



**HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS**

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## **From Zero to Hero**

*The Hero's Journey as Presented in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter  
Book Series*

**B.A. Essay**

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**May 2011**

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## **Abstract**

This essay aims to explore and explain the phenomenon of the Hero's Journey and the various archetypes known in folklore, and show the ways in which the Harry Potter series conforms to both subjects. The Hero's Journey is introduced, as well as two prominent authorities on the subject, Joseph Campbell and Christopher Vogler. The stages of the Hero's Journey are discussed in the order in which they have been put forth by Christopher Vogler in his book *The Writer's Journey*. More attention is devoted to the Return stage of the journey than the other stages, as it provides an interesting basis for further analysis in connection with the Harry Potter series. It offers up the chance to look at Harry's various returns from the world of magic, both in terms of each individual book as well as looking at the series as a whole. The topic then turns to the Jungian archetypes which are often used as analytical tools in folkloristics, and showing how they too are represented in the Harry Potter series. The archetypes are the building blocks from which all character creation stems, and it is no different with this series. A detailed analysis of the Hero archetype is presented, as it is important to understand the Hero's motivations. The issue at hand is how each stage is represented in the Harry Potter series and what effects they have on the story. It is a valid argument to say that the Harry Potter series conforms to the Hero's Journey structure, since what the plot boils down to is a young boy's quest to regain what has been taken from him, a family.

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## 1. Introduction

The concept of the Hero's Journey has been a staple of storytelling throughout the civilized world since the Ancient Greeks, when Homer wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In the Western world it has been shaped into stories dominated by white male heroes of a superior class who dominate and rule over lesser beings in one form or another, be they other men of a lower class, women, slaves or animals. An offshoot of those kinds of stories was developed for young budding Imperialists of the British Empire, in which their sense of adventure was encouraged and nurtured; such stories as *Robinson Crusoe* for example (Hourihan 2-3). This is the Hero's Story; "[t]he story of the hero and his quest, the adventure story, is always essentially the same. . . . It appears in countless legends, folk tales, children's stories and adult thrillers. It is ubiquitous" (Hourihan 2). The Harry Potter series is a prime example of this type of story structure, as what the plot boils down to is a young boy's quest to regain what has been taken from him, a family

This essay examines Carl Jung's archetypes and Joseph Campbell's concept of the journey a hero embarks on in works of fiction, and analyzes how these aspects are presented in the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling. A majority of the analysis will be based on *The Writer's Journey* by Christopher Vogler: since it provides a very accessible way of looking at the works of the other two. However it is also flawed in the sense that some of Campbell's stages are better defined than Vogler's: Campbell gives added weight to issues which Vogler seems to gloss over, since they are of less importance when looking at the Hero's Journey as it relates to movies. Due to the way the two present the issue in different ways, some aspects will be drawn almost unilaterally from one of their works, as

the other does not focus on that issue much or at all. I wish to examine the Hero archetype and the Hero's Journey stage of the Return in more detail than the others, as it is my view that they are more important in the Harry Potter series.

I will make reference to all seven Harry Potter books for the purposes of this essay, and when citing them I use the following abbreviations: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* will be *PS* and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* will be *DH*.

## 2. The Hero's Journey

The concept of The Hero's Journey or the monomyth is explained in great detail and tied in with mythic studies by Joseph Campbell in his seminal book on the issue, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). In the book, Campbell describes the various stages of the Hero's Journey, which consists of the journey the main character follows throughout a story and the various archetypes that characters in stories embody along the way. The journey is split into seventeen stages, which are typically grouped as follows: Departure, Initiation, and Return (Campbell ix). The three groupings of stages contain five, six and six stages respectively. Departure deals with the Hero's adventure prior to the quest, and includes the stages of The Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Supernatural Aid, The Crossing of the First Threshold and The Belly of the Whale; Initiation deals with the Hero's many adventures along the way, including the stages of The Road of Trials, The Meeting with the Goddess, Woman as the Temptress, Atonement with the Father, Apotheosis and The Ultimate Boon; and Return deals with the Hero's return home with knowledge and powers acquired on the journey in the stages of Refusal of the Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of the Two Worlds and Freedom to Live (Campbell 36-7).

The phenomenon of the Hero's Journey is further elaborated on by Christopher Vogler in his book *The Writer's Journey*, which presents a look at Campbell's work and also draws from the psychology of Carl G. Jung. Vogler attempts to modernize the theory by relating the ideas to contemporary storytelling. He re-imagines and shifts around Campbell's seventeen stages into twelve:



Ordinary World  
Call to Adventure  
Refusal of the Call  
Meeting with the Mentor  
Crossing the First Threshold  
Tests, Allies, Enemies  
Approach to the Inmost Cave  
Ordeal  
Reward (Seizing the Sword)  
The Road Back  
Resurrection  
Return with the Elixir. (Vogler 8)

There are major differences between the two categorizations, as Vogler points out early on (Vogler 6). A number of the aspects he outlines do not have a direct correspondence to Campbell's and vice versa. The most striking of those is how Vogler's The Road Back stage is meant to encompass six of Campbell's terms; Refusal of the Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Within, Crossing the Return Threshold, Master of the Two Worlds and Freedom to Live. Although slightly confusing at times when one is dealing with both works at the same time, it is understandable why Vogler chooses to change around some of the terms. His main focus is on the Hero's Journey as it appears in movies, while Campbell's draws its examples mainly from myth. For this reason, stages such as Atonement with the Father and Rescue From Without may not fit as well for the movie set-up or in fact with works of fiction such as the Harry Potter series, as they do when dealing with myths.

