

University of Pardubice
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Depiction of Evil in Harry Potter Series
Bachelor Thesis

Univerzita Pardubice
Fakulta filozofická
Akademický rok: 2022/2023

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

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Osobní číslo: **H21236**
Studijní program: **B0231A090018 Anglický jazyk**
Specializace: **Anglický jazyk pro odbornou praxi**
Téma práce: **Zobrazení zla v knihách o Harry Potterovi**
Zadávající katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

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Rozsah grafických prací:
Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**
Jazyk zpracování: **Angličtina**

Seznam doporučené literatury:

Barratt, Bethany. The Politics of Harry Potter. 2012. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Bubíková, Šárka. Úvod do studia dětství v americké literatuře. 2009. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice.
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Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **30. března 2025**

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Acknowledgement

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph. D., M.Litt. for her valuable advice and guidance throughout the process of writing this thesis.

Annotation

This bachelor thesis focuses on the depiction of evil in the Harry Potter book series by J. K. Rowling. It situates the series within the traditions of Children's and Fantasy Literature, analysing its thematic and narrative structures. Furthermore, it explores the various manifestations of evil through key characters, creatures, and magical objects, emphasising their significance within the story.

Keywords

Harry Potter, evil, Fantasy Literature, Children's Literature, wizard, magic,

Název

Zobrazení zla v knihách o Harry Potterovi

Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na zobrazení zla v knižní sérii o Harry Potterovi, kterou napsala J. K. Rowlingová. Zařazuje sérii do tradic dětské a fantasy literatury, analyzuje její tematické a příběhové struktury. Dále rozebírá různé podoby zla prostřednictvím klíčových postav, tvorů a magických předmětů, přičemž zdůrazňuje jejich význam v rámci příběhu.

Klíčová slova

Harry Potter, zlo, fantasy literatura, dětská literatura, kouzelník, magie,

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Introduction

Since its publication in 1997, the Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling has captivated readers of all ages and established itself as a cornerstone of modern Children's and Fantasy Literature. Its complex interplay of themes and characters invites readers to engage with profound ideas and universal questions. This thesis examines one of the most compelling themes within the Harry Potter series: the depiction of evil. Evil, as a concept, plays a pivotal role in literature, serving as a lens through which societies explore their values, fears, and aspirations. In Children's and Fantasy Literature, the battle between good and evil often forms the foundation of the narrative, offering both a moral framework and a catalyst for narrative tension. Rowling's work serves as an example of this literary convention while presenting evil as a multifaceted force that operates on personal, societal, and metaphysical levels. As both a piece of Children's Literature and fantasy fiction, the series transcends traditional genre boundaries, addressing universal themes that resonate with readers across diverse cultures and age groups. Among these themes, the concept of evil plays a significant role.

The structure of the thesis is organised into three main chapters. The first chapter contextualises the Harry Potter series within the tradition of Children's Literature, examining how its themes and narrative strategies align with and challenge the conventions of the genre. Starting with an introduction to the history of the development of the genre. Beginning with early stories that were shared across all age groups, transitioning to Aesop's fables, and culminating in the works of influential figures such as the Brothers Grimm or Louisa May Alcott. Subsequently, the use of themes reflecting childhood experiences is addressed. Additionally, the chapter examines the influence literature has on the child's development while considering the role adult writers have on the content of the stories youngsters read.

The second chapter delves into the elements of Fantasy Literature. In doing so, it situates the Harry Potter series within the broader tradition of fantasy while showcasing its unique contributions to the genre. This section highlights the use of impossible and fantastical elements, the role of magical creatures, and the interplay between the ordinary and the extraordinary. The chapter explores the craft of worldbuilding, emphasising how authors construct immersive fantasy realms that feel realistic within their imaginative contexts.

Finally, the last chapter provides an in-depth exploration of the depiction of evil in its various forms. Evil represents itself in Children's and Fantasy Literature in different forms, including moral, natural, and supernatural manifestations. Key characters, such as Voldemort

and Draco Malfoy, as well as pivotal elements like the Dementors and Horcruxes, are used to demonstrate the diverse types of evil. This section illuminates the series' exploration of the origins, consequences, and moral complexities of evil while also examining the interplay between individual choices and systemic forces, offering a nuanced understanding of its nature.

1. Children's Literature

The Harry Potter book series is a widely beloved and popular literary phenomenon that has captivated readers of all ages since its publication in nineteen ninety-seven. The series combines the elements of fantasy and Children's Literature. Experts argue that the books push the boundaries of Children's Literature due to several factors. These include the darker themes explored, Harry's frequent acts of disobedience, and the emphasis on characters making their own decisions, even when adults might disagree. However, this chapter's focus is on the ways in which the Harry Potter series confirms and embodies the characteristics of Children's Literature. Children's stories serve as a cornerstone of human development. It lays the groundwork for a lifelong love of language, ignites young imaginations, and offers a gentle hand in navigating the complexities of emotions. Looking for its beginning, Peter Hunt points out that children engaged with books long before texts were produced specifically for them – which was around the eighteenth century – therefore, all pre-eighteenth-century texts can be considered for children as well as for adults.¹ This suggests that the distinction between literature for children and adults was not as clear-cut in earlier centuries. Grenby supports this idea by adding that children have been reading texts since the earliest recorded history up to the present day.² Therefore, there was no need for texts to be labelled solely for children or adults. Texts were used for sharing and learning together despite their darker, realistic themes. Furthermore, these stories were passed down through generations and often contained valuable lessons about morality, resilience, and the importance of community – themes that remain relevant across time. The Harry Potter series undeniably embraces core Children's Literature values, which this chapter aims to analyse, along with exploring a brief history of this genre.

