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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

**J. K. Rowling's inspirations in particular children's literature works  
for *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone***

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I confirm that this thesis is my own work written using solely the sources and literature properly quoted and acknowledged as works cited.

České Budějovice .....2023

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Eliška Křížová

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## **Anotace**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je určit, jakými prvky dříve napsaných děl dětské literatury se J. K. Rowlingová inspirovala při psaní prvního dílu série Harryho Pottera – Harry Potter a kámen mudrců. První tři kapitoly mé práce se zaměřují na teoretický kontext a definování žánrové literatury a dětské literatury a její historie. Čtvrtá a pátá kapitola mé práce je analýzou prvků, které měly vliv na vznik prvního dílu Harryho Pottera – jeho žánru, konceptu, postav a jejich vztahů. Šestá a sedmá kapitola zakončují tuto práci poznatky o tom, jaký vliv měly knihy o Harrym Potterovi na dětskou literaturu obecně a také na způsob, jakým se J. K. Rowlingová postavila k propagování Harryho Pottera jako značky.

První kapitola mé práce se zaměřuje na definování pojmu ‚žánrová literatura‘ a na to, jak je na žánrovou literaturu pohlíženo různými kritickými pohledy. V druhé kapitole se nachází definice dětské literatury společně s výčtem jejích žánrů a typů, přičemž poslední část této kapitoly se věnuje tomu, jaký účel, kulturní význam a využití dětská literatura má. Třetí kapitola je historický přehled toho, jak se vyvíjela dětská literatura v Británii od počátku 19. století až do současnosti. Čtvrtá kapitola pokračuje analýzou původu a vlivů žánru a fantasy světa první knihy Harryho Pottera. Pátá kapitola je zaměřena na to, jakým způsobem jsou ovlivněny jednotlivé postavy v Harry Potter a kámen mudrců a jaké prvky z konkrétních děl jiných autorů byly inspirací pro Rowlingovou při psaní tohoto dílu. V šesté kapitole nalezneme způsoby, jakými knihy o Harrym Potterovi ovlivnily svět dětské literatury a sedmá kapitola pojednává o tom, k čemu je dobrý merchandising, a jak se J. K. Rowlingová postavila k tomuto způsobu propagování Harryho Pottera jako značky.

**Klíčová slova:** Harry Potter, J. K. Rowling, fantasy, inspirace, dětská literatura, Harry Potter a Kámen mudrců

## **Abstract**

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to determine which elements of previously written works of children's literature have inspired J. K. Rowling when writing the first instalment of the *Harry Potter* series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. The first three chapters of my thesis focus on the theoretical background and definition of popular fiction and children's literature and its history. The fourth and fifth chapters of my thesis contain an analysis of the origins and influences of the genre, fantasy world, and also the particular characters and their relationships in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Chapters six and seven conclude this thesis with insights into the influence the Harry Potter books have had on children's literature in general, as well as the way in which J. K. Rowling has approached the promotion of Harry Potter as a brand.

The first chapter of my thesis focuses on defining the term 'popular fiction' and how it is viewed through different critical perspectives. The second chapter provides a definition of children's literature, a list of its genres and types, and the last part of this chapter studies the purpose, cultural benefit, and use of children's literature. The third chapter serves as a historical overview of how children's literature has developed in Britain from the early nineteenth century until today. The fourth chapter continues with an analysis of the origins and influences of the genre and fantasy world of the first *Harry Potter* book. Chapter five focuses on where Rowling's inspiration for particular characters in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* could come from, pointing out specific works by other authors where these characters probably originated. Chapter six specifies the ways in which the Harry Potter books have influenced the world of children's literature, and Chapter seven discusses what merchandising is good for and how J. K. Rowling has approached this way of promoting Harry Potter as a brand.

**Keywords:** Harry Potter, J. K. Rowling, fantasy, inspiration, children's literature, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

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## Introduction

J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels are known all over the world today and are loved and praised (as well as hated and criticised) by millions of people of all ages. But it was not an easy path for Rowling to find and convince the right people to publish her first book of the series. After spending almost six years writing it, she received financial support and encouragement from the Scottish Arts Council in the form of £4000 in order to help her keep writing because of the potential they saw in her book. This helped her to clearly plan out the sequels and finish the first book (Eccleshare 7).

The first agent as well as the first publisher denied her book before she was taken on, on a second attempt, by the agent Christopher Little. Little spent a year sending the book to different publishers and it was rejected 12 times, mainly because they thought it was too long, before finally being sold to Barry Cunningham, who was then editorial director of Bloomsbury Children's books. This was the start of an incredibly successful series that continues to entertain children and adults across generations (Eccleshare 7).

It has been almost 26 years since the first novel of the Harry Potter series was published.

Since then, the series has triumphed with seven books, eight blockbuster films, 500 million copies sold worldwide, and a brand value of \$25 billion (Dh91.8 billion), according to the US-based business website Money.com. The books were even translated into over 67 languages, and led their author, British writer J. K. Rowling, to become the first billionaire author (Nayeem).

But the phenomenon goes beyond books and movies, as several video games have also been released, for example, the newest one *Hogwarts Legacy*, which has taken the Harry Potter fandom by storm, managed to “earn \$850 million in global sales and moving more than 12 million units in just its first two weeks post-launch on PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X|S and PC, according to numbers released Thursday by the video game company” (Maas). And there are



many more Harry Potter themed items you can get and places that you can visit, and it proves that this phenomenon keeps on being relevant and successful, at least concerning the terms of profitability.

In my bachelor's thesis, I would like to go to the core of Rowling's both probable and acknowledged inspiration when writing the first book of the series and point out how Rowling has used and transformed the elements of already-written children's literature works by different authors to her *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* book.

In the first part, I would like to explain the term 'popular fiction' and present a couple of critical views on popular writing. I will then focus on defining the genre of children's literature, describe its different types and subgenres, and also identify the cultural benefit, purpose, and use of children's books.

The next part will summarise the history of British writing for children from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until today, pointing out some of the most influential works in this field.

The fourth and fifth chapters of my thesis will define the origins and influences of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. The fourth chapter will focus on elements of other school story and fantasy books that could have influenced Rowling when creating the world of Hogwarts, while the fifth chapter will analyse the origins and influences of particular characters and their relationships in the first Harry Potter book.

Chapter 6 will highlight the main ways in which the *Harry Potter* books have changed the world of children's literature, and in Chapter 7, I will explore how Harry Potter was promoted as a brand, especially in the form of merchandise items, throughout its history and whether its marketing tactic for merchandising its products has endured to this day.

The primary output of my thesis should be a comparison of what Rowling has taken from other genres and particular works when writing Harry Potter, and which elements are her own inventions.

# 1 Popular fiction

## 1.1 Defining popular fiction

In the book industry, the term ‘popular fiction’ refers to a set of fictional works that are written with the intention of falling into a certain literary genre in order to appeal to readers and fans who are already familiar with that genre. The reader simply knows what to expect from popular fiction genres and returns for similar types of books since he or she knows it is a safe bet that they will enjoy it. That would be one of possible definitions of this genre, however, as is customary in literary genres, even popular fiction does not have one clear object of study, and therefore it cannot be precisely defined. Depending on its cultural and geographical situation, popular fiction has changed and is continuously changing and developing over time.

According to Glover and McCracken, the late nineteenth century is identified as “the period when the genres that constitute so much of popular fiction emerge; but [they] recognise that the reception of these genres is in a state of continuous evolution” (1). If we were to categorise which genres of popular fiction had their upsurge in the late nineteenth century, genres such as mystery, detective fiction, romance, horror, thriller, adventure, science fiction, and fantasy would make it to the top of the list. Mystery and detective fiction is closely tied to names such as Edgar Allan Poe or Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose *Sherlock Holmes* books continue to be popular, and his stories are being produced in different forms until today. Besides for detective and mystery fiction, Edgar Allan Poe is also well known for his horror stories, for example, *The Fall of House Usher*, *The Black Cat*, *The Pit and the Pendulum* and many more. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* are another iconic horror novels of the nineteenth century. One of the greatest romance genre authors is Jane Austen and her novels *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, or *Persuasion*. These and many other authors and their works from the nineteenth century remain to be relevant until today and are inspiration not only for other popular fiction books, but also movies and other adaptations of the well-known stories. The

genre of children's fiction also had its breakthrough, as described in detail in the third chapter of this thesis.

However, there are also new forms and genres of fiction emerging, as our society and the topics going on in it are developing and constantly changing. The effective relationship between popular fiction and new media technologies, such as radio, cinema, television, and, of course, the internet, has played a crucial role in the evolution of genre fiction, and the view on these genres has also gone through a transformation over time.

If we take a look at the current New York Times Best Sellers List (to the date 18 March 2023), we can see that six out of the top ten best-selling paperback trade fiction books on the list are books by the author Colleen Hoover, which fall into the romance, new adult, and young adult fiction genres. "Many of Hoover's plot lines involve emotionally intense situations including sexual assault, surviving trauma, infertility and abusive relationships" (Cadden). A big part of Colleen's work success comes from short video reactions that can be found on TikTok, one of the most used social media sites today, where under #BookTok her fans react to certain parts of her books, mainly erotic scenes and narrative twists. As with everything, there are people who love her style of writing, and there are also people who despise it and say that it is not okay for young girls to read her work because it features problematic abusive relationships and romanticises it. "Not since E.L. James's *Fifty Shades* saga has there been an author's work as simultaneously beloved and derogated as Hoover's" (Hoepfner). This result suggests that at the moment romance or new adult fiction books dominate the US market, and it proves the fact that the Internet and social networks are nowadays the key factor in their marketing success.

The possibility of selecting repetitive topics and similar motifs in these weekly charts is offering another point of view on understanding popular fiction. According to this approach, there is only a limited number of genres or forms of narrative entertainment, such as suspense,

romantic relationship problems, physical horror, or speculation about the future, upon which popular fiction is mainly based. It is these repertoires of schemes that efficiently shape their audiences by using fictional lures that ensure that their audiences are hooked into the stories so much that they feel the need to come back to them repeatedly at regular intervals (Glover and McCracken 2).

“In one of the earliest analytic surveys of science fiction, *New Maps of Hell* (1960), the novelist Kingsley Amis identified this type of pleasure-seeking as a type of addiction that characteristically begins in adolescence” (Glover and McCracken 2). According to his argument, it is necessary to examine the essence of the intense fixation in order to get to the core of any given genre. Although Amis’s insistence on finding particular addictive elements of genre reading is somewhat outdated, there are certainly groups of readers that we today call ‘fans’ who create whole ‘fandoms’ of specific types of books (Glover and McCracken 2).

Of course, it is unavoidable to make a point about the nature of the audience of popular fiction not being uniform and stable but quite the opposite - very variable in terms of age, gender, social or ethnical background, etc. When it comes to the aforementioned success of Colleen Hoover’s work, there can be a general assumption made that her type of audience is vastly composed of teenage to young adult and adult female readers. But that does not have to specifically mean that because her books rule the US best-seller charts today, it is now only this particular group of people that reads popular fiction – there always needs to be a context.

Therefore, it would also be inaccurate to assume that sales and commercial success are the only indicator of the ‘popular’ in popular fiction. The political and cultural history of the concept of ‘popular’ is much longer and more complicated, and it has also influenced the ways people understood popular fiction. According to Morag Shiach (1989), as cited in Glover and McCracken (2012) “‘popular’ first began to appear in sixteenth-century legal contexts, referring to rights or prerogatives that were available to everyone, as in the concept of ‘popular

government' or government by all the people and not just some" (3). Soon, the usage of this word became suspicious to members of the political class and, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the phrase 'popular and ambitious' was a label for someone deceitful and untrustworthy, as well as 'popularity' was perceived as a negative term for "gaining influence over people in order to serve one's own nefarious political ends" (Schiach 23). In accord to Glover and McCracken:

[a]t the same time, the notion of the popular was inverted and disvalued, as when the writer Jonathan Swift described riots and protests as 'popular commotions', so that the 'popular' signified what is 'low' or 'base', in the sense of vulgar, degraded or open to manipulation (3).

## **1.2 Critical view on popular fiction**

As it was stated previously in this thesis, the term popular or genre fiction generally refers to a number of genres which tend to form strong following of readers who can either in some way relate to or simply just enjoy their plots, and by that they support its commercial profit.

In a College English journal entry called *Popular Fiction as Liberal Art*, its author William W. Stowe presents two diverse views by two different groups of critics on popular fiction, particularly on detective fiction. The first group consists of critics such as Max Horkheimer, T. W. Adorno, Dwight Macdonald and Edmund Wilson and represents the first 'elitist' view, and the second group including Richard Slotkin, John G. Cawelti and Janice Rad are representatives of a view that could be best called the 'populist'.

