



Blurring Reality and Fantasy: Magic Realism in Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

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Abstract

The bespectacled young boy who soars through the sky on a broomstick—Harry Potter—has cast a spell on countless teenagers, captivating the world with his thrilling adventures. Since its publication in 1997, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* has been translated into over 70 languages, gaining global acclaim for its engaging plot, humorous tone, and rich thematic content. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the interplay between imagination and reality in the novel through the lens of magical realism.

Magical realism is widely regarded as a literary technique that uses fantastical elements to reflect and critique real-life experiences. While magic serves as a narrative tool, the underlying focus remains rooted in reality. This paper begins by introducing the research focus—*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*—highlighting both its widespread popularity and its celebrated author, the renowned British writer J.K. Rowling. By aligning the novel's features with the conventions of magical realism, the study explores the convergence of fantasy and reality in character development and scene construction.

Furthermore, the paper delves into the deeper reflections of reality embedded within the magical world, uncovering the life values Rowling seeks to express. These include themes such as rebellion, the confrontation of desire, and the transformative power of love. In doing so, the analysis not only reveals the realistic undertones present in the narrative's settings and characters, but also enhances the understanding of how magical realism operates within *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

Keywords: Imagination, Reality, Magic Realism, Muggles

Introduction

J.K. Rowling, born in 1965, went from being an unemployed single mother to a multi- millionaire within five years. Her teenage years were difficult due to her mother's illness and a strained relationship with her father. The idea for *Harry Potter* came to her during a delayed train ride in 1990, and she began writing the first book in Edinburgh cafés, often accompanied by her infant daughter. Before her literary success, Rowling studied French and Classics at the University of Exeter and worked for Amnesty International. Despite early struggles, she found global fame with the release of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in 1997. The book series became a worldwide phenomenon, translated into over 25 languages and selling millions of copies.

The story, praised for reviving children's interest in reading, led to eight successful film adaptations. The first movie grossed over \$970 million globally and received multiple award nominations. Rowling, admired for her resilience and imagination, is lovingly referred to by fans as the "magic mother."

Magic realism is a literary technique that portrays reality through the

use of magical and imaginative elements, without fully abandoning the essence of real life. Rather than focusing purely on fantasy, it blends the ordinary with the extraordinary to highlight the real world in a more vivid way. At its core, magic realism remains grounded in reality.

Over ten years, the story of Harry Potter has grown from a tale about a boy wizard into a global phenomenon. Fans have followed Harry, Ron, and Hermione as they faced challenges, grew up, and shared unforgettable moments. The journey begins with *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, a landmark in modern children's literature. Orphaned and mistreated by his relatives, Harry learns on his 11th birthday that he is a wizard. He joins Hogwarts, forms strong friendships, and begins his magical training. However, danger looms as the Dark Lord seeks the Philosopher's Stone to gain immortality. With courage, friendship, and love, Harry protects the stone and defeats the Dark Lord—marking the beginning of an extraordinary adventure.

This paper explores Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone through the lens of magic realism, drawing on the novel's captivating storyline. The *Harry Potter* series is undeniably categorized as magical fantasy. Within this genre, J.K. Rowling introduces readers to wizards, Dementors, and fantastical creatures like giants and dragons. However, the central figure among these elements is Harry Potter himself.

Analysis of Magic Realism

Harry begins his journey as an orphan living with his upwardly mobile aunt, uncle, and cousin. Unbeknownst to him, he is a wizard. One day, he discovers that an entire magical world exists alongside the mundane "Muggle" world—a world governed by magic and rich in its own language and culture. This hidden realm coexists with the everyday, routine-bound existence of non-magical people.

At the beginning of the story, readers are introduced to Mr. Dursley who is wondering about the appearance of Owls, Shooting Stars and Funny people in his surroundings.

Mr. Dursley's hesitations are increased by shooting stars all over Britain, owls flying by daylight, mysterious people in cloaks all over the place. The author initiates the

first magic in Harry Potter's life such as vanishing glass of boa constrictor's tank, a cobra starts to speak with him.

The snake suddenly opened its beady eyes. Slowly very slowly, raised its head until its eyes were on a level with Harry's. It winked. Harry stared. It gave Harry a look that said quite plainly: I get that all the time. The snake mobbed vigorously. Where do you come from, anyway? Harry asked? The snake replied. Boa constrictor, Brazil, Harry sat up and gasped, the glass front of the boat Constrictor tank had vanished. (Rowling, 26)

Harry gets mysterious letters, even though no one, ever in his whole life, has never got letter from any one, and he has no friends too, no other relatives. Dursley reads the letter and sniffled angrily, because he doesn't want to get letter from unknown to Harry. So, he burns all letters, whenever comes to Harry. After burning the letter, he gets out a hammer and nails harder up the cracks around the front and back doors. So, no one can get out. On Sunday, Dursley feels happy because no post on Sundays, but something comes whizzing

down in the kitchen chimney through the fire place many letters comes to Harry. “Next moment, thirty or forty letters came pelting out of the fire place like bullets”. (35)