No author has been as strongly associated with Children's Literature as Aesop and his fables. As concise narratives that convey moral lessons, fables have captivated readers for centuries. According to Lerer, fables have been accepted as the centre of childhood reading since the times of Plato and continued to be so during all the forthcoming cultures.³ Their enduring relevance stems from their use of animal characters and inanimate objects to satirise human behaviour, all while emphasising moral lessons through figurative language. Despite their brevity, the stories hold remarkable depth. Each generation unpacks and reinterprets them,

¹ Peter Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature*, (New York: OPUS, 1994), 27.

² M. O. Grenby, *Children's Literature*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 1.

³ Seth Lerer, *Children's Literature: A reader's history from Aesop to Harry Potter*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 35.

revealing new layers of meaning and social commentary relevant to contemporary concerns. Gable and Yates point out that since Aesop himself was a slave, fables started as stories told by servants to the young, using the language of the subordinate,⁴ and Lerer concurs. Meaning that the history of fables is deeply rooted in the tradition of female servants sharing stories with the children entrusted to their care. Though initially passed down orally, fables were eventually written down and adapted for a broader audience. Despite this transformation, the core elements of fables - universal morals and relatable animal characters - remained constant, ensuring their continued relevance. Overall, Aesop's fables continue to captivate readers and spark critical thinking across generations with their brevity, reinterpretable depth, and timeless morals.

Alongside fables, religious texts played a significant role in shaping early Children's Literature. These stories offered concrete examples of appropriate behaviour in various situations. With the growth of literacy rates in the eighteenth century, the demand for literature increased rapidly, leading to the emergence of Children's Literature as a distinct genre. No longer solely reliant on religious texts and didactic manuals, children craved stories that would both spark their imaginations and provide entertainment. This emerging desire presented an excellent opportunity for publishers like John Newbery, who established the first press devoted to Children's books. Hunt calls Newbery one of the most influential London booksellers.⁵ Newbery indeed became a pioneer in Children's Literature. In seventeen hundred and forty-four, he published one of the first commercial books for children: *A Little Pretty Pocketbook*. His publications often incorporated moral lessons in a way that felt natural and engaging for children. Another early example of Children's Literature is *The Governess* by Sarah Fielding. Set in a fictional boarding school, it tells the story of Mrs Teachum and her nine pupils. The nineteenth century saw the rise of fairy tales, with the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen shaping the genre for generations to come. Their tales often focused on moral lessons with clear distinctions between good and evil, enriched by elements of magic and fantasy. Educational stories remained popular, exemplified by Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, which offered a blend of entertainment and moral guidance for young girls. By the twentieth century, Children's Literature had become a recognised and respected art form. This period gave birth to famous Children's stories such as *Winnie-the-Pooh* by A. A. Milne; *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White, and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum, which continue to captivate generations of readers. Children's Literature has transformed into a rich

⁴ Lerer, *Children's Literature*, 36.

⁵ Hunt, *Introduction to Children's Literature*, 29.

and diverse genre, offering young readers stories that inspire imagination, teach valuable lessons, and provide timeless entertainment.

As the title suggests, children have consistently been the central focus of Children's Literature throughout history, serving as its primary audience and consumers. However, the authors remain to be adults. Therefore, they hold immense power and influence over the readers. Literature has been shaping young minds for ages, as Jack Zipes illustrates with an example from the eighteenth century when reading was controlled rationally for fear of becoming a pleasurable activity.⁶ This example highlights the power dynamic at play: adults shaping the minds of a less experienced audience. This influence extends beyond entertainment, fostering the development of a child's values and ideas throughout generations. Zipes argues that since the term "Children's Literature" is in the genitive case, it evokes the notion that the literature in question is in the possession of children,⁷ and Lukavská agrees. However, as was mentioned, the literature is not conceived by children to children; therefore, it does not belong to them. This emphasises that Children's Literature, while created for them, is a product of adult intention and design, reflecting the values, norms, and ideologies that adults deem appropriate. Therefore, adults—particularly the authors and creators of Children's Literature—wield crucial influence in shaping young minds according to their own ideals and preferences. By controlling the narratives, themes, and moral lessons embedded in these stories, they guide children toward specific behaviours, beliefs, and worldviews that align with adult expectations. Although children are the target audience, authorship allows adults to shape them into versions of what they deem appropriate, reinforcing social norms and cultural values that may not fully respect the child's unique perspective or autonomy.

An essential aspect of Children's Literature is the story's thematic content. The central theme often revolves around the triumph of good over evil in numerous ways, and this topic is to be explored further in the upcoming chapter. However, to make the stories relatable and enjoyable for children, the story should include topics that resonate with childhood experiences. Moreover, the experiences should be timeless, ensuring children from various historical periods can connect with literature. As Lukavská notes, this universal relevance enables young readers to form meaningful connections with the stories.⁸ Such experiences include descriptions of school, as learning and bullying, as well as coming-of-age narratives, exploring nature, running

⁶ Jack Zipes, *Stick and Stones*, (New York: Routledge, 2001) 47.

⁷ Zipes, *Stick and Stones*, 39.

⁸ Jana Segi Lukavská, *Dítěti vstříc*, (Brno: Host, 2018) 23-24. My translation

in the woods, making friends, or going on adventures in the countryside. Lynch-Brown mentions that these realistic elements are integrated with subjects that capture Children's imaginations.⁹ For instance, topics like dinosaurs, planes, magic, toys coming to life, animals, or sports serve as a way to channel one's energy and engage with the story. By incorporating these elements, Children's Literature creates a bridge between a child's own world and the world of imagination, encouraging them to become fully absorbed in tales of magical creatures and thrilling adventures.

Animal characters often play a crucial role in Children's narratives, serving as both central figures and loyal companions who teach loyalty and compassion. From Aesop's wise fables to Aslan from the world of Narnia, animals have long played a pivotal role on the pages of Children's Literature. This technique of personification makes the moral lessons in fables easier for children to grasp. By attributing human characteristics and behaviours to animals, children can relate to the character's motivations and decisions, drawing a more explicit connection to the moral of the story. Stories such as *Winnie the Pooh*, *Charlotte's Web* and *The Jungle Book* exemplify that animal characters in Children's Literature not only teach essential values but also spark imagination and creativity, fostering deep emotional connections with young readers. Animals thus play a vital role in shaping the moral and emotional landscapes of Children's Literature, making them an enduring and significant feature in the genre.

