ABSTRACT

An Exploration of *Harry Potter* and its Effect on the Millennial Generation

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The Harry Potter phenomena has spanned the globe from its publication in 1997. Even today, several years after the last book was published and the last movie released, Harry Potter continues to enthrall readers around the world. In my thesis, I explore how the Harry Potter books have affected the millennial generation that grew up reading the novels. Through first analyzing how the books conform and differ from literary traditions, I establish the literary merit and influence of the seven books among children and adults. After establishing the significance of the novels, I consider how the success and phenomenon of the seven Harry Potter books has influenced the millennial generation in three significant ways. First, the novels have led to a more literate generation than the one before it. The books have also provided the millennial generation with a structure from which to cope with terror. Finally, the success of the Harry Potter books have influenced the millennial generation to be more politically involved and politically progressive.

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AN EXPLORATION OF *HARRY POTTER* AND ITS EFFECT ON THE MILLENNIAL

GENERATION

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CHAPTER ONE

Genre in *Harry Potter*

Harry Potter. In the very first chapter of the very first book, we learn that "every child in our world will know his name" (*Philosopher* 15). Of course, the character refers to Harry Potter's fame in the wizarding world for defeating Voldemort, but Harry Potter is certainly famous in our own muggle world as much as in the fictional wizarding world. With over 400 million copies of the books sold, translated into 69 different languages, and published in 200 countries, it's hard to ignore Harry Potter (Kennedy). The incredible popularity of Harry Potter has had innumerable effects on the publishing world, so much so that an entirely new children's bestseller list was created when the series success "left little room for books aimed strictly at adult readers" (Byam 7). Harry Potter has enchanted millions of children and adults around the world, but many critics remain unconvinced that the series deserves any actual literary credit. Sure Harry Potter is a commercial success and many people around the world love the books, but is Harry Potter just a popular series? Can it be considered high literature? And, what makes Harry Potter so popular among children and adults around the world?

First and foremost, the Harry Potter books are often considered children's literature. There is no doubt that the first three books are children's stories. The young age of the protagonists, the simple writing  and the simpler story structure of the first three books place them into the category of children's literature. In *Philosopher's Stone,* Harry is eleven years old and living with the horrible Dursley's, when he discovers he is a wizard. Harry quickly finds himself at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

and goes on an adventure within the confines of the school. *Chamber of Secrets* and *Prisoner of Azkaban* maintain similar plot structures as the first novel, but each successive story becomes more complex.

In the first book, Harry learns about the wizarding world and his role in it, and the conflict arises as Harry tries to stop Voldemort from using the philosopher's stone to come back. In *Chamber of Secrets*, the book starts out somewhat darker when Dobby, a house-elf bound to serve the Malfoy family, warns Harry of "a plot to make most terrible things happen at Hogwarts" (*Chamber* 18). Throughout the second novel, Harry struggles to solve the mystery of who is attacking the students at Hogwarts, and, by the end of the novel, Harry must save Ginny Weasley from dying. By the third novel, Harry's own life is in danger as everyone believes Sirius Black escaped the wizarding prison, Azkaban, to kill Harry. With each sequel, Rowling's writing moves away from the simple statements of the first book and the plot becomes much more elaborate.

By the time readers get to *Goblet of Fire,* the story has become progressively darker in preparation for the dramatic turn that occurs at the end of the fourth book with Voldemort's return. At the conclusion of the fourth book, readers realize that the *Harry Potter* books are not solely about Harry and his adventures, but that the story is a long and complex one that will take several novels to tell. Therefore, while the first three books are undoubtedly children's literature, the fourth novel creates a shift that steadily departs from the genre becoming more mature and complex.

The *Harry Potter* series also participates in the genres of the bildungsroman and the English school story traditions. These two genres continue throughout the seven Harry Potter books. The bildungsroman and the school story are genres found in most

noteworthy literature and are a part of a long literary tradition. In addition to the literary tradition accompanying these genres, the bildungsroman and the school story are ideal genres to contribute to the overall category of children's literature. The occurrence of these two genres within the Harry Potter series establishes the series as children's literature while acknowledging the literary traditions in which the books are participating in.

The bildungsroman is a novel of formation. It is a coming-of-age story that readers will find in nearly all children's, young adult, and adult literature. In each of the books, Harry develops morally and emotionally, and learns who he is. In *Philosopher's Stone*, Harry begins to develop his identity when he discovers he is a wizard, and he continues to learn more about himself, his parents, and Voldemort throughout the subsequent books.

Harry learns more about his parents through the people he meets around him, such as Sirius Black, Harry's godfather, and Remus Lupin, Harry's professor and one of his father's friends. Harry learns how his parents die through the traumatic experience of reliving their deaths. When near a dementor, creatures that guard the wizard prison Azkaban, Harry hears his mother screaming "not Harry! Please- I'll do anything" (*Prisoner* 177). Harry's connection to Voldemort is slowly revealed in the fourth book, but becomes more obvious through Harry's dreams in the fourth and fifth books. In the very first chapter of *Goblet of Fire,* Harry's connection to Voldemort begins to develop as Harry witnesses Voldemort murder Frank Bryce, the caretaker of the Riddle House where Voldemort is residing with Wormtail. By the fifth book in the series, Harry's connection to Voldemort is undeniable as Harry begins to experience Voldemort's

emotions. At the end of the *Order of the Phoenix*, Voldemort even exploits their connection to manipulate Harry into entering a trap at the Ministry of Magic. Each of these instances add to the realization of Harry's identity as he learns about his past and who he is.

However, it is important to consider how Rowling develops Harry's character. Rowling's choice of narration emphasizes "subjective, internal experience" (Westman 3), which allows the reader to grow and learn as Harry does. Emotionally, Harry Potter begins the series as an insecure and neglected child who is unsure of how his life in Hogwarts will be. In the *Order of the Phoenix*, Harry has grown into an angsty teenager who believes he is an adult and prepared to face the many dangers associated with Voldemort. He eventually grows more confident in his abilities and secure in his friendships with Hermione and Ron. In *Deathly Hallows*, Harry goes through the emotional turmoil and fear that comes with hunting down horcruxes and preparing to face Voldemort, and, by the epilogue, Harry is a grown man, content in his life and with the knowledge that "all was well" (*Deathly Hallows* 759).

Despite growing up with the horrible Dursleys, Harry tends to be a morally good person. However, the growth in Harry's morality develops in subtle ways through his experiences. In the first half of *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry feels resentment and bitterness toward Sirius Black for supposedly betraying Lily and James Potter to Voldemort, and Harry lets his feelings cloud his moral judgement. Harry's anger towards Sirius leads him to claim that a dementor's kiss, which removes a person's soul, could be a just punishment. In a conversation with Lupin, Harry claims "'[Sirius] deserves it'… 'you think so?' said Lupin lightly. 'Do you really think anyone deserves that?" (*Prisoner*

183). In this instance, Harry and the readers begin to realize the consequences of something as tragic as the dementor's kiss, and Lupin's rebuttal allows Harry to begin to further develop his ethics and morality against such drastic forms of punishment.

By the end of the third book, Harry has grown to realize the horrific reality that comes with such a punishment. The realization that no one deserves to have their soul removed by a dementor later leads Harry to save his cousin Dudley from dementors attacking them in the *Order of the Phoenix,* despite how terrible Dudley is as a person. Nevertheless, Harry's morality develops much more than the simple realization that no one deserves to be punished through the removal of their soul. By the time Harry faces Voldemort in the final battle at Hogwarts in the *Deathly Hallows*, Harry even wants to give Voldemort a chance to redeem himself as he tells him to "think about what you've done.. Think, and try for some remorse Riddle… it's your one last chance… it's all you've got left" (*Deathly Hallows* 741). Despite the fact that Voldemort committed horrific crimes, including killing Harry's parents and countless others he cared for, Harry wants to give Voldemort the opportunity to become a better person, find a capacity to love, and, in some way, fix the chaos and destruction he has created. Harry's journey of formation spans seven novels and Harry's character development is realistically built throughout the entirety of the series.

Readers are more aware of Harry's growth and formation because they experience the wizarding world through the limitation of Harry's perspective and as Harry experiences them (Westman 4). Karin Westman, a scholar in contemporary British literature, argues that this limited third-person narrative style "emphasizes sympathetic engagement with Harry's character" (Westman 5). This allows readers to grow and learn

as Harry learns about social class, prejudice against muggle-borns or house-elves, and various forms of injustice seen throughout the novels. Because readers experience the wizarding world through Harry and learn as he does, reader's experience Harry's bildungsroman alongside him and are sympathetic to Harry and the choices he makes. Rowling's employment of this narrative style allows her to develop Harry's character effectively and consider the novels as bildungsroman.

In addition to the bildungsroman, Harry Potter participates in the school story literary tradition often found in British novels. In "Harry Potter and the English School Story", Patti Houghton describes the many elements of the school story:

> the setting is a school for boys or girls, modeled on the great public schools… The hero is usually a new student who feels like an outsider at school. The new student may be a 'scholarship kid'... or may be a wealthy and privileged child who seems to be 'stuck up'. Sometimes the new student is an orphan or comes from an unhappy home… the arrival of the hero at school is often complicated in some way. For instance, a teacher or relative, who is supposed to explain the traditions of the school, is prevented from meeting the new student… the new student inadvertently breaks a school rule… gets off on the wrong foot with house or study mates… possesses superior talent, usually athletic… is often viewed with suspicion or dislike by at least one teacher (Houghton 1).

It is fascinating how the Harry Potter books conform to the literary tradition of the school story. Hogwarts is a grand school modeled after British boarding schools, and Harry Potter is the new kid in school. He is both an outcast and greatly admired. Harry is completely unaware of how to navigate his new magical school having grown up as an

orphan with the horribly muggle Dursleys, but his fame for having survived Voldemort draws the attention of his schoolmates and alienates Harry even further. Of course, Harry struggled to enter Hogwarts as the Dursleys prevented him from reading his school letters. It is only when Hagrid comes to personally deliver the Hogwarts letter to Harry that he is able to learn about his magical heritage and prepare to attend Hogwarts. Once Harry arrives at Hogwarts, he promptly rejects the friendship of Draco Malfoy creating a school nemesis. Harry is immediately disliked by Snape, who criticizes Harry for his fame. Harry demonstrates athletic skill by becoming the youngest Seeker in Quidditch, a popular wizarding sport played on brooms, for a century. In later books, *Harry Potter* continues to conform to various elements of the school story by maintaining his rivalry with Draco Malfoy, continuing to receive derision from Professor Snape, and continuing to excel in Quidditch and other competitions within the school. In addition to these elements, Harry is also often made an outcast by other Hogwarts students and the wizarding world as a whole.

While Harry Potter does conform to various aspects of the school story, the *Harry Potter* books do differ somewhat within the school story. According to Westman, when comparing *Harry Potter* to other novels within the genre of the school story, in other novels, such as *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* the main character "Tom learns to embody a masculine identity that rests upon physical and spiritual prowess; this education emerges from interactions with other students and the preaching of Rugby's headmaster" (Westman 6). On the other hand, the *Harry Potter* books place a greater emphasis on "the value of academic inquiry for intellectual growth, usually achieved through a pedagogy

of collaborative exchange" (Westman 6). Harry Potter and his friends learn formally through classroom instruction, research, and collaboration.