By the first group, referred to as elitists, popular fiction is usually considered a bad art or a lower form of literature; hence, only if they dare to call those works a literature. Citing Edmund Wilson's opinion on detective fiction: "My experience with this second batch of novels has, therefore, been even more disillusioning than *my* experience with the first, and *my* final

conclusion is that the reading of detective stories is simply a kind of vice that, for silliness and minor harmfulness, ranks somewhere between crossword puzzles and smoking” (395, as cited in Stowe 646). In addition to Wilson’s, also Dwight McDonald’s attitude towards the value of popular fiction is mainly based on his own assumed superior taste. “Masscult ... doesn't even have the possibility of being good [because it] offers its customers neither an emotional catharsis nor an aesthetic experience” (Macdonald 4, as cited in Stowe 647). Again, Macdonald’s opinion is based only on his personal experience, it is purely subjective, and yet he transfers this view to general mass culture because he assumes that since he cannot feel any emotional or aesthetic value, no one can.

More reliable theoretical viewpoints on the aesthetic worth of popular fiction and popular culture in general have critics Max Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno. In their opinion, the products of the ‘culture industry’ have been deprived of the flexible wholeness that comes from oppositions between parts of the artistic composition and were replaced with artificial and conventional completeness. “The whole and the parts are alike; there is no antithesis and no connection. Their prearranged harmony is a mockery of what had to be striven after in the great bourgeois works of art” (Horkheimer and Adorno, as cited in Stowe 647). Although their judgement may have an origin in their antipathy to popular culture, Horkheimer and Adorno’s criticism is not dependent on antipathy for its theoretical foundation. Instead, it suggests an explanation of what is vital about bourgeois art and then displays why it is impossible to reproduce this vitality in an industrially produced and artificially formulated form of art which is not based on individual and creative thinking. The thing that they do not even take into consideration is that popular fiction as well as any other modern form of popular art could have its own vitality, which can certainly differ from the one of bourgeois art, but does not necessarily have to be less important to it (Stowe 647).

The second group of critics, the 'populists', has an even more complex way of approaching popular fiction. Richard Slotkin's notion is based on his belief that myth is a broad structure of meanings and metaphors for experience that is developed collectively and automatically and based on "a protagonist or hero," "a universe in which the hero may act," and "a narrative . . . in which the interaction of hero and universe is described" (Regeneration 8, as cited in Stowe 650). Popular fiction is in this case perceived as an expression of myth, rather than its plain transcription, in a more comprehensible form for people so that they can use it to make essential relationships with people and the world around them. The interaction between cultural myth, literary production (writing), and literary consumption (reading) creates a base of Slotkin's approach to popular fiction (Stowe 650). According to Slotkin, his approach

will not allow texts to appear as perfect expressions of a 'national mind' but will treat them as events in which diverse pressures of personality, ideology, and generic form leave their mark on the product. ... Once produced and distributed, their mythology becomes part of a dialectic of cultural and social pressures, which it may strongly influence, but which does not consist solely of itself (The Fatal Environment 31).

The myth is not a restricting mechanism, but an adaptive mechanism that can be used as a tool for living and understanding, as it is represented in popular culture (Stowe 650).

John G. Cawelti presents in a way similar view to that of Slotkin. His argument is that there is only very small chance for any specific popular story to produce some entirely new form of thought or behaviour. He believes that fiction is at best (or worst) able to strengthen or support some of the patterns of behaviour or thought, as cited in studies about the effect of propaganda, and even this practical effect of fiction is, in fact, restricted to our set of stories which are determined by the culture we live in and which we bear in our minds, and they provide patterns for our actions and ideas (Stowe 651). "The theories that would treat fiction as the outward manifestation of "some underlying social or psychological dynamic" (Cawelti 24, as

cited in Stowe 651) he sees as probably undeniable, but not particularly enlightening” (Stowe 651). As Cawelti implies by this argument, if it is true that social and psychological aspects that people are not naturally aware of affect or even determine human thinking and behaviour, then it needs to be true in the same way about popular fiction which is also a section of human thinking and behaviour. But this presumption already includes its outcome, as he says, because the arguments circulate among each other and, therefore, do not reveal anything compelling.

Popular fiction is thus seen by both critics, Slotkin and Cawelti, as representative of some form or forms of experience gained in the culture of its producers and consumers. Such fiction, at its most significant, may illustrate cultural dilemmas in a form of a narrative in order to narratively resolve them, and also it provides examples for beneficial or even heroic acts in society. Of course, popular narratives can only provide these functions if the exemplary situations and their resolutions are admirable and worthy ones.

Not only academic reading, but all reading, happens in a ‘critical climate’, and the possibility of changing this climate raises the suggestion of the possibility of influencing popular reading. Common justification for studying popular culture, and one of the utterly valuable intentions of media and cultural studies generally, is the faith in this kind of reeducation. However, it is only limited to the readers who had been in some way influenced by critical reading or who have learnt it themselves, which up until now is not everyone, even for all the educational system efforts. “Plenty of uncritical popular fiction embodies the same patterns of sexist, racist, jingoistic behavior, and plenty of readers-not themselves conscious sexists, racists, or jingoists-consume it uncritically, thus reinforcing assumptions they don't even realize they have” (Stowe 652).

This applies to many romance-readers studied by Janice Radway; however, Radway claims that the textual meaning of romances is not equivalent to the cultural meaning of reading romances. She accepts that romances in a textual form have a tendency to support patriarchal



values (Radway 97; 147, as cited in Stowe 652) but what she finds more oppositional is the actual use that readers make of reading romances. Reading was a daring and assertive act to many of the readers she studied that enabled them to declare restricted independence from families and husbands and establish their private, personal time, and place (Radway ch.3, as cited in Stowe 653). The question still persists by all means if there is a positive social effect in this oppositional reading or if it simply deflects the dissatisfaction of the readers into harmless channels. A straightaway answer to this remaining question would claim that any sense of defiance that can be induced by reading romance is unreal and unfruitful and that romance-reading is kind of a getaway from everyday life problems. However, Radway is not making any sudden statements, and this answer does not come so easily to her. She argues that even though contemporary cultural forms have enormous, sometimes even frightening, ideological power, they are still not complete, omnipresent, or watchful. There are people who are not satisfied with their place within the social community or with the limited emotional and material benefits that accompany it. This means that interstices in the social community still exist, and these unsatisfied people carry on the opposition, and by attempting to imagine a more ideal social state they are trying to resist despair. Radway thinks that it is absolutely crucial for those who are, like herself, committed to social change to learn not to disregard this minimal but still valid form of protest (Radway 222, as cited in Stowe 653). “Radway's work on the romance is more genuinely populist than either Slotkin's or Cawelti's because it tries very hard to take account of the actual readers' experiences as well as the critics' interpretations” (Stowe 653).

These are, I believe, one of the many examples of critical views that we can come into contact with when approaching popular fiction. *Harry Potter* books as representative of children's literature have, of course, different critical approaches than detective or romance fiction, but the particular opinions on it are still not uniform as in case of every other popular fiction genre.

## 2 Children's Literature

### 2.1 Defining the genre of children's literature

When defining the term 'children's literature', at first there seems to be no problem doing so. Reynolds claims that

[f]rom newspapers and other media to schools and in government documents, it is understood to refer to the materials written to be read by children and young people, published by children's publishers, and stocked and shelved in the children's and/or young adult (YA) sections of libraries and bookshops (Introduction).

Occasionally, there can be questions about the suitability of different books intended for the children's audience, concerning mainly their content. Questions about sexual explicitness, morality, level of eeriness, and also about the writing style, usage of swearing, informal language... These are all topics which can bring disagreement among people – mainly adults who already have children and are though dealing with choosing suitable literature for them to read. But how to recognise a good book for children? What does it have to be like to be actually beneficial to them? In particular, it has to be good in terms of emotional and moral values. Canadian critic Michele Landsberg believes that

good books can do so much for children. At their best, they expand horizons and instil in children a sense of the wonderful complexity of life ...No other pastime available to children is so conducive to empathy and the enlargement of human sympathies. No other pleasure can so richly furnish a child's mind with the symbols, patterns, depths, and possibilities of civilisation (34).

Despite these questions, children's literature is a genre that has more or less a clear interpretation for most people.

“For those who research and teach children’s literature, by contrast, the term is fraught with complications; indeed, in one of the most controversial studies of children’s literature of the last century, Jacqueline Rose (1984) referred to the ‘impossibility’ of children’s literature” (Reynolds Introduction). This impossibility means that in the academic field we cannot precisely identify the body of ‘children’s literature’, any more than we can strictly label something as ‘adult literature’. There is no clear line between these two types of books: “both reflect ideas about the purpose, nature, and modes of writing at any given moment; they share a technology, a distribution system, often the very producers of works for adults and children, and even some of the texts are the same” (Reynolds Introduction).

Many ‘children’ books are now read by adults, as well as many ‘adult’ books are also read by children. Does it mean that if a book written for adults is read by children, it becomes children’s literature? As the British critic John Rowe Townsend points out:

Surely *Robinson Crusoe* was not written for children, and do not the *Alice* books appeal at least as much to grown-ups?; if *Tom Sawyer* is children’s literature, what about *Huckleberry Finn*?; if the *Jungle Books* are children’s literature, what about *Kim* or *Stalky*? and if *The Wind in the Willows* is children’s literature, what about *The Golden Age*?; and so on (Standards of Criticism 196).

This particular question, of course, comes up also with the Harry Potter books, which are going to be analysed throughout this thesis.

The problem with children’s literature is, that the deeper and clearer definition of what it really is we want, the more blurry and obscure answers we get. It is mainly due to the problem of precisely defining other terms related to children's literature; for example, there is no ‘objective child reader’. As well as everything else, even books for children are influenced by many aspects and are written differently because of the culture they come from, and, therefore, because of the children they are written for - the race, ethnic origins, tradition, sometimes even

religious beliefs are introduced there in a simplified manner. In addition, the period in which they were written and many other aspects that change constantly over time affect the nature of children's literature.

## 2.2 Types and genres of children's literature

To help ourselves with understanding what children literature is and what it is not, we can sort it out into several categories – types and subgenres.

One of the first and most known writings for children that succeeds the earliest writings for children (instructional manuals, grammars, school texts, and books of courtesy), are tales about fairies and fairy tales.

### **Tales about Fairies** are:

elaborate narratives that depict the fairy kingdom and elfland; the leprechauns, kobolds, gnomes, elves, and little people (Briggs 1976, 1978) that populate its stories are authors of unintelligible actions that often have no moral point and frequently lead to troublingly amoral consequences and conclusions (Bottigheimer 148).

They arise in the baroque seventeenth century, based on preserved Celtic lore, during the reign of Louis XIV by the French *précieuses* and their followers. These tales featuring fairies and giantesses were initially invented for literate adult aristocratic French audiences, but it was not long after when they found favour among children. In the same period, humble people also had become familiar with the fairy world and used its simple stories to frighten children (Bottigheimer 148).

“**Fairy tales**, unlike tales about fairies, more often than not, do not include fairies in their cast of characters and are generally brief narratives in simple language that detail a reversal of fortune, with a rags-to-riches plot that often culminates in a wedding” (Bottigheimer 148).

Earthy heroes and heroines are accompanied by magical creatures in their missions to achieve happiness, and the story usually provides us with some kind of moral point, which can be added separately, as in Perrault, or included in the text, as in Grimm (Bottigheimer 148).

The phenomenon of readership boundary cross-over is demonstrated by both tales about fairies and fairy tales. Although its content was originally conceived by and for adults, in simplified form, it often passed into the domain of children's reading (Bottigheimer 149).

In the case of **folk-tales**, there is a more flexible definition than that of fairy tales and tales about fairies.

The term 'folk-tale' normally encompasses a multitude of minor genres, such as nonsense tales, aetiologies, jests, burlesques, animal tales, and never-ending tales, but there is good reason to incorporate a discussion of chapbook romances within a consideration of folk-tales in children's literature (Bottigheimer 157).

Some of the typical medieval romances are *Guy of Warwick*, *Valentine and Orson*, and *Bevis of Southampton*. These romances were introduced to the modern world by printing presses and are called 'chapbooks' because they were carried further to new readers, both young and old, by chapmen, the peddlers who sold books. Their medieval original forms provided a cast of characters that fit into the schema of modern fairy tale, such as kings, queens, giants, dragons, faithful fairies, and wicked mothers, but it was their length that distinguished them from modern fairy tale. However, romances were drastically shortened when refashioned for chapbook distribution, but they kept their familiar array of characters, especially giants, royalty, and dragons (Bottigheimer 157).

Another set of very well-known stories, which depict the confrontation of weak, small, poor, but witty hero against a strong, large, rich, but stupid real or metaphorical giant, are *Jack and the Giants*, *Tom Hickathrift*, *Robin Hood*, and *Tom Thumb*. Unsurprisingly, these

seemingly disadvantaged heroes have no hard time defeating their much bigger antagonists and manage to win over them and get well-deserved acknowledgement and treasure (Bottigheimer 158).

The term ‘folk-tale’ itself implies its connection to the folk, and therefore all these minor genres were defined by the nineteenth-century scholars as belonging especially to illiterate country tenants. Contrary to fairy tales, folk-tales have a much deeper and older tradition: some of them appear in the Indian *Panchatantra* or in the Bible and some of the animal tales originate from classic collections such as *Aesop’s Tales* (Bottigheimer 158).

