

Moral Values in Literature

Morals in the Harry Potter Novels

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Abstract

Education isn't just about reading, writing and arithmetic. It is also about life, citizenship and the value of being a good person. When a school teaches these things, a child's world and perhaps the world around us will begin to change. – Charles Haynes (US educator and researcher). Moral values are important in life and are things that people care about. Honesty is a virtue which is upheld by all societies and is universally accepted. Values are what matter to us. They are what motivate our behaviour. They ground our judgments about what is good or bad, desirable or undesirable.

Any form of activity that involves making judgments about what is better or worse, good or bad, high quality or low quality, right or wrong, successful or unsuccessful, desirable or undesirable involve values in one form or another. There are values in sports, values in art, values in social and cultural practices, values in science, values in relationships, values in economic transactions, religious values. Our everyday experience is saturated with values and value judgments.

We need values to build a morally upright society that will in turn contribute to healthy relationships and help to form our emotional identities with care and courage. Both the home and school are responsible for inculcating core moral values such as respect, responsibility, fairness, trustworthiness and citizenship. We need to start early with the young because we continue to hear about behavioural disorders, increased violence and crime activities by and among the young.

Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th president of the United States said, "To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society." Through literature, young people can be taught to be more sensitive and tolerant of "otherness," to stand up for justice, and simply to be more humane, wholesome and responsible members of society. Research has shown positive outcomes of using everyday literature to teach character education at all grade levels and developmental levels. There are a lot and here are some main morals that appear in Harry Potter novels.

1. Never underestimate love. That was how Voldemort met his sticky end.

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2. Never forget your friends. Which Ron and Hermione often did, but they always paid the price.
3. Love your family. Always. Don't be a Percy.
4. Study hard. And you'll see it may one day save your life, as it often did when Hermione saved everybody.
5. Yield not to temptation. This is a bible proverb, but to yield to temptation sometimes brings costs.
6. Be humble. You saw what happened to Cadmus and Antioch Peverell, and how they were so different from their brother Ignotus.
7. Do not mock others. Sirius paid for what he did to Kreacher, as did Voldemort. Do not mock those of whom you think to be lesser than you.
8. True friendship can get you through anything. An unlikely trio to begin with, Harry, Ron and Hermione proved time and time again that real friendship forges an unbreakable bond. Together they managed to face Dementors and Death Eaters, Dolores Umbridge and Horcruxes.
9. Bravery comes in many forms. Harry had to summon up all his courage when he sought out Voldemort in the Forbidden Forest and these were many demonstrations of courage and fortitude.
10. Money isn't everything. Harry may have inherited a whole vault of gold from his parents, but it couldn't buy him the thing he perhaps yearned for the most: the family that was lost to him.

Some of the main morals in each of the Harry Potter novels are discussed below.

Keywords: Harry Potter Novels, Moral values, Language Class room, Literature, Morally Upright Society

Discussions and Interpretations

1. HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT YOU ARE CAPABLE OF UNTIL YOU TRY

Harry is faced with extraordinary circumstances, and he is able to rise to the challenge. He finds reserves of bravery within himself, as well as special abilities. Harry Potter has no idea that he is a wizard, of course. When he is eleven years old, he finds out that he is a wizard and is whisked off to Wizarding School. That is pretty unusual. Until then, he has no idea he was "The Boy Who Lived" or that he has famous parents.

From the beginning, Harry exhibits traits of bravery and curiosity. He sees Hagrid taking something from a vault at Gringotts, and he wants to protect it. He thinks that it is Snape who is after it, and about that he is wrong, but at least he tries to protect Hogwarts.

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Harry makes friends based on their character traits and not prestige. He discovers that he has talents he never knows he has, including an aptitude to play the sport Quidditch.