Each of the books emphasizes academic learning. Harry is often in class learning from his many magical subjects and usually has to focus on learning specific spells or potions. Harry and his schoolmates are often seen struggling to learn, demonstrating an importance on the need to practice and excel academically. When in doubt, the Hogwarts students retreat to the library, often lead by Hermione. Furthermore, there is also an emphasis placed on collaborative learning. Harry is often working closely with Hermione and Ron to solve whatever problem they are facing in each of the books. Academically, the trio of friends practice together to master spells. One example occurs in *Goblet of Fire* during the triwizard tournament, a dangerous competition between three wizarding schools (Hogwarts, Durmstrang, and Beauxbatons) that Harry inadvertently finds himself a part of. Hermione and Ron "were supposed to be studying for their exams… but were putting most of their efforts into helping Harry prepare" for the third task in the triwizard tournament (*Goblet* 607).

In *Order of the Phoenix*, the importance of academic learning is further emphasized when Umbridge denies students the opportunity to learn defensive spells. Recognizing the importance of learning, Harry and many of his school mates work together to organize Dumbledore's Army and teach each other the many defensive and offensive spells they know. The importance of academics in the *Harry Potter* books differs slightly from other novels within the school story genre since in *Harry Potter* "authority is earned through knowledge rather than conferred by rank or age" (Westman 6). For this reason, characters, like Dumbledore, McGonagall, Remus Lupin and Mad-

Eye Moody, are highly regarded for their knowledge and expertise. Characters, like Minister Fudge and Lucius Malfoy, have wealth and status, but lack actual authority or respect because they lack knowledge, expertise, and moral decency.

Despite *Harry Potter's* participation in literary traditions like the bildungsroman and school story, critics maintain that *Harry Potter* is children's literature that does not contain any significant value. In "Harry Potter and the Childish Adult," A. S. Byatt explores the success of the Harry Potter books and why so many children and adults read the books. Byatt begins by describing how the worldwide success of *Harry Potter* is due to the narrative of the books, which maintains a "childish psychology" and cliches that are "comfortingly recognizable and immediately available to the child's own power of fantasizing." Ultimately, Byatt believes that the *Potter* books are popular because readers like to "regress to a lost sense of significance we mourn for" and revert to "their own childish desires and hopes." Byatt claims that Rowling's world "is a caricature of the real world… it is small, and on the school grounds, and dangerous only because she says it is." Byatt concludes her article by claiming that "it is the substitution of celebrity for heroism that has fed this phenomenon" meaning that Byatt believes that the phenomenon of *Harry Potter* developed due to the hype of the books instead of its merit, and believes that this phenomenon has sacrificed the value of heroism in favor of popularity and celebrity.

To give Byatt the benefit of the doubt, Byatt wrote her article in 2003, when only the first five books of the *Harry Potter* series were published. However, the first five books still contain significant themes that completely contradict Byatt's claims on the childishness of the novels. Byatt's claims on the childish narrative of the story is entirely

valid, but Byatt dismisses this as if this narrative style removes value from the story as a whole. The childish narrative of the story is essential considering the books are from the point of view of an 11 year old. Though the narrative matures as Harry does, even in *Order of the Phoenix,* the narrative retains some childish aspects because the main character is only 15 years old. However, the fact that the narration follows the psychology of a child does not negate the very serious themes that books contain.

The first three books are less serious than the fourth and fifth books, yet all still contain themes of death, identity, prejudice, discrimination and injustice among many more. Byatt believes adults are merely comforted by children's literature and enjoy regressing to "childish hopes and desires." Granted, there is an enjoyment of the simpler nature of children's literature, but Byatt again completely ignores the larger themes apparent in the first five novels. By the time *Order of the Phoenix* is published, Harry is struggling to survive in the face of Voldemort's return and struggling to cope with the trauma of witnessing the death of a schoolmate. Harry is fighting against government propaganda, making him an outcast in the entirety of the wizarding world, and tyranny, in the form of Umbridge's rule of Hogwarts, that suppresses education and encourages conformity. The *Harry Potter* books are teaching children to question authority and fight to defend what is morally right and just, yet Byatt is diminishing these themes and dismissing them as "childish hopes and desires." Furthermore, Byatt dismisses the wizarding world that Rowling has created by it is a "caricature of the real world… small… and dangerous only because she says it is." Rowling's world is not the world of *Narnia* or the *Lord of the Rings* that occur in entirely separate realms from the real world. Rowling's wizarding world interacts with the muggle world alongside it, and this makes

Rowling's world unique and realistic because there is a connection to reality that readers can relate to.

The fact that the wizarding world interacts with the real world does not mean that it is a "caricature" or "small." Readers experience the wizarding world as Harry does, which limits our interactions with the wider wizarding world because Harry's experiences are mostly limited to his time at school. Nevertheless, from the very beginning, readers are aware that there is more to the wizarding world than just Hogwarts. Readers learn there is a ministry, a prison, newspapers, gossip magazines, wizard towns, and careers that make up the larger wizarding world. In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, readers meet the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, and interact with him and the dementors that guard the wizard prison, Azkaban. In *Goblet of Fire*, readers learn more about the ministry and its many departments. Harry attends the Quidditch world cup organized by the departments of International Magical Cooperation and the department of Magical Games and Sports. Throughout the first five books, readers learn of aurors and magical law enforcement, of death eaters, of the wizarding justice system, of the banking system of Gringotts, of Hogsmeade and of wizarding schools in foreign countries. The wizarding world is much larger and complex than just Hogwarts, but because readers are experiencing this world through Harry it only makes sense that readers would learn and experience all of it as Harry does.

Finally, Byatt claims that "it is the substitution of celebrity for heroism that has fed this phenomenon." This statement is certainly ironic considering Rowling's own criticisms on focusing on celebrity rather than actual heroism. Rowling's criticism on celebrity first appears with the character Gilderoy Lockhart, the Defense Against the

Dark Arts professor in Harry's second year. Lockhart is much more interested in his own fame rather than actually helping others. Lockhart's vain focus on celebrity appears when he requires his students buy all of the books he has written himself instead of actual textbooks for his Defense class. In his very first class, Lockhart even gives his students a quiz that includes questions like "what is Gilderoy Lockhart's favorite colour" (*Chamber* 77).

Later in *Goblet of Fire*, Rowling's criticisms appear through the character of Rita Skeeter who attempts to exploit Harry's fame to gain readers leading Skeeter to publish terrible things about Harry and damage his reputation. Throughout these two instances, Harry, Ron, and Hermione criticize the importance of fame and celebrity. Instead of searching for fame that other characters desperately want to give him, Harry simply attempts to help others for the sake of saving others and not for the attention it would bring. Rowling herself was not famous before publishing the first book, and the books became popular for their general appeal. The popularity of the books has continued to grow because of the relatable themes that Rowling explores through her novels. Though Byatt is writing this article in 2003 when only five books had been published, Byatt dismisses Harry Potter and its success entirely without truly understanding *Harry Potter* and what has attracted so many people to believe in and relate to the story.

Byatt is not alone in her criticisms of *Harry Potter*. Byam, in "Children's Literature or Adult Classic", further addresses critics of the books:

> They may believe that its popularity is due largely to the crass commercialization and audience manipulation involved in serial publication. These critics see the serialization of the *Harry Potter* novels as placing them in the same category as

other print and video series that are designed to attract, respond to, and exploit a popular audience (Byam 13).

Byam contradicts this criticism of *Harry Potter* by noting that many classical literature books were originally published serially, such as many of Charles Dicken's novels or even Jane Austen. Byam, thus, defends *Harry Potter* by concluding that "great literature can be created within the confines of commercial form" (Byam 13). However, as evidenced through the genres of the bildungsroman and the school story, *Harry Potter* follows several literary traditions that demonstrate its value within the category of children's literature, and Rowling certainly diversifies children's literature and goes beyond what is merely for children. As Westman states "children's literature [may be] heralded as the savior of literary fiction and the equal of 'adult' fare" (Westman 17).

One of the many things that makes the *Harry Potter* novels so unique is the combination of genres within the story. While the books participate in the great traditions of the bildungsroman and the school story, the *Potter* books are, most noticeably, fantasy stories. Novels within the fantasy genre are incredibly diverse, but all utilize an incredible amount of imagination as authors create impossible worlds for their stories. As with the vast majority of fantasy novels, the *Harry Potter* series contains several recognizable myths. One of the most prevalent myths in the *Potter* series is the use of the hero's journey mythology as devised by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

Campbell's theory posits that all good stories follow a monomyth that follows familiar trends, such as the journey from the ordinary world to the world of adventure. In addition to the familiar story structures in the monomyth, there are certain recognizable archetypes that appears in nearly every story including the archetypal hero, mentor, ally,

trickster, shapeshifter, and shadow. Hero's are the obvious and most recognizable

archetype found in stories and among fantasy stories hero's exist in characters like Harry

Potter, Bilbo and Frodo Baggins, Luke Skywalker, and the Pevensies. Mentors appear in

characters like Dumbledore and Gandalf; tricksters in Dobby, Merry and Pippin, and the

Chesire Cat. The shapeshifters are unreliable characters, such as Gilderoy Lockhart,

Snape, and Gollum, and shadows are the villains inevitably found in every story, such as

Voldemort, Sauron, the White Witch in Narnia, and Darth Vader. The hero's journey

contributes significantly to the fantasy genre and appears in the most successful stories.

The fact that *Harry Potter* contains many elements of the hero's journey emphasizes the

overall success of the series as literature.

Although the monomyth of the hero's journey appears in nearly every successful

fantasy story, there are several differences in the fantasy of the *Harry Potter* books in

comparison with other fantasy novels. The fantasy stories of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S.

Lewis create worlds entirely separate from our real world with its own rules and

traditions. Other fantasy stories typically emulate folk tales or exist within the real world.

The *Harry Potter* books are unique in that Rowling's wizarding world exists and interacts

with the real world, and contains rules and traditions similar to the real world. Westman

explains Rowling's take on the fantasy genre as "a parallel world suggestive of

contemporary British society" (Westman 9). In addition to this blending of the wizarding

world within the real world, the fantasy of the *Potter* novels "provides perspective on

everyday experience and the individual's place in society" (Westman 9). The realism

with which Rowling uses to accomplish this allows the wizarding world to feel very

much like the real world, but the real world is mediated through the fantasy elements of

the story. This realism is further emphasized through the parallel of the contemporary setting in which the series takes place. Not only does the use of realism to convey everyday experiences in the wizarding world make the series unique, but it allows Rowling to convey her critiques on politics and injustice as well as convey messages of morality and democracy. The blend of the high-fantasy wizarding world with the setting of contemporary British society, and realism makes the *Harry Potter* series unique from traditional fantasy stories.