Another early genre that contributed to the tradition of writing for children is myth and legend. All cultures around the world have developed their own body of myth and legend, similarly to folk-tales and fairy tales, firstly passed on as an oral tradition and eventually fixed in writing on any material used in those times. **Myth** is a universal phenomenon created by the need of people to explain fundamental natural phenomena, such as how the world and all the things in it were created, but also what is behind all of that we can see, what hidden worlds may lay beneath ours. “Myth deals with imponderables: where, how and why did life as we know it originate; what supernatural being/s pre-existed human life; from whence did mortals come and whither are they bound” (Saxby 162). Questions about human nature and behaviour are just as inevitable (Saxby 162).

There is no clearly defined border between myth and legend. **Legend** is traditionally a story from former time that is passed on orally and popularly accepted as historical. As time goes on, however, details are added, and our main character is exalted and elevated to heroic status. All of the mythic life stories of superheroes, often of semi-divine origin, have elements of supernatural woven into them. Most of us are familiar with their own legends created within the myth of their race, for example, Theseus, Perseus, and Odysseus from Greece; Gilgamesh from Sumeria; Beowulf, Arthur, and Cuchulainn from ancient Britain; Roland of France, and

so on. Supernatural powers are also present in the legends about saints, prophets, seers, and holy ones (Saxby 164). “Miracles of healing are attributed to saints such as Catherine of Siena, and Guanyin, the Chinese Goddess of Mercy” (Saxby 164).

For a variety of reasons, myth and legend provide perhaps the most powerful form of literature that we can offer to children. “Not only are they archetypes, but they generate linguistic power, stir the imagination, ease anxiety and help bring about inner harmony and much-needed emotional and spiritual wholeness” (Saxby 165).

Dramatic literature for children does not seem to be a very broad field that is rich in tradition of writing for children. But if we interpret the term ‘**drama**’ more abundantly and detach it from the restrictions of ‘dramatic literature for children’, we come to realise that it is actually something so natural for children as they engage in their own ‘dramas’ every day and are not only performers, but also originators of the genre, in this case almost on the same level as adults. Whenever children act out stories, imitate other people, pretend to be someone else, whether it is their mom, favourite cartoon character or a doctor, they encounter drama and therefore we can say that it is one of the oldest and the most fundamental genres for child development (Hollindale 203).

One of the early works in which the author is aware of this broader meaning and necessity for drama is *Peter Pan* by J. M. Barrie, which is considered to be one of the greatest and most significant works of dramatic literature for children. “Arguably the whole of *Peter Pan* is concerned with the dramatic games of children at play, and Peter himself is given over entirely to a life of acting and performance” (Hollindale 204).

The next genre that we must not skip to mention is **high fantasy**. As well as with the term ‘children’s literature’, the definition of high fantasy is not clear and precise. ‘High’ can refer to more than one aspect; it can refer to the theme, style, subject matter, or tone, but it can also refer to the high social status or morals of the characters themselves, and much more.

“‘Fantasy’, as a literary term, refers to narrative possibilities limited, at least initially, only by the author’s own imagination and skill as a story-teller” (Sullivan 300). That means that when we combine these two terms, high fantasy classifies as a literary genre including some of the most known and praised books for young readers, universally (Sullivan 300).

As the name itself hints, in fantasy stories there needs to be some sort of secondary world. However, the secondary world of high fantasy cannot be fully fantastic and made up because the reader would be hardly, if at all, able to understand what the author is talking about. That is why there need to be elements of the world as we know it. We can trace the background of the inspiration, from which high fantasy is retrieving the specific character names, fundamental plot patterns, hero archetypes, and many more, back to the earliest of traditional literary influences in western Europe: myth, epic, legend, romance, and folk-tale (Sullivan 302).

### **2.3 Purpose, use and cultural benefit of children’s literature**

There are two fundamental psychological needs of children: security and adventure. Satisfying these two elemental needs, which may at first seem contradictory, but in fact are complementary, is crucial for the healthy mental growth of the child. Balanced satisfaction with security and adventure is a kind of nutrition for the child’s mental health, and if not provided properly, it can lead to serious neurotic disorders, which can cause his inability to adapt to society. That means that the absence of fulfilling these needs or any imbalance in their fulfilment can be harmful not only for the child himself, but also for its surroundings (Kamm 169).

Literature is a great source of satisfaction in both security and adventure. The psychological need for security is achieved by creating an atmosphere of joyous living and by suppliance of endless exciting situations that allow the child’s imagination to take over, the need for adventure is also significantly satisfied. Ordinary life does not offer as many



adventures as a thrilling book can produce; whether it is travelling to a faraway land, sailing the ocean, or, in our specific case, studying the School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and fighting the Dark Lord. By empathising with and, in a sense, incarnating into the main hero, he gets the adventurous nutrition that is much needed for his mental well-being (Kamm 169).

Children's books are generally one of the first and earliest ways in which we come into contact with stories and ideas about the world. The stories which we as children read or listen to are strongly influential in the means of creating our common knowledge, and they help to shape our view and opinion on basic concepts of how the world around us works and how we should behave in it. Because literature written for children often includes some kind of education and explanations, it can be viewed as a meaningful bearer of information about present and past cultural habits and its changes. Children's books also encompass many different levels and layers of society and the culture in which they function and often include even visual illustrations, which can be a highly useful source of historical information about how people in the past looked like and behaved, how they perceived religion, science, diseases, wars, and many other elements (Reynolds Introduction).

### **3 History of British children's literature from the nineteenth century until today**

#### **3.1 Beginnings of writing and publishing for children**

Writing for children has a really deep tradition whose beginnings can be traced back to the seventeenth century, whereby usually one of the first examples of books for children is *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* written by the Czech educational reformer John Amos Comenius who has written it in 1658 in Latin and German language. A year later, the book was translated into English and, over time, into many other European languages.

The following eighteenth century can be described as a breakthrough in the business of publishing for children, when in the 1740s John Newbery opened a bookshop in London where he started to publish and sell books for children's audience. His first ever published title, *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* in 1744 is generally considered to be the first children's book and its content is made up of simple written rhymes for every letter of the alphabet. This and other Newbery's books gained a large popularity and following, and in the course of time a literary award, the John Newbery Medal, has been named after him.

#### **3.2 Development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – Fairy Tale, Fantasy and Adventure**

The production of children's books was becoming larger in the early nineteenth century, but its content was still mainly instructional and didactic. Compared to fact-based literature for children, fiction has not had a great number of attractive titles and was represented mainly by feeble moral stories which were considered by children as acceptable, rather because there was nothing more appealing in that case ("British Children's Literature" 672).

What has come through most interesting development in the beginning of the nineteenth century were folk-tales that have been gradually restored. Because of Tudor and Stuart literati regarded folk-tales as peasant absurdities, the Puritans as immoral and perilous nonsense, and

the eighteenth century declared them as illogical and unreasonable, folk-tales had been experiencing hard times. But in the population, they were still free. The emergence of Romanticism, the bigger respect for imagination that had followed the Age of Reason, and the partial replacement of classical influences by Nordic ones are probably the reasons why folk-tales arose into respectable print. Furthermore, in the early nineteenth century, a children's bookshop owner, Benjamin Tabart, presented a number of collections of 'popular fairy tales' and from this time on the acceptance of old tales ascended with the greatest catalyst being the translation of *German Popular Stories* by the Grimm brothers in 1823-1826 ("British Children's Literature" 672).

By the 1850s, the more progressive authors showed their favour for the use of imagination in their writing. In 1851 John Ruskin published his famous fantasy story *King of the Golden River* and so expressed his approval of fairy tales. Because the population was increasing expeditiously, the literacy rate was rising, and publishing was becoming a profession, the conditions were now in favour of children's book production. However, there were third- and fourth-rate writers who continued to supply the market with what it demanded still in a great amount – didactic material for children. To put it simply, in Victorian age, the ideal of childhood was that children should do as they are told and behave well. Piety was approved, usually to an unreal level, and tract societies' activity and the expanding trade in Sunday School 'rewards' led to a spate of 'goody-goody' books ("British Children's Literature" 672). Townsend says that "[t]o look at the Victorian children's books still familiar today is in one way misleading but in another way illuminating: the survivors are far from representative of the entire output and come almost invariably from the minority that ignored, bent or broke the rules" ("British Children's Literature" 672).

A crucial decade in which two significant fantasies were published was the 1860s. In 1863 it was impressive and fascinating, but also confusing *The Water Babies* by Charles

Kingsley, and the second major work was no other than *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, which came out in 1865, followed in 1871 by a free sequel *Through the Looking-Glass*. Although the *Alice* books were not always favourable with children, many would still consider them as the best books for children of all time, not to mention that until today their story remains relevant and popular among generations. Moreover, many critics and reviewers are still excited about the *Alice* books, as evidenced by the fact that they have been analysed from various perspectives. Both of the *Alice* books and *The Water Babies* have also found undeniable favour among adults and can be classified as 'crossover fiction'. Yet, debatably, George Macdonald can be often regarded as the most creative and inventive fantasy writer of the mid-Victorian years with his two best-known books *At the Back of the North Wind* from 1871 and a year after published *The Princess and the Goblin* ("British Children's Literature" 672).

However, fantasy books were not the only genre that dominated the children's literature market at that time. Based on adult fiction works such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Walter Scott's or Fenimore Cooper's novels, the adventure story books have found their way into children's literature in the 1840s with the Captain Marryat's stories. A long period of production of 'boys' stories' by the authors R. M. Ballantyne, G. A. Henty, or W. H. G. Kingston and others have followed, and these stories represented a prime example for growing-up boys provided by young men living honourable and virtuous lives, building empires, and these men were recognised "as Britain's, and therefore the world's, best" ("British Children's Literature" 673).

What was considered as the most convenient literature for young girls at that time was now forgotten domestic dramas, which have not gained much popularity among girls growing up in Victorian age. Their brothers' adventure stories were what they preferred better, and assumably, this preference also expanded into school stories which were, in most cases, set in

boys-only boarding schools. In fact, the school offered an attractive backdrop with its ‘world withing world’ concept, where pupils, in this case boys, were full-fledged citizens. The school story genre has come to the forefront mainly with *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* written in 1857 by Thomas Hughes and *Eric, or Little by Little* by F. W. Farrar from 1858, which is a deeply moral and sentimental story that may now be seen as absurd but by the end of the century almost thirty different editions of this book were published. One of Rudyard Kipling’s works, *Stalky and Co*, about three adolescent smart alecks published in 1899 has hopelessly outshone the worth of classic school stories that were written in the 1880s and 1890s by Talbot Baines Reed (“British Children’s Literature” 673).

With his beloved fantasy story about little boy befriending talking animals *Jungle Books* published in 1894 and 1895; catchy and easy-to-follow animal fables for the little ones *Just-So Stories* from 1902 and English people and land celebrating short fantasy stories *Puck of Pook’s Hill* that came out in 1906, Rudyard Kipling has largely contributed by variety of stories to the children’s literature repertoire. Another author who also contributed with unusual themed books is Edith Nesbit with her three most famous family stories about Bastable children, the first one published in 1899 being *The Story of the Treasure-Seekers* and another three books *Five Children and It* (1902), *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904) and *The Story of the Amulet*, which also include children’s protagonists but in addition present creatures with magical powers. Kenneth Grahame with his adorable children’s novel *The Wind in the Willows*, published in 1908, is also worth mentioning for its irredeemable character of Mr. Toad whose escapades both children and parents enjoy reading and. Another famous book that became popular among children was *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Beatrix Potter’s first published book that has never been out of print since its first publication in 1902 and is by nowadays children known mainly because of the film adaptation from 2018. Long-lasting success on stage and later on in animated and played movies – that is what the play by J. M. Barrie *Peter Pan*, first published

in 1904, has experienced, but the book form is not so likeable due to its hint of simpering, superiority, and sugar coating (“British Children’s Literature” 673).

### **3.3 Between Two Wars**

The five or six decades before the outbreak of the First World War have been known, for their prolific production of high literary and artistic work, as the golden age of children’s literature. If we were to compare this generous amount of published material for children with the twenty years between the end of the First World War and the beginning of the Second World War, the numbers seem really poor. Books for children were not thought of as something prestigious and anyone who pursued to be a serious writer had not seen a good enough potential in writing them professionally. Although, for example, in the USA children’s books were perceived as a part of national culture, the comparable development of children’s library work and the usage of leisure-time books in schools did not expand as quickly to Britain. As the first step in doing so can be considered the institution of the Carnegie Medal for an outstanding book for children in 1937 which was inspired by its American equivalent, the Newbery Medal, that was established fifteen years earlier. But, as Townsend mentions, “routine publishing for children ran to cheap ‘rewards’, bumper books, series books, annuals and endless production lines of the tired old school and adventure stories” (“British Children’s Literature” 674). What has had a high success in a financial way was the series of books in which the same protagonists performed and which were not demanding of their readers regarding the readability and complexity (“British Children’s Literature” 674).

The 1920s and 1930s have their highlights in outcomes of original ideas, mostly of people who did not intend to write for children at first place. An outstanding example of this case is A. A. Milne with his *Winnie-the-Pooh* stories, which belong to the small list of books which every literate adult knows well, and therefore it is easy to quote or reference it without

doubting if it will come through. Perhaps only *Alice* books are on the same level in this regard (“British Children’s Literature” 674).