In *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* Campbell says of the monomyth that [m]any tales isolate and greatly enlarge upon one or two of the typical elements of the full cycle (test motif, flight motif, abduction of the bride), others string a number of independent cycles into a single series (as in the *Odyssey*). Differing characters or episodes can become fused, or a single element can reduplicate itself and reappear under many changes. (246)

A number of aspects in the Harry Potter series are indeed made more prominent cogs of the story. In the series, the most attention is given to tests of various kinds. Be it something as small as Harry struggling with his homework at Hogwarts which usually ends up giving him that little bit of wisdom that he needs for the bigger and life threatening tests, all of which are significantly prominent in the plot. Competing in competitions such as a game of Quidditch or the Triwizard Tournament are example of these bigger tests, or indeed Harry's mission to destroy Lord Voldemort. Supernatural aid and the role Mentors play is very important as well: since Harry is an adolescent Hero he needs the guidance of those older and wiser to help him along on his journey and to defeat the evil wizard Lord Voldemort, even though in the stubborn ways of an adolescent, Harry himself often feels that he knows best and can do it all on his own, without help. Rightly so he also often feels that his Mentors and Allies do not give him all the information he needs to succeed in fighting Lord Voldemort; out of some need to shield and protect him from the truth, they feel he is too young to understand. Professor Dumbledore repeatedly makes this mistake and usually repents it after each book's main battle with Lord Voldemort when he visits Harry as he is somewhere alone regaining his strength. Dumbledore learns from his mistakes in the end, as a major plot point of *The Half-Blood Prince* has to do with Dumbledore providing Harry

with a valuable first hand insight into the development of Lord Voldemort from a young boy who was a lot like Harry himself at the time to a man twisted and corrupted by evil, through the use of his Pensieve, a magical item which stores memories. This culminates with Dumbledore taking Harry along on a quest to retrieve one of Lord Voldemort's many Horcruxes<sup>1</sup>. It is evident that Dumbledore trusts in Harry now, as well as his own ability to lead him. Whereas before he had placed the responsibility of teaching Harry Occlumency in the hands of Professor Snape in stead of instructing Harry himself, which garners limited results and much resistance from Harry, now Dumbledore takes on the task of assisting Harry himself.

In his own words, Vogler says of the Hero's Journey that it "is a pattern that seems to extend in many dimensions, describing more than one reality. It accurately describes, among other things, the process of making a journey, the necessary working parts of a story" (xiv). The Harry Potter series accomplishes to re-use the same motifs over and over as the books go along. The books are always about the story of Harry's fight with Lord Voldemort, where Harry has to pass through certain tests and ordeals in order to succeed in beating Lord Voldemort or his emissaries. What keeps the story so gripping and interesting, apart from the aspect of magic, is the way Harry's battle with Lord Voldemort always escalates book by book, growing more serious as Harry grows older and is able to take on more responsibility and wisdom. As the stakes get higher so does the risk and in the end many of Harry's allies end up injured or dead when they try to bring him back to safety at the beginning of *The Deathly Hallows*. All of the books except for the last in the series, *The*

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<sup>1</sup> By committing an act which is especially evil, a wizard can split his soul and preserve a part of it in an object called a Horcrux. Voldemort made seven such Horcruxes.

*Deathly Hallows*, occur during a single year of Harry's studies at Hogwarts, and so the normal progression of the school year and events such as Christmas and end of year exams are repeated also, although the final exams do get cancelled on a few occasions after a showdown with Lord Voldemort has occurred.

The Hero's Journey is a motif which can be found within most stories in some sense. When it comes to the Harry Potter series an interesting dual action occurs, where the Hero's Journey can be applied both to the collection of seven books about Harry's life, as well as to each individual book in its own right. The whole of the Harry Potter series can be seen as the journey of the Hero Harry where he tries both to fulfill his destiny by destroying Lord Voldemort, as well as his personal quest to regain what he has already lost at the beginning of *The Philosopher's Stone*, namely a family.

The Hero's Journey typically begins with an insight into the Hero's ordinary world. This insight is needed in order for the significance of the disruption the Herald and/or the Call to Adventure brings for the Hero to make sense, as Campbell says, "[t]he familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand" (51). A change to the status quo has arrived, and the need for change is here. In *The Philosopher's Stone*, early on Harry's normal existence is disrupted when he learns of his magical pedigree and is presented with the Call to Adventure to attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. First he receives this call when letters addressed to him start arriving by various means to the Dursley household. The Dursley family takes him away to try and outrun them. Then the Call is given in earnest by the Herald archetype embodied by Hagrid, the half-man, half-giant gamekeeper of Hogwarts. As Gail Radley notes, Hagrid fits the bill of the Herald

perfectly, the unsightly image of a dark being who at first does not appear friendly (Radley 20-1). Often the Hero is faced with a Threshold Guardian at this stage, someone or something which the Hero must overcome in order to cross the threshold into the new world. Harry's whole view of the world is rocked to the core as he learns not only that there is indeed magic in the world, but that he himself is famous within this special world.

Campbell describes the Hero's Journey as involving the protagonist or the Hero of a given story receiving a Call to Adventure which

signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown. This fateful region of both treasure and danger . . . it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds and impossible delight. (58)

The Hero can often be reluctant to take on the journey and might even Refuse the Call to Adventure at first, perhaps out of fright or disbelief. But once the call has been taken up and the threshold crossed, the main adventure can begin, with the Hero entering what Campbell names The Belly of the Whale. In Harry's first case of receiving a Call to Adventure, there is at first a brief Refusal of the Call, which is in a way voiced more vehemently by Uncle Vernon than Harry himself. Once that is over, Harry is taken from his ordinary world or the magic-free existence he has been living so far with the Dursleys, into the special world of magic, represented first by Diagon Alley. Harry receives another notable Call to Adventure in *The Goblet of Fire*, when he is selected to compete in the Triwizard tournament, even when he is not even old enough to compete. The tournament brings a change to what would have otherwise been another ordinary school year for Harry.