It is important to understand the many genres of *Harry Potter* in order to understand the purpose and effects of the series. While there are many more genres within the series, the genres covered in this chapter establish the series within literary traditions and demonstrate the unique aspects of the series. The inclusion of the bildungsroman and the school story within the genres of *Harry Potter* emphasize the literary worth of the series and emphasize how the series maintains some literary traditions that exist in a variety of literature classics. However, the unique form of fantasy that Rowling creates with the wizarding world is part of the reason that the series has achieved its popularity. The *Harry Potter* series maintains traditions that readers will recognize while incorporating something new and impactful that has drawn the attention of millions of readers worldwide.

CHAPTER TWO

The Literary Effect

Over the course of a single decade, from 1997 to 2007, the *Harry Potter* series

sold over 400 million copies. Four hundred million copies is a staggering number, but

what effect, if any, did the *Harry Potter* phenomena have?

To begin with, the Harry Potter books certainly affected the publishing industry in

several ways. The immense popularity of the books prompted the New York Times to

create a second bestseller list specifically for children's books. In 2000, three of the Harry

Potter books were on the New York Times bestseller list for seventy-nine weeks

(Glassman). With the upcoming publication of *Goblet of Fire* predicted to have similar

success, the New York Times created a separate bestseller list for children's books. By

2004, the New York Times had established an offshoot of the bestseller list for children's

series books. The individual success of the *Harry Potter* books was largely ignored as the

series appeared on this new bestseller list (Glassman).

Most significantly, the Harry Potter books changed the way the industry published

books. While *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was published in the UK in 1997,

*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* did not arrive in the U.S until 1998. The second

installment of the series, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, arrived in the UK in

1998. The original U.S publication date for the second book was September of 1999, but

the demand for the book was so emphatic that Scholastic moved up the U.S release date

by three months (Glassman). By the arrival of the third installment, *Prisoner of Azkaban*,

the UK and U.S release dates were only three months apart. The publication of the fourth

book, *Goblet of Fire*, led to many new changes in traditional publishing practices as the book was simultaneously released in the UK and the U.S (Glassman). This was a significant change since the popularity of the books had pressured the publishing industry into releasing the novels simultaneously in two different countries to prevent a potential loss in sales as readers sought any means necessary to read the books. Furthermore, Scholastic allowed for book distributors to ship *Goblet of Fire* overnight for arrival on its release date of July 8 (Glassman).

By the end of the series in 2007, the Harry Potter books revolutionized the publishing industry on a scale the literary world had never seen. Scholastic had ensured simultaneous release dates in the U.S and UK to prevent a drop in sales from consumers buying the UK edition of the book. Book distributors prepared for release dates by mailing out pre-ordered books and hosting midnight release parties. Scholastic attempted to keep up with the demand of the books by increasingly large and never before seen initial print runs, such as 6.8 million for *Order of the Phoenix* and 10.8 million for *Half-Blood Prince* (Glassman). Copies of the English-language *Harry Potter* books quickly appeared in other countries as readers all over the world anxiously awaited the publication of books in their own language. French citizens bought so many copies of the English-language *Order of the Phoenix* that it was the first bestseller in France not written in French, and German publisher, Carlsen, sued Amazon.de for selling the UK edition of *Order of the Phoenix* to Germans when it first released (Glassman).

To provide context for the success of the series, the *Harry Potter* books took seven of the top nine spots on the USA Today's list of 150 bestselling books of the last fifteen years spanning from October 28, 1993, to October 23, 2008. *Harry Potter and the*

*Deathly Hallows* sold 13.1 million copies compared to Stephanie Meyer's *Breaking Dawn* at 6.1 million copies and Suzanne Collins's *Mockingjay* at 1.5 million copies sold (Glassman). Although the *Twilight* series and *The Hunger Games* series were incredibly popular novels and very successful movie franchises, their popularity paled in comparison to the phenomena of Harry Potter. *Harry Potter* has been the most successful literary creation in years and has yet to find an equal in its sheer scale of success.

However, the success of the *Harry Potter* led to the demand for more stories. It is because of the success of *Harry Potter* that the publishing industry has focused on publishing engaging and entertaining young adult and children's books in a way it had not done previously. Without *Harry Potter,* the publishing industry, as well as the movie industry, may not have pursued stories like *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games*. *Harry Potter* demonstrated that there was a highly literate population of readers that was attracted to series like that of Rowling's and enjoyed the creativity of the worlds authors created.

Of course, this success means that the books had to have greatly affected its young readers. In "The Power of Harry", authors Sara Ann Beach and Elizabeth Willner look at how the Harry Potter books have impacted young readers. Beach and Willner questioned young readers on their opinions of the books. A notable response by Jennifer, age 10, describes how she did not previously like to read and "thought *Harry Potter* was going to be an ordinary book, but it isn't... When [her] teacher says it is time to stop reading, [she] and [her] classmates would groan" (Beach). Although Jennifer is just one example of many, the article demonstrates how the young children interviewed enjoy the *Harry Potter* books and really identify with the characters. Beach and Willner describe

how "the magical world created by Rowling draws young readers into the books by connecting aspects of the world in which they live with a world that transcends reality" (Beach).

It is easy to see how children would be able to relate to the characters Rowling develops. Children grow up struggling to figure out who they are and how to fit in, and many of the characters in the series feel the same. Harry Potter himself struggles to come to terms with who he is and finding his own place in the wizarding world after spending a lonely and neglected childhood. In *Philosopher's Stone*, Neville Longbottom, one of Harry's schoolmates, is a lonely and shy character who struggles to live up to his family's expectations. When Neville is introduced, he explains that:

> the family thought I was all Muggle for ages. My great-uncle Algie kept trying to catch me off my guard and force some magic out of me - he pushed me off the end of Blackpool pier once, I nearly drowned - but nothing happened until I was eight. Great-uncle Alfie came round for tea and he was hanging me out of an upstairs window by the ankles when my great-auntie Enid offered him a meringue and he accidentally let go. But I bounced all the way down the garden and into the road. They were all really pleased. Gran was crying, she was so happy. And you should have seen their faces when I got in here - they thought I might not be magic enough to come, you see. Great-uncle Algie was so pleased he bought me my toad (*Philosopher* 93).

What sounds like an innocent story, demonstrates how Neville felt unworthy growing up in his family. Instead of accepting Neville for who he is and as someone who may not have magic, his family kept trying to "force the magic" out of him. Even after

showing signs of magic, Neville's family thought he may not be good enough to go to Hogwarts. Neville arrived at Hogwarts with incredibly low self-esteem after spending his childhood believing he wasn't good enough to even be at Hogwarts. While his family likely did not intend to make Neville feel inferior to others, it certainly affected his confidence and his ability to succeed in his early years at Hogwarts. However, by the end of the series, Neville has found his place in the wizarding world and even stands up to Voldemort to protect his friends.

Many of the other characters are equally relatable. Hermione Granger, one of Harry's best friends at Hogwarts, is an unapologetically intelligent student, but she is often made fun of for her intelligence as well as for being a muggleborn (a magic person born from a non-magic family). In their Charms class, Hermione successfully levitates a feather, and she's praised by the professor who exclaims "well done!... Everyone see here, Miss Granger's done it!" (*Philosopher* 127). Hermione's success makes Ron jealous and he harshly tells Harry that "it's no wonder no one can stand her… she's a nightmare, honestly" (*Philosopher* 127). Many children understand how it feels to be bullied, and it is characters like Neville and Hermione, among so many others, that allow readers to relate to the story.

Relatable characters are just one of the reasons why young readers enjoy the books and continue to read, but the *Harry Potter* books are most definitely inspiring readers to continue reading. In a poll conducted by the Scholastic Books website, participants were asked what books they intended to read other than *Harry Potter*. Responses ranged from others in the fantasy genre, such as *The Hobbit* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, to books outside of the fantasy genre, such as *Anne of Avonlea*

(Beach). In another 2005 survey, conducted by the Federation of Children's Book Groups in the United Kingdom, 48% of children reported that *Harry Potter* made them want to read more books. In the same survey, "59% of children attributed improved reading skill to Rowling's novels". Eighty-four percent of teachers responding to the 2005 survey agreed that the books had a positive effect on reading abilities (Jones).

Overall, anyone who has read *Harry Potter* will likely remark on its positive literary effects. *Harry Potter* is often attributed as the reason children and young adults continue to read, and statistics actually support this conclusion. A poll conducted by the National Education Association in 2001 "found that 56 percent of young people say they read more than 10 books a year, with middle school students reading the most. Some 70 percent of middle school students read more than 10 books a year, compared with only 49 percent of high school students" ("Facts about Children's Literacy). This poll shows that more than half of young people in the country read more than 10 books a year, which is certainly impressive. Middle schoolers had the largest percentage of students reading at an incredible 70%. This is probably due to the fact that middle schoolers will have more free time as compared to high school students, who may be studying more rigorously for college or working to help support their families.

What is perhaps not a coincidence is that middle schoolers are also at an age to read the *Harry Potter* books, which targets beginning readers around age 9 to 12. Taking into account that the poll was conducted in February 2001 is also significant since, by 2001, the first four installments of the *Harry Potter* series were already published and the first Harry Potter film was set to premiere later that year and was already prompting new people to begin reading the series. Whether the *Harry Potter* books account for the 70%

of middle school readers is not definitive, but it is certainly suggestive and one of the several reasons why so many middle schoolers will read more than 10 books a year.

A report, titled "Reading on the Rise", conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts publishes the 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. The survey is the largest federal survey of arts and culture among U.S. adults and analyses long-term trends in the U.S. This survey on participation in the arts has been conducted five times- in 1982, 1985, 1992, 2002, and 2008.

Overall, the report finds that literary reading is rising for the first time in 26 years. In 2008, 50.2% of adults read literature compared to 2002 when 46.7% of adults read literature after a steady decline since the first survey conducted in 1982. The absolute numbers of adults reading literature has also increased dramatically. In 1982, 95.6 million adults in the U.S read literature. There was an increase in 1992 when 100.3 million adults reported reading literature, but this declined in 2002 when only 96.2 million adults reported reading literature. In comparison, the 2008 survey concluded that 112.8 million adults in the U.S read literature- an increase of 16.6 million since 2002. Significantly, the survey found that literary reading has increased the most among young adults with 51.7% of 18-24-year-olds reporting that they read literature. The rate of change from 2002 to 2008 of 18-24-year-olds participating in literary reading was 21%: the largest rate of change among all the age groups recorded. Interestingly, the survey attributed fiction as responsible for the new growth in literary reading among adults ("Reading").

This National Endowment for the Arts report is especially important in supporting the influence of *Harry Potter* on literacy. By the publication of the report in 2009, children that had started reading *Harry Potter* when it appeared in 1997 were now adults.

Most children, aged 7 to 13, who read *Harry Potter* in 1997 made up the 18-24-year-old demographic in 2008, which recorded the largest rate of change in increased participation in literary reading. Considering that the *Harry Potter* books target middle readers aged 9 to 11, it makes sense to presume that most of the 18-24-year-olds in 2008 who participated in literary reading would have read *Harry Potter* and spent most of their childhood participating in the *Harry Potter* phenomena.