Harry’s life becomes change when he meets Hagrid, a wizard in Hogwarts School. He comes to invite Harry to his place. He meets Hagrid, the keeper of the keys on his eleventh birthday. He gives a chocolate cake with “happy birthday” written on it with green icing. This chocolate cake is taken from inside pocket of his overcoat. So many squashed things are in his black over coat. When he sits on the sofa, which hang down under is weight. Then Hagrid tells him that he is famous at Hogwarts and he is wizard. Hagrid takes Harry to Diagon alley. It is a wizard bank named Gringotts runs by goblins. They settle down in the boat. Harry is looking for another boat. They both sit on the boat to reach the bank. Harry is still staring at Hagrid trying to imagine him flying. Harry is no longer to see more magic. Hagrid pulled out the pink umbrella again, tapped it, twice on the side of the boat and they speed off towards. (51)

They passed book shops, music stores. In fact, Harry had the most peculiar feeling that he had no money to

buy anything. It’s all new to him. He faced a different experience. Hagrid tells him that all students of Hogwarts School need some materials which is used for magical purpose to enter into the magical society. I.e., magic sticks, gold coin, and any pets like cat, rat, bat or an owl. To catch a train to Hogwarts, goes platform number nine and three quarters, which is like Brigadoon, and it exists only at the certain times and is reached by walking straight towards through the wall between platform nine and three quarters. On the journey he buys food, chocolate frogs and Bertie Bott’s every flavour beans. Coconut, baked bean, strawberry, curry, grass, coffee, sardine and it’s even enough to bite lightly at the end of a grey when Ron who is friend of Harry, doesn’t touch which turned out to be peeper.

After sometimes later the train seems to be slowing down and finally stopped. Then Harry hears a familiar voice that is Hagrid, who calls all the students to follow him. Through the little boats they moved to the castle. Hagrid knocks three times on the castle door.

When Harry potter embraces on his first journey to Hogwarts, his reputation as a hero proceeds him. For Harry, this acknowledges and celebrated heroism-with people staring and pointing

at him wherever he goes in the wizarding world and feels uncomfortable. Reaching into the castle professor McGonagall leads them into a great hall. Hogwarts magical school has a houses system. Students feel very strong in sense of loyalty for their respective houses. When Harry's turn comes, he sits on the stool, the sorting hat has placed on his head. The hat suggests Harry's intelligence house. Harry immediately opposes Slytherin, because he knows Slytherin house is associated with dark wizards. Rowling has stated the reason for the sorting hat's selection of Slytherin at first. And the reason is because the sorting hat sense the part of Voldemort's soul within Harry.

That's interesting... So where shall I put you? Harry said, Not Slytherin, not Slytherin, not Slytherin, eh? Said the small Voice are you sure? you could be great you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness. (Rowling, 90-91)

The sorting hat originally belongs to Godric Gryffindor, who is one of the four founders of Hogwarts. The four founders used to pick the students for their houses, but then they realize that someone else will have to do it after they died. So,

Gryffindor takes off his hat and make it to choose every student to each house. The sorting hat spends four minutes to select Hermione Granger to Gryffindor. After the selection everyone eats as much as they can the remaining of the food from the plates, leaving sparkling clean as before. The students are admired by the photographs and the oil paintings move about leaving their frames entirely to visit other art works. "The people in the portrait along the corridors whispered and painted as they passed...They climbed more stair case, dragging their feet...". (96)

Hermione, who seems to remember anything that can be learned from book, while Harry gets to know the things done as a hero. He is concerned that his years among muggles particularly those muggles might have crippled his magical abilities. However, he seems to be overlooking that Hermione, and other students, they also grow up in muggles households, with no more magical background than he has. In the midnight Harry feels somewhat feel unsettle apart from the natural world and being in the strange new world. Harry discovers that his father was a seeker in Quidditch pitch. Harry also wants to be his father. Next day in great hall, six screech owls carries a parcel to Harry potter. It contains new

nimbus two thousand broomstick and it is prescribed that Oliver wood will meet him tonight on the Quidditch pitch at seven o'clock for the first training session. The gift is given by McGonagall. Harry becomes happy out of it.

Broomsticks are used for transportation by witch and wizards for all ages; this is for participating in the game of Quidditch. Harry becomes quite attached with his nimbus. On the Christmas Eve, Harry gets a parcel and that is an invisible cloak, which looks shiny, silvery cloth. According to the legends, the cloak of invisibility has the power to protect the body of one who wears it from being seen by death. It makes the wearer invisible to muggles and wizards. Harry sees a mirror where he notes a woman standing, smiling too. He whispers Mum? Dad? Harry looks at his family for the first time in his life.