Other Calls to Adventure include Harry joining the Gryffindor Quidditch team, trying to figure out who the heir of Slytherin is in *The Chamber of Secrets* and finding out the identity of the Half-Blood Prince in the book by that name. The adventures named here, apart from joining the Quidditch team, all involve the main plot of the book they occur in, and set it in motion.

Once he has entered the magical world, Harry becomes immersed in everything magical, for example while he is out shopping for his school things for the first time. During this journey the Hero meets and interacts with characters that take on the different roles of the archetypes that will be explained in the next chapter. The story which unfolds in *The Philosopher's Stone* sees Harry introduced to his special world of magic and his new school, Hogwarts. While there, he is faced with another threshold to cross and a Threshold Guardian blocking his way. This is the ceremony of Sorting, where new students are sorted into the four Hogwarts houses of Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff or Slytherin based on their individual strengths and ambitions, and placed among others of the same ilk. The matter is decided upon by the Threshold Guardian represented by the Sorting Hat. Harry faces this initiation into magical society and is rewarded with a place in Gryffindor house, “[w]here dwell the brave at heart” and whose “daring, nerve and chivalry / Set Gryffindors apart” (Rowling *PS* 88). Harry meets and makes allies and enemies at Hogwarts, his main rival being a young Slytherin boy by the name of Draco Malfoy. They are vastly different, as their house sorting show. Whereas Harry is a member of Gryffindor house, Draco is in Slytherin house, where its “cunning” residents “use any means / To achieve their ends” (Rowling *PS* 88). Harry is then presented with a Test. “This is a favorite phase of the myth-adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals. The hero is

covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region” (Campbell 97). In this case the task is to figure out who is attempting to steal the Philosopher’s Stone and to stop that person. Vogler comes up with the next step and names it The Approach to the Inmost Cave, “where soon they [the Heros] will encounter supreme wonder and terror” (Vogler 143). This stage is taken literally in *The Philosopher’s Stone*; in order to stop their enemy from gaining the Philosopher’s Stone, Harry, Ron and Hermione must enter a secret underground hiding place, a sort of cave, guarded by yet another Threshold Guardian, the three headed hound Fluffy. Once they are past him and venture underground the three of them face further Tests in the form of magical puzzles and tasks which they must solve in order to achieve the Reward of finding the Stone. Harry is the only one who makes it through these Tests, as the stakes have been raised with him having to leave Ron and Hermione behind (Vogler 149). Harry comes face to face with Lord Voldemort for the first time in the series and is tasked with the ultimate Ordeal of defeating him in order to stay alive. The Ordeal, or Ultimate Boon as Campbell names it is when the Hero faces the biggest and most dangerous challenge yet, for which the previous Tests have been preparing the Hero. The Ordeals in the Harry Potter series always revolve around Harry’s confrontation with Lord Voldemort or his envoys, and are mostly about this confrontation with the Shadow archetype (Vogler 163) which will be discussed in a later chapter. In *The Prisoner of Azkaban* Harry’s main confrontation is with Peter Pettigrew, his father’s old friend and ultimate betrayer. The villain often escapes from the Hero after the Ordeal is done, as happens in the *Prisoner of Azkaban* (Vogler 164). After that, another test presents itself as Harry and Hermione work to rescue and free Sirius. This stage is very much about the Hero witnessing or

experiencing something which gives him or her the opportunity for growth. It can be witnessing sacrifice, as Harry does in both *The Order of the Phoenix*, when he watches Sirius sacrifice himself in order to save him, and in *The Deathly Hallows* when Dumbledore dies (Vogler 159-60). The Hero can also appear to die at this stage, just like Harry does when he seems to sacrifice himself at the hands of Lord Voldemort in *The Deathly Hallows*, but is reborn as he wakes up with all around him assuming he is dead (Vogler 161-2). After an Ordeal comes the Reward. Rewards come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, anything from saving someone or simply saving yourself, like Harry does with Ginny, Ron, Hermione and Sirius, to objects which had been desired, such as the Philosopher's Stone. It can also come in the form of added wisdom and self-growth. Readers of the Harry Potter series, children especially, learn from this that "a struggle against severe difficulties in life is unavoidable, is an intrinsic part of human existence-but that if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets unexpected and often unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious" (Bettelheim 8).

An interesting Stage of the Hero's Journey in terms of the Harry Potter series is the one concerning the Return. Since the books form a continuum that spans seven years in Harry's life, each Return features a return to Number Four Privet Drive following a year's study at Hogwarts. As described before the Hero's Journey in Harry Potter can be looked at both in terms of each individual book, but also when looking at the story as a whole. The Return therefore functions in two different ways depending on how one chooses to see it, which will be examined next.



## 2.1 The Return

“W[hen] the hero-quest has been accomplished . . . the adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy“ (Campbell 193). Each book in the Harry Potter series typically ends with this stage, The Resurrection and Return With Elixir occurring before the Return in the Harry Potter series. Harry does perform a sort of Return With the Elixir each time he stalls Lord Voldemort’s return to power, and as such it is a needed step to ensure that the magical community remains safe, and he is more sure in his own worth and the value of the cause (Radley 23). That, however, is not a part of Harry’s return back to the Muggle world, as they do not know of the existence of magic, or vehemently refuse to accept the fact that it does, as is the case with Harry’s Aunt, Uncle and cousin.