Regardless, the increase in literary reading was apparent through all age demographics, so *Harry Potter* readers older than 13 in 1997 still contributed to the overall rise is reading across the United States. Taking into account the decline in reading since 1982, it is entirely plausible to attribute the increase in reading in 2008 to the popularity and success of the *Harry Potter* books. The survey itself demonstrates that fiction is responsible for new growth in adult literary readers since 47% of all adults reported reading fiction instead of poetry or drama ("Reading"). If fiction is responsible for the increase in reading and the *Harry Potter* phenomena had come to dominate the previous decade in reading, it makes sense that the *Harry Potter* books had the most impact on increased reading trends.

Although the series is responsible for a rise in reading through sheer numbers, *Harry Potter* does much more than just encourage people to read. The series contributes to literature by allowing children to learn high literature. Huey argues that *Harry Potter* becomes "elegant literature" through its grounding in mythology (Huey). Readers are learning about myths and legends through the *Harry Potter* books and the mythology that Rowling incorporates in her novels. Some examples include the Cerberus creature that Rowling introduces in the very first book of the series. In Greek mythology, Cerberus

was a three-headed dog that guards the underworld. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Fluffy represents Cerberus. Hagrid, an avid collector of interesting creatures and groundskeeper at Hogwarts, uses his three-headed dog to help guard the philosopher's stone. The mythological Cerberus is lulled to sleep with music, and Harry is, similarly, able to lull Fluffy to sleep with a flute as he attempts to save the Sorcerer's stone from Voldemort (Huey). Fluffy is just one example of how Rowling incorporates myths and legends. Huey also highlights Rowling's incorporation of the basilisk, the Phoenix, the hippogriff, and the unicorn. Rowling's use of myths and legends allow for readers to participate and learn elements of high literature. Readers who had not previously been exposed to mythological elements would gain a familiarity and understanding of basic mythology after reading the *Harry Potter* series.

Not only do the *Harry Potter* books encourage children to read and teaches them valuable elements of high literature, like mythology, but the series has also inspired readers to be creative. Fans of *Harry Potter* have created communities where they can express themselves creatively. Fans developed forums and news sites where they could maintain resources and foster creative discussions on *Harry Potter*. Some of the most notable online databases for all things *Harry Potter* include The Harry Potter Lexicon, The Leaky Cauldron, and MuggleNet (Glassman).

Furthermore, Harry Potter has inspired readers to become writers, which is most clearly seen through the popularity of fanfiction. The largest site for fanfiction is located at fanfiction.net, which contains over 750,000 archived Harry Potter stories (fanfiction.net). Other fanfiction sites include mugglenet.com and live-journal.com with their own sizable databases of Harry Potter fanfiction. *Harry Potter* is not the first story

to inspire fanfiction. Traditional examples of 'fanfiction' include Homer's Virgil's *Aeneid* that drew upon Homer's *Odyssey* and *Illiad*. Jane Austen's works have often been retold and reimagined including, most recently with, *Death Comes to Pemberley* and, the popular, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Retelling popular and beloved stories is not new, but the *Harry Potter* series inspired fanfiction on an unprecedented scale.

On fanfiction.net, *Harry Potter* has the largest amount of fanfiction stories followed by the *Twilight* series at just over 200,000 stories. While there have been retellings of traditional stories, there has never been fanfiction in the way that *Harry Potter* fanfiction inspired. Never before had readers engaged in a story by creating endless retellings of a books. *Harry Potter* readers recreated the ending of the series, explored the characterization of their favorite characters, retold the series from entirely different perspectives, and so much more. *Harry Potter* fanfiction then inspired readers to write fanfiction on other stories they loved, including *Twilight*, *Star Wars,* and *The Lord of the Rings.* Today, readers can find fanfiction on nearly every popular story, and this is all due to the phenomena of *Harry Potter*. It is no coincidence that fanfiction.net was created in 1998, a year after the publication of the first *Harry Potter* book. Fanfiction is a highly literate response to *Harry Potter* and entirely unique to the millennial generation.

In addition to fanfiction stories, the *Harry Potter* series has inspired all kinds of fan works. Notable examples include Wizard Rock bands (Wrock), The Potter Puppet Pals, three Harry Potter musicals by Starkid, and fan art (McManus). Most *Harry Potter* fans will at least know of the Potter Puppet Pals and their famous "Mysterious Ticking Noise" video, but many *Harry Potter* fans participate in some form of fan-inspired creativity. These spaces where fans express themselves creatively, whether reading or

writing fanfiction or watching many of the fan-inspired works, allows *Harry Potter*

readers to develop their own creativity and imagination. This also allows readers to

engage with the original text, further conversation about the text, and analyze different

aspects of the text. Regardless of whether fanfiction remains true to the original series or

explores a "what-if" scenario, readers and writers are furthering the conversation and

analyzing *Harry Potter* creatively in an entirely unique response to the phenomena of the

series.

     The success of *Harry Potter* instills a passion in readers that allows them to

become life-long readers, with greater exposure to high literature, and allows them to

develop their creativity and imagination. The passion readers have for *Harry Potter* and

the literary value of the series has even led to the study of the *Harry Potter* books in

university classrooms. Every year, more colleges and universities in the United States see

the value of *Harry Potter* and teach classes on the series. In 2011, bestcollegesonline.com

listed 14 colleges with courses teaching *Harry Potter*. Some of the universities listed

included Yale University and the University of Texas-Austin. Although not on the list in

2011, our own Baylor University has had a couple different courses inspired by and

teaching *Harry Potter*. Laura Baker Shearer describes her experience teaching *Harry*

*Potter* in her college class and notably explains how the series "sparks intellectual interest

in students" (Shearer). Shearer describes how the most significant result of teaching

*Harry Potter* was that it allowed her students to engage academically, develop critical

thinking skills, and participate in literature simply because students were interested in

*Harry Potter*. The *Harry Potter* series has great literary value, whether that value is

gained indirectly through simply reading the books and participating in fan communities

or directly through classrooms around the country. The series has had an impact on

literature and literacy and I hope that the series continues to positively impact readers

around the world.

CHAPTER THREE

Coping with Terror and Trauma

An important aspect of the Harry Potter books is war. At the start of the series, the wizarding world has enjoyed a decade of peace. The last conflict, referred to as the First Wizarding War, left Harry Potter himself an orphan when Voldemort murdered his parents in an attempt to kill him. The series slowly builds up to the Second Wizarding War, when Voldemort returns in *Goblet of Fire* and works to take over Harry Potter's world throughout the last three books in the series. Rowling's depictions of the realities of war lead to significant instances of trauma. However, the depictions of war and trauma in the series gives readers an avenue through which to cope with their own experiences of terror.

The effects of any given traumatic situation differs with each person, but the manner in which trauma functions occurs similarly with every individual. Psychologist Robert Stolorow describes trauma as a portkey to convey the "impact of emotional trauma on our experience of time" (Stolorow 434). In the Harry Potter series, portkeys are a magical object that allows characters to instantly travel long distances. Stolorow uses portkeys to demonstrate how trauma disrupts the linearity of time and forces individuals to return to their traumatic experience instantaneously. Although Stolorow argues that trauma "is not an illness from which one can recover" (Stolorow 435), he does believe that some semblance of recovery is obtained through "deep emotional attunement and understanding" (Stolorow 436). To accept trauma is to coexist and cope

with individual traumatic situations, and the fictional world of Harry Potter allows readers to do so.

Courtney Strimel, in "The Politics of Terror: Rereading *Harry Potter*", argues that Rowling's series allows readers to confront terror issues. Strimel believes that the magical and fantastical elements in *Harry Potter* acts as a "psychologically safe vehicle for the lessons contained throughout the… series" because the fantasy genre is often used "as an escape from the real world" (Strimel 37). Thus, this manner of escaping the real world through the series can act as a therapy technique for readers undergoing trauma. The *Harry Potter* series deals with war as well as other traumatic experiences that allows children to deal with these many issues "while maintaining a safe distance from the agent causing anxiety" (Strimel 37).

The depiction of intergenerational trauma in *Harry Potter* allows readers to mediate their own traumatization. Maureen Katz describes intergenerational trauma as psychological and emotional trauma that children inherit from their parents who have undergone instances of terror specifically due to war and state terror. Katz conveys how the originally traumatized generation creates a scarred and altered attachment with their children. This creates feelings of anxiety, dread, and a lack of hope in the children that inherit trauma. Katz suggests that these children cannot "move forward when another's desire is imposed upon them, but only when they fashion their own note of hope" (Katz 205). Children attain this individual hope and recovery of their desires by articulating the attachments to their parents and developing their reflective functioning and mentalization.

Throughout the series, various characters demonstrate some form of inherited

trauma from their parents who fought in the first wizarding world. However, Neville Longbottom is the most prominent example of intergenerational trauma. Neville struggles with attaining a sense of identity and independence, and copes with his inherited trauma by asserting his independence in a manner that reflects the best parts of his parents.

Neville Longbottom's inherited trauma stems from the torture his parents endured that left them unrecognizable from the people they were. Towards the end of the first wizarding war, Voldemort's supporters tortured Neville's parents, Alice and Frank, for information. Neville's parents first appear in *Order of the Phoenix*, when Harry, Ron and Hermione visit the magical hospital, St. Mungo's, over Christmas. While at the hospital, Harry and his friends stumble into Neville visiting his parents:

> Neville looked as though he would rather be anywhere in the world but here. A dull purple flush was creeping up his plump face and he was not making eye contact with any of them… 'Yes, Neville's told me all about you. Helped him out of a few sticky spots, haven't you? He's a good boy,' [Neville's grandmother] said, casting a sternly appraising look down her rather bony nose at Neville, 'but he hasn't got his father's talent, I'm afraid to say.' … 'What?' said Ron, looking amazed… 'Is that your *dad* down the end, Neville?'
>
> 'What's this?' said Mrs. Longbottom sharply. 'Haven't you told your friends about your parents, Neville?'
>
> Neville took a deep breath, looked up at the ceiling and shook his head… "Well, it's nothing to be ashamed of!' said Mrs. Longbottom angrily. 'You should be *proud*, Neville, *proud*! They didn't give their health and their sanity so their only son would be ashamed of them, you know!'

'I'm not ashamed,' said Neville, very faintly, still looking anywhere but at Harry and the others… 'Well, you've got a funny way of showing it!' said Mrs. Longbottom. 'My son and his wife,' she said, turning haughtily to Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Ginny, 'were tortured into insanity by You-Know-Who's followers… They were Aurors, you know, and very well respected within the wizarding community… highly gifted, the pair of them. I - yes, Alice dear, what is it?'

Neville's mother had come edging down the ward in her nightdress… Her face was thin and worn now, her eyes seemed overlarge and her hair, which had turned white, was wispy and dead-looking. She did not seem to want to speak, or perhaps she was not able to, but she made timid motions towards Neville, holding something in her outstretched hand (*Order* 453-455).