Harry looked into faces of the other people in the mirror and saw other pairs of green eyes like him, other noses like him, even a little old man who looked as though He had Harry's knobby knees Harry was looking at his family, For the first time in his life. (Rowling, 153)

Dumbledore hides this mirror of desire from everyone, because he hides the

philosopher's stone in it. The stone will transform any metal into pure gold. It's also capable to produce the elixir of life which will make a man immortal. The mirror reflects everyone's desire in life. While Ron comes and sees himself, he sees him as a head captain in Quidditch pitch holding the house cup. Dumbledore warns Harry that the mirror gives neither knowledge nor truth. And then, despite Hagrid's presence, Harry gets to know the ill-omens while entered into forbidden forest. The forest contains present in great quantity life, death is always to remain unseen nearby unicorn. Unicorns symbolize purity, female chastity, morality. The forbidden forest suggests that Voldemort still be alive. He resources to hold up strength and get spirit's life to fully restore his body. Harry is more doubted about Snape and he thinks that Snape sets the troll loose in the castle. But it is actually professor Quirrell.

Because he also wants to steal the philosopher stone which can restore the Voldemort's body. The big surprise in the story is that, it is Quirrell not Snape, who is behind the attacks on Harry. Finally, he comes to know when Quirrell reveals his turban and shows Voldemort face where he keeps on his head.

Mirror of desire is the key to finding the philosopher's stone. Harry thinks that he has to find the stone before Quirrell does. Harry walks towards the mirror. Quirrell moves close behind him. He sees his reflection but a moment later the reflection smiles at him. It puts its hand into his pocket, and heavily drops on his pocket. It is the philosopher's stone. He lies to Quirrell while he asks.

At the end of this novel, Harry hears a voice from Quirrell's turban and he sees a terrible face, glaring red eyes and like a snake. Voldemort asks for the stone to get back his bodily form.

Quirrell rolled off him, his face blistering too, and then Harry knew; Quirrell couldn't touch His bare skin, not without suffering terrible pain, His only chance was to keep hold of Quirrell, keep him in enough pain to stop him doing a curse. (Rowling, 213)

Finally, the philosopher's stone destroys him, which means Voldemort's have to try other ways to comeback. He is looking for another body to share. And he cannot be killed. The ongoing battle between good and evil is in action. In this series, good opposes evil somewhere. The name Voldemort is no longer to

pronounce because he causes danger whoever calls him.

Harry's own willingness to sacrifice himself makes to get rid of evil from Hogwarts. Harry, Ron and Hermione pass several challenges in order to retrieve the philosopher's stone. Each of the challenges emphasizes a different magical skill, which corresponds to the Hogwarts professor who instituted the challenges. The first challenge is to circumvent a ferocious three-headed dog to access trap door, the second challenge is to escape from the throttling tendrils of devil's snare, a plant that struggles its victims; the third is to retrieve a flying key from hundreds and unlock the door into next chamber; the fourth challenge is to win a giant sized game of chess, the fifth challenge is to masters a wizard's riddle a poisonous potions; and the sixth challenge is to retrieve the philosopher's stone from within the mirror of desire.

Harry, Hermione and Ron each bring a different set of skills to this novel of challenges. With Hermione's calm rationality and cool grasp of magical knowledge, she is able to move the group safely past the devil's snare. The ever-loyal Ron is able to defeat professor McGonagall's impossible chess game, though at the price of having to

sacrifice their lives. Harry is able to use his flying skills to retrieve the flying keys and to retrieve the philosopher's stone.

Through this impressive display of mutual trust, friendship and loyalty, Harry, Ron and Hermione prevent Voldemort from using the Philosopher's Stone and regaining the dark power that he once possessed. After the challenges have been won and Voldemort has fled, the three students enjoy the end- year-feast and Gryffindor's surprise victory over Slytherin to win the house cup. After the feast, all three are return to their homes for the summer holidays and return for the second year of study (and the second novel of the series) after a few months. Yet, Harry, Ron and Hermione's successful passage through this series of challenge has a significance that echoes for beyond their defeat of dark wizard. Although the Hogwarts professors may have only meant to protect the Philosopher's Stone, they also create a situation in which Harry, Ron, Hermione undergo on unorthodox coming-of-age ritual and prove their worth and readiness for adulthood.

Conclusion

The novel is also a piece of fantasy fiction and it focuses on the

struggle between good and evil. This novel is read above the average as a novel about friendship it also contains morals and love. As the characteristics of magical realism, it includes fantasy and fantastic elements. It portrays a real world setting with magical elements. And mainly, the author doesn't give any explanation of fantasy in the novel. Magical elements are presented as ordinary occurrences; therefore, the reader accepts the marvellous as normal. The basic element of post-modern novels, the author indulges Hybridity mixing up the ordinary with the extraordinary and the reality with the unreal world. J.K. Rowling's brilliance in weaving the elements of magic realism into the novel is evident throughout. Critic Kiberd remarks on the intricate process of conception and combination that brings these elements to life "it is

really in (Rowling's) imaginative combination of so many disparate elements of previous

children's literature that the brilliance of the Harry Potter conception may be found" (Kiberd

67-68) it was portrayed through various characters in the novel.

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