To look at the practical part, one of the major themes in the Harry Potter series is the characters' educational journey at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The narrative follows the students through various educational experiences, such as preparing for exams, learning new spells, and selecting subjects for the O.W.L.s, or "Ordinary Wizarding Levels, the examinations taken by the Hogwarts students at the age of fifteen."¹⁰ These exams present a major challenge for young witches and wizards, testing their knowledge and abilities across a wide range of magical subjects. Some examples of O.W.L. subjects include Potions, Charms, Transfiguration or Defense Against the Dark Arts. Another prominent aspect of school life depicted in the series is dealing with bullies, notably represented by Draco Malfoy and his companions. Draco's antagonism, which is a big part of Harry's life at school, exemplifies the social tensions present in the wizarding world. For instance, the young Malfoy is mocking Hermione's blood status and calling her "filthy little Mudblood"¹¹, one of the most offensive

⁹ Caron G. Lynch-Brown, Carl M. Tomlinson, Kathy G. Short, *Essentials of Children's Literature*. (Pearson Education Limited, 2014) 2.

¹⁰ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000) 64.

¹¹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1998) 117.

terms for a person born to a non-wizard family. On other occasions, Malfoy steals Neville Longbottom's Remembrall during a flying lesson in *Philosopher's Stone*. Furthermore, he taunts Buckbeak the Hippogriff with the words "great ugly brute," leading to Draco's injury in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*. As the story follows the characters throughout seven years, they grow up and make strong friendships. The students encounter increasingly dangerous adventures and experience significant personal milestones, such as having a first crush and first kiss, which Harry shares with Cho Chang. The thrilling adventures characters go through include exploring the Forbidden Forest during detention, sneaking around the castle at night with an invisibility cloak, and even using a time-turner to travel back in time and save Sirius Black, Harry's godfather. Watching these characters mature allows readers to relate to their growth, fostering a deeper connection and maintaining curiosity throughout the series.

Among the many themes that captivate children, magic stands out as one of the most prominent in the Harry Potter books. Magical elements are woven throughout these stories, ranging from enchanted objects and creatures to fantastical modes of transportation, such as flying broomsticks, portkeys, and Floo powder, which allows wizards to travel between locations via fireplaces. Harry learns about portkeys when travelling to the Quidditch World Cup. Mr. Weasley explains:

For those who don't want to Apparate, or can't, we use Portkeys. They're objects that are used to transport wizards from one spot to another at a prearranged time. [...] "Well, they can be anything," said Mr. Weasley. "Unobtrusive things, obviously, so Muggles don't go picking them up and playing with them ... stuff they'll just think is litter..."¹²

Unlike Apparition, which requires skill and practice, Portkeys can transport multiple people at once. Portkeys showcase the resourcefulness of magical travel in the Harry Potter universe. Exiting objects defying reality are exemplified by wands, unique and indispensable tools for wizards and witches, Time-Turner, Resurrection Stone, Invisibility Cloak and Skele-Gro, a potion used to repair or regrow bones after injuries. These magical items enable characters to transcend the ordinary laws of nature. Throughout the series, the enchanting world of magic stretches the boundaries of reality and shows that everything is possible, maintaining a captivating experience for readers.

Another engaging theme is sport, as represented in the books by Quidditch, the foremost sport in the wizarding world. The game is a recurring element throughout the Harry Potter

¹² Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 81.

series, providing both excitement and crucial plot points. Hagrid explained it: “It’s our sport. Wizard sport. It’s like -- like soccer in the Muggle world -- everyone follows Quidditch -- played up in the air on broomsticks, and there’s four balls [...]”¹³ This explanation, though simplified, provides sufficient insight into the game’s structure and its importance to the wizarding community. The game involves two teams of seven players, each member with specific roles: three Chasers, whose objective is to throw a red ball through one of three hoops of the opposite team; two Beaters, with the job to use a heavy black ball to knock opposing players off their broomsticks and disrupt them; one Keeper, who guards the hoops, essentially a goalkeeper; and one Seeker, whose sole mission is to catch the Golden Snitch, a tiny and fast-moving ball with wings. In his first year, Harry becomes the youngest player in a century and quickly earns fame as a Seeker. He later becomes the team’s captain, displaying his natural skill in flying and strategic understanding of the game. Throughout the series, Harry faces various challenges related to Quidditch, including serious injuries, biased referees, and even a temporary ban from playing. He overcomes these obstacles and leads his team to numerous victories, becoming a Gryffindor and Hogwarts legend. Through Harry’s passion for Quidditch, young readers find an authentic connection and inspiration to their own lives.

As explored in the theoretical part, animal characters in Children’s Literature often serve as relatable companions, essential characters, or antagonists, all of which appear in the Harry Potter series. Before emerging into the magical world, one animal from the muggle world is worth mentioning: a Boa Constrictor. Early on in the story, the Boa at the zoo foreshadows Harry’s ability to speak Parseltongue when Potter empathises with its captivity and unintentionally frees it. In his first letter from Hogwarts, the young wizard learns that students can bring a cat, an owl or a toad to school, where the pets can take part in school activities. Therefore, Hagrid gifts Harry a snowy owl, Hedwig, who becomes his loyal companion and connection to the wizarding world, particularly during his summers with the Dursleys. Owls in the series play a unique role in delivering mail. Hedwig is no exception, and she frequently delivers Harry’s letters. Other owls mentioned in the books include Errol, the Weasley family’s old and clumsy owl, and Percy’s screech owl Hermes. Bringing a toad to school enables the student to take part in the Frog Choir, which performs on special occasions. Returning to the influential pets mentioned in the story, Fawkes, the phoenix belonging to Albus Dumbledore, is one of the most iconic domesticated animals. The phoenix saves Harry in *The Chamber of Secrets* by blinding the Basilisk and healing Potter with its tears. Other

¹³ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1997,) 85-86.

memorable pets include Neville Longbottom's toad, Trevor, Hermione's cat, Crookshanks, and Ron's rat, Scabbers – who is later revealed to be Peter Pettigrew, a wizard who can transform into a rat as an Animagus. The young wizards encounter many other fascinating magical creatures throughout their Hogwarts journey, including majestic Unicorns, Hippogriff and Dragons. These animal characters, both magical and ordinary, play crucial roles in the narrative and symbolise loyalty, friendship, and resilience while also providing entertainment and enriching the story's charm.