Neville has grown up knowing his parents, but never able to develop a relationship with them. He has spent his childhood visiting his mentally ill parents without truly knowing them. Instead, Neville grandmother raised him. Mrs. Longbottom is a very strong and independent woman, whose pride over her ill son's former accomplishments have led to high expectations for Neville. Mrs. Longbottom clearly mourns for the son she lost, and has attempted to connect with her son through Neville. She gave Neville his father's own wand, despite the fact that wands work better when they are unique to the individual and not inherited. Mrs. Longbottom wants Neville to be like her son so much that she clearly expresses her disappointment when he doesn't live up to her expectations. Neville grew up wanting to be with his parents, but instead

Neville's family encouraged him to be like his parents and made Neville feel as though he was a disappointment to his family.

Because of this fractured relationship with his parents and even his grandmother, Neville inherited the trauma of his parents torture. He grew up shy and insecure. He felt like a failure before he was even given the chance to find out who he is. Neville is only able to begin coping with this inherited trauma when he finds his own place at school and especially among his friends in Dumbledore's Army. In *Order of the Phoenix*, as the new professor for Defense Against the Dark Arts terrorizes the school and refuses to properly teach the students of Hogwarts, Harry and his friends form a secret group called Dumbledore's Army. The purpose of the group was for interested students to teach each other how to defend themselves against the growing threat of Voldemort. It is while a part of the DA that Neville begins to grow confident in himself and his abilities. He learns how to defend himself and fights alongside his friends against Voldemort's Death Eaters at the end of the fifth book.

In *Deathly Hallows*, Death Eaters take over Hogwarts and torture the few students who return to school. It is in this book that Neville takes on the Death Eaters at Hogwarts, defies them, and works to help the many other students tortured at school because "it helps when people stand up to [the Death Eaters], it gives everyone hope" (*Hallows* 754). Realizing that he can inspire hope and help others, Neville takes on this role to save as many people as he can at Hogwarts. By the end of the series, Neville has become confident in who he is, he has become a leader, and defended Hogwarts against Death Eaters. Neville asserts his own identity, while reflecting his parents values of bravery and justice. Neville is successful through his own actions in the DA, but he follows in his

parents footsteps by fighting against Voldemort. Thus, Neville creates an attachment with

his parents through the shared experience of fighting against Voldemort, and is able to

resolve and cope with his trauma by establishing his own identity and hope for a better

future.

Another example of trauma in the series comes from the depiction of terrorism.

Throughout the series, Rowling describes several instances of terrorist attacks. As four of

the seven novels were published before the September 11 attacks on the World Trade

Center, Rowling likely drew on the IRA attacks in Britain to depict the terrorist attacks in

the novels. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) conducted numerous attacks throughout

Great Britain from October 1968 to April 1998 ("Troubles"). These attacks greatly

affected Britain through physical devastation and the psychological threat of more

attacks. Rowling's depictions of terrorist attacks in *Harry Potter* demonstrate a similar

physical and psychological threat, but the fictional attacks allow readers to "comfortably

assimilate the terror" (Strimel 38).

In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, readers encounter the first depiction of a terrorist attack

as the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, recounts the attack that led to Sirius Black's

imprisonment. Sirius Black and Peter Pettigrew were friends of Lily and James Potter,

Harry's parents. Sirius was imprisoned for betraying Lily and James to Voldemort and

for an attack on Pettigrew that left many more dead. Minister Fudge describes how:

> Pettigrew died a hero's death… he cornered Black. They say he was sobbing.
>
> 'Lily and James, Sirius! How could you!' And then he went for his want. Well, of
>
> course, Black was quicker. Blew Pettigrew to smithereens… I will never forget it.
>
> I still dream about it sometimes. A crater in the middle of the street, so deep it had

cracked the sewer below. Bodies everywhere. Muggles screaming. And Black

standing there laughing, with what was left of Pettigrew in front of him… a heap

of blood-stained robes and a few- a few fragments (*Prisoner* 155).

Fudge's account of the terrorist attack is reminiscent of the IRA attacks in Britain

as well as the many post 9/11 terrorist attacks around the world. The description of chaos

and the physical devastation of the destroyed street and the lives lost are all too realistic.

However, the fact that it is not real and is being conveyed through a work of fiction

allows readers to disassociate from the reality of the terror attack and slowly come to an

understanding of their own feelings and trauma from actual instances of terrorism.

Another example of terrorism occurs in *Goblet of Fire* during the Quidditch

World Cup. Quidditch is a magical sport played on broomsticks in a manner similar to

basketball. In the fourth book, Harry and the Weasleys have the opportunity to attend the

Quidditch World Cup. However, the festivities soon turn into a terrorist attack when:

A crowd of wizards, tightly packed and moving together with wands pointing

straight upward, was marching slowly across the field… High above them,

floating along in midair, four struggling figures were being contorted into

grotesque shapes. It was as though the masked wizards on the ground were

puppeteers, and the people above them were marionettes… Two of the figures

were very small… Harry saw one of the marchers blast a tent out of his way with

his wand. Several caught fire. The screaming grew louder… The colored lanterns

that had lit the path to the stadium had been extinguished. Dark figures were

blundering through the trees; children were crying; anxious shouts and panicked

voices were reverberating around them in the cold night air (*Goblet* 119-121).

Again, this terrorist attack describes a physical element that leads to chaos and the harm of others. Figures running and screaming along with the contorted shapes of the muggles floating in the air emphasize this fear of the physical terror attack. However, the description of the use of wands and magic to create the attack emphasizes the fact that the attack is fictional, which does allow readers to mediate their own experiences of terror through the understanding that this depiction of terrorism is not real. The attack at the Quidditch World Cup also causes a psychological terror among the characters. Death Eaters, who were followers of Voldemort and created terror throughout the first wizarding war, conducted the attack. The reemergence of the Death Eaters instills the fear among the wizarding community of the possibility that the widespread terrorism from the first war may return.

The appearance of the Dark Mark in the sky above the campgrounds at the Quidditch World Cup expounds upon this psychological terror. The Dark Mark was Voldemort's symbol and "it [hadn't] been seen for thirteen years… You- Know- Who and his followers sent the Dark Mark into the air whenever they killed" (*Goblet* 142). To have experienced a war where the appearance of this symbol meant that the people you cared about were likely dead would have left lasting trauma on the entire wizarding world. Therefore, having the Dark Mark reappear after thirteen years of peace and safety would create a psychological attack on victims and inspire an incredible amount of fear.

However, Harry and Ron do not understand the fear that the Dark Mark inspired, and question how a glowing sign in the sky can cause such panic. Their ignorance of its significance and their use of reason forces readers to question how a symbol could hold such terrorizing power. While the experience of this psychological attack does allow

readers to process their own psychological terrors in a mediated manner, Harry and Ron's

questioning of the Dark Mark suggests that readers should question why certain symbols

inspire terror and fear. Instead of succumbing to terror at the appearance of a

psychological attack, individuals should attempt to confront the object of fear rationally.

Although approaching a psychological attack, like the Dark Mark, with reason

helps mitigate the fear of the symbol, rationality may not relieve the reality of widespread

terror and chaos. As the series progresses, the themes of the books become darker. By the

end of *Goblet of Fire*, Voldemort has returned and the possibility of war threatens the

wizarding world once more. Throughout the last three books, Harry and his friends

struggle with the increasing realities of war and death at the hands of Voldemort. They

are very much in the midst of war and all that it entails. It is, of course, no coincidence

that the drastic shift in tone from *Goblet of Fire* to *Order of the Phoenix* occurs after the

9/11 terrorist attack.

*Order of the Phoenix* was published in 2003. Despite the fact that the series was

heading in the direction of war before the 9/11 attack, the attack on the World Trade

Center undoubtedly affected the drastic change in tone found in the fifth book. Readers

get a sense of Harry's frustration in the very first pages of *Order of the Phoenix* as Harry

describes how "the injustice of it all welled up inside of him so that he wanted to yell

with fury" (*Order* 14). Harry, though he was the one that brought back the news of

Voldemort's return, remains secluded from any new information surrounding Voldemort.

Rowling emphasizes his anger and confusion throughout the book as she describes how

Harry's "temper rose to the surface like a snake rearing from long grass. He was

exhausted, he was confused beyond measure, he had experienced terror, relief, then terror

again in the last twelve hours, and still Dumbledore did not want to talk to him" (*Order* 438).

Harry's feelings of fear, anger and confusion permeates the general atmosphere of the wizarding world in *Half-Blood Prince* when Voldemort and the Death Eaters increase their attacks. In the very first chapter of the sixth book, Rowling describes the increased attacks:

> The Brockdale Bridge- [Voldemort] did it… he threatened a mass Muggle killing… the hurricane in the West Country… was the Death Eaters… and we suspect giant involvement… and as if that wasn't enough… we've got dementors swarming all over the place, attacking people left, right and center (*Half-Blood Prince* 12-14).

Voldemort is no longer hiding his return in the sixth book, and attacks both the magical and the muggle world. He spreads terror and chaos causing many in the wizarding world to constantly fear for their safety. Just as many people began to fear airplanes and refused to fly after 9/11, many in the wizarding world begin to avoid traditionally safe areas, such as Hogwarts. Hermione describes how "people are terrified - you know the Patil twins' parents want them to go home? And Eloise Midgen has already been withdrawn" (*Half-Blood Prince* 221-222). Even though Hogwarts is one of the safest places in the wizarding world, people's fear of Voldemort and his attacks compel them to act irrationally. The tone in the last three books of the *Harry Potter* series truly reflected the post- 9/11 atmosphere of fear, confusion, and anger. Readers understand the emotions of confusion and frustration that Harry feels and the general atmosphere of terror and desperation throughout *Half-Blood Prince.*

The description and reflection of these prevalent emotions post- 9/11 are important to portray psychologically. Readers experience these emotions in their own reality as well as in the fantastical world of *Harry Potter*, which allows them to "extrapolate valuable lessons on processing grief and managing fear" (Rosado 80). Readers see their own emotions reflected in the novels, but experience these emotions in a detached manner. The books provide a medium from which readers can "meet and deal with complex terror issues" (Strimel 51). Facing and dealing with these emotions of fear, terror, anger, and confusion allows individuals to cope with them. This was especially important after 9/11 when terror permeated our reality and the Iraq War became a fact of life.

The *Harry Potter* series describes many kinds of terror and trauma. It is an unavoidable reality for many, but the examples found in the series of books gives readers an opportunity to learn how to cope with their own instances of terror and trauma. It is not always possible to resolve trauma, but, through examples of reflective functioning, rationality, and the confrontation of fear, readers are able to learn how to cope with their own terrors.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Political Effects

One of the most important elements of *Harry Potter* is politics. Throughout the series, Rowling conveys subtle, yet powerful, political statements. Readers encounter diverse issues, such as prejudice, equality, authoritarianism, violence and media. The political issues encountered in the series provide a liberal perspective, and these statements have the greatest impact on readers of *Harry Potter*. Therefore, *Harry Potter* readers tend to lean left on the political spectrum, and, because *Harry Potter* is such an important part of the millennial popular culture, the majority of the millennial generation follows politically liberal ideology.

