

Predominant Recurring Motifs in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter Series*

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Abstract

Motif is an artistic device used in literary and visual works to draw the attention of the audience toward a particular idea or theme. When the writer of a work intends to emphasize or point out an important aspect, he makes an ample use of motifs in his works. In *Harry Potter Series*, Rowling makes use of concrete objects and abstract ideas as motifs. The notable motifs are genealogy and discrimination, authority and government, friendship and loyalty and death and resurrection. *It is evident that love motivates acts of sacrifice. The major characters sacrifice and undergo suffering voluntarily for the sake of others.* An inexplicable bond that exists between *Harry and Dumbledore is the most unique motif.* Political themes such as fascism, racism, prejudice and discrimination play a larger role. Rowling has played with two conflicting motifs: choice and free will. The activated free will of Harry appears as a strong guiding force in his life. The motif of desire for immortality is well-handled in the *Series*. Voldemort cherishes the strong dark desire for endless life. To the contrary, the trio is not afraid of its own mortality.

Keywords: Motifs, themes, free will, choice etc.

The books in Harry Potter Series, penned by J.K. Rowling are adventure stories. Of course, there is a streak of fairy-tale magic added to the main discourse. The Series is well-known for its intricate narrative and profound themes that resonate with readers of all ages. The purpose of the paper is to explore the predominant and recurring motifs, which deepen the narrative of the Harry Potter Series. These motifs serve as the fundamental components to construct the story. The significant motifs which are inherently present in the Series are man's struggle against death, the power of love relationship between Harry and his mentor Dumbledore, friendship and loyalty, prejudice and acceptance and choice and free will.

Harry Potter Series is the story of a young hero, after whom the fiction is named. Harry Potter was born to the magical people. Unfortunately, he was orphaned and adopted by the Dursley family. This family is referred as Muggles, meaning the non-magical people. It gave the cruellest treatment to the young boy. Fortunately, Harry receives a letter from the Hogwarts school on his eleventh birthday. The young wizards and witches are educated there. Accepting the offer, Harry enters the school. To his surprise, he finds in the Hogwarts school a world filled with wonder and mystery. Fortunately, he extends his friendship with two of his inmates, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger.

Out of curiosity, Harry begins studying magic. The black magic reveals the hidden secret that his parents' death was no accident; instead, they were murdered by the evil-minded Lord Voldemort. Voldemort, the murderer aimed at killing the infant Harry. But his murderous attack got back to himself. His magical power was badly crippled.

Among the books in the Harry Potter Series, the first four books set the stage for the climatic event, which is to begin in Book IV. Voldemort regains a corporeal body and returns to power. He is more empowered by the evil wizards, called Death Eaters. He knows well that Harry is the only force to defeat him. Voldemort begins a campaign to kill Harry. The last three books deal with Harry's desperate battle against Voldemort. He remains steadfast in his fight even when the world spins into chaos around him.

The Power of Love:

It is evident that love motivates acts of sacrifice in Harry Potter Series. The major characters sacrifice and undergo suffering voluntarily for the sake of others. In spite of collapsing with utmost loss in the act of sacrifice, these characters keep up their integrity. Their sacrificial act is based on pure love. The familial bond and love,

delineated in the Series is beautiful and noble. Harry's mother is marked for her sacrifice and love. She dies in the attempt to save her infant son Harry from Voldemort, the antagonist. The power of Lily's love is proved when the 'Killing Curse', the deadliest weapon of Voldemort rebounds and attacks him. Harry's soul is so pure that Voldemort fails in his attempt to 'possess' Harry. Like his mother, Harry's life is filled with the extension of his love for others.

To the contrary, Voldemort's life is based on hatred. In The Philosopher's Stone, Dumbledore, the Headmaster of the Hogwarts School observes that, Voldemort does not value anything as takes no trouble to understand it. He has neither knowledge nor experience on house-elves and of love, loyalty, and innocence. He has never grasped the reality that all these beings and matters have power beyond his own and even beyond the reach of any magic. Voldemort's essence lies in seven Horcruxes. Till the Horcruxes exist, none could put an end to him. Harry, Ron and Hermione venture destroy the six Horcruxes. Later they realize the seventh Horcruxes exists in Harry himself. The 'Killing Curse' sent by Voldemort failed while facing Harry. The Curse blasted a piece of the tainted essence of Voldemort. It got bonded to Harry. So it is evident that when Harry lives, there is no death for Voldemort. Harry bears the evil, which is not his own. Harry resolves meet sacrificial death in order to save others from the evil force. Harry is sure that he does seek the help of others nor someone else involve in the fight with the evil. He decided it has got to be him alone.