Going back to the theory, the most significant personal gain that books offer children is enjoyment. Apart from the topics of interest to children, one of the key ways to ensure that a piece of writing is enjoyable for children is by the use of humour. Comedy makes narratives more accessible, helping young readers follow and understand the story with ease. Furthermore, laughter generates positive emotions, which children begin to associate with reading; therefore, they develop a positive attitude towards books. Humorous stories motivate children to continue reading, as an amusing text is more likely to keep them engaged and eager to progress. The use of humour in writing can simplify complex concepts or ideas, making them more approachable for young readers. This can be particularly beneficial when addressing new, challenging topics such as self-identity, acceptance of differences, betrayal, and ethical dilemmas. Incorporating humour into Children's Literature enhances its educational value and the association of positive emotions with reading, making it easier to develop a lifelong love for books, as exemplified by the widespread affection for the Harry Potter septalogy.

In addition to enjoyment, literature has always served a didactic purpose and has held a significant academic value. It provides essential insights and lessons that contribute to personal and intellectual growth. Hunt supports this by saying, "All books must teach something [...]." ¹⁴ This 'something' can extend far beyond explicit lessons. Literature can offer new perspectives, foster a deeper understanding of the world, or simply provide the pleasure of a well-told story. Many scholars recognise Children's Literature for its educational benefits. Yet Lukavská argues that didactic function is not the primary function of Children's Literature, despite the role it plays in their intellectual, moral, and emotional development. ¹⁵ Westin adds that throughout history, there has been a shift away from didacticism, which she views as a shift from the adult control over Children's Literature. ¹⁶ Nevertheless, each book, no matter its topic,

¹⁴ Hunt, Introduction to Children's Literature, 3.

¹⁵ Lukavská, *Dítěti vstříc*, 25. My translation

¹⁶ Lukavská, *Dítěti vstříc*, 25-26. My translation

contains elements that convey moral and social lessons while also playing a pivotal role in enhancing linguistic skills. Each child has heard from their parents that reading makes people smarter and is essential to education. Lynch-Brown et al. confirm this by saying, “Literature for children leads to personal fulfilment and academic gains.”¹⁷ Books can promote improvements in reading, writing, and even art appreciation. As previously mentioned, children are first introduced to literature through their parents reading aloud, a practice that helps them remember words and acquire new vocabulary. Over time, children begin to recognise letters and words, eventually reading simple sentences at school. As Lynch-Brown further point out, “[...] reading ability, like any other skill, improves with practice.”¹⁸ therefore, frequent encounters with written text are essential. By reading, children are exposed to diverse vocabulary, more complex sentence structures and writing styles. Consequently, literature enriches Children’s vocabulary and helps them understand the written and spoken word. Reading not only enhances linguistic skills but also captivates young readers through the clever use of words, making it an essential educational tool for developing a child’s character.

To consider the practical aspect, humour is an integral part of the Harry Potter series, frequently used to lighten the mood and ease the introduction of challenging themes. Comedy is a prevalent feature of the books. One prominent source of humour comes from the Weasley twins, Fred and George, who express their comic and rebellious spirit at school. Before establishing their own joke shop called Weasleys’ Wizard Wheezes, they sold magical products to the students of Hogwarts. Their products are best described by the Weasley twins themselves:

“Range of sweets to make you ill,” George whispered, keeping a wary eye on Mrs Weasley’s back. “Not seriously ill, mind, just ill enough to get you out of a class when you feel like it. Fred and I have been developing them this summer. They’re double-ended, colour-coded chews. If you eat the orange half of the Puking Pastilles, you throw up. Moment you’ve been rushed out of the lesson for the hospital wing, you swallow the purple half — “

“ — which restores you to full fitness, enabling you to pursue the leisure activity of your own choice during an hour that would otherwise have been devoted to unprofitable boredom.”¹⁹

This utterance illustrates the twins’ playful defiance, adding humour while questioning authority. Another instance of Fred and George’s humorous spirit involves using an Aging potion in an attempt to bypass the magical age barrier and submit their names for participation

¹⁷ Lynch-Brown et al., *Essentials of Children’s Literature*, 3.

¹⁸ Lynch-Brown et al., *Essentials of Children’s Literature*, 5.

¹⁹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 119.

in the Triwizard Tournament despite being underage. This attempt, however, ended in a hilarious fiasco for the twins: “[...] they had been thrown by an invisible shot-putter. They landed painfully, ten feet away on the cold stone floor, and to add insult to injury, there was a loud popping noise, and both of them sprouted identical long white beards.”²⁰ Even though Fred and George face consequences for most of their jokes, they keep their spirits up even in the darkest moments. One of the dark times is when George loses an ear during a battle, and he still manages to make a joke about it. Another humorous exemplification appears through Dobby, introduced in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Since Dobby is a house-elf and he is treated as a slave by his masters, he bursts into tears at any polite actions Harry takes, such as a simple offer or a gesture of kindness. Moreover, Dobby is known for his good intentions, which are often misguided and eccentric ways of trying to protect Harry, such as using a Hover Charm that drops a cake on a guest at the Dursleys’ house. Connecting such a complex topic as slavery with humour helps children understand the difficult subject better. Humour in the *Harry Potter* books not only provides moments of levity, as seen with the mischief of the Weasley twins or the quirks of Dobby the house-elf, but also serves to soften the mood during challenging times, which helps children learn to grasp challenging topics and existential insights.