Harry risks his life to follow the Sorcerer's Stone deep into the castle to stop anyone from taking it. He thinks it is Snape, but it turns out to be Quirrell. Harry is brave enough to fight off Quirrell, even though he is harbouring Voldemort. Harry jumps to his feet, catches Quirrell by the arm, and hangs on as tight as he can. Quirrell screams and tries to throw Harry off – the pain in Harry's head is building -- he can't see -- he can only hear Quirrell's terrible shrieks and Voldemort's yells of, "KILL HIM!..." (Ch. 17)

Harry is later told by Dumbledore that he saved the stone because he wanted to rescue it, and not use it. In this way, the person who takes the stone has to have good intentions. Harry has good intentions, whereas Quirrell and Voldemort do not.

2. HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS TOLERANCE OF PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT

The idea of tolerance within a community is highly important in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. The plot of the novel explores this idea through Salazar Slytherin's intention to wipe out "mudbloods," or wizards with non- magical ancestors, from Hogwarts. Harry himself is only half-wizard, and Hermione's parents are both "Muggles," non-magical people. However, Harry and Hermione are better wizards than Malfoy, who is from a family of generations of pure wizard blood, showing that dedication and work, rather than genetic heritage, are the important factors in guaranteeing success.

Rowling describes the Slytherin students as inbred: all are oversized, strange-looking, mean and unintelligent. But their blood is pure, and that is what matters most to them, their final torch of victory when they have nothing else in their favor. The Dursleys too add to this theme with their inherent intolerance-they are a pitiful lot, terrified of magical people, mean to Harry, nosey and ill-tempered, and yet extremely proud of themselves for being, in their opinion, normal.

3. HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN A PERSON MUST KEEP AN OPEN MIND

The major moral of this story is that a person must keep an open mind. Things are not necessarily as they seem and people who do not keep an open mind expose themselves to danger. This can be seen most clearly in the interactions between Harry and his friends and the various animals (real animals or the animal versions of animagi) in the story. The friends consistently misinterpret the intentions of the animals in the story. For example, Harry and Ron spend much of the story being angry at Crookshanks for trying to kill Scabbers all the time. As another example, Harry is terrified by the big dog. Relatedly, everyone is afraid of

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Sirius Black. All of these perceptions turn out to be wrong. Because of their inaccurate perceptions, the friends get themselves in trouble at the end of the book. They also inadvertently help Voldemort by letting Scabbers/Pettigrew return to him.

The book is all about thinking you know something when you really are wrong. It is about how we endanger ourselves when we are so sure of something that we do not allow ourselves to consider that we might be wrong. In this book, Harry learns about the power he has within himself when he casts the Patronus spell to save himself and his godfather, Sirius Black, from the dementors. He originally thinks that the Patronus must have been cast by his father, who he thinks that he has seen, but it is really Harry (who, with Hermione, used the time-turner to go back in time). Initially, Harry waits and waits and waits for his father to come and save him and Sirius, but when it becomes clear that no one is coming to save them, he learns to rely on himself. It's a pretty empowering moment for Harry, and it certainly increases his self-confidence, suggesting that we are all more capable than we believe. Harry is a young wizard, yet he handles such an advanced spell. I think this is meant to help empower young readers to feel confident in themselves and their own capabilities.

4. HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE PEOPLE ARE NOT ALWAYS AS THEY APPEAR AND NOT EVERYONE IS GRATEFUL FOR BEING SAVED

Harry is told that Mad-Eye Moody is a trusted Auror, and so he is, but the man he thinks to be Moody has turned out to be the evil Barty. The moral is, do not always assume you know someone.

In the book, Hermione is furiously fighting for the rights and freedom of house elves. This takes time, devotion and dedication. However, when she succeeds and provides freedom for Mr Crouch's house elf Winky, she responds with hostility and a distinct lack of gratitude.

Helping others is always right but doesn't always guarantee a happy ending. As Cedric and Harry both have reached the cup at the same time, marking them both heroes of the Triwizard Tournament, they both have agreed to touch the cup together, signifying joint winners. Unfortunately, this also has meant that when the cup became the portkey to the graveyard that Barty Crouch Jr has organised, Cedric is taken along too, ended up 'a spare' and is instantly murdered by Voldemort. Sadly, if Harry hadn't agreed to share first place, Cedric will probably still be alive. J.K. Rowling delivers the sobering message that courage and integrity doesn't always win, but you must persevere anyway.

5. HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE TRUST OUR FRIENDS AND HAVE OUR EYES OPEN ABOUT THINGS THAT SEEM TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE,

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One of the central mysteries of Rowling's book is the identity of the Half-Blood Prince. Harry Potter finds a used potions book with all sorts of useful instructions in it. A name, the Half-Blood Prince, is written inside it. This book gets Harry through his potions class and also gets him into some serious trouble. Potter tries a spell that is written in the book and ends up seriously hurting another student. But, even despite the danger, Potter has a deep connection with the book. He feels that the Half-Blood Prince is a lot like himself. He hides the book from authorities within in the school, hoping to keep it for him. However, at the end of the book, Potter finds out the true identity of the Half-Blood Prince.

Just after Snape has killed Dumbledore, Potter tries to use one of the spells from the book on Snape, who easily counters the spell. Snape reveals that he is the Half-Blood Prince. So what is the moral lesson from all this? Rowling is warning against things that seem too good to be true. All throughout the book Potter is warned about how dangerous the Half-Blood Prince's potions book might be. His closest friends continually warn him that he's getting into trouble. But Potter holds on to the book *because* he likes it. And, in the end, this turns out badly for him. Rowling is warning us to trust our friends and to have our eyes open about things that seem too good to be true.

6. HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY

At the start of the school year, the Sorting Hat warns students that they need to stand together. Unfortunately, the House system at Hogwarts automatically divides students into four houses, mirroring the ideological split of the school's four founders. Coupled with a highly competitive Quidditch Cup tournament and separate dormitories, students at Hogwarts are inherently segregated. All of Harry's close friends—Ron, Hermione, Ginny, and Neville—are members of Harry's House, Gryffindor. Houses are not the only form of segregation at Hogwarts. Like Slytherin founder Salazar Slytherin, some Hogwarts students believe that only pure blood Wizards should be allowed to study at Hogwarts—Mudbloods and half-bloods are often ostracized or mocked. Even outside of the Wizarding community, terrible segregation exists. The giants Hagrid visits in the mountains are not welcoming to others, and the Centaurs constantly chase outsiders out of the Forbidden Forest.

Lord Voldemort preys on this internal splintering, as does the Ministry of Magic. Ultimately, Ministry employee Dolores Umbridge is able to use this petty competition to form an Inquisitorial Squad of students, which consistently thwarts Harry's attempts to stop Voldemort, making his work far more difficult. Now more than ever, Hogwarts must stand together—not only to defeat Voldemort but to protect themselves against corrupt faculty members that threaten their education.

7. HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS

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TRUST.

Being able to trust is a moral strength that might pale in comparison to such virtues as loyalty and bravery; however, the theme of trust is woven into the plot of the Harry Potter series, and it comes to the forefront particularly in the Deathly Hallows. Throughout his long search for Horcruxes, Harry often doubts whether his blindly following Dumbledore's instructions is the right thing to do. "This is not love, the mess he left me in", he tells Hermione. Nevertheless, he perseveres and eventually understands..

CONCLUSION

Harry Potter stories could be used as a vehicle to promote moral development in Pre-adolescent children because many of the characters in these stories exhibit stages of moral reasoning to which this age group can relate. It has been posited that children in their pre-adolescent years typically reason at Stages Two and Three (Bear et al., 1997). Many examples of moral dilemmas that may be developmentally appropriate for pre-adolescents are found throughout the Harry Potter series. It can be concluding that the Harry Potter stories possess a multifarious richness and depth that far transcend the discussion of morality. This article describes just one issue from each novel of a multitude of issues for which the Harry Potter stories can be utilised for both understanding children and identifying ways in which to foster their moral development.