Prejudice and equality is exceedingly prevalent throughout the *Harry Potter* series. It is an important aspect of the series as a whole, since the war Harry fights against Voldemort has to do, in part, with Voldemort's intolerant ideology against muggle-borns, any witch or wizard with non-magical parents. In fact, Rowling first introduces this prejudice against muggle-borns when Draco Malfoy insults Hermione for her muggle heritage. In a confrontation between the rival Hogwarts houses, Gryffindor and Slytherin, Hermione defends her Gryffindor friends from Slytherin taunts to which Draco harshly responds "no one asked your opinion, you filthy little mudblood" (*Chamber* 86). Ron later explains that "mudblood's a really foul name for someone who was muggle-born… There are some wizards- like Malfoy's family- who think they're better than everyone else because they're what people call pure-blood" (*Chamber* 89). Thus, Rowling introduces the pureblood ideology that sets up the central conflict in the novel. Rowling

also emphasizes that this prejudiced ideology is inherently wrong as Draco bullies

Hermione, who is compassionate of others and is often referred to throughout the series

as the brightest witch of her age.

Hermione also acts as a proponent of equality in *Goblet of Fire* when she works

to promote the liberation of house-elves. House-elves are small elvish creatures that are

essentially enslaved to serve magical households. These creatures are first introduced in

*Chamber of Secrets*, when the Malfoy's family house-elf, Dobby, tries to help keep Harry

safe. When Harry meets Dobby in *Chamber of Secrets*, Dobby is clearly mistreated and

abused by the Malfoy family. If Dobby disobeys orders from the Malfoy's he feels

compelled to harm himself, whether by knocking his head on a lamp or even ironing his

fingers. By the end of the second book, Harry helps secure Dobby's freedom from the

Malfoy's.

Hermione encounters house-elves in *Goblet of Fire* when she meets Winky, a

mistreated house-elf fired from her family by her own master Barty Crouch, an uncaring

ministry official. Hermione, outraged by what she learns about house-elves, tries to

secure their freedom despite the popular belief among the wizarding society that house-

elves like being enslaved. In order to help the house-elves, Hermione creates S.P.E.W, or

the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare. Hermione passionately defends her

organization and describes how their "short-term aims… are to secure house-elves fair

wages and working conditions. Long-term aims include changing the law about non-

wand use, and trying to get an elf into the Department for the Regulation and Control of

Magical Creatures, because they're shockingly underrepresented" (*Goblet* 225).

Hermione is not ashamed to stand up against what she believes is wrong and work for the equality of everyone, even creatures as different as house-elves.

These examples of prejudice and equality are prevalent throughout the *Harry Potter* series. In the study, *Harry Potter and the Millennials*, Anthony Gierzynski conducted an extensive survey that analyzed the effect of various lessons found in *Harry Potter* on millennial participants. Gierzynski argues in his study that readers internalize the lessons in the series through incidental learning, which "occurs when learning is a byproduct of some other activity, such as reading for pleasure" (Gierzynski 29). Gierzynski's study analyzed the responses of *Harry Potter* readers in contrast to participants who had not read the series to various political statements and questions. When participants were asked a series of questions to assess their tolerance to various groups of people, such as atheists, homosexuals, and Muslims, Gierzynski found that individuals who read the series exhibited more tolerance and empathy towards others (see fig. 1). *Harry Potter* readers demonstrated on average greater feeling towards marginalized groups scoring 14 points and had low intolerance scores at an average of 5.2. Millennials who read some or none of the books did not demonstrate a drastically different result, but the scored 12.9 on feeling and 6.3 on intolerance. This means that on average, millennials who read *Harry Potter* demonstrated greater feeling and less intolerance towards marginalized groups than millennials who had not read the series.

Similarly, millennials who read *Harry Potter* valued equality more than participants who did not read the series. In Gierzynski's research, participants evaluated whether they valued equality and whether the government should ensure everyone has a "job and good standard of living" or if the government "should just let each person get

ahead on his or her own" (Gierzynski 54). Again, Gierzynski's research demonstrated

that readers of *Harry Potter* valued equality and favored the lower- and middle-class

citizens. Thirty-seven percent of *Harry Potter* readers highly valued equality in

comparison to the non-readers 29.5% (see fig. 2). Therefore, readers of the series are

more likely to support the idea that everyone should be given the same equal opportunity

to succeed and that the government should play a role in achieving that success.

## Mean tolerance scores
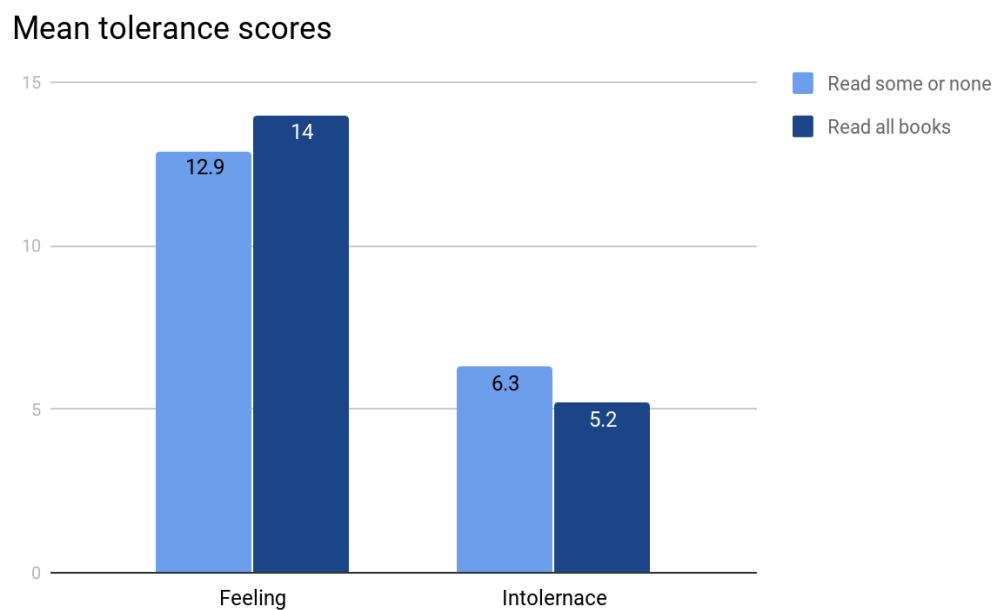


Figure 1. Mean Tolerance Scores; "Sum of feeling thermometer scores and tolerance scores"; *Harry Potter and the Millennials*; John Hopkins University Press, 2013, p.53.
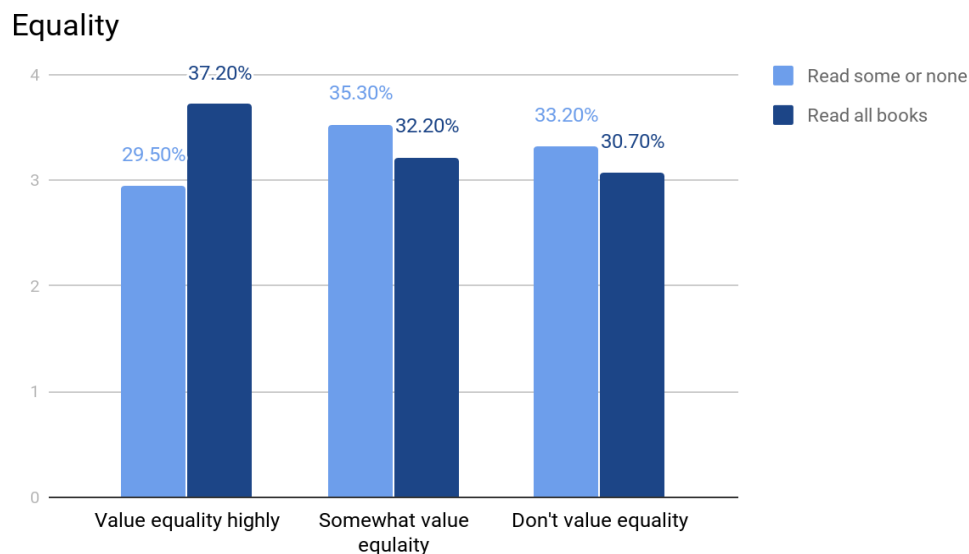
## Equality



Figure 2. Equality Scores; "Whether respondent values equality"; *Harry Potter and the Millennials*; John Hopkins University Press, 2013, p.54.

The series also discusses authority and the basis for authority. Rowling establishes two opposing authorities early on in the series. Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts, derives his authority from his wisdom, experience, and respect from others. In contrast, Voldemort, the villain of the series, establishes his authority through the accumulation of power and terrorization of others including his own followers. However, the most disliked character in the entire series is arguably Dolores Umbridge. This is in part due to her authoritarian tendencies towards all of Hogwarts when she is appointed the professor for Defense Against the Dark Arts. Although Voldemort does exhibit a degree of authoritarianism among his followers, he only demands strict obedience from his supporters and not those who oppose him. Unlike Voldemort, Umbridge takes over Hogwarts and enforces her authoritarian views upon everyone in Hogwarts.

Under Umbridge, students at Hogwarts are stripped of their usual freedoms and are even prevented from learning. In her first lesson, Umbridge explains that her class

will be a "carefully structured, theory-centered, Ministry-approved course of defensive magic" (*Order* 216). Despite the traditionally practical nature of Defense Against the Dark Arts, Umbridge refuses to allow students to actually learn how to defend themselves and instead emphasizes theory over practicality. Furthermore, students and faculty at Hogwarts cannot challenge Umbridge because of her loyalty to the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, who is attempting to exert his control over Dumbledore for fear of losing his own power. In Fudge's attempt to exert control over Dumbledore and Hogwarts, he appoints Umbridge the Hogwarts High Inquisitor allowing her to "inspect her fellow educators" (*Order* 275). Umbridge's appointment as High Inquisitor gives her nearly unrestricted control over Hogwarts. She uses her position to create numerous educational decrees that limit personal freedoms at Hogwarts and exerts her will over faculty and students alike.

Umbridge is a clear example of unjust authority, and Rowling emphasizes that Umbridge's abuse of power is wrong. Harry and his friends fight against Umbridge's authority at Hogwarts by creating Dumbledore's Army. Hermione introduces the idea of having Harry teach other interest students how to defend themselves through the organization. Harry and the members of the DA understand that their group directly undermines Umbridge's authority, but continue to practice defensive magic because they need to be able to defend themselves against the threat of Voldemort despite Fudge's attempt to deny Voldemort's return.