As was mentioned, books convey important lessons, and the *Harry Potter* septalogy is no exception. A key theme is the value of acceptance and overcoming adversity, often explored through the lens of friendship. Harry’s friendships are based on loyalty, kindness, and shared values rather than wealth, blood status, intelligence, or house affiliation. Contrary to his arch nemesis, Draco Malfoy, who is friends only with pure-blood Slytherins. Harry’s friends are of different blood statuses, like Hermione Granger, and financial status as his best friend, Ron Weasley, and some of them are even more unconventional and misunderstood, such as Neville Longbottom, Rubeus Hagrid, or Luna Lovegood. Overall, Potter’s choice of friends reflects his openness and rejection of societal prejudice. Through these friendships, the series underscores the importance of valuing individuals for their character rather than superficial attributes, offering young readers a powerful lesson in inclusivity and acceptance.

In summary, Children’s Literature has maintained its essential purpose of fostering enjoyment with the incorporation of learning. Throughout this chapter, several key aspects of Children’s Literature were explored, including the teaching of moral lessons, the use of animal

²⁰ Rowling, *Goblet of Fire*, 286.

characters and the incorporation of humour. With topics of interest to children, the literature becomes engaging and expands the awareness of complex themes. The Harry Potter series exemplifies these characteristics of Children's Literature, effectively combining school with magic, vibrant characters, and relatable lessons. By integrating these essential elements, the series establishes itself as an essential Children's book, reinforcing its importance within the genre.

2. Fantasy Literature

Fantasy, as a literary genre, is particularly difficult to define due to its fluid boundaries that often overlap with other genres, making it expansive and challenging to categorise. The genre defies simple categorisation as it incorporates a broad spectrum of imaginative elements, often blending features from other genres such as mythology, science fiction, and horror. Mendlesohn points out that there is no single, universally agreed-upon definition of Fantasy Literature.²¹ The lack of agreement reflects the genre's rich diversity and its capacity to encompass a wide range of narrative styles and themes. Different theorists have varying approaches, but they all agree that fantasy typically features the impossible, which sets it apart from other genres. This 'impossible' can manifest in several ways, most commonly through magic, mythical creatures or supernatural phenomena that defy our understanding of the natural world. Drout supports this by adding that fantasy, along with science fiction, is about things that physically cannot happen.²² This statement further confirms the usage of elements that are impossible within our known reality. In the end, it is this embrace of the unreal that allows fantasy to explore alternative realities and challenge conventional perceptions of what is possible. This chapter aims to explore some of the key features that make Fantasy Literature distinct beyond the obvious inclusion of magic and exemplify them in the Harry Potter septalogy. It examines the art of worldbuilding, with a particular focus on the extent to which authors create detailed and immersive fantasy worlds that achieve a sense of realism within their imaginative frameworks. Additionally, this chapter investigates the significance of supernatural animals and creatures, which often serve as embodiments of the fantastical, enriching both the plot and the symbolic structure of the narrative. In summary, this chapter explores the distinctive features of Fantasy Literature, highlighting the impossible and fantastical elements in the Harry Potter series.

While fantastic and unreal elements are central to the genre, many fantasy themes and inventions draw inspiration from our own reality and everyday experiences. Although defining the genre with precision presents a challenge, this ambiguity should not obscure its essence. At its heart, Fantasy Literature is a genre that incorporates fictional elements which deviate from conventional experiences and understanding of the world. It allows readers to explore magic,

²¹ Edward, James, Farah Mendlesohn. *The Cambridge companion to Fantasy Literature* . (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

²² Michael D.C. Drout, *Rings, Swords, and Monsters: Exploring Fantasy Literature* , (Maryland: Recorded Books, 2006), 6.

encounter mythical creatures, and experience the extraordinary. Whether the fantastical elements are woven into a familiar setting or into an entirely new world, fantasy transports readers beyond the boundaries of reality. The lack of a rigid definition might be seen as a limitation, yet it significantly enhances the richness and diversity of the genre. This flexibility fosters innovation and experimentation, granting authors the creative freedom to craft unique narratives. The genre's vast and diverse framework enables writers to explore stories that resonate with their individual creativity and distinctive storytelling styles. Within the realm of fantasy, authors have the liberty to introduce elements such as dragons, princesses, magic, knights, and enchanted objects, among countless other fantastical creations. Similarly to Children's Literature, one of the major themes of fantasy stories is the conflict between good and evil. This shared feature will be discussed in the next chapter. Despite the presence of fantastical elements, fantasy frequently engages with profound social and philosophical themes. Drout argues that in doing so, it serves as a powerful lens through which to examine the complexities of human nature, morality, and the structures of society.²³ This connection between the extraordinary and the ordinary allows readers to explore their own realities, prompting reflection on their values, beliefs, and the world around them. Fantasy Literature has gained immense popularity in recent decades, with numerous bestselling novels, films, and television series captivating audiences worldwide. The enduring appeal of fantasy lies in its ability to merge imaginative elements with deep social and philosophical reflections, offering both escapism and insights into the human experience.

