

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Components of Fantasy and Nightmare in the *Harry Potter* Series

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Accepted version published on July 1, 2026

 <https://doi.org/10.26572/ghr2601509>

ABSTRACT

Harry Potter is every child's must-read when in the young adult stage. Its popularity is passed down from one generation to the next. J.K. Rowling is said to have agreed that fantasy is not her genre of writing. Readers tend to find that Harry Potter failed to live up to the expectations of the fantasy genre. Rowling provides an account of how fantasy highlights everyday experience and an individual's standing in society. This paper examines the elements of fantasy in the Harry Potter series and how the genre is blended within the books and widely accepted by audiences across cultures. Rowling draws parallels between the Muggle and wizarding worlds and discusses capitalist society. Rowling uses bildungsroman and the school's story to make her books adore the element of fantasy. This restricts the scope of discussion about society, and the focus is clearly on Harry Potter as a character. Rowling wrote this book for herself; the author herself agreed. Thus, the target audience wouldn't be children alone. Rowling keeps focusing on the plot, which shows how the series stands out in children's literature.

Keywords: Fantasy, Young adult, culture, bildungsroman, wizarding world and secrets

FULL RESEARCH PAPER

Women writers chose to write for children because they are mostly the ones who spend time with children. Also, a woman is a child in herself. Children's literature was considered less significant than writing for adults, a decent job for women. Many women writers used children's literature to satirise patriarchal society. They no longer reproduced the values of the patriarchal society but challenged and subverted it. One such writer is J.K. Rowling. J.K. Rowling developed the Harry Potter series while on a train to London's King's Cross a decade and a half ago, and eventually seven books were published in the following years. The characters in the books are named after Latin words, also showing Rowling's interest in the language. *Harry Potter* is every child's must-read when in the young adult stage. Its popularity is passed down from one generation to the next. J.K. Rowling is said to have agreed to the fact that fantasy is not her genre of writing. Readers tend to find that Harry Potter failed to live up to the expectations of the fantasy genre. Rowling provides an account of how fantasy highlights everyday experience and an individual's stand in society. This paper examines the elements of fantasy in the Harry Potter series and how the genre is blended within the books and widely accepted by audiences across cultures. The paper considers two books from the series, *Philosopher's Stone* and *Chamber of Secrets*, which are Books 1 and 2, respectively.

Rowling draws parallels between the Muggle and wizarding worlds and discusses capitalist society. Rowling uses bildungsroman and the school's story to make her books adore the element of fantasy. This restricts the scope of discussion about society, and the focus is clearly on Harry Potter as a character. Rowling wrote this book for herself; the author herself agreed. Thus, the target audience wouldn't be children alone. Rowling keeps focusing on the plot, which shows how the series stands out in children's literature. Harry Potter doesn't fall under a particular genre as it embodies various genres to appeal to society. That is, a postmodern pastiche of genres.

In the series, the author clearly points out that the wizards don't have a particular concept, like a caste system, though some support pure-bloods. Some rules which are in practice in the Muggle world aren't the same as in the magical world. For instance, wizards can't make food in their world as the Muggle world does. Caste

system, gender and race were symbols of power and control in Britain. Books that both girls and boys once read were categorised. The publishers had in mind only gender, as Children's literature served as a tool to pass on society's intentions to the next generation. The wizard world that Rowling brought to life can be seen as a commentary on racial differences in reality. The first comment Rowling received for her books included the use of her initial K. This is an example of how far the world will go to welcome a female author to write for young boys. In the wizarding world, through self-interest, secrecy and difference in support, Lord Voldemort, Cornelius Fudge, and Rufus Scrimgeour attain power. Also, in *The Chamber of Secrets*, the fear of miscegenation at Hogwarts and Draco Malfoy's taunts about segregating 'Mud blood' such as Hermione serve as instances of power being deployed in the wizarding world, too. Ron Weasley comments, "Most wizards these days are half- blood anyway. If we hadn't married Muggles we'd have died out" (Rowling 89). Thus, the role of class within the ideology of 'purity' is established by the use of the adjective 'common ', and through Ron, Rowling mocks it.

Harry Potter can't be classified completely as a fantasy novel. They are readable at a stretch just because of the continuity they possess, which sometimes children find irresistible. Young readers also tend to get confused as there are no flashbacks to recall the happenings. Critics conclude that Rowling's *Harry Potter* series shall be a standard for the future definitions of many genres of Children's literature. Some of the elements of fantasy in the series include the plot, setting, characters, weather, and themes. *Harry Potter* is a story in which, before the action begins, the reader is told what will happen. The climax of each book carries an intense event which is resolved. A conflict is resolved after its aftermath.

In *Harry Potter*, there is an alternate universe. The Muggle world is set in London, but Hogwarts is in Scotland. Thus, it's a world within a world. *Harry Potter* series doesn't fit neatly into low fantasy or high fantasy. Thus, the distinction between high fantasy and low fantasy is a problem as far as *Harry Potter* is concerned. Writers generally choose this genre for escape from reality. Fantasy defamiliarises the familiar; the familiar becomes strange.

Some elements of fantasy include the setting of the books, which carry magical things or supernatural elements. Ghosts are just a presence in these series like other characters. In the *Harry Potter* series, *Platform 9 ¾* serves as a divide between the Muggle world and the wizarding world, as does Diagon Alley. Also, these gateways act as a divide in the capitalist society. The wizarding world has its systems just like the

real world. Also, the use of magical power and half-human, half-animal characters must be considered to enhance the series' fantasy elements.

The series uses a school setting, which helps the books incorporate elements of fantasy. It's rather the author's choice for setting. The co-educational school emphasises the value of academics for intellectual development. Rowling's series is a cultural narrative of both politics and education, through complex representations of teaching and learning for individual growth. At Hogwarts, the development of the mind precedes the person's physical growth. Ron's remark in *Chamber of Secrets* about the library shows this. Here is mutual respect for knowledge, as teachers and students sometimes exchange ideas. In the series, there is always a mentor figure, Albus Dumbledore.

One can find a study of an individual's growth in this series. That is, Bildungsroman. Harry's story is narrated right from the orphaned child to a person who sends his child to Hogwarts. The series is restricted to one's omniscient point of view. The series is increasingly concerned with the character than with other emotions and actions. Thus, it privileges psychological realism. Thus, Harry's double perspective, of being poor and rich, reveals class prejudice and ways of getting across it with humility, confidence, and sympathy.

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