The Resurrection frequently features Harry spending time in the Hogwarts hospital wing, recuperating after a face-off with Lord Voldemort. These pauses in the action serve the purpose of cleansing Harry of the evil (and oftentimes death) which has occurred previously (Vogler 198). This stage is also meant to show that the Hero has changed (Vogler 210). The nature of the Harry Potter series as being a circular story of seven books means that there is always change at the end of each book, as Harry grows up. If he would not change, the books would all revolve around the same child who is new to the world of magic. As the story goes on however, and the experiences of joy, pain, loss, love and friendship pile up, Harry must adapt and learn, or the quest is all for naught. Harry returns home at the end of all except the final book in the series, *The Deathly Hallows*. The first six books end with him finishing a year at Hogwarts and returning to Number Four Privet Drive for his summer holidays. These returns to the ordinary world, where his magic use is

typically either not permitted by magical law or frowned upon by his Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon, are not of Harry's choosing, though, and he would like nothing more than to remain in the special world of magic during his summer holidays and refuse to return, as does happen in Hero's Journey stories (Campbell 193). For his own safety, however, a return to the ordinary world of a Muggle existence is necessary. *The Deathly Hallows* ends with an Epilogue which flashes forward in time by nineteen years, in which Harry is in the process of seeing his children off to Hogwarts at Platform Nine and Three Quarters. It is an anomaly in that finally Harry is able to remain in the special world like he had always wished. These returns serve a vital purpose in the overarching continual story, although the reader usually does not know more of their effects until at the beginning of the following book. Harry is often left feeling isolated from the magical world, and while he is away from it all he does is long to be back there among others of his kind who understand, know and love him. These feelings fester into anger as the books progress, while at first the lack of communication was not intentional, as the story moves along other people in Harry's life such as Professor Dumbledore, Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, members of the Order of the Phoenix and Harry's godfather Sirius Black all ensure that Harry is kept in the dark about certain things happening in the magical community. He is left alone to brood and think on things, fostering in him the belief that he can do it all on his own at times, since no-one else seems to care as much as he does. Even during his time alone in the Muggle world Harry is tested and has to struggle against magical powers that may wish to do him harm, as becomes apparent in *The Order of the Phoenix* when Harry and his cousin Dudley are set upon by Dementors. Here as well as other times, Harry must deal with the consequences of using magic outside of school when he is underage, as it is banned by law. Incidents like

those only serve to increase Harry's bad moods and dislike of being stuck with the Dursley family each summer. As it turns out however, these returns are very important and necessary to keep Harry safe, and he is glad for the protection it offers him, even though he is also glad to be free of it in the end. In the Epilogue chapter of *The Deathly Hallows* Harry has finally regained what was taken from him by Lord Voldemort at the age of one, namely the state of being a part of a family unit. It has been what he has craved for so long, and by achieving it the series comes to an open ended close, with the reader left to ponder how Harry's life will continue from this point. All signs are positive however, as the last line of the book says that "The scar had not pained Harry for nineteen years. All was well" (Rowling *DH* 607).

### 3. The Archetypes

The two main authorities on the narratology of folk tales are Vladimir Propp and Joseph Campbell. Propp was a Russian Formalist critic, who by examining a hundred Russian folktales came up with a system of thirty-one functions that make up the building blocks of all folktales (Barry 218). As Propp suggested, his thirty-one functions can be grouped quite easily and naturally into spheres, and so it is more beneficial to look at the seven spheres of action as roles rather than types or characters, since a role is a more relatable concept in that sense (Barry 221). Propp also suggested that not all the functions, or all roles need to be present in every story, and characters frequently take on different roles based on what the story requires, for example the villains may also be false heroes (Barry 221-2). As Suzanne Lake points out, Sirius Black is “portrayed for the first two-thirds of Book Three as a horrifying half-human monster, relentlessly seeking Harry’s destruction, only to be revealed as his hero, friend, and benefactor in the end” (Lake 516). This is a good example of a character changing archetypes.

There is a plethora of different archetypes in existence, like the very common fairy godmother and wicked stepmother. These are the building blocks that folklore and fairytales are made up of, they are arranged in different ways in different stories, which explains why similar stories can be found in the folklore of several unrelated civilizations. Taking the popular fairytale of Cinderella as an example, there is a story native to Muslim women’s culture that was observed, recorded and analyzed by the folklorist Margaret Mills in Iran in 1978 (Mills 180-92). The story which is told during that ritual is strikingly similar to Cinderella. It tells of a girl who is tricked into killing her own mother by the evil

stepmother figure, which her father then marries. The evil stepmother has a daughter, the evil stepsister figure. These characters make life hard for the heroine. But then a fairy godmother figure appears in the likeness of a cow, which is believed to be the mother's spirit reincarnate. To summarize the further similarities to Cinderella, the good heroine is left at home with a menial task to accomplish while the evil stepmother and daughter attend a wedding, but the mother's spirit provides her with beautiful clothes and a ride to the wedding, and says she will complete the task for her. While there, she dances and is noticed by her family, but the stepmother does not believe it. They rush home, but on the way our heroine loses one of her shoes. The next day it is picked up by a prince who sets out to find its owner to wed whoever it fits. Even though the stepmother tries to hide the stepdaughter away and out of sight she is found and the shoe fits her, so she marries the prince. Even though it is not the exact same story they share enough similarities in order for them to seem like it to readers.

Propp chooses seven spheres of action to differentiate between the roles of different characters, while Vogler later puts forth eight archetypes. Vogler's eight are simply the most basic patterns, which are then often changed and expanded on to fit the need of each story in turn (Vogler 26-7). This chapter will explore each of Vogler's archetypes in turn, and how they have been presented in the Harry Potter series. They are the archetypes of the Hero, the Mentor, Threshold Guardian, Herald, Shapeshifter, Shadow, Ally and Trickster (Vogler 26). Since Harry Potter, as the Hero of the story, is the most important character, a sub-chapter will be devoted to the discussion of the Hero archetype, so the discussion here will start with the Mentor.