J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series stands as a prime example of Fantasy Literature. Magic is one of the main themes in the series, but it is cleverly combined with our everyday reality. The story is a fitting example of how the fantastical is linked with everyday life, creating a world where magic exists not as a distant concept but as an extension of the ordinary. Since Harry is a newcomer to the magical world, the reader discovers the wonders of magic along with the main protagonist. In Harry's world, magic does not exist in isolation. It parallels and often contrasts the mundane experiences of everyday life. For example, Hogwarts students still go to school, study, and take exams. However, instead of math or history, they are learning herbology, divination and potions. Potter is used to doing things the ordinary way, such as travelling by car, washing dishes by hand and going to the doctor or dentist. He learns the wizard's alternatives to skip the hard work and time with magic and potions. Magical inventions are often clever metaphors for real-life issues or experiences. The wizarding world's

²³ Drout, *Exploring Fantasy Literature* , 6.

magical solutions to everyday problems mirror human desires to make life easier. In the same way, people invent machines and tools to simplify their lives; wizards use spells like *Accio* to summon objects or *Alohomora* to unlock doors. Many themes, objects, and even creatures within fantasy are inspired by the world we know. The concept of potions, for instance, has roots in herbal medicine and alchemy, both practices that have existed throughout history. Another example is the King's Cross station, which exists in London, but for wizards and witches, it represents a gateway between the muggle and the magical worlds. Even the division between Muggles and wizards echoes the social divisions that exist within our reality. Prejudice, discrimination, and social hierarchy are all very genuine issues in our world, but Rowling uses magic as a lens to explore these themes. Hermione faces bias for being Muggle-born, foreshadowing one of the major problems of the wizarding world where elitism and purity of blood mirror struggles for acceptance in everyday life. Rowling's Harry Potter series skilfully blends the fantastical with the familiar, using magic not only to build an enchanting world but also to make the story more relatable, enriching the fantasy by connecting it to the complexities of our own society.

One of the hallmarks of immersive Fantasy Literature is the creation of entire worlds with their own cultures, histories, and, crucially, languages. The setting is usually one of the defining features of a story; it influences the themes, atmosphere and choice of characters. An unknown setting of a story is one of the key features of Fantasy Literature. It is fitting that authors create a completely or partly fictional world for their story; such setting is called 'the secondary world'.²⁴ This secondary world serves as a foundation for the narrative, providing not just a physical space but also a rich tapestry of lore that enhances the reading experience. It is not important how we call this world; what matters is that the setting is different from our own. It must take itself seriously – meaning that it makes sense, remains coherent and consistent—and it must contain some form of metaphysical power. Tolkien adds that successful worldbuilding requires hard work, thought and special skill in order to create an entirely imagined, credible fictional world that operates by its own rules and logic and is distinct from our real world.²⁵ This attention to detail is essential in crafting a believable fantasy realm that captivates readers and invites them to explore its intricacies. The secondary world is not just a background, but it actively shapes the narrative. The challenges and opportunities presented by the setting can drive the plot and influence the characters' decisions. For example,

²⁴ Internet archive, "J. R. R. Tolkien, On Fairy Stories," Published September 10, 2021. https://archive.org/details/on-fairy-stories_202110.

²⁵ "On Fairy Stories"

a character with access to powerful magic might face the temptation to misuse it. Writers invent whole worlds full of fantastical places, creatures and inhabitants. They spent pages and pages describing every detail of the setting, culture, and time period of the story. The authors depict spectacular sceneries, miraculous settlements and magical forests. Through this creation and worldbuilding, writers transport us to the realms of gods, demons, and magic. Le Guin describes the setting as a place with low population density and lots of greenery in which towns are surrounded by wasteland.²⁶ The typical fantasy world is indeed painted in shades of green, with isolated towns rising from a sea of untamed wilderness. Low population density fosters a profound connection with nature for the inhabitants of these settlements. The secondary world is a place where Mankind is not the master nor the centre of existence. Every journey beyond the familiar town walls becomes an expedition, a constant reminder of both the beauty and the inherent challenges posed by this unique environment. Unlike other genres, fantasy is not tied by the laws of physics or the limitations of the known world. Authors have the freedom to unleash their imagination and transcend the boundaries of our own reality or even the laws of physics. Therefore, there exist fantasy worlds with flying islands, multiple moons, or different time flows. Drout claims that this genre often uses incredibly detailed physical descriptions in order to immerse the reader in the secondary world of fantasy.²⁷ By vividly portraying the sights, sounds, and textures of the environment, the author can create a sense of presence for the reader. These descriptions can engage the reader's senses and make the fantastical setting feel more real and believable. Le Guin points out that the fantasy land may stereotypically resemble medieval Europe in terms of how preindustrial it is. However, that does not mean that it is not a structured society with its own unique social order.²⁸ The typical fantasy is not uncivilised. In fact, even within these seemingly familiar medieval settings, fantasy authors often craft intricate social hierarchies, governance systems, and cultural practices. The lack of technology does not equate to a lack of sophistication. Moreover, the secondary world may even possess advancements beyond our own without using technology. For instance, many fantasy narratives feature complex systems of magic that serve as a form of advanced knowledge, allowing characters to manipulate their environment in ways that defy the laws of physics. Authors invent their own rules for their worlds, where primitive societies might possess hidden advancements in areas like alchemy, potion-making, or even telekinesis, keeping their civilisations thriving without the need for the technology we recognise. Le Guin further adds

²⁶ Ursula K. Le Guin, *Proč číst fantasy*, (Praha: Gnóm!, 2020), 64, My translation.

²⁷ Drout, *Rings, Swords, and Monsters*, 6.

²⁸ Le Guin, *Proč číst fantasy*, 27, My translation.

that in the fantasy world, humanity is typically not the master nor the centre of everything and may not even be important.²⁹ In fact, the nature and fauna of these worlds play a crucial role in shaping the narrative and the cultures that inhabit them. Nature is a source of wisdom or a guiding force, portraying as an entity to be respected rather than dominated. This perspective highlights the theme of harmony with the natural world, emphasising the need for coexistence rather than conquest. These narratives encourage readers to explore themes of coexistence and respect for nature, prompting a reflection on humanity's role within the larger ecosystem of life and the profound connections that bind all living things.

As was mentioned, one of the defining features of immersive Fantasy Literature is the creation of entire worlds with their own cultures, histories, and, crucially, languages. By inventing languages, authors deepen the richness of their fictional universes, providing readers with a sense of authenticity and uniqueness that distinguishes their worlds from reality. Some of the most iconic fantasy worlds – from J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth to George R. R. Martin's Westeros – feature meticulously crafted languages that add depth to their respective universes. In *The Lord of the Rings* series, Tolkien constructed fully realised languages such as Quenya and Sindarin for the Elves, each with its own grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. These languages not only enhance the world-building but also reflect the culture and history of their speakers, adding layers of meaning to the narrative. In this way, the invention of languages in immersive Fantasy Literature serves as a powerful tool for world-building, deepening the reader's connection to the plot.