There were other noteworthy books, but their influence was not so significant. The *Dr Doolittle* series by Hugh Lofting began being published in 1922 and they were a following of the ancient lore of the personified-animal story that was formed around the Doctor himself – a friendly, blameless and caring figure. John Masefield’s *The Midnight Folk* that came out in 1927 together with eight years after published *The Box of Delights* displays two great blends of adventure and magic; magical nursemaid *Marry Poppins*, who was already a character from an ancient time, was presented in 1934 by P. L. Travers. And also, *Swallows and Amazons* published in 1930 as the first part of series that went on until 1947 has freshened up the children’s book market. Despite the fact that at the time no one could have seen it coming, *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien (1937) was the most influential and significant book of the 1930s, and along with *The Lord of The Rings*, published for adults after the Second World War, it engendered a wave that has carried on and even reinforced over time – “a fashion for books about wizards, dragons and other creatures of lore and legend, set in lands far away in space and time” (“British Children’s Literature” 675).

A remarkable author of the poetry for children of the first half of the twentieth century – Walter de la Mare – was also exquisite in writing short stories with often poetic and also haunting atmosphere. The peak of his powers was in the period between the wars, although the publication of his *Collected Rhymes and Verses* was postponed to 1944 and his *Collected Stories for Children* were also not published until 1947. Possibly the most brilliant English artist and picture book creator of the first three quarters of the twentieth century was Edward Ardizzone, whose benign, classical but easily distinctive style has adorned the covers and inside pages of children’s books. The first of his books, *Little Tim and the Brave Sea-Captain* from

1936 was a picture-story book about young sailor Tim whose series kept going after 1945 (“British Children’s Literature” 675).

### **3.4 A New Age of Children’s Literature**

Similarly to what happened in the First World War, there were restrictions on publishing during the Second World War because of the strain of the conflict and post-war poverty. The 1950s were the decade of recovery, as the standard of books for children produced by main-line publishers has greatly improved, partly for institutional reasons. Because the scope of school and library work for children was broadening, as it was in America, the demand for quality literary work for children was increasing. Specialist editors of children’s books were being appointed by publishers and under the auspices of Puffin Book, a Penguin imprint, paperbacks of literary merit for children formed themselves. Thanks to the new hopeful atmosphere, a new generation of writers was on the rise (“British Children’s Literature” 675).

There was also an intensification of the effort to expand the readership of children’s books. “Traditionally children’s fiction had been produced by middle-class writers for middle-class children and was largely about middle-class children” (“British Children’s Literature” 675) and it was mainly teachers who saw the limitations in this kind of books due to their poor appeal to ‘ordinary’ children. In the following years, the visibility of class division in children’s books has decreased as a result of actual reduction or at least silencing of divisions in society, and also because of the broadening of the layers from which the authors and their fictional characters and their backgrounds have come from. However, the goal of broadening the readership base has not been reached, despite all efforts, to its desired fullness, and middle-class families remained the main buyers and readers of the books (“British Children’s Literature” 675-676).



Surprisingly, perhaps, it was a number of years before the war itself engendered books of much attraction as a subject of fiction for children and young adults. John Rowe Townsend points out these particular books from that age:

Ian Serraillier's *The Silver Sword* (1956), about the trek of three children across war-torn Europe in search of their parents, was probably the first. Later came Jill Paton Walsh's *The Dolphin Crossing* (1967) and *Fireweed* (1969), Nina Bawden's *Carrie's War* (1973), Robert Westall's *The Machine-Gunners* (1975) and *Blitzcat* (1989), and Michelle Magorian's immensely popular *Goodnight, Mister Tom* (1981) ("British Children's Literature" 676).

What was having a generally tough time during the years after war was the adventure story which had to compete with the increasing availability of television. Television provides the visual aspect of what we can only imagine when reading the books – the foreign places and strange people that inhabit them. The physical action that is also the vital element of adventures is, after all, better conveyed by films and TV because of their immediacy. However, books offer a better environment and more space to address social, moral, and philosophical questions, and even with regard to the action aspects, they are better at expressing the characters' inner feelings and thoughts rather than only showing the outside view of the situation. Peter Dickinson with his *Blue Hawk* (1976) or *Eva* (1988) and Gillian Cross with *Born of the Sun* (1983), *On the Edge* (1984), and *Wolf* (1990) are examples of writers who were open to delve into the possibilities while still holding the reader's attention to their books ("British Children's Literature" 676).

Fantasy, which has a long and strong legacy in British writing for children, has retained its place even in the post-war years. Well-known and used themes such as miniaturisation persisted in providing a pleasant service; for example, *The Borrowers* from 1952 by Mary Norton are about small people whose living and survival depend on what they 'borrow' from

the human inhabitants of the house they live in the corners of. On the opposite side of the size scale there were immense imaginary worlds, highly encouraged and inspired by Tolkien. C. S. Lewis' Narnia books began to come out in 1950, starting with *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, which means it was even before *The Lord of the Rings*, however, as Tolkien's friend, Lewis was familiar with his work in progress and has studied in some of the same spheres, one of them being the medieval allegory and the Christian allegory which are the Narnia books ("British Children's Literature" 676-677). With his retelling of the Arthurian tale, White's *The Sword in the Stone*, published in 1939, can also be included in this section of fantasy books for children or young readers.

A form of fantasy that can be considered as another British speciality since 1945, are the 'minimal or marginal fantasy' books that have such an illusory fantasy element that makes one wonder if the supernatural occurrences are real or not. One of the instances, *The Children of Green Knowe* from 1954 and *The Chimneys of the Knowe* published four years later by L. M. Boston, depicts a story of a little boy who is able to hear and seemingly meet the previous children's inhabitants of the house he currently lives in, but we cannot tell and will never know if these meetings are imagined or if they really happen. Similar cases are *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958) by Philippa Pearce or Penelope Lively's *A Stitch in Time* from 1976 ("British Children's Literature" 677).

The age group of most readers of the above-mentioned post-war books would most likely be from 11-year-olds upwards. It is difficult to find any exceptional titles for juvenile readers from 7 to 9 years of age. "Young children's lack of experience and, possibly, their limited reading ability restricts what can be done in writing for them, and many authors find it difficult" ("British Children's Literature" 677). However, they are as important as their older fellow readers and majority of the above-mentioned authors have tried writing for this younger group, and often admirably well, but the titles are not their authors' most famous ones. What

meets with success with the youngest readers are the humanised-animal stories, for instance *A Bear Called Paddington* (1958) by Michael Bond or Dick King-Smith's *The Sheep-Pig* (1983) and more ("British Children's Literature" 677).

Another very popular author, whose work has been one of the best-selling children's books since the 1930s and was even translated into 90 languages, was Enid Blyton. Her writing for children included a broad scale of topics ranging from education, natural history, and biblical stories to fantasy and mystery. Her best-known books are the *Noddy* series about a wooden toy published between 1949 and 1963, and also the *Famous Five* series consisting of 21 books starting in 1942 with the first book *Five on a Treasure Island; Secret Seven*, or the *Five Find-Outers*, which are all stories about groups of children who solve out the mysteries and go on all sorts of adventures together. There was also a *Malory Towers* (1946-1951) series of six books in a school story genre picturing girls' boarding school based on the one that Blyton's daughter attended.

A name often mentioned alongside Blyton is Roald Dahl, whose books, as well as Blyton's, were completely adored by children and had a great impact on children's reading. Although some literary critics commented on Dahl's work not directly in a positive sense, especially in terms of the overall literary value of the content of his books, his popularity with children was undeniable. Titles such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* from 1964; later in 1975 published *Danny, the Champion of the World; The BFG* (1982); year later published *The Witches* and also *Matilda* (1988) are known and cherished worldwide, most of them also for their well-done movie adaptations.

Phillip Pullman would be the last author to be mentioned in this part of the chapter for his fantasy trilogy *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000), whose first volume, *Northern Lights*, published in 1995 has won the Carnegie Medal of the Library Association as the year's outstanding English-language children's book. The story of two children protagonists, Lyra

Belaqua and Will Parry, wondering through a number of alternate universes along with their dæmons, animal-like creatures representing the person's inner-self, has won the hearts of children as well as adult readers.

### **3.5 Contemporary British Children's Literature**

#### **3.5.1 Challenges and forms of contemporary writings for children**

The way in which publishers, writers, and illustrators have experimented with the new methods and processes of publishing children's literature not only attractively, but also cheaply, is one of the key aspects of the long history of children's books. To make books as colourful and appealing as possible in as low-cost and profitable way as possible, has always been one of the aims of children's publishers, from the times when illustrations needed to be hand coloured to today's generously coloured printed picture books. Reynolds points out that: "children's literature has often been early to experiment with new print technologies and innovations in paper engineering for creating novelty books such as harlequinades, pop-ups, and books with other kinds of movable parts" ("Contemporary children's narratives"). The thin dividing line between different children's stories carriers – books, games, and toys, along with the inclination to innovative ways of presenting print products to children, has influenced the way in which the stories are told. In 1980s this kind of influence was clearly apparent in the number of variations of 'choose your own adventure stories' that were quite popular in those days and their inspiration came mainly from role-playing games, e. g. Dungeons and Dragons, especially their schemes and plots. As the term suggests, these books provided readers with multiple choices of possible outcomes and plot lines decided by a combination of coincidence and strategy (Reynolds, "Contemporary children's narratives").

What was certainly another crucial aspect that affected the style, composition, and narrative methods of writing for children was the emergence of new media. "Children's stories

have been adapted for film and television, written to be read on radio, recorded on vinyl, audio tape and CDs and been conceived as CD-ROMs, electronic and online fictions” (Reynolds, “Contemporary children’s narratives”). The way of how stories are written, where and how they are encountered, and even the over-all meaning of reading is affected by each new medium and its tools. As Reynolds mentions, there are two points that need to be made before ending this historical overview. The first concerns the fact that by taking into account of all the different forms in which young people come into contact with narratives, whether it is on paper, audio, or any other electronic form; if it is a board or video game or a play on stage, song lyrics or spoken word, or any other medium or carrier – the field of interests and study of those who write or work with children’s literature have been significantly broadened. The second point discusses the role of children in the process of producing children’s literature (Reynolds, “Contemporary children’s narratives”).

As has been shown in this history chapter, the standard concept of writing children’s books is that they are written by adults for children and it is typical for children’s literature criticism that the audience is its most defining aspect rather than genre, approach, period and other aspects common for other forms of writing. The general assumption of children trying to express their thoughts through writing was that they are limited by their lack of knowledge and experience of the world to say something impressive enough, even when their childhood imagination was at its peak. That and the restricted access to the equipment that would allow them to publish their works is why children “have not written what has been *published* as children’s literature” (Reynolds, “Contemporary children’s narratives”). However, actually, children have always been creators and authors of various anecdotes, jokes, songs, riddles (including other more apparently literary work, such as poems, novels, plays,...), and our age of electronical online writing and publishing of fan fictions, etc., enables them to publish their writings and increase the reach of it for wide public, beyond the borders of their friends and

family circles. It would be too early to tell how this will impact our understanding of what counts as children's literature, but it might help to reconsider the usefulness of the label, at least in terms of the academic study of literary works written intentionally for children or the young (Reynolds, "Contemporary children's narratives").

### 3.5.2 Popular British authors of contemporary children's literature

In addition to J. K. Rowling and her *Harry Potter* series, which are to this day world-wide best-sellers, and their success cannot be doubted, there are a few other British authors that deserve to be mentioned for their contribution to the fund of children's literature with their likeable books.

The first author to mention would be Dame Jacqueline Wilson whose book *The Story of Tracy Beaker* about a ten-year-old girl who has been put into children's residential care home due to her behaviour problems, published in 1991, opened her door to fame with its sad but interesting topic. Her 1999 published book *The Illustrated Mum*, narrated in first person by an eleven-year-old Dolphin who is daughter to alcoholic, tattoo-loving mother Marigold who suffers with bipolar disorder. Wilson has won the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize for this book and its TV adaptation, produced in 2003 has won the 2004 BAFTA award for best school drama. Many of her other children's books feature controversial topics such as mental illness, divorce, adoption, domestic abuse, and the way in which her children's protagonists deal with these problems. Jacqueline Wilson now teaches modules in Master's degree programmes in Creative Writing and Children's Literature at the University of Roehampton; has published more than 100 books for children, many of which were also adapted to TV series, the most recent one being *The Beaker Girls* in December 2021.

Although Anthony Horowitz is nowadays known by the adult audience mainly for his detective and mystery novels featuring Sherlock Holmes, James Bond (both officially approved

by estates of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Ian Fleming) or his own detectives, his *Alex Rider* novels about a fourteen-year-old boy becoming a British Secret Service spy have been a great success among young readers. Starting in 2000 with the first book *Stormbreaker*, the series now consists of eleven books, the most recent one being *Nightshade*, released in 2020. The twelfth book to the *Alex Rider* series is in the making, as Horowitz announced in January of 2022, to be published sometime in 2023.