Umbridge is a clear example of corrupt authority and the abuse of power in the series, and readers learn that this kind of corruption and abuse is unacceptable. Therefore, when Gierzynski evaluated participants predisposition towards authoritarianism, the

study found that *Harry Potter* readers scored lower on average than participants who had read some or none of the books (see fig. 3). Gierzynski specifically evaluated participants tendency to show obedience to authority or conform to rules by asking them to choose between two phrases: "independence and respect for elders, curiosity and good manners, self-respect and obedience, considerate and well behaved" (Gierzynski 55). Those predisposed to authoritarianism were more likely to choose the latter of the two options available to them. Clearly, the depictions of corrupt authority in the series, especially through the character of Umbridge, impact readers predisposition towards authoritarianism. The *Harry Potter* books allow readers to learn that it is alright to challenge authority when it is clearly corrupt and infringing upon individual freedoms. No one should blindly follow others simply because they are an authority figure.
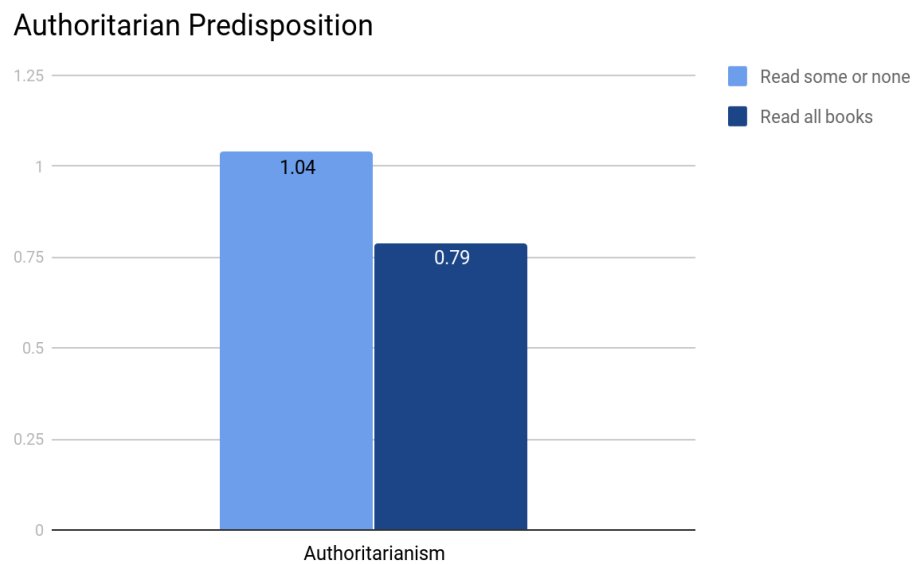
## Authoritarian Predisposition



Figure 3. Authoritarian Predisposition; "Mean score on authoritarian predisposition"; *Harry Potter and the Millennials*; John Hopkins University Press, 2013, p.56.

Just as Rowling encourages readers to challenge authority, Rowling also reinforces the unacceptability of violence. From the very first book in the series, violence

is looked down upon as Harry's cousin, Dudley Dursley, bullies him throughout their childhood. Readers understand that the violence from bullies, like Dudley and Draco Malfoy, is unacceptable. However, the series repeatedly emphasizes that violence is unacceptable under any circumstance. At the start of the final book, *Deathly Hallows*, Harry attempts to escape Voldemort and the Death Eaters during a chase. When Harry encounters Stan Shunpike, a friendly bus driver under magical mind-control, Harry simply disarms him so he is unable to continue fighting. Using the disarming spell exposes Harry's identity and places him in greater danger during the chase. Harry's mentor, Remus Lupin, berates Harry telling him that "the time for disarming is past. These people are trying to capture and kill you. At least stun if you aren't prepared to kill" (*Hallows* 70). Harry counters Lupin by explaining that they "were hundreds of feet up [in the air]... if I stunned him and he'd fallen, he'd have died… I won't blast people out of my way just because they're there… That's Voldemort's job" (*Hallows* 70-71). Harry's integrity prevents him from committing unnecessary violence even in the face of danger.

Even at the conclusion of the series, Harry attempts to give Voldemort a chance at redemption instead of resorting to violence and killing him. In their final confrontation, Harry tells Voldemort "before you try to kill me, I'd advise you to think about what you've done… think, and try for some remorse, Riddle… It's your one last chance… it's all you've got left" (*Hallows* 741). When Voldemort finally attacks, Harry still uses a disarming spell instead of the killing curse. Despite having Voldemort literally trying to kill him, Harry still attempts to avoid violence and even goes so far as to give him an opportunity for redemption.

Harry's unwillingness to utilize violence emphasizes the importance of life and compassion that he demonstrates throughout the series. Lives are valuable and no one deserves to experience violence against them. Harry exhibits this attitude through the entirety of the series, and it's an admirable quality that Rowling clearly values. This translates to millennial readers who are less likely to support violence. In Gierzynski's study, millennials who had read all the *Harry Potter* books were less likely to favor the death penalty, less likely to agree that the best way to deal with terrorists is kill all terrorists, and less likely to find torture acceptable (see fig. 4). In each of the three situations, participants who had read all the books were less likely to support any form of violence by about 10% less than those who had only read some or none of the books. Thus, the survey demonstrates how *Harry Potter* taught readers to be less accepting of violence.
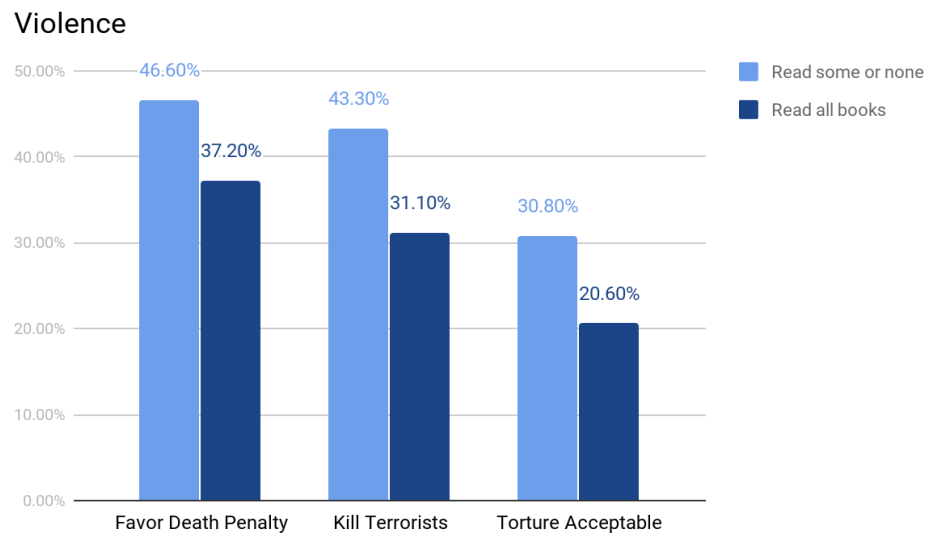


Figure 4. Violence; "Attitudes toward deadly violence and torture"; *Harry Potter and the Millennials*; John Hopkins University Press, 2013, p.57.

Finally, Rowling also urges readers to be skeptical of the media. While media is a great tool to disseminate news, the media all too often exhibits bias. Rowling first criticizes the media in *Goblet of Fire* when Rita Skeeter, reporter for the Daily Prophet, creates outlandish news stories about Harry. In this instance, Rowling criticizes tabloid media for its sensational stories for the sake of sales. However, Rowling truly conveys her judgement of the media in *Order of the Phoenix* when the wizarding newspaper, the Daily Prophet, publishes propaganda to discredit Harry.

Throughout *Order of the Phoenix,* the Ministry of Magic refuses to accept the reality of Voldemort's return. Because Harry was the only person present during Voldemort's return, the Ministry of Magic refuses to accept Harry's account of the truth. Instead the Ministry utilizes the media to discredit Harry's story by writing about him as though he is a "deluded attention-seeking person who thinks he's a great tragic hero… If some far-fetched story appears, they say something like, 'A tale worthy of Harry Potter'" (*Order* 71).  The Ministry's attempt to smear Harry is so effective even some of his friends at Hogwarts begin to believe the Daily Prophet's lies. When Harry returns to Hogwarts, Seamus Finnigan, Harry's roommate, tells Harry that his mum "didn't want [him] to come back to Hogwarts… because of you" (*Order* 196). Many of the students at Hogwarts are critical of Harry and make him feel as an outcast despite the truth of Voldemort's return.

In each instance of media in the books, Rowling demonstrates that the media can easily distort facts and convey lies. These depictions of the media encourage readers to be skeptical of the media they consume. Millennials demonstrate their skepticism of the media by curating their news sources. Unlike previous generations, millennials are more

likely to use social media or online sources with 64% of 18 to 24 year olds and 58% of 25 to 34 year olds utilizing online sources for their news consumption (see fig. 5). The use of online news sources actually exposes millennials to a greater variety of news. The Reuters institute found that "algorithms are exposing most users to a greater range of online sources… [and they] are significantly more likely to see sources they would not normally use" (Newman 15). Not only are millennials curating their media by exploring online sources versus traditional sources, they are also ensuring that their news sources are diverse enough to reduce the possibilities of 'fake' news and bias.
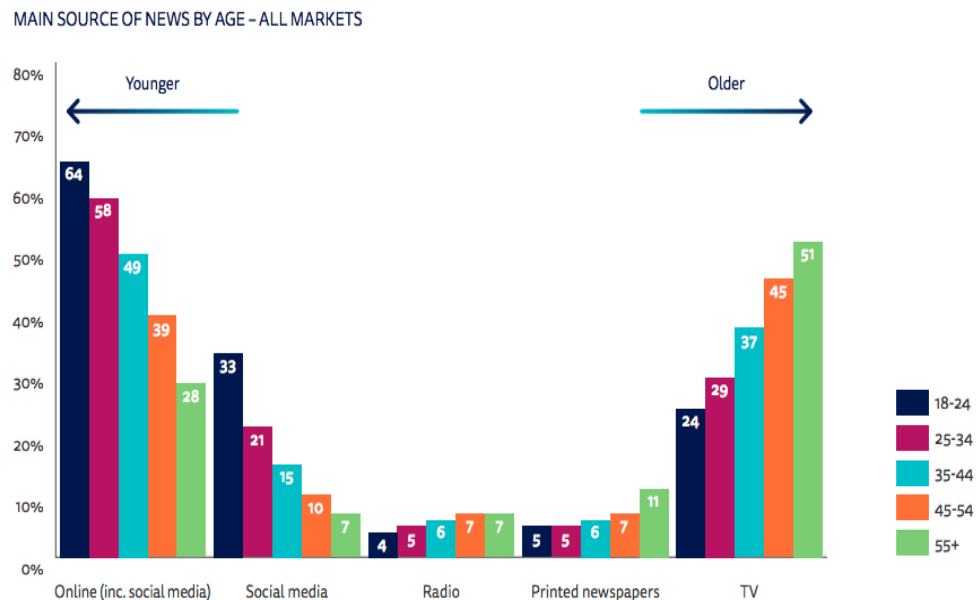


Figure 5. "Main Source of News By Age"; *Digital News Report 2017*; Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2017, p. 10.

While equality, authoritarianism, violence, and media are the political issues Rowling deals with the most throughout *Harry Potter*, the series has a great effect on millennial politics. Gierzynski's study also analyzed the effect *Harry Potter* had on voting millennials in the 2008 election. Gierzynski found that an overwhelming majority

of millennials believed that history would view the Bush administration unfavorably, but millennials who read *Harry Potter* were more likely to view the former administration unfavorably than their millennial counterparts who had not read all of the books (see fig. 6). Those who had read the series are also more likely to participate in the political process and are less cynical than those who did not read the books (see fig. 7).