Severus Snape is another character through whom the motif of sacrificial love is applied in *Harry Potter Series*. There is a sub-plot in the Series, centred on the sacrificial love of sacrificial love. Snape is the often-irritable Potions teacher at Hogwarts. There is a secret hidden in his past history. Snape was once an admirer of Lily, Harry's mother. He *did* not want her to be married to a man, who, according to *him* was reckless and mature. Of course, Lily was not aware of his love to her. She *He did* not want her to be married to a man, who, according to him was reckless and mature. Lily assigns the work of rearing her infant to Snape. Since that moment, Snape has been *sacrificing* his own personal life to defend the child, whom he believes, should have been his own. Though Snape appears to be antagonistic to Harry, he protects him when the darkest moments occur.

The Bond:

An inexplicable bond that exists between *Harry and Dumbledore in Harry Potter Series is the most unique motif. Since his entry at the Hogwarts School as the Professor, Dumbledore has been taking care of Harry by playing the role of the*

latter's father. Throughout his struggle with Voldemort, Harry gets the best insight and counselling from *Dumbledore*. He is the Godly figure, providing moral support and constant advice to Harry during his tough times such as destroying Voldemort's Horcruxes. For instance, Harry dies at the Dark Lord's hands during his journey to face Voldemort. Even in that critical situation, Harry never doubts the integrity of Dumbledore's command.

Prejudice and Acceptance:

Harry Potter Series contains many political themes such as fascism, racism, and genocide. Prejudice and discrimination also play a larger role. In *The Philosopher's Stone* and *The Chamber of Secrets* a substantial amount of ethnic/social conflict can be spotted. The Dursleys are often most recognized for their extreme dislike for "different" communities. They are of the opinion that they have nothing to do with the strange people, dressed up in funny cloaks. They describe themselves as "perfectly normal. Basically, Draco Malfoy believes that most pure-blooded wizards are superior to the other wizards and the magical creatures. His first meeting with Harry reveals his dislike for the all other groups. He describes Hagrid, the half-giant wizard as a savage, living in a hut in the Hogwarts school campus. Malfoy criticises Hagrid as one who is a drunkard, trying to do magic, and setting fire to his own bed. He starts his enquiry on Harry's parents. He is curious to know the practices of the old wizarding families by knowing about Harry's parents. Harry's journey involves confronting prejudice and learning to accept himself and others, including those with different backgrounds or abilities.

Friendship and loyalty

Harry Potter Series is a wonderful delineation of friendship woven through the life of the characters. The bond of friendship is the central theme, with the trio of Harry, Ron, and Hermione consistently demonstrating unwavering loyalty and support for each other in the face of adversity. Their unity is crucial in overcoming challenges and ultimately triumphs over evil. When he first learns about the mysterious Chamber of Secrets, he feels overwhelmed and uncertain about how to proceed. However, it is through the support of his friends, especially Ron and Hermione, that Harry gains the courage and determination to confront the unknown.

The importance of loyalty extends to other characters and groups as well in *The Order of the Phoenix*, further emphasizing the significance of solidarity and camaraderie.

The themes such as diversity, empathy, loyalty, courage and leadership portrayed in the magical world of Hogwarts provide valuable insights for overcoming life's challenges and building stronger relationships. The entire realm of the Hogwarts and beyond teaches priceless lessons on our everyday existence, transcending the wizarding world.

Choice and free will

Throughout *Harry Potter Series*, Rowling has played with two conflicting motifs: choice and free will. The activated free will of Harry appears as a strong guiding force in his life. The Sorting Hat decides to place Harry in Slytherin. But, Harry chooses Gryffindor, deciding what type of wizard he is to become. Dumbledore's states that the choice of a man shows what he is, far more than his abilities. His statement emphasizes personal responsibility and the choices that define individuals. Harry's decision to go into Gryffindor, his dedication to protecting others, and his ultimate choice to sacrifice himself all showcase the power of free will.

Man's Struggle against Death:

The motif of desire for immortality is well-handled in *Harry Potter Series*. Voldemort cherishes the strong dark desire for endless life. This desire haunts him to that extent of taking him to the path of villainy. It is pathetic that he gets transformed from a disturbed orphan boy to an evil man. He attains pseudo-immortality by constructing the Horcruxes. The emptiness in the desire of Voldemort is criticized by Dumbledore and it is applicable to human life. Everyone wants to secure as much money and life as he wants. These are the two matters that human beings choose above all other matters. The irony is they choose among the two worst things in their life.

To the contrary, the trio in *Harry Potter Series* is not afraid of mortality. Harry confronts Voldemort and meets his death by Vildemort. Voldemort casts the Killing Curse on the Horcrux inside Harry. The Curse kills the soul and not Harry himself. It is not a true death but a sort of limbo, caused for a period of time. He wakes up to find himself in that state between life and death. There, to his shock, he witnesses the mutilated soul of Lord Voldemort. He is confirmed that each one's soul is responsible for his actions. Life does not end with this material world; it is a precursor to something more. To Harry, death is not as an end, but a beginning. Dumbledore philosophises death as it is the unknown we fear when we look upon death and darkness, nothing more. Harry is brought back to life for his good conduct. He defeats

Voldemort and saves the magical world. Voldemort's death leads to the salvation of others.

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