In the marvellous setting, live creatures that correspond to their environment, some familiar, others shrouded in mystery and myth. Flora and fauna in Fantasy Literature often play a significant role in shaping the world and narrative, contributing to the genre's atmosphere, symbolism, and thematic depth. The depiction of nature can range from lush, enchanted forests to cursed landscapes, each contributing to the mood and tone of the narrative while also serving as a reflection of the world's underlying magic and lore. Magical forests are typically home to fairies blending in with flowers, talking animals, gnomes guarding hidden paths or mythical unicorns. The desert environment can contain sandworms that burrow beneath the dunes and various lizards with scales that reflect the harsh sunlight. In the depths of aquatic spaces thrive creatures like mermaids with shimmering tails, giant boat-eating octopuses, and naiads that weave through the currents. Some creatures are friendly and help the hero on his quest, while

²⁹ Le Guin, *Proč čist fantasy*, 68, My translation.

others are dangerous and play the part of a villain, a topic to be further discussed in the next chapter. Animals in fantasy can range from realistic to mythical, from loyal companions to terrifying foes. Dragons, however, dominate the realm of fantasy. These magnificent beasts, often depicted as colossal, winged lizards with razor-sharp claws and fiery breath, transcend mere correspondence to their environment. They embody a powerful blend of nature's raw power and mythical awe. The presence of mythical creatures and magical beasts is one of the defining features of Fantasy Literature. The fantasy world's setting, with its richly imagined landscapes and diverse creatures, plays a vital role in shaping both the atmosphere and the narrative, offering readers an immersive experience where nature and magic intertwine to create a sense of wonder and adventure.

J. K. Rowling's wizarding world is a precisely crafted secondary reality that co-exists seamlessly alongside the reality of Muggles. While the magical realm is hidden from non-magical people, it operates with its own distinct rules, customs, and history. It is a place where magic is commonplace yet still holds an air of mystery and wonder since young Harry discovers the world's wonders along with the reader. The setting combines elements of the modern world with an atmosphere evocating an earlier, more enchanted time. Although the story takes place in the twentieth century, the wizarding community's resistance to muggle inventions creates a sense of timelessness, making the magical world feel both ancient and mysterious. Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry plays a significant role in the worldbuilding of the series. The medieval castle stands as a symbol of the old and enduring nature of the wizarding world. The school itself is not just a setting, but an active, magical environment filled with mysteries and secrets. Secret paths, hidden doors and moving staircases that change direction unexpectedly force students to navigate its labyrinthine corridors with a sense of adventure and unpredictability. The enchanted grounds of Hogwarts extend beyond the castle walls, featuring a vast expanse of fields, lakes, and hidden groves that invite exploration. The Black Lake, with its shimmering waters and mysterious depths, adds another layer of intrigue to the setting. The Forbidden Forest is an ominous woodland that creates a boundary between the safety of the castle and the unknown threats that await beyond. Students are forbidden to enter the Forbidden Forest, as its depths are filled with hidden dangers and treacherous paths. Together, these elements create a captivating tapestry that immerses readers in a world where the boundaries between magic and reality blur, inviting them to explore the enchanting landscapes of a magical realm.

In J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, the use of a specific magical language – Parseltongue – serves a powerful narrative and symbolic function. Parseltongue is the language of serpents. It tends to sound like hissing, and only a select few wizards and witches have the rare ability to communicate with snakes using this language. As the official Harry Potter fan web page points out, the ability to speak this language is very uncommon and is exclusively hereditary.³⁰ One of the most notable aspects of this language is its association with Salazar Slytherin, one of the four founders of Hogwarts, and his notorious descendant, Lord Voldemort. Therefore, it is associated with dark magic. This connection to the Dark Arts typically instilled fear and distrust in Parselmouths, those who possessed such abilities. In the story, Harry is discovered to be a Parselmouth, a trait he inherited from the fragment of Voldemort's soul that latched onto him as a baby. Unknowingly, Potter uses this language to talk to a Boa Constrictor in a zoo, and in doing so, he forms an unexpected connection with the serpent, empathising with its desire for freedom. This moment highlights how Parseltongue, despite its dark associations, can also be used innocently. It also foreshadows Harry's connection to Voldemort, as well as his struggle with the moral ambiguity of powers linked to dark forces. Just as Parseltongue allows communication with serpents, it also serves as a lens through which the complexities of heritage and fear are explored throughout the series. The use of Parseltongue not only deepens our connection to the narrative but also allows us to empathise with the characters as we navigate the enchanting yet relatable struggles of the magical world.

As mentioned previously, in any fantasy world, one can expect to encounter a variety of wondrous creatures, and Harry Potter's world is no exception. These beings are inspired by a combination of mythology, folklore from various cultures, medieval bestiaries, real animal characteristics and the author's own imagination. Classical mythical creatures that make an appearance include centaurs, one was a teacher at Hogwarts for a while. These wise and proud creatures, half-man and half-horse, are familiar from mythology. In Harry Potter, they dwell in the Forbidden Forest, offering cryptic advice since they are known to be skilled in divination and astronomy. This expertise is one of the reasons why Dumbledore hired a centaur called Firenze to teach Divination. One of his lessons is recorded in the book *The Order of Phoenix*:

It was the most unusual lesson Harry had ever attended. They did indeed burn sage and mallow sweet there on the classroom floor, and Firenze told them to look for certain shapes and symbols in the pungent fumes, but he seemed

³⁰ "Parseltongue," Harry Potter Wiki, last modified October 10, 2024, <https://harrypotter.fandom.com/wiki/Parseltongue>.