Multi-award-winning author Mark Haddon is best known for his book *The Curious Incident of a Dog in the Night-Time*, a story about a fifteen-year-old Christopher John Francis Boone, who provides the reader with a different view on the world through his eyes. Some critics and commentators have described the book as being narrated by a boy with Asperger syndrome, but Haddon himself refuted this statement. In his blog, he wrote

curious incident is not a book about asperger's. it's a novel whose central character describes himself as 'a mathematician with some behavioural difficulties'. ... if anything it's a novel about difference, about being an outsider, about seeing the world in a surprising and revealing way. it's as much a novel about us as it is about Christopher (Haddon).

Although Haddon's intention was that the book is supposed for an adult audience, it has also appealed to a child audience, as was the case with many other books intended for adults.

Before *The Curious Incident*, Haddon has also written a series of comical children's books about *Agent Z*, which is a 'front' for a trio of schoolboys whose mission is to eradicate boredom by creating chaos through their practical jokes. Three of the books in the *Agent Z* series came out in the 1990s, and the last one, *Agent Z and The Killer Bananas*, came out in 2001.

The last author to close this chapter is an American-born British author, Francesca Simon. Her most notable books are the series about *Horrid Henry*, which has been published from 1994 to 2015 in a total of 24 official books with a special 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book *Horrid Henry: Up, Up and Away!* Published in 2019. The story has also been adapted for TV series, movie, and theatre. The story follows an everyday-life incidents of ferociously misbehaved boy Henry who deals with problems in his own, often inappropriate, wild but entertaining way.



## **4 Defining the origins and influences of the genre and fantasy world in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone***

Rowling's skill to draw from an extensive range of different sources sets the ground for her lively and amusing storytelling, which is one of the key aspects of why children cannot put her books down. Although Rowling has never specifically named a single author from whom she would take the inspiration for *Harry Potter*, she integrates elements from different genres within the books. She herself has said: "I haven't got the faintest idea where my ideas come from, or how my imagination works. I'm just grateful that it does, because it gives me more entertainment than it gives anyone else" (Rowling, "From Mr Darcy"). However, she did mention some of her favourite authors, who could have been the likely source of inspiration for her writing *Harry Potter*, even if unconsciously or unintentionally. Even though it sometimes seems that some passages or ideas in her books are purely imitations of others, she does add her own wit and creativeness to enhance the writing of others (Eccleshare 37).

### **4.1 School story**

There is no doubt that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is a school story, as evidenced by the fact that Hogwarts play a major role in this first book of the series. Rowling understands the advantages of the boarding school setting and makes the best use of every element it provides. As Eccleshare points out:

The double-stranded code of conduct in which some, usually trivial, actions are curtailed by petty school rules and the deduction of house points gives a semblance of order in a world where matters of a much serious nature - even including life and death - are controlled by greater forces which work for good and evil (37).

Specifically, she supports the profound core of the scholarly ideology that urges the question why learning is so important and what it can do for you, which is not a usual element of school stories (Eccleshare 37).

What is one of the main benefits of school stories is that they offer an entire new world in which children feel their power, to the extent possible, but also the safety provided by the school. Of course, as happens with schools, there are certain rules and regulations that restrain their activities; however, there are other assets, especially in the case of boarding schools, that provide the students with a bunch of other possibilities. Because they are far away from their homes and families and therefore also from the emotional support it usually gives them, it can, apart from feeling homesick, free them from the complications that parent-child relationships come with. They can instead shift these emotional energies into different kinds of relationships – mainly strong friendships and also enmities with their peers and younger or older children as well. Another aspect that intensifies the action is the ceaseless proximity of children in boarding schools and the fact that they are staying there overnight too creates an opportunity to create plots with darker, mysterious undertones and the feeling of fear and overall, there is just more time to do more things. The impossibility of parents' opportunities to interrupt the adventures within this enclosed world creates a fresh air for enlightening the details of children's lives (Eccleshare 37-38).

#### **4.1.2 Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry inspirations and comparisons**

Not many children around the world have experienced studying on a boarding school; however, in fiction it is often used and appealing idea. According to Eccleshare "Rowling fits Hogwarts neatly into the tradition, drawing on conventions of rules, hierarchies, an obsession with sport and much talk of food" (38). Indeed, already the very first Hogwarts feast Harry experiences, all the food served is individually listed:

Harry's mouth fell open. The dishes in front of him were now piled with food. He had never seen so many things he liked to eat on one table: roast beef, roast chicken, pork chops and lambchops, sausages, bacon and steak, boiled potatoes, roast potatoes,

chips, Yorkshire pudding, peas, carrots, gravy, ketchup and, for some strange reason, mint humbugs. (Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone* 92).

Food is an important part of the general value of Hogwarts, it is delicious and there is always plenty of it, which is not usual in the history of fiction where the norm was that the food was of poor quality and there was not much of it. Rowling herself has admitted that it was one of her favourite books, *The Little White Horse* by Elizabeth Goudge, that inspired her to give the extra attention to the food being eaten in *Harry Potter*. Rowling said that “perhaps more than any other book, it has a direct influence on the Harry Potter books”, she continued “[t]he author always included details of what her characters were eating and I remember liking that. You may have noticed that I always list the food being eaten at Hogwarts” (Fraser).

The appearance of Hogwarts – the castle-like building with its theatrical setting – is very similar to Roslyn, cliff-top located school from *Eric, or Little by Little*, the 1858 classic by F. W. Farrer, and it also resembles the Malory Towers of the same named book by Enid Blyton (Eccleshare 38).

Apart from Hogwarts, the pub life in Hogsmeade, which is an only all-wizarding village in Britain where students can go on selected weekends (and which is not introduced in the *Philosopher's Stone*, but in the third book *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*), copies the pub life in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) by Thomas Hughes (Eccleshare 38).

#### **4.1.3 Quidditch invention**

Sport is another essential component of the school story genre and it plays an important role not only in shaping the character of the particular student but also in the perception of other students about him or her. It has the ability to make ‘heroes’ out of ‘ordinary’ students. The atmosphere filled with emotions that is present during the grand sporting matches, along with

the emphasis on the team participation and the contribution of the individual, is what unites the schools or houses.

Quidditch is one of the smartest inventions of Rowling as it is a fantasy sport that does not lack, in any way, anything that a real sport has. The passionate talks about teams, game rules, player's equipment, and the superior status of sporting heroes – that is how Rowling shows her ability to come up not only with new vocabulary, but also, overall, with a well-executed parody of a real sport. As Eccleshare describes it:

Quaffles, Bludgers, Beaters, the Golden Snitch – the idea of a game with balls that fly directly at players, a scoring system so complex that achieving the main objective can cause a team to lose the game, conducted in three dimensions by teams flying broomsticks – it is an imaginative tour de force (22).

What adds to the amusement and credibility of Quidditch as a sport is Lee Jordan's commentary full of remarks based on his obvious personal preferences of which side he is a fan of: “Slytherin in possession – Flint with the Quaffle – passes Spinnet – passes Bell – hit hard in the face by a Bludger, hope it broke his nose – only joking, Professor – Slytherin score – oh no ...” (Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone* 139).

As in any other fictional school, even the Hogwarts sports field is a proper stage on which emotional power struggles take place. Thanks to Rowling's perfect sense of setting out the Quidditch match to create the perfect timing, the reader gets just the right amount of tension at just the right moment through the variable pace of the game, as well as through the frequent incidents which can make the result interesting and, even though the structure is to a great extent predictable, in a way surprising (Eccleshare 41).

## 4.2 Magical schools

Rowling is surely not the first author to alter the typical school-story scheme by adding the ingredient of magic. In Ursula Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* quartet of books (1968-1990), there are several very similar elements between the main protagonist Ged and Rowling's Harry. Before being sent to the School of Roke, a special school for wizards, Ged becomes an apprentice to an acknowledged mage. Later on in the book, Ged also receives a scar in a fight with evil shadow that has the ability to possess people. Throughout the book, he becomes a greatly respected wizard and also a headmaster, bears the resemblance to Dumbledore. Eccleshare also suggests that another character of the book, Archmage Nemmerle, the Warder of Roke, also superficially resembles Dumbledore, but adds that "*A Wizard of Earthsea* is far less tethered to the realities of school than *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*" (41). When Le Guin was asked if she feels that Rowling 'ripped her off', her answer was no, but she had a snide remark that "she [Rowling] could have been more gracious about her predecessors. My incredulity was at the critics who found the first book wonderfully original. She has many virtues, but originality isn't one of them. That hurt" (Jaggi).

Very reminiscent of Hogwarts in some of its distinctive features and characters is also Miss Cackle's Academy of Jill Murphy's book *The Worst Witch* from 1974. At Miss Cackle Academy, it is also possible, thanks to magic, for students to fly, appear and disappear, it also includes students' pets and extraordinary things happening with them, and the overall storytelling is conceived in a humorous spirit. Some of the characters have very similar features and not only regarding behaviour, but regarding their looks too. *The Worst Witch*'s main protagonist, Mildred Hubble has two best friends – the first one is a jokester witch, who does not resemble Ron Weasley very much, but the second friend is a know-it-all witch, who could be reminding of Hermione. The three of them face various pitfalls and insinuations from their rival and a bully Ethel Hallow, a blonde snobbish girl from a wealthy and respected family,

much similar to Draco Malfoy's character and looks. There is also a deputy of headmistress Miss Hardbroom, who with her black hair, extremely frightening and strict character, and her fondness for Ethel and antipathy for Mildred draws resemblance to professor Snape and his akin attitude towards Draco and Harry. Murphy is frustrated about people pointing out the parallels between her books and *Harry Potter*, quoting:

It's irritating ... everyone asks the same question and I even get children writing to ask me whether I mind about Hogwarts and pointing out similarities. Even worse are reviewers who come across my books, or see the TV series, and, without taking the trouble to find out that it's now over quarter of a century since I wrote my first book, make pointed remarks about 'clever timing' – or say things like 'the Worst Witch stories are not a million miles from JK Rowling's books'. The implications are really quite insulting (Murphy)!

Knowledge acquisition is an inevitable part of childhood that can turn into great power if it is formed properly. Most school stories do not go into much deep details when talking about lessons, which is the opposite of what Rowling does in *Harry Potter*. Learning is essential for Harry if he wants to defeat Voldemort, and there is no other way of acquiring such power than learning patiently and properly. Lessons at Hogwarts provide fundamental information as well as practise which is later useful for our main heroes when dealing with various challenges. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, it is the 'Wingardium Leviosa' spell, which Ron only knows thanks to Professor's Flitwick's lesson, that helps him defeat the troll toward the end of the book, and there are also plenty other examples in the following books that prove the crucial role of learning. Eccleshare also adds:

More than that, lessons are vehicles for some of Rowling's best invention, sometimes serious as with Professor Lupin's conjuring up a Boggarts, sometimes in close parody of reality, as with Professor Binn's dreary History of Magic Lessons, and sometimes

in wild imagination, as with Hagrid's disastrous lessons both with Buckbeak and with the Blast-Ended Skrewts (42).

### 4.3 Fantasy worlds

The school story scheme provides the main structure for the first *Harry Potter* book; however, Rowling also employs other themes, mainly those that come from significant fantasy books for adults and children.

According to Eccleshare: "The magical world in which Hogwarts exists is a whole creation, just as C. S. Lewis's Narnia, J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth, Ursula Le Guin's Earthsea or J. M. Barrie's Never Never Land" (42). The wizarding world in Harry Potter books is concealed by a spell so that Muggles, non-wizarding people, could not see or find it, and the world itself is managed by its own logic. It is extremely important to keep the coherence and the credibility of this world to the reader; that is why Rowling is careful not to break any of the rules set to avoid any implausible outcomes that can only come out of a magical gimmick. All of the creatures, plants, weather and the whole landscape with its climate have their own powers in this invented world. It is, for instance, The Forbidden Forest located on the school area outskirts where the magical creatures, such as centaurs or unicorns, similar to those of Narnia live. Or it is The Whomping Willow, which does not let anyone near its branches (or more precisely, if it does, it does not end very well for its visitor), which is an important active aspect of the environment in which it grows (Eccleshare 42).

Most of the main characters in Rowling's made-up world are human, similar to Le Guin's but unlike Tolkien's, although, some of them have slight anomalies. All of the witches and wizards are capable of having abnormally long lives, and they can (and from time to time they do) appear in the real world without drawing any attention to themselves. Moreover, the character of Rubeus Hagrid, for example, is a part giant on his mother's side, which is an

information that is not revealed until the fourth book of the series. Madam Pomfrey, who is the school doctor or a healer, is able to undo the Petrification curse or help Harry to regrow his bones after he broke them in a Quidditch incident and then got them incorrectly fixed by Gilderoy Lockhart's unsuccessful attempt. Contrary to this, all the children, even Harry with his special destiny, behave completely, or at least to a large extent, humanly. They have to acquire their magical skills by learning and practising, and Rowling makes sure not to give anyone powers inadequate to their status. The ability of becoming invisible is only enabled to Harry by using the Invisibility Cloak which he has inherited from his father, it is not any of his own special abilities. Equivalent to driving in our real world could be the ability to Apparate – travel from place to place in a shortest and simplest way - in a wizarding world, because as we have to pass the test and driving exam to get our licence, the same applies for older students who want to learn to Apparate, they need to attend a course and then pass a test to do it (Eccleshare 43).