In the 2008 election, millennials who read *Harry Potter* were more likely to have voted for Obama over McCain, and they were more likely to have voted (see fig. 8). In a brief survey I conducted, 68.7% of millennial participants who read the series voted in the 2016 election. In comparison, only 37.5% of millennial participants who had not read the series voted in the latest election (see fig. 9). *Harry Potter* certainly encourages readers to participate politically and they are more likely to vote for liberal candidates. Politics is an important aspect of *Harry Potter*. Rowling's most powerful political statements revolve around her treatment of equality, authority, violence, and media. However, it is clear that *Harry Potter* has a broad political effect on its readers, but, most importantly, the series encourages readers to be informed of the world around them and work to improve it.
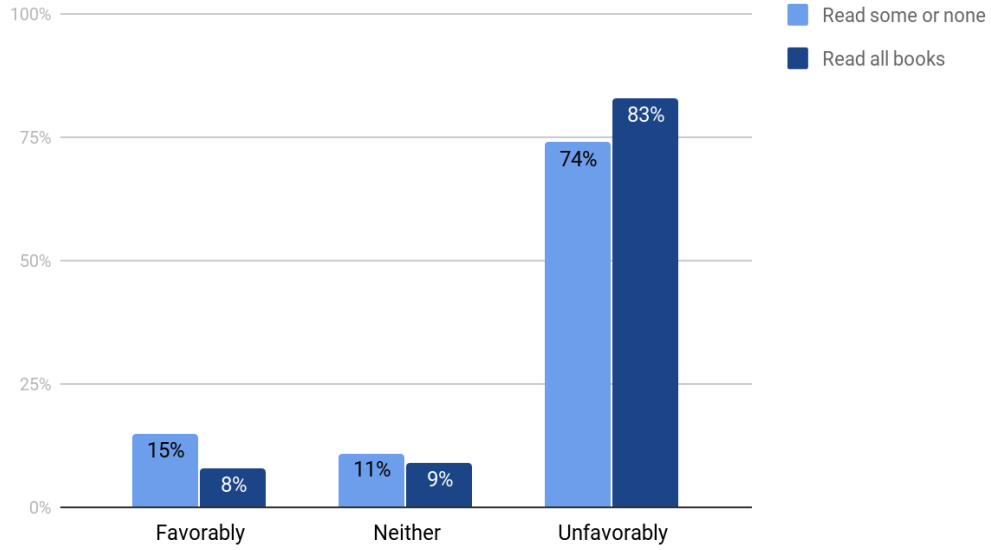
## Bush Administration



Figure 6. Bush Administration; "How historians will view Bush administration"; *Harry Potter and the Millennials*; John Hopkins University Press, 2013, p.59.
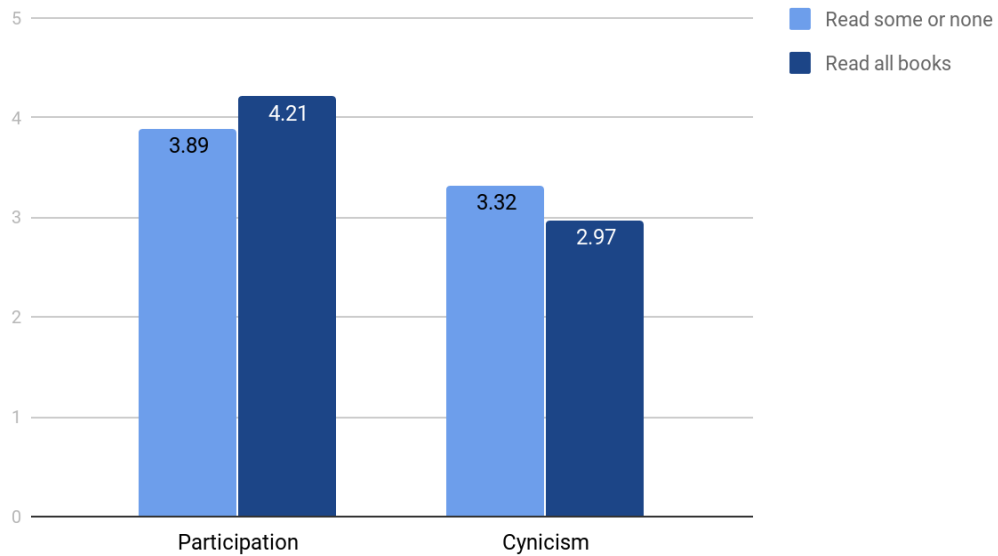
## Political Participation vs. Cynicism



Figure 7. Political Participation vs. Cynicism; "Participation and cynicism"; *Harry Potter and the Millennials*; John Hopkins University Press, 2013, p.60.
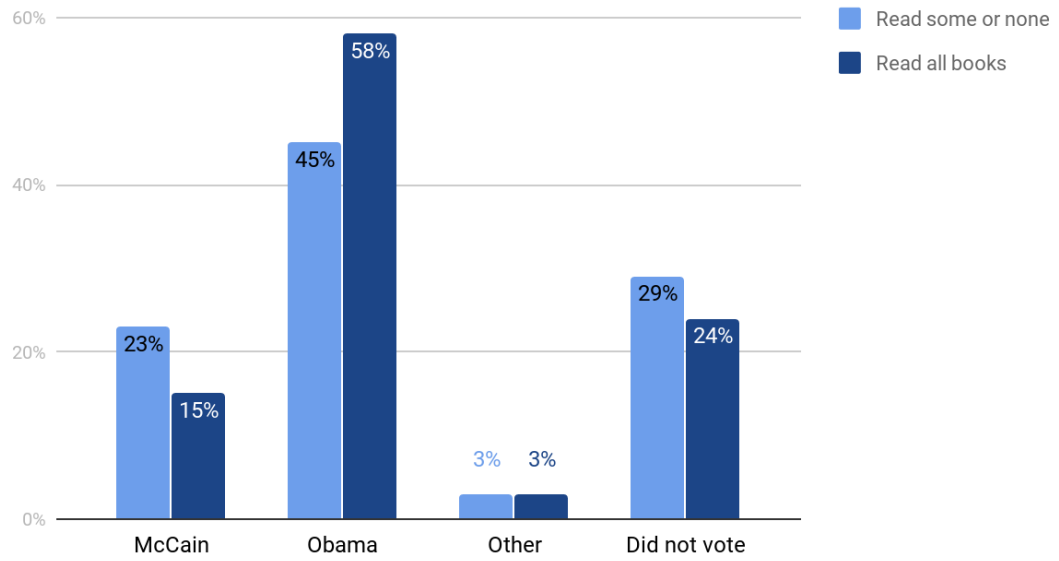
## 2008 Election



Figure 8. 2008 Election; "Vote for president in 2008"; *Harry Potter and the Millennials*; John Hopkins University Press, 2013, p.61.
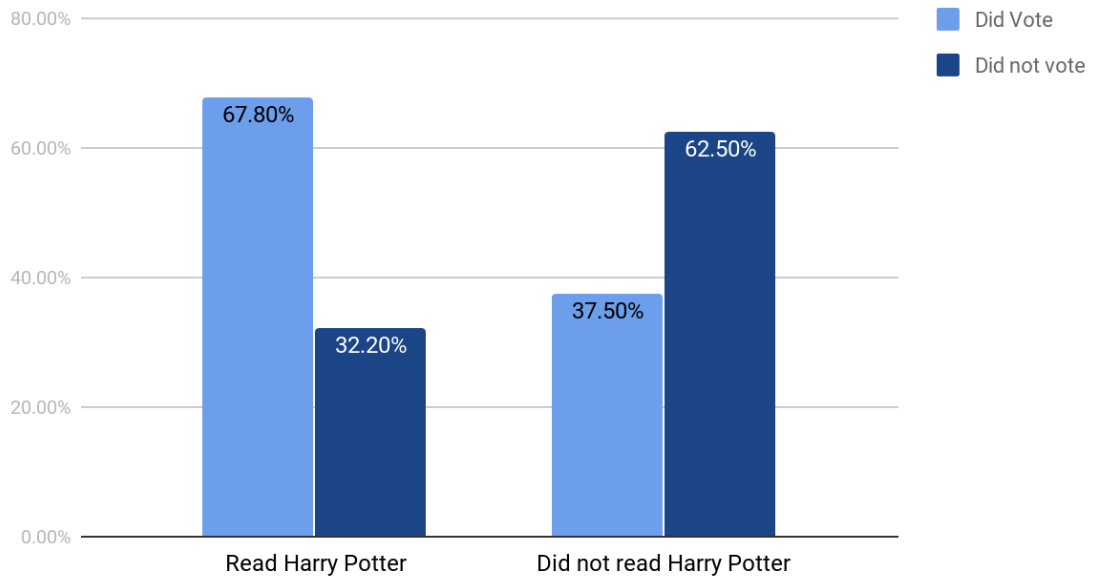
## 2016 Voting Participation for General Election



Figure 9. Voting participation in 2016 general election.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The phenomena of *Harry Potter* is unlike anything we have known in modern memory. While there are innumerable reasons of its success, Rowling drew from traditional storytelling to create a series that is impactful and engaging. The many genre's that *Harry Potter* participates in reinforces the tradition that the series draws from and demonstrate how the blend of so many genres can lead to a successful story. *Harry Potter* appeals to so many readers because it is diverse and compelling, while retaining traditional aspects of genre, such as the bildungsroman, the English school story, fantasy, and the hero's journey.

But, the success of *Harry Potter* has done much more than entertain readers. *Harry Potter* transformed the publishing industry by demonstrating that a highly literate and engaging audience existed to drive demand for good stories. *Harry Potter* lead to the rise of the young adult novel within the publishing industry to meet the demand of eager young readers searching for the next enthralling story. Most importantly, *Harry Potter* inspired millions to read and created lifelong readers. Because of *Harry Potter*, millennials are the most literate of any generation and participate in literature far more than any generation before them.

The complexity of *Harry Potter* has also given hope to individuals who have experienced terror and trauma. The series provides endless examples of war, terror and trauma that gives readers an opportunity to engage in their own trauma. The mediated platform of fiction gives readers a chance to experience these instances of terror and learn

to respond and cope with their own trauma. With the emergence of war and the post 9/11 war on terror in the 2000's, children and young adults all over the world were undergoing terror, and *Harry Potter* may have been the tool we needed to cope with that terror. Rowling's depictions of war are what has allowed the millennial generation to cope with the terror of the 21st century.

Finally, Rowling's political lessons in *Harry Potter* have instilled themselves in its readers. *Harry Potter* has taught readers to reject prejudice, support equality, fight against authoritarianism in favor of democracy, refuse to accept violence, and to remain skeptical of the media. These political lessons, among many more, have inspired millennials to engage in politics and fight for what they believe in. *Harry Potter*'s political lessons lead to a more liberal and progressive millennial generation that primarily seeks to achieve equality and freedom for everyone.

These three examples of literacy, terror, and politics, are only three ways in which *Harry Potter* has impacted the millennial generation. I have no doubt there are many more ways that *Harry Potter* has shaped the millennial generation, but certainly *Harry Potter* has only had a positive impact on its readers. The phenomena of *Harry Potter* will continue to shape the millennial generation as new material continues to appear, and the lasting legacy of *Harry Potter* will positively shape subsequent generations as well.

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