When one thinks of a Mentor, the image that very readily comes to mind is of an old man with a long white beard. It is no surprise then that Jung named this archetype the wise old man (Jung 35). The Mentor's "words assist the hero through the trials and terrors of the weird adventure. He is the one who appears and points to the magic shining sword that will kill the dragon-terror, tells of the waiting bride and the castle of many treasures, applies healing balm to the almost fatal wounds" (Campbell 9-10). Jung says of the archetype that it is "the superior master and teacher, the archetype of the spirit, who symbolizes the pre-existent meaning hidden in the chaos of life" (35). The Mentor's main role is to teach and provide guidance for the Hero. He or she often also performs the act of gift-giving, bestowing the Hero with valuable, often magical items. The purpose of these gifts is to aid the Hero on the journey (Vogler 40-1). The main Mentor of the Harry Potter series is represented by the old, kind, white bearded and half-moon spectacled headmaster of Hogwarts, Albus Dumbledore. He is very much a stereotypical mentor or wise old man figure. He has the token long white beard and glasses, which typically signify wisdom. Bearing the title of professor is also a marker that lets the reader know this man is someone to be listened to. Dumbledore gives Harry lots of items that help him on his journey such as the Invisibility Cloak his father owned and the Golden Snitch he caught, or rather almost swallowed in his first ever Quidditch match. These items prove to be very useful to Harry.

The Threshold Guardians appear at the crossings of the various thresholds of the Hero's Journey, which has already been previously discussed, with a few Threshold Guardians already named in the process. Their role is typically to present the Hero with a test or task, which must then be overcome in order for the Hero to be granted access to a new place, for example into the special world, or some place where the hero will face off

with his or her enemy (Vogler 49-51). “Such custodians bound the world in the four directions—also up and down—standing for the limits of the hero's present sphere, or life horizon. Beyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger” (Campbell 77). The reader of the Harry Potter series encounters a very good example of a Threshold Guardian in the goblins at Gringotts, the wizard's bank in Diagon Alley, an area of London only accessible to magical beings or those who know of their existence. They first appear in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, when Hagrid first takes Harry into his vault to retrieve Galleons, Sickles and Knuts, the wizards' currency, so Harry can buy his school things. Gringotts is deep underground, and the many vaults are accessible via train tracks, but the problem is that only the goblins can operate the carts. As Hagrid notes “Yeh'd die of hunger tryin' ter get out, even if yeh did manage ter get yer hands on summat” (Rowling *PS* 51). Harry encounters the goblins and Gringotts on a few other occasions throughout the series, the task always being similar, getting to vaults in Gringotts, either his own by legal means or to trick the goblins into getting him to another vault illegally.

Threshold Guardians can also appear as non-living things, for example bad weather or bad luck. They are in essence something or someone that hinders the hero from going on with the quest (Vogler 50). Their psychological function is deeper than simply to, as the name implies, guard a threshold. They often represent our internal demons, the things inside us which tend to hinder us from moving forward or making a change in our own lives. (Vogler 50-1). Other Threshold Guardians include the portrait of the Fat Lady who guards the entrance into Gryffindor tower. Only those who know the ever-changeable password may enter. A similar function is performed by the gargoyle statue located in front of the entrance to Professor Dumbledore's office.

Vogler is quite right in his description of the Herald archetype when he notes that “[l]ike the heralds of medieval chivalry, Herald characters issue challenges and announce the coming of significant change” (55). The Hero of any given story might have been getting along just fine, but a piece of information or a challenge brought by the Herald changes that world in a way that the Hero can no longer go by the status quo. This is The Call to Adventure. The first Herald figure Harry comes across is Hagrid. He arrives at the little hut where the Dursleys and Harry are hiding, intent on his job, given to him by Dumbledore, which is to bring Harry to Diagon Alley to shop for his school things. He ends up taking on the role of Herald when he learns that the Dursleys kept the truth about Harry’s origins and birthright as a wizard from him after his parents were killed by Lord Voldemort and Harry was placed in their care. Hagrid then tells Harry the truth of who his parents were and what he himself did in order to put an end to Lord Voldemort’s reign of terror. Harry has always felt out of place in the strictly Muggle existence of the Dursleys, and events in his life with them have occurred under strange circumstances to say the least, such as how he has been able to escape torture at the hands of Dudley and his friends, or the time he felt horrified by the haircut his aunt gave him and his hair grew back overnight. The news Hagrid brings him shift his world into place. Hagrid also brings further significant changes to Harry’s life, namely that he is meant to attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Later on Hagrid sheds the Herald archetype by telling Harry all sorts of things about the wizard world which children raised in a wizarding family would know, and exposing Harry to his own status as a famous wizard for the first time. By this imparting of knowledge and other actions such as giving Harry his owl Hedwig as a birthday present, Hagrid shows aspects of the Mentor archetype, and on their journey together he takes on



the role of the Ally archetype, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The Herald role can be taken up by a whole host of other archetypes, for example the Ally, the Mentor or the villain himself in issuing a challenge to the Hero. It might be an actual person, or simply some force or event, such as the start of wars or forces of nature which force people to action.

Shapeshifting and the archetype of the Shapeshifter is one not easily defined. Any other archetype can wear the mask of Shapeshifter if needed. An act of shapeshifting can be quite different in scale, and the element of magic in the books allows for its use for the purpose of disguise. Such acts can range from putting on a costume of some sort to disguise your appearance, like Harry frequently does when using his Invisibility Cloak, to when a Shadow appears friendly to gain the Hero's trust. Good examples of the latter in the Harry Potter series come in the forms of people such as Professor Quirrell, Professor Moody in *The Goblet of Fire* and Sirius Black at the beginning of *The Prisoner of Azkaban*.

