to escape into the world of another abandoned person might create hope. People want to become heroes/heroines of their own lives, and by seeing other lonely people survive and develop into prospective heroes/heroines might help some on the way to becoming the person they want to become. It becomes evident that fictional orphan stories have had such a major impact on the literary world because of the fact that inside our unconscious minds lay a connection with the feeling of being abandoned. Orphans seem to have continued to be a success in the literary world for both writers and readers. One of the most apparent factors for the success in literature is arguably the fact that orphans are the embodiments of loneliness and exclusion who are able to rise from the pain and achieve greatness in the end. Orphans offer an "everything is possible"-feeling which gives hope to people. Orphans do not only become the heroes/heroines of their own lives, they become the heroes/heroines of the readers' lives as well.

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