But the magical world still needs its magical creatures for which Rowling's inspiration comes primarily from mythology. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, there are two of these creatures that play quite an important role, and that is a unicorn which is found dead in the Forbidden Forest, and, as it is later discovered, it was killed by Professor Quirell to gather his blood in order to keep Voldemort alive. The second creature, a giant three-headed dog, ironically named Fluffy, who guards the access to the Philosopher's Stone, is clearly inspired by Cerberus, the same-looking creature that guards the gates of the Greek underworld. In the second book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Dumbledore's knowledgeable phoenix Fawkes is introduced and we learn that his tail feathers are contained in and therefore control both Harry's and Voldemort's wands. In addition to unicorn blood, the Phoenix is also symbolic of everlasting life and rebirth, and these motifs have been repeatedly used in other children's books, such as *The Phoenix and the Carpet* by Edith Nesbit from 1904 or *The Little White*



*Horse* from 1946 written by Elizabeth Goudge. In the second book, it is also Basilisk who had the power to kill anyone who looked into his eyes (but in the book only petrified everyone who saw him because it was always only through some sort of reflection), which is also a well-known mythical beast, and the list could go on throughout the following books. About her using folklore and mythology as a source of inspiration, Rowling has said:

I've taken *horrible* liberties with folklore and mythology, but I'm quite unashamed about that, because British folklore and British mythology is a totally bastard mythology. You know, we've been invaded by people, we've appropriated their gods, we've taken their mythical creatures, and we've soldered them all together to make, what I would say, is one of the richest folklores in the world, because it's so varied. So, I feel no compunction about borrowing from that freely, but adding a few things of my own (Fry).

In the magical world of Hogwarts, other non-human creatures such as trolls, werewolves, or vampires are involved. In the first book, Rowling's creatures are not very inventive and characterful, but throughout the books there is more and more of them, and they are also much more interesting and extraordinary. A mighty hippogriff Buckbeak, together with other fantastic, but often dangerous animal-like creatures that were usually introduced by Hagrid to Harry and his friends and later to whole classes of students in his 'Care of Magical Creatures' lessons, which he started teaching in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. These creatures were also inspired by mythical beasts, and Rowling found this original way to incorporate them in her books.

Rowling has not escaped comparisons with other fantasy writers, especially C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. She admitted that she had read and really liked *The Chronicles of Narnia* when she was a child and pointed out that "I found myself thinking about the wardrobe route to Narnia when Harry is told he has to hurl himself at a barrier in Kings Cross Station - it

dissolves and he's on platform Nine and Three-Quarters, and there's the train for Hogwarts” (Renton). But she also stresses the differences between the world of Narnia and Hogwarts:

Narnia is literally a different world, whereas in the Harry books you go into a world within a world that you can see if you happen to belong. A lot of the humour comes from collisions between the magic and the everyday worlds. Generally, there isn't much humour in the Narnia books, although I adored them when I was a child. I got so caught up I didn't think CS Lewis was especially preachy. Reading them now, I find that his subliminal message isn't very subliminal at all (Renton).

She expresses herself similarly when certain aspects, characters, or creatures are compared to Tolkien's *Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*. In several interviews, Rowling has suggested that she is not really a fantasy fan and that at first she was even unaware of the fact that she was even writing fantasy when starting *Harry Potter*: “I'm a bit slow on the uptake about those things. I was so caught up in it. And I was about two thirds of the way through, and I suddenly thought, ‘This has got unicorns in it. I'm writing fantasy!’” (Jones). She also claims that she had read *The Lord of The Rings* when she was a teenager, but had never finished it, and that the first time she had read *Hobbit* was in her twenties when she was already writing *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*. In a chat interview for AOL Live, one person asked: “Your Harry Potter books remind me of JRR Tolkien's *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. (My niece is borrowing my Tolkien books to keep her busy until your next book.) Are you a Tolkien fan? Did his work influence the Harry Potter series?” (Rowling, “JK Rowling Chat”), for which her Rowling's answer was:

Well, I love the *Hobbit*, but I think, if you set aside the fact that the books overlap in terms of dragons & wands & wizards, the Harry Potter books are very different, especially in tone. Tolkien created a whole mythology, I don't think anyone could

claim that I have done that. On the other hand...he didn't have Dudley ;o) (Rowling, “JK Rowling Chat”).

Although Rowling might be right in the fact that both of the books have different atmospheres and different humour, it is still hypocritical of her to deny the inspiration so vehemently. Even the Tolkienian scholar Tom Shippey notes that “no modern writer of epic fantasy has managed to escape the mark of Tolkien, no matter how hard many of them have tried” (Shippey). To give another opinion on this problematic, Eivind Fosse Ruud, who has compiled more than eighty-page master thesis, which describes the similarities and differences of archaic writing, the origin of names, primary characters, and the description of evil in the books of both authors, has concluded:

Yes, Rowling might have borrowed certain elements, and perhaps, if James had argued that all fantasy is influenced by Tolkien, I could be inclined to agree. However, based on my findings I am confident in declaring that with *Harry Potter* Rowling has created something truly unique. By taking the fantasy out of the Middle-Ages, adding elements of the boarding school story, and a splash of modernity, she has ensured the story of the boy with the glasses will live forever in the minds of her readers (81-82).

The Harry Potter books could be described as a blend of school-story tradition, which brings about the feeling of nostalgia, and a themes of high fantasy genre about good and evil that are induced through a discussion about rights and race. Eccleshare sums up that: “The interspersing of contrasting contemporary black comedy and social commentary on the late twentieth century provides both context and access” (44).

## **5 Defining origins and influences of particular characters and their relationships in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone***

At first glance, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* appears as a book that is easy to predict, follows a traditional concept, and is mostly derivative. The plot is simple, made up of archetypal characters, including Harry, the ordinary orphan who has to prevent the Philosopher's Stone from ending up in the wrong hands, which is a typical moral story about good fighting against evil, in which Harry starts his journey, collecting his skills and knowledge, and has to face dangerous challenges to become a hero (Eccleshare 20).

To reach its end, the story makes use of suitable aspects of all the different genres: the already mentioned school story, fairy story, thriller, fantasy, and by blending the best of every single one of them, the perfect story full of excitement, surprise balanced with a pinch of fear, and concern is created to satisfy the reader from the start to its fortunate resolution (Eccleshare 20).

### **5.1 The Dursleys**

Rowling starts her first book with an introduction of the Dursleys – ‘the perfectly normal family’ living on Privet Drive, number four. It is not further than in the first few lines, which start with the description of how Mr. and Mrs. Dursley look, where we can find similarities with another book of the author to whom Rowling was constantly being compared, that is, Roald Dahl. Specifically, it is with Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach* characters Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker, who are described as follows:

Aunt Sponge was enormously fat and very short. She had small piggy eyes, a sunken mouth, and one of those white flabby faces that looked exactly as though it had been boiled. ... Aunt Spiker, on the other hand, was lean and tall and bony, and she wore steel-rimmed spectacles that fixed on to the end of her nose with a clip (Dahl).

Rowling's description of the Dursleys is nearly mirroring:

[Mr Dursley] was a big, beefy man with hardly any neck, although he did have a very large moustache. Mrs Dursley was thin and blonde and had nearly twice the usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on the neighbours.

The youngest of the Dursleys, their son Dudley, does not have an equal character in Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach*, but is often being compared to Lewis's *Narnia* character of Eustace Scrubb, with whom he shares the personality of a spoilt and arrogant brat who likes to mock other children.

As well as Harry, James' parents have died, although due to different causes and James was not a baby, as Harry was, when it happened, but the fact that they had to be sent to their vicious relatives who did not care for them in the best way possible is akin. Harry has to live in a cupboard full of spiders under the stairs and James' room is described as 'bare as a prison cell'. And another almost identical description follows right after with the depiction of how Harry was treated by Dursleys, as well as James by his aunts. At the beginning of the second chapter, Harry is awakened early by his aunt Petunia, who rushes him into the kitchen to make breakfast on Dudley's birthday morning, and in James' case, his aunts had put James to work at dawn to chop wood for the kitchen stove.

Children ending up in the hands of their terrible guardians is a concept that Dahl uses in other of his books, for example, the Grandma from *George's Marvellous Medicine* from 1981 or the Wormwoods in *Matilda* from 1988.

Of course, the phenomenon of the main hero being a mistreated orphan is not anything unusual and certainly not something Roald Dahl has come up with. The use of an orphan as the

main character provides many opportunities for the author to build up the hero throughout the story. Further elaborations of this topic will be given in the next part of the chapter.

Although Rowling admits that she had read *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* when she was a child, appreciates Dahl as a writer and says that she takes the comparison ‘as a huge compliment’, her answer is not dissimilar from those concerning other previously mentioned authors about whom she was asked to speak upon the possible inspiration:

I don't actually think we're that similar. I think that superficially, very superficially--because from what I know about Roald Dahl, he was very good on quirky details--we have something in common. But at a deeper level, we're quite different. This is not at all meaning that I'm better than Roald Dahl. He's an absolute master at what he did. It's just that I think we set out to do quite different things. I think his characters are more cartoonlike than mine are. I also think--unfashionable a word as that is--that my books are a lot more “moral” (Feldman).

Rowling has a point here. Although there are some similarities, the way in which she and Dahl portray their characters is quite different. In *Harry Potter*, all the characters are more believable, genuine, and appear more human-like than Dahl, thanks to their diverse personality traits. As Rowling has said, characters in Dahl's books appear more cartoon-like, which also applies to their personalities, as he tends to draw a clear line between good and bad characters. The heroes are mostly children with poor family backgrounds who have to face evil adult villains with purely bad intentions who have barely any redemption arc throughout the story. By saying that her books ‘are lot more moral’, Rowling probably alludes to Dahl's unabashed descriptions of his characters, in which he is not afraid to use words like ‘fat’ or ‘ugly’, which has been a recent subject of editing in new editions of his books (Vernon). There has also been a discussion about Dahl's antagonists being mainly monstrously evil women outnumbering

their male villain counterparts overwhelmingly, which has caused a wave of controversy against Dahl himself (Velez).

## 5.2 Harry's character concept

Catchy and exciting, as well as easy to follow and captivating story line is not everything when it comes to producing quality plot and storytelling. The author must ensure that the reader experiences various emotions throughout the book, so the plot has to be interesting enough not only to hold the reader's attention, but also to enable people to grow, travel to different destinations or whole new worlds, open the gates of their imagination, and allow them to dream (Eccleshare 16).

Although *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is a superficially simple book, it has the power to do all the above-mentioned things that make a good plotting. As Eccleshare states: "Rowling is a captivating storyteller and her skill lies not just in the drama of the obvious narrative but in the meticulous detail of the plots" (16).

Rowling draws Harry's story on two, probably immortal, story lines that are common to all English literature. The first one is 'the Cinderella tradition'. Being an orphan stuck with his uncaring relatives who treat them as an unpaid maid, Harry fits precisely into this tradition, which is repeated throughout literature for decades. Especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century novels for children and adults, orphans are not an unusual phenomenon, quite the contrary – there are a ton of them. Orphans are outsiders who have to find their own place and home in the world. Novel as a genre established on presenting an ordinary character who makes all the efforts to deal with all the pitfalls life throws at him. As Professor John Mullan describes it:

The orphan is therefore an essentially novelistic character, set loose from established conventions to face a world of endless possibilities (and dangers). The orphan leads the reader through a maze of experiences, encountering life's threats, and grasping its

opportunities. Being the focus of the story's interest, he or she is a naïve mirror to the qualities of others. In children's fiction, of course, the orphan will eventually find the happiness to compensate for being deprived of parents (Mullan).

Major Victorian age authors such as Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, or Charlotte Brontë have used the possibilities of including an orphan in their books or even making them their main characters.

In addition to the others, Rowling has used the 'rags-to-riches' concept when creating Harry's character because it is globally attractive. Especially for children, the vision of being able to break out of the conditions they are currently in, and become independent of their imperfect background, metaphorically enables them to grow up and take control over their own lives (Eccleshare 17).

One of the turning points for Harry, as for any other Cinderella, is when he learns about his true identity and, in his case, becomes not only spiritually but also materially richer. When Hagrid takes Harry to Gringotts Wizarding Bank in Chapter Five, Harry discovers that his family left him a vault full of wizarding gold. Until 2015, it was not known how Harry's parents were able to leave him so much money, but on September 21, Rowling explained on the Pottermore website that most of the money comes from Harry's twelfth century ancestor, the wizard Linfred of Stinchcombe, whose wealth comes from the medical services he provided to his Muggle neighbours (Rowling, "The Potter Family"). So, a new part of Harry's interesting, but to some extent still mysterious character, is that he has money and that it can partially compensate him for the loss of his family (Eccleshare 17).