Professors Quirrell and Moody come across as nice people at first, with Moody even gaining the status of an Ally of Harry's, until they are later revealed to not be who they've said they are, Quirrell being the host of what remains of Lord Voldemort and Moody actually being Barty Crouch Jr., having drunk Polyjuice potion in order to change into Professor Moody. Perhaps the greatest Shapeshifter in the Harry Potter series is Professor Severus Snape. His and Harry's dislike of each other is very deep-rooted in Snape's history. Harry's father James and Snape were bitter enemies while they were at Hogwarts, and when Harry joins the school Snape appears to pick up right where he left off with the father. He also used to be a Death Eater, which is what those who are loyal to Lord Voldemort are called. Throughout the books, however, Snape frequently does and says

things which go against his apparent hatred of Harry. On top of everything he has the unlimited trust of Harry's most influential Mentor, Professor Dumbledore. Snape embodies a great use of the Shapeshifter by Rowling, since the reader is never quite sure where Snape's loyalties lie. At the end of *The Half-Blood Prince* Snape seems to return completely to the dark side, re-joining forces with Lord Voldemort and even murdering Dumbledore. In *The Deathly Hallows*, Snape ends up dying at the hands of Lord Voldemort so Lord Voldemort can take possession of the Elder Wand. The whole story of what the Elder Wand is and why Snape dying for it are important is too long of a tale to be repeated here, but this is an important event in the grand scheme of the story as it is a great unselfish act. Harry realizes that Snape was an Ally all along.

The Shadow archetype is also a complex one to pin down. Usually people think of it simply as the villain or bad character, and that is a valid point of view since the enemy usually takes on this archetype, and in the Harry Potter series the evil wizard Lord Voldemort is a very powerful Shadow. The Shadow, on the other hand, is also realized in the internal or suppressed elements of repressed feelings left to fester there (Vogler 65). Harry feels guilty and responsible for the death of Cedric Diggory in *The Order of the Phoenix*. In the end these feelings are a source of encouragement for him, and help him become stronger in his quest to defeat Lord Voldemort. Harry and Lord Voldemort also share a strong mental connection, which, if left open, makes Harry susceptible to Lord Voldemort's thoughts and mood. It brings out a side in Harry that he does not like in himself. Vogler makes a valid claim when he writes that "most Shadow figures do not think of themselves as villains or enemies. From his point of view, a villain is the hero of his own myth, and the audience's hero is his villain" (68). Villains can be most dangerous when

they believe so strongly in what they wish to achieve, that they are nigh on impossible to oppose (Vogler 68). Such is the case with Lord Voldemort, he does not believe that Muggles should be allowed into Hogwarts, he believes that wizards should use their powers and knowledge to rule over them as superior men. Others share his belief, so it is easy for him to amass an army of followers. But he also uses his powers to bend people to his will.

A great parallel can be drawn up between two mighty evil figures of recent popular fantasy literature, that of Sauron in J.R.R. Tolkien's epic trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, and Lord Voldemort in the Harry Potter series. In his analysis entitled *The Quest Hero* which examines *The Lord of the Rings*, W.H. Auden states:

One of Tolkien's most impressive achievements is that he convinces the reader that the mistakes which Sauron makes to his undoing are the kind of mistakes which Evil, however powerful, cannot help making just because it is Evil. His primary weakness is a lack of imagination, for, while Good can imagine what it would be like to be Evil, Evil cannot imagine what it would be like to be Good. (57)

Just like Sauron dismisses the idea that anyone who possesses the Ring and knows what it can do should not wish to use it (Auden 57), so too Lord Voldemort frequently dismisses the fact that love is at all important. Having been deprived of it as a child he cannot see how something which he does not understand could have such power as to bring him down. As Dumbledore explains,

That which Voldemort does not value, he takes no trouble to comprehend. Of house-elves and children's tales, of love, loyalty, and innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing. Nothing. That they all have a power beyond his own, a power beyond the reach of any magic, is a truth he has never grasped. (Rowling *DH* 568)

This mistake ends up being his downfall in the end. Another trait that Lord Voldemort and Sauron share is the immense pleasure they derive from being “irrationally cruel since it [Evil] is not satisfied if another does what it wants: he must be made to do it against his will” (Auden 57). One of the staples of Lord Voldemort’s time of power was the common use of the Imperius curse, the purpose of which is to leave the thing it is cast on completely under the caster’s control. This is quite a direct way to achieve this aim of complete control over someone, and the power to persuade them to do as you wish; in Sauron’s case it was the fear he embodied which caused his minions to do his bidding.

Every Hero needs friends and helpers in the battle against the Shadow. That help comes in the form of Allies. They can be both humans and animals or indeed magical beings, and all have their representative in the Harry Potter series. Harry’s most trusted Allies are his sidekicks Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. The idea of sidekick Allies is very prevalent in Hollywood Western movies. The sidekick Ally is a person who follows the Hero on the adventures and more often than not put on the mask of the Trickster when they provide much needed comic relief on the otherwise grueling quest (Vogler 73). Ron and Hermione both, along with other Allies such as Hagrid, also serve the vital purpose of introducing Harry to the magical world (Vogler 72). Harry’s non-human and magical Allies include the house-elf Dobby, who feels indebted to Harry after he rescues Dobby from his servitude to the Malfoy family. It is mainly for these people that Harry is fighting; as they understand and sometimes share his burden, and it is to them Lord Voldemort and his followers usually attempt to inflict harm to hurt Harry.