perfectly unconcerned that not one of them could see any of the signs he described, telling them that humans were hardly ever good at this, that it took centaurs years and years to become competent, and finished by telling them that it was foolish to put too much faith in such things, anyway, because even centaurs sometimes read them wrongly. He was nothing like any human teacher Harry had ever had. His priority did not seem to be to teach them what he knew, but rather to impress upon them that nothing, not even centaurs' knowledge, was foolproof.³¹

This passage emphasises centaurs' wisdom and insight while contrasting their perspectives on divination with those of humans. Firenze suggests that humans are inherently less skilled in this area due to their shorter lifespans and different connections to nature. This highlights the Centaurs' deep understanding of the natural world and their ability to interpret its signs as well as well as their sense of superiority over others. Other well-known mythical creatures mentioned in the books include unicorns, werewolves and, of course, dragons. In the Harry Potter universe, there is only one way to become a werewolf: being bitten by a werewolf during its full moon transformation. Once bitten, the condition, also known as lycanthropy, is permanent. There is no known cure, although potions like Wolfsbane can manage some of the worst effects of the condition. A werewolf, when transformed, is a fearsome beast with all traces of human awareness gone, and he can attack anyone. At any other time, a werewolf is a completely normal human. However, as stated on one of the official fanbase websites, the term werewolf is used for both the wolf-like creature and the normal human.³² The Ministry regulates werewolves, making it almost impossible for them to get a job. A famous example of this is Remus Lupin, a character who was bitten as a child by Fenrir Greyback, a vicious werewolf. Bill Weasley was a victim of Greyback as well. Fortunately, the attacker was not transformed into a wolf, so Bill was only left with scars and no lycanthropy curse. Another legendary creature, dragons, play a significant role in fantasy literature, so it's no surprise they do the same in Harry Potter as well. These enormous fire-blowing creatures are rightfully seen as vicious since they are extremely hard to control. We first hear about dragons from Ron – his older brother Charlie trains them in Romania. Their major appearance comes in the fourth book, where they are a key part of one of the Triwizard Tournament tasks. Here, we truly witness their danger as Harry faces off against a particularly ferocious one – a Hungarian Horntail, to be precise. Finally, a dragon, though unintentionally, aids Harry and his friends in their escape from the Gringotts Bank. The presence of such diverse and mythological creatures not only

³¹ Rowling, *Order of the Phoenix*, 27.

³² Werewolves,” Hybrid magical creatures, Harry Potter Lexicon, last modified January 1, 2021, <https://www.hp-lexicon.org/creature/sentient/werewolf/>.

enriches the magical world of Harry Potter but also serves to reflect the deeper themes of power, control, and the complex relationships between magical beings and wizards.

In the series, J. K. Rowling introduces a vast number of original wizarding world beasts and creatures which she invented or reimagined by blending elements of existing myths, folklore, and her own creativity. These creatures play a crucial role in bringing the magical world to life, adding depth and excitement to the narrative. A notable example is the Boggart, a creature that everyone knows from childhood; everyone had or still has their own bogart but in different forms. Rowling uses this to create a shape-shifting entity whose proper form is unknown, as Boggart takes on a different shape for each person, reflecting their deepest fears and making it a creature everyone can relate to on a personal level. Other creatures created for the magical world are Thestrals - huge, gaunt, winged horses only visible to people who have witnessed death. For this reason, combined with their skeletal black bodies without flesh, people used to think they were bad omens. However, that is simply a superstition; Thestrals are friendly, gentle creatures with a fantastic sense of direction. Their misunderstood appearance serves as a significant example of how inaccurate assumptions can be made based on looks alone. A notable example can be Acromantulas, gigantic spiders with a taste for human flesh, and a toxic venom that is highly valuable. Aragog is the primary Acromantula we encounter, and most of what we learn about the species comes through him and his interactions with Harry, Ron, and Hagrid. Aragog is capable of human speech, and he was brought up by Hagrid. When Harry and Ron first meet this Acromantula, he is described as “[...] a spider the size of a small elephant emerged, very slowly. There was grey in the black of his body and legs, and each of the eyes on his ugly, pincered head was milky white.”³³ This vivid description paints a terrifying picture of Aragog, emphasising his size and intimidating presence. Despite his fearsome appearance, Aragog demonstrates a complex personality; he is loyal to Hagrid and exhibits a protective nature towards his own enormous spider family. The colony in the Forbidden Forest is the only significant group of Acromantulas mentioned, and they are portrayed as his descendants. This reflects a recurring theme in the series: the idea that creatures often labelled as monsters can possess a level of intelligence and morality. Lastly, it is fitting to introduce a creature that plays a crucial role in the second book – Basilisk, an enormous serpent with sharp venomous fangs. An explanation of this wizard-bred magical creature appears in the excerpt, which Harry finds in Hermione’s hand after she has been Petrified.

³³ Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*, 292.

Of the many fearsome beasts and monsters that roam our land, there is none more curious or more deadly than the Basilisk, known also as the King of Serpents. This snake, which may reach gigantic size and live many hundreds of years, is born from a chicken's egg, hatched beneath a toad. Its methods of killing are most wondrous, for aside from its deadly and venomous fangs, the Basilisk has a murderous stare, and all who are fixed with the beam of its eye shall suffer instant death. Spiders flee before the Basilisk, for it is their mortal enemy, and the Basilisk flees only from the crowing of the rooster, which is fatal to it.³⁴

As was mentioned in the quotation, Basilisk kills people by looking at them, which makes him one of the most feral monsters and beasts in the magical world. However, because the Basilisk was still a serpent, a Parselmouth could communicate with it and potentially exert influence over the creature. One can get petrified by Basilisk by looking at him via an artificial object with a reflective surface. This happened to various students at Hogwarts in the book *Harry Potter and The Chamber Of Secrets*: Colin Creevey saw the serpent through his camera, Justin Finch-Fletchley through the ghost of Nearly Headless Nick and both Hermione and Penelope Clearwater through a mirror. The condition of petrification can be reversed