Harry has a clear destiny set out by Rowling, which is, in addition to the rags-to-riches concept, another appeal of her plot. Eccleshare states: "He is an Arthurian hero: the boy who can pull the sword from the stone and who has a role to play in shaping the future of the world" (17). This is one of the inspirations Rowling *has* actually admitted, as she referred to Arthur



(called Wart) from T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone* as to "Harry's spiritual ancestor" (Guardian Staff).

As Rowling sets up Harry as a child whose home situation is going to change completely, she leads him through a series of exciting situations with which Harry has to deal with to prove himself in many different ways. "Like any other hero, Hergé's Tintin for example, Harry is always on a mission" (Eccleshare 17). Every quest Harry or his friends have to go through, Rowling uses as an asset to provide the narrative with momentum and to impart a moral lesson and raise the moral status of those who go through it (Eccleshare 17).

The aspect in which Rowling is completely traditional and unremarkable is that Harry represents the forces of good against the representative of evil, Voldemort, who has killed Harry's parents and nearly Harry himself, if it were not for his mother's love that has protected him and enabled Harry to escape only with his lightning bolt-shaped forehead scar. Harry's role as a representative of good is partially symbolic, even with his natural athletic ability at Quidditch that heroes often control. Throughout the story he still doubts about this role, for example, when he is scared about being put in the Slytherin because of his ability to speak Parseltongue (snake language), and this doubts and hints of not only having the positive-looking side to him makes him more intriguing than if he was just a pure representation of everything good without any fluctuations. What happens to Harry does not change him extensively and he continues in playing his part, but Rowling has her ways to conquer these apparent limitations. She does so by her use of magical aspects intertwined with human ones as Harry tackles his major tasks, and the inclusion of magic is what allows him and his friends to become more interesting characters because of their extended resourcefulness (Eccleshare 17).

Rowling understands how children like to be trembled by fear which can be later dispelled, that is why Harry always wins, even in the tensest situations that Rowling is so good at creating (Eccleshare 18).

Harry's heroic role is developed gradually but substantially: the more time he spends at Hogwarts and less at Dursleys, the more his skills, knowledge, and experiences grow along with his character.

### **5.3 Friendship with Ron and Hermione**

Harry's best friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, are again familiar and conventional characters, but are sympathetic and easy to identify with. Ron is himself a bit of a shallow character, but his older and more favourable brothers and his 'pure blood' family add depth to his character background. The Weasley brothers, prankster twins Fred and George, and the self-important Percy, are one of the less shadowy characters through which Rowling proves her ability of creating amusing dialogues in an environment of a large family. On the other hand, ambitious and forthright Hermione is overall more entertaining than Ron, and her character seems to have more layers, although it often places her in a position of being the victim of improper remarks. Eccleshare is of the opinion that: "The jokes about Hermione are about her cleverness, her eagerness to please and her dislike of breaking rules, all of which serve to make a potential heroine into a bit of a prig" (23).

When taken together, Harry, Ron, and Hermione form an engaging trio of friends who have good intentions and are not afraid to slightly break the rules when it is needed, often in order to help someone or if there is no other way of fighting against evil. With their enthusiastic energy and togetherness, they risk the loss of some house points in order to triumph their school enemies – the notoriously known Draco Malfoy and his minions Crabbe and Goyle. In case of taking on Voldemort, the greater enemy, they are not afraid to go out on a limb and even break the rules on a more serious level (Eccleshare 23).

Friendship plays an important role in most genres of children's literature, and the school story is no exception. Bringing together two children who differ in their character traits and

skills enables to form a complementary duo of friends who compensate for each other's weaknesses with their strengths. Harry meeting and immediately befriending Ron on the train to Hogwarts in Chapter Six can be set side by side with extroverted and impulsive Jennings befriending anxious but cautious Derbyshire when arriving at Linbury Court Preparatory School in Anthony Buckeridge's *Jennings Goes to School* from 1950. Ron and Harry fit perfectly into the premise of ideal complementary friendship – where one lacks, the other exceeds – Ron's lack of magical skills is balanced by Harry's natural wizarding talent, and Harry's sheer ignorance of Hogwarts and the wizarding world is offset by Ron's overkill of knowledge about it all (Eccleshare 38-39).

Including Hermione to form a trio of friends with Harry and Ron is not an unusual concept, although same-sex friend groups are more common due to lack of school story books set in a mixed boarding school. Popular school story trios are, for example, Marlow twins Nicola and Lawrie who befriend the third member of their group Thalia on the train to school in *Autumn Term* (1948) by Antonia Forest; or Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky & Co.* (1899) heroes Stalky, Beetle and M'Turk. Having a group of three friends enables the author to provide three different reactions to every situation and make the story more 'multi-dimensional'. That is what Rowling is clearly aware of because throughout the story Ron and Hermione offer different opinions and reactions due to their different points of view to every one of the critical situations they and Harry are repeatedly found in. Ron is generally more on Harry's side and they have similar points of view, but it is usually Hermione whose astute but careful judgement is in the end the right one to follow and eventually succeed with (Eccleshare 39).

#### **5.4 Rivalry with Draco Malfoy**

It would not be a proper school story without school villains or bullies. Draco Malfoy, the arrogant snobbish boy who comes from a wealthy pure-blooded wizarding family, along with his two cronies, Crabbe and Goyle, fit neatly into the roles of the school's bad guys. Crabbe

and Goyle do not have any special character traits on their own, but they serve more as an encouragement of Malfoy in terrorising Harry and his friends who, unlike them, have their own personalities, which puts them into superior position. Ron is from the start mocked for his poverty, Hermione for coming from a Muggle family, and Harry for an unspecified reason, but supposedly jealousy – Rowling manages to depict the reality of any school in a very believable way. She also restricts the level on which the boys can harm each other by using magic, so their rivalry stays on a more emotional and human-like level (Eccleshare 23-24). Furthermore, Harry's tolerance for his friends' apparent imperfections puts him in a better moral position than Malfoy, who cannot rise above such superficial reasons for discrimination (Eccleshare 40).

Rivalry is not less important than friendship when it comes to creating a legitimate school story. As Eccleshare points out: "Rivals play an important role in highlighting the moral high ground occupied by the heroes; the good instincts and actions are reinforced by being thwarted or despised by others" (39). Malfoy and Harry's immediate antagonism fits into the classical school-story framework, although their reasons for hating each other are rooted in deeper foundations.

Unsurprisingly, even Draco Malfoy has his earlier-written version in the character of Harry Flashman, who is a typical school bully from Thomas Hughes' Victorian school story classic *Tom Brown's School Days* from 1857. It is nearly impossible not to spot some resemblances between Hughes' and Rowling's books, since *Tom Brown's School Days* is considered to be the original boarding school story book that later influenced the structure of all the books that fall into this category. Stephen Fry, who was chosen as the narrator of the *Harry Potter* British audio adaptation and has starred in a TV adaptation of *Tom Brown*, notes the unmissable parallels of both works:

You can certainly say that of Harry Potter - a boy who arrives in this strange school to board for the first time and makes good, solid friends and also enemies who use

bullying and unfair tactics. He then is ambiguous about whether or not he is going to be good or bad. His pluck and his endeavour, loyalty, good nature and bravery are the things that carry him through - and that is the story of Tom Brown's Schooldays (Manchester Evening News).

## 5.5 Dumbledore's role

The Hogwarts Wizarding School headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, is one of the most archetypal characters of the whole book. He is an omnipotent, old, wise, and friendly man, which is a characteristic that fits neatly into the Jungian archetype of 'a wise old man'. Eccleshare adds: "He is the embodiment of supreme goodness, the only real counterweight to the evil of Voldemort" (24).

In this case, it is simple: If Harry is referred to as an Arthurian hero, Dumbledore must be his Merlin. Merlin's long history and origin, as a mythical figure featured in a legend of King Arthur, dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century when he was introduced by a British author Geoffrey of Monmouth, who portrayed him, combining earlier historical and legendary characters, in the figure as we know him now. If Rowling admitted that T. H. White's Arthur (Wart) from *The Sword in the Stone* was 'Harry's spiritual ancestor', it is unlikely to assume that Dumbledore was not inspired by White's version of Merlin. In Phyllis D. Morris's essay *Elements of the Arthurian Tradition in Harry Potter*, which deals with all the elements in which Harry is an Arthurian hero and Dumbledore his mentoring guardian Merlin, she points out that:

The parallels between Dumbledore and Merlin do not end with the protection of the hero in danger, however. In addition to both characters sporting long, flowing beards (and blue eyes, according to T.H. White), Merlin was King Arthur's mentor and guide, as Dumbledore has been Harry's guide and mentor (Colbert 188, as cited in Morris 2).

People also point out similarities with Tolkien's Gandalf, which could certainly be another influence of Rowling's Dumbledore, but the fact that both characters could be considered variations of the Jungian archetype of 'a wise old man' shows that neither Tolkien nor Rowling can claim it as their own new and original character type.

## **5.6 Voldemort as the embodiment of evil**

Good fighting against evil is the cornerstone of every children's literature book. If Dumbledore represents absolute goodness, there must be a representative of evil darkness to give the story its balance. Voldemort, also referred to as a Lord of Darkness, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named or You-Know-Who, is introduced in Chapter One of *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* in a dialogue between Professor McGonagall and Dumbledore about Harry's parents' murder. We get to know that Dumbledore is the only one whom Voldemort is supposedly afraid of and also that there needs to be some miraculous reason why he was not able to kill Harry, a little defenceless baby. In Chapter Four, Harry learns the truth about his parents' death from Hagrid and also that Voldemort's incomprehensible inability to kill Harry is the reason why he is so famous in the wizarding world. The spell must have somehow rebounded on Voldemort and even though it has not killed him, it disembodied him and that is the reason why he was hiding ever since.

At the end of the first book, Voldemort is present only on the other side of Professor Quirrell's head because he is too weak to have his own body, and it is also the reason why Quirrell killed the unicorn earlier in the book, to gather his blood in order to keep Voldemort alive. It also explains the reason why Voldemort wants the Philosopher's Stone – to get his own body, to become stronger and immortal.

There is not much revealed in the first book about Voldemort's origin, his true identity is gradually being discovered throughout the series. This thesis is mainly focused on the first

book of the series; however, in Voldemort's case, there are some acknowledged, as well as speculated, influences that I would like to point out.

In book five, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Dumbledore explains Sybill Trelawney's prophecy about Harry's and Voldemort's connection and the reason why either of them must die by the hand of the other because neither can live while the other survives. Rowling has affirmed that the prophecy idea comes from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. In an interview for *The Leaky Cauldron* and *MuggleNet*, when someone asked about what would happen if Voldemort had never heard the prophecy, she replied:

It's the *Macbeth* idea. I absolutely adore *Macbeth*. It is possibly my favourite Shakespeare play. And that's the question, isn't it? If *Macbeth* hadn't met the witches, would he have killed Duncan? Would any of it have happened? Is it fated or did he make it happen? I believe he made it happen ("Interview With JK Rowling").

Tolkien fans could not fail to see the similarities between Sauron and Voldemort, as in the fact that they are both weak at the beginning of the stories and are being prevented from gaining back their lost powers. These powers and their strength can be regained by acquiring magical objects – *The Philosopher's Stone* and *One Ring* – which both of the evil wizards try to do. Both of them are also referred to indirectly, in alike manners as mentioned further above. There are other similarities in various Tolkien characters or magical creatures, but, as was mentioned earlier in this thesis, Rowling denies any particular inspiration, even though the evidence is just too obvious to believe that, even if unconsciously, she was not influenced by Tolkien at all.

## 6 The impact of *Harry Potter* books on children's literature

It would be unfair to just point out the genres, authors, and their works that influenced the creation of *Harry Potter* without mentioning how big an impact this immersive wizarding world has had on children's and young adult literature.

J. K. Rowling maybe was not the very first one to come up with a magical school setting or with completely original characters, but she was, most probably for many children and young adult readers, the first author who was capable of creating the wizarding world of *Harry Potter* so compelling that they did not care about its originality and enjoyed it fully. Furthermore, with Hogwarts, Rowling has come up with new elements, as Pierce added: "Hidden school tunnels and rooms in which kids get into real trouble (Hogwarts is the most unsafe school ever!); a teacher who physically tortures the boy hero; consistent law-breaking and 'justice served' which corrects nothing at all" (Pierce, as cited in Fallon), along with Quidditch, these introduced themes that were, if not entirely new, then at least newly popular in the world of children's literature.

Back when the first Harry Potter books started coming out, Rowling, as a good-looking, talented author who was willing to give interviews, was everything every publisher could dream of. This was, of course, not good news for other authors publishing at the time because Rowling's rapid spread of fame, clout, and acclaim made it nearly impossible for them to keep up. *Harry Potter* has taken up all the media space, and other fantasy authors were, even if once very skilful and praised in their field, now overlooked, which has made them, understandably, a bit infuriated. It also made them wonder why Rowling's books are so attractive to young readers? What was the secret ingredient she had that others were lacking? Tamora Pierce, one of the authors of fantasy books for teenagers who was by then in this field for years, along with other young adult writers and specialists, took part in a panel discussion concerning the popularity of the three then-published Harry Potter books.