The Trickster is another archetype with a relatively self-explanatory name. The main Trickster figure in the Harry Potter series comes in the form of Harry's godfather, Sirius Black. Sirius is someone whose development has in effect stopped in relative youth. The trauma of losing his best friend James Potter, not to mention the long time he spent in Azkaban for a crime he did not commit have left Sirius longing for his lost youth. He, along with James Potter, Remus Lupin and Peter Pettigrew got up to all sorts of mischief and troublemaking while they were students at Hogwarts, culminating in the creation of the Marauder's Map, a magical map of Hogwarts which shows all the activity going on in the school, as well as its many hidden rooms and passageways. This map proves to be an integral item in allowing Harry and his friends to sneak around the castle undetected. The role these four comrades performed before is taken up with gusto by Fred and George Weasley, Ron's older twin brothers. They get up to all kinds of mischief, in part aided by the Marauder's Map, and end up quitting Hogwarts before they graduate in order to start their own joke's shop, selling magical mischief toys to children.

Now our attention will turn towards Harry the Hero.

### **3.1 Harry the Hero**

The Hero archetype is personified in Harry Potter himself. The Hero's psychological function according to Freud, as explained by Vogler is to represent the Ego "the I, the one, that personal identity which thinks it is separate from the rest of the group" (Vogler 29).

The Hero has something special about him or her that sets him apart and even above others.

Campbell puts it well, saying:

[T]he makers of legend have seldom rested content to regard the world's great heroes as mere human beings who broke past the horizons that limited their fellows and returned with such boons as any man with equal faith and courage might have found. On the contrary, the tendency has always been to endow the hero with extraordinary powers from the moment of birth, or even the moment of conception. (319)

Heroes typically possess qualities which the audience can relate to and sympathize with while also being extraordinary in their own right; they should experience growth and typically learn from their experiences (Vogler 30-1). Vogler summarizes the essential purpose of the hero quite well, claiming that it all boils down to Sacrifice, “the Hero’s willingness to give up something of value ... on behalf of an ideal or a group” (32). If this sacrifice does not take place oftentimes the catalyst for all future deeds is removed and an important opportunity for the hero to grow is lost. When he first appears in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, Harry has already been through so much despite only being one year old. He has lost his parents at the hands of the evil wizard Lord Voldemort and faced death at the same hands and survived. By doing so he has unwittingly been the catalyst of some of the most powerful magic ever known. Already he has been through a major experience which defines him as a Hero, namely the sacrifice of a loved one. As Vogler notes “[m]any fairy-tales begin with the death of a parent or the kidnapping of a brother or sister. This subtraction from the family unit sets the nervous energy of the story in motion, not to stop until the balance has been restored by the creation of a new family or the reuniting of the old” (33). The Harry Potter series as a whole embodies this notion, as it begins with the loss of Harry’s parents and ends with him finally having founded a new

family with Ginny Weasley. Another major marker of the Hero is the way they deal with death, either by surviving it themselves, succumbing to it even if the death is only symbolic in order for them to be reborn, or by offering their own life in defense of the aforementioned greater good (Vogler 32). Harry does this on two occasions of note, the first time he survives Lord Voldemort's spell at the age of one, and a second time in *The Deathly Hallows*. When Harry falls at the hands of Lord Voldemort's Avada Kedavra curse, his consciousness is transported into a dreamlike state. While there, he runs into Professor Dumbledore, who had died at the end of the previous book, *The Half-Blood Prince*. Harry and Dumbledore discuss why it is that Harry is not dead. Stunned, Harry says "But I should have died — I didn't defend myself! I meant to let him kill me!" 'And that,' said Dumbledore, 'will, I think, have made all the difference'" (Rowling *DH* 567). By willingly sacrificing himself, and having every intention of dying, Harry is able to escape death.

Heroes are also very often flawed, which prevents us from placing them on a pedestal of perfection. These flaws sometimes cause the hero to make mistakes, which make them more human to the reader (Vogler 33-4). The flaws often place self-made road blocks in the way of the hero's progress, for example a bad temper can cause the Hero not to see that what is being done by other characters is also for the greater good. Harry's main flaws can be connected to his status as an adolescent hero. He is often quick to get angry with his Allies for one reason or another, and simple misunderstandings which could be cleared up by thinking things through before acting or expressing oneself are at the root of Harry's problems. He often feels, and it turns out to be the case, that his Mentor figures

keep information from him because he is too young to either be able to handle or understand.

An interesting aspect of the Harry Potter series is the struggle Harry goes through in dealing with the fact that he and Lord Voldemort are in fact not all that different. For one thing they are both half-bloods<sup>2</sup> and orphans who were raised in Muggle environments, not knowing they were wizards. Another curious thing which connects them is their wands, which turn out to both have a phoenix feather as a core. The two feathers originate from the same bird, Dumbledore's phoenix, Fawkes. The two wands sharing a core means that they can not kill the owner of the other one, they can hurt but never kill. Harry and Lord Voldemort are also both Parselmouths, the rare ability of being able to talk to and understand snakes, and while Lord Voldemort was a proud member of Slytherin House during his time at Hogwarts, where all of the evil witches and wizards who are educated at Hogwarts seem to end up, Harry resents Slytherin and the fact that the Sorting Hat suggested he be placed there himself. Harry has a hard time accepting these similarities in their characters, since he considers everything about Lord Voldemort to be evil, the fact that they are indeed so similar makes him doubt himself. As the quote from *The Deathly Hallows* above showed and what Harry has to figure out over the course of the seven books, and what the eventual moral of the series ends up being is that it is not what we are that shapes how we turn out in life, it is the choices we make. Lord Voldemort's main flaw is that he does not understand love, having never enjoyed the basic form of it in unending parental love himself he is incapable and in a sense unwilling to love anyone or anything other than himself. Harry on the other hand grows up in what feels like an unloving

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<sup>2</sup> A term referring to persons who have one Muggle parent and one pureblood wizard parent.



environment with the Dursleys, but when it all comes down to it his aunt does love him, since she could have turned him out instead of taking him in as a child, and Dudley ends up not really wanting to nor understanding why they have to leave Harry behind in *The Deathly Hallows*. The final exchange between the pair shows exactly how far they have come from the pre-Hogwarts days of Dudley and his gang being menaces in Harry's life:

“I don't think you're a waste of space.”