Pierce recalled: “By the time the panel was over, I was free. *Nobody knew*. No one there could point to a single factor that made the books popular” (Pierce, as cited in Fallon).

They came to the conclusion that it was not some new concept or secret formula that Rowling had discovered which made her books so appealing. Every one of those elements of *Harry Potter* has been used before and in some way presented and processed by previous writers, but the most logical explanation of Rowling’s massive success is that she has used these well-known elements in the right way at the right time to produce the right books for the right readers (Fallon).

Of course, there is no intention to devalue her creativity – her ability to come up with such an enchanting vocabulary that guided the reader through all seven perfectly thought-out and suspenseful books is truly a commendable skill. Besides, Fallon addresses another great point: “In fact, her most massive creation might have been the current middle-grade and young adult fiction market. If we think of popular pre-Rowling authors as big fish in a small pond, they may now look like smaller fish in comparison — but the pond has become a Great Lake”. Indeed, not only were the kids so caught up in this ‘Potter mania’, but also an increasing number of adults were happy to read Rowling’s books on their way to work or in any spare moment of their day. The hype was spreading among both children and adult audiences, and the fact that more and more adults were not ashamed of reading *Harry Potter* in public has led to normalisation of reading young-adult novels generally.

With an expanding number of people who started to be interested in reading thanks to Rowling’s books, other earlier-written fantasy and young-adult fiction works experienced a new wave of readers. Peter Glassman, one of the founders of Books of Wonder, an independent bookstore based in Manhattan, remembers that when *Harry Potter* first hit the US market in 1998 it caused that “people were looking for books like that, because there was nothing else ...

we were selling a lot of Lloyd Alexander, E. Nesbit, obviously the “Narnia” books, *The Hobbit*, L.M. Boston” (Glassman, as cited in Fallon).

So, at first, it was the classics who were benefiting from the *Potter* craze, but eventually new writers began to seize the opportunity created by this new fantasy and young adult fiction reading trend, and with an increasing number of readers, an increasing number of books for young adult and children audience started to be published. As Brown points out: “3,000 young adult novels were published in 1997. Twelve years later, that figure hit 30,000 titles--an increase of a full order of magnitude”, and this trend continued in the following years: “Sales for children’s and YA books rose by 20.8% to \$1.9 billion for 2014, while children’s and YA e-book sales soared by 33.7% to \$227.3 million, making up 12.0% of sales, up from 10.9% in 2013” (Abrams). It was mainly genre fiction writers who flourished at these times, but also realist writers, most notably John Green, had their piece of the pie.

Maybe the most significant impact that the *Harry Potter* series had was on the length of books for children. The standard length of children’s books before *Harry Potter* was around 140 pages because no one believed that children are capable and willing to read longer works. Searle says that: “After Harry Potter ..., a page count of 290 became the new minimum—an increase of 153 pages—according to research done by Booklist Reader”. The page count also rose with each one of the Harry Potter books themselves, starting with 320 pages for the first book of the series and finishing with a total of 756 pages for the last one, although, *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix*, the fifth book of the series was even longer – by 12 pages. Rowling’s seven-book series also encouraged other young adult and children’s authors to publish their large-scale sagas, and titles such as *Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *Divergent* by Veronica Roth or Victoria Aveyard’s *Red Queen* became instantly popular.

Although the increasing numbers may not all be solely the cause of *Harry Potter* books, we can say with confidence that they have a certain contribution and that thanks to them both the writing and publishing for children has definitely undergone a transformation.

## **7 Harry Potter's influence on merchandising**

### **7.1 What is merchandising good for?**

Merchandising is one of the ways to keep a brand in the eyes of consumers, and it also serves as an extension of that brand. Its two main purposes are, first, to increase awareness and recognition of a brand by advertising it in various forms, and second, to simply generate revenue for the company producing the merchandise. Due to the vision of its enticing outcomes, many brands can fall into the abyss of overmerchandising – the brand's products oversaturate the market and the brand eventually becomes diluted to the public. As the brand's message becomes more and more unclear under the flood of products, it is hard for customers to stay emotionally involved in the brand and, in the end, they can lose their interest at all (Gunelius, 86).

Gunelius states it simply:

[M]erchandising is the process of creating products related to a specific brand. Typically, a brand will be licensed to other companies who will manufacture, promote and sell products based on that brand. The licensee will pay the licensor a fee for merchandising rights, and usually, the licensor will receive a percentage of sales from the licensed merchandise (86).

There is no limit to the form, shape or size of the merchandise, as it varies from clothing, toys, or art to home decorations, party supplies, games, or electronics, and many more items that can display the brand's logo, be modelled after individual characters in the form of action figures or dolls, or simply be mock-ups of specific objects related to the brand. The options are nearly limitless, and creativity is the key when it comes to inventing new ways of merchandising brands (Gunelius 87).

Merchandising has a long history and is not aimed only at the children's market. "Companies make millions of dollars each year through merchandising efforts targeted at adults

and related to professional and college sports teams, musicians, actors and so on” (Gunelius 87). As an example of a brand name that is being merchandised itself, Gunelius points out Starbucks coffee mugs or Harley-Davidson T-shirts (87).

One of the most valuable abilities that merchandising has is that it can extend the life of a brand and its potential to continually generate money. *Harry Potter* is a shining example of this, with the fact that even after almost 16 years since the last book and 12 years since that last film came out, new merchandising products, videogames, spin-off movies, and TV series are still being created and successfully marketed.

## **7.2 Protecting Harry Potter from overmerchandising**

In 1999, Rowling sold the licensing rights for the Harry Potter brand to Warner Bros., which surely saw the moneymaking potential immediately. They then started selling the merchandising rights, redistributing them between different companies and manufacturers to ensure that the Harry Potter brand is being extended in the appropriate way, all of that under the strict eye of Rowling herself. For example, when Coca-Cola Company won the right to interlace their products with Harry Potter movies with a \$150 million bid, they had to agree with Rowling’s requirements regarding the Harry Potter brand. The first of Rowling’s two main demands was that part of the money earned would be donated to various community projects, with an \$18 million donation to a US charity that encourages literacy in children, Reading is Fundamental. The second demand prohibited any Coca-Cola products from appearing in Harry Potter movies, as well as using any books or movie images in Coca-Cola’s own promotions. Through these demands, Rowling ensured that the Harry Potter brand would not be exposed unduly and that it would not destroy its message or emotional value due to Coca-Cola (Gunelius 88).

Warner Bros. have not only bought the rights for the movies, but they also signed contracts with many other companies to produce original Harry Potter branded merchandise. Gunelius lists some of them:

A diverse group of companies purchased licensing rights to the Harry Potter brand, including Electronic Arts, LEGO, Mattel, Hasbro, Gund, Tonner Doll Company, Whirlwood Magic Wands, The Noble Collection (a collectibles manufacturer), Neca (manufacturer of action figures, toys and so on) and many more (88-89).

In the course of time, Warner Bros. brick-and-mortar as well as online stores were selling Harry Potter merchandise, along with toy stores and mass and online retailers.

Needless to say that Rowling, along with the team behind Harry Potter, was still keeping these license sales at bay, which wittily ensured that the market was not saturated and was leaving customers wanting more of the Harry Potter merchandise. As Gunelius points out: “There is a subtle difference between inundating the market with merchandise and using the laws of supply and demand to your advantage” (89). Rowling’s unyielding commitment to ensure that Harry Potter was not overmerchandised was leveraged by the brand’s team, and it ended up being an exceptional marketing tactic (Gunelius 89).

To provide some evidence, in 2008, when the brand was around for 10 years, there were approximately 400 official Harry Potter products on the market, which was not a lot for a brand that has been there for such a long time. If we took it further to the merchandising market in 2004, the year when the third movie was released and the sixth book of the series was awaited to be published, we would assume that at this peak of demand for Harry Potter related products, the brand would have been manufacturing as many products to profit as much from it as possible. However, the chart leaders who had the biggest licensing property were *Shrek 2* and *Spider-Man 2* with their merchandise. The same situation would be 2006, the year between the release of the sixth and seventh book and the fourth and fifth movie. As fans waited for the

book finale, the hype was so high that if Harry Potter's merchandising team got a little carried away by it and launched a larger amount of merchandise, the market would not get saturated so quickly because the demand was just so high to satisfy it easily. Yet, the most merchandised movie of summer 2006 was Disney and Pixar's animated film *Cars*, which had more than 70 licensees and 350 *Cars*-related products announced even before the movie's release date in June 2006 which, compared to 400 Harry Potter-related items that have been there for the ten years of its existence, shows that we cannot talk about the market being saturated with Harry Potter merchandise at that time (Gunelius 89).

Another essential component of the Harry Potter brand are video games. As Gunelius points out: "Electronic Arts is responsible for creating video games to coincide with each film in the Harry Potter series, but J.K. Rowling has been closely involved in the development of each game and must approve all aspects of every game" (93). To date, 12 official video games have been released, including this year's Hogwarts Legacy open-world RPG game, which is experiencing great success since its release. It is still a low number compared to other brands, for example, *Star Wars*, which has released over a hundred of videogames throughout its history, or the *Shrek*, which has produced over 30 video games.

It is hard to say if we can still talk about the market not being saturated with Harry Potter items now in 2023. Given recent years statistics, for example, according to Arnal from Licensing for Growth: "In France, Harry Potter was the best-selling brand of the toy business in 2020: 2,5 million products sold and an increase of 44% vs previous year", who then adds that the appeal of the brand does not apply only to toys and children's items, but that the textile industry, for example, benefits massively from it. Indeed, the fact that today Harry Potter-themed clothes can be found in every other fast fashion or retail store may suggest that the market has probably been saturated with Harry Potter merchandise.

## Conclusion

Throughout my thesis, I have argued that J. K. Rowling gained inspiration from various sources, mainly other children's literature or fantasy authors, when writing the first book of her wizarding series *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. I have pointed out specific patterns regarding genre, story structure and particular characters, which appear in other earlier written works by different authors, and identified which aspects of the book are primarily Rowling's own inventions.

The first three chapters of my thesis focused on providing a theoretical base on which I could build on my subsequent analyses of particular elements that influenced and inspired Rowling's work. The first chapter consists of defining the term 'popular fiction' and showing different critical points of view from which it can be analysed and judged. In the second chapter, I have continued by defining the genre of children's literature and explaining its purpose, use, and cultural benefit. The third chapter was a detailed historical overview of British children's literature, starting with the early beginnings of writing for children and continuing through the past centuries until today's contemporary authors of British children's literature and their works.

Chapters 4 and 5 presented an analysis of the origins and influences of the genre, fantasy world, and also of the particular characters and their relationships in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. In these chapters, specific examples of similarities with earlier written works were given along with Rowling's personal comment on most of them. The fourth chapter revealed that Rowling was not the first author to use the school environment to set her story in and pointed out several authors and their books that are considered as the classics of school story genre. It had also discussed the concept of fantasy worlds and again provided different possible sources of inspiration for Rowling's fantasy world of wizardry. The fact that Harry's family, friends, enemies, school teachers or Harry himself could also have been based on



already used character archetypes or that Harry's character development plot has been in children's literature for a long time already was the topic of the fifth chapter of my thesis.

Chapter 6 has discussed the impact of Harry Potter books on children's literature. It included other author's initial confusion about Rowling's huge success, as her books had not been built on fully original elements, along with number of ways in which the children's literature industry has changed, starting with normalisation of adults reading books for a younger audience; new wave of readers for similar earlier-written books, as well as the emergence of new writers. The publishing industry has seen an increase in the publication of children's and young adult books. Rowling's books have increased people's overall interest in reading, and they also encouraged other writers not to be afraid to write longer books or even sequels for children and young adults, as *Harry Potter* exceeded the standard length of children's books and increased it by almost 150 pages. All of these facts have shown that the world of children's literature has not remained the same after the publication of the *Harry Potter* books.

The last, seventh, chapter offered a view on how Harry Potter as a brand has dealt with merchandising. The first part of this chapter has explained that merchandising is an essential part of making the brand more visible as well as profitable and that there are no limits when it comes to the form, shape, or size of merchandising products. The second part of this chapter has demonstrated that Harry Potter as a brand has for a long time been able to not fall into the trap of overmerchandising, providing a comparison with other brands popular at the time. However, the current situation of Harry Potter merchandise seems to no longer follow this trend.

I have managed to fulfil the purpose of my thesis, as it provides both a theoretical background for the popular fiction genre and the genre of children's literature along with its history, as well as practical analyses and comparisons with the structure concepts and character types of other authors' books. My work has proven that Rowling did draw on many sources,

mostly on the fantasy and school story genre, combining their elements in a smart way to produce an engaging book that both children and adults eventually enjoyed a lot, which is confirmed by the sixth and seventh chapters of my thesis that demonstrates how Harry Potter has influenced publishing, as well as the marketing industry.

Harry Potter is an ongoing worldwide phenomenon whose development is still in progress. In my opinion, it provides and will continue to provide an opportunity for research from many different viewpoints as it is interesting from both the literary and marketing perspective. Although my thesis has covered parts of both spheres, I believe that more research would reveal many more impressive outcomes that this thesis has not been able to encompass.

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