If Harry had not seen Dudley's lips move, he might not have believed it. As it was, he stared at Dudley for several seconds before accepting that it must have been his cousin who had spoken; for one thing, Dudley had turned red. Harry was embarrassed and astonished himself.

“Well ... er ... thanks, Dudley.”

Again, Dudley appeared to grapple with thoughts too unwieldy for expression before mumbling, “You saved my life.”

“Not really,” said Harry. “It was your soul the Dementor would have taken ...”

He looked curiously at his cousin. They had had virtually no contact during this summer or last, as Harry had come back to Privet Drive so briefly and kept to his room so much. It now dawned on Harry, however, that the cup of cold tea on which he had trodden that morning might not have been a booby trap at all. Although rather touched, he was nevertheless quite relieved that Dudley appeared to have exhausted his ability to express his feelings. After opening his mouth once or twice more, Dudley subsided into scarlet-faced silence. (39)

As much as the two have bickered and fought over the years, they are as close to brothers as they can be, and the thought of being parted confuses Dudley. He is obviously not very apt at expressing his feelings on this issue, but the simple gesture of leaving a cup of tea outside Harry's door shows that he does care. Although others do not seem to understand the true meaning of Dudley's words, they resonate to Harry, which is what is important.

It should be obvious from examining the descriptions of the Hero archetype outlined above that Harry Potter is a prime example. What's more is the fact that Harry fits the mold of the adolescent Hero. Stories about adolescent heroes are shaped by the protagonist's age, and typical rites of passage are a staple in such stories. Bruno Bettelheim notes that "[t]he fairy tale proceeds in a manner which conforms to the way a child thinks and experiences the world; this is why the fairy tale is so convincing to him" (45). Such tales might not resonate as well with adults who have seen more and know more than children. But a coming-of-age story like Harry Potter is a great way for children to experience the growth along with the Hero. It provides the child reader with the ability to draw parallels to his or her own life to the broad happenings of the story. Among the rites of passage represented in the Harry Potter series are a number of firsts and realities like going to school, making friends, losing family and/or friends, belonging to a gang, first love, first kiss and first heartbreak. Heroes do not grow old, there is no hint at a future after the adventure is over "because, for him [the hero], only the journey and the struggle are real" (Hourihan 74). This is true of the Harry Potter series, as even though Harry matures over the course of the seven books and grows older, were it not for the Epilogue at the end of *The Deathly Hallows*, Harry would never truly grow old.

## 4. Conclusion

A journey can take many shapes and lead in a host of different directions, with just as many outcomes. In content, tales can be as diverse as they are many. But in structure, a trend has emerged through the ages and dominated the world of fiction across the globe. That is the Hero's Journey. It describes a pattern which stories tend to conform to in an almost universal fashion. Those are the stories where a Hero or protagonist goes out on a quest, leaving behind the world he or she has known to enter into a world previously unknown. While on this journey the Hero must face difficulties and perform tasks that test his or her strength and resolve. The ultimate goal of the quest is to defeat an enemy, a Shadow who must be stopped. Along the way the Hero encounters Allies and receives help and guidance from Mentors. When the Shadow has been defeated the Hero is faced with a choice, to return back to the old, familiar world, or stay in the new exotic world. The Hero, his Allies and Mentors and the enemy Shadow are a few examples of a multitude of archetypes which exist to help categorize the different characters in a story. They shed light on the different functions a character performs and helps the reader understand their purpose.

The analysis above has aimed to explain the process of the Hero's Journey and its archetypes as they relate to J. K. Rowling's seven book series on the boy wizard Harry Potter. The Harry Potter series is a great example of the ways in which the Hero's Journey and archetypes are presented in stories. The books have a dashing young Hero in Harry Potter himself and a compelling and complex Shadow to oppose him in Lord Voldemort and various other underlings of his who strive to bring Harry down. Harry has his Allies in his school friends Ron and Hermione to name but two, as well as other witches and wizards

who identify themselves on the side of good and oppose Lord Voldemort. Strong Mentor figures show up as well, most notably so in Professor Albus Dumbledore. As well as containing a number of other archetypes, the story lends itself seamlessly to an analysis based on the Hero's Journey. Harry must leave the world without magic he has known for the first eleven years of his life, and cross a threshold into a new world where magic is very much real. There he has to learn how to survive in this new world, all the while living with the threat Lord Voldemort poses to him. Harry faces tasks and trials which ultimately prepare him for the Ultimate Boon or Ordeal of a showdown with Lord Voldemort or his allies. After that battle is won and Voldemort defeated Harry returns, somehow wiser or better off after the Ordeal than before. His status as an adolescent hero matters to the story, since it marks his development and attitudes, often with detrimental results. The fact that Harry returns back to Number Four Privet Drive at the conclusion of six out of seven books also matters, as the returns serve to isolate the Hero and bring him outside of his preferred place of existence. They also serve as a setup to the adventures and dangers which are to follow.

Bruno Bettelheim connects the attraction and need for fairytales for children with the fact that they need a safe way to experience the world, without actually experiencing it. Fairytales provide an excellent platform for this, as

[t]he fairy-tale hero proceeds for a time in isolation, as the modern child often feels isolated. . . . The fate of these heroes convinces the child that, like them, he may feel outcast and abandoned in the world groping in the dark, but, like them, in the course of his life he will be guided step by step, and given help when it is needed.

(Bettelheim 11)

The Harry Potter series has succeeded in doing just that for millions of children worldwide, the appeal of the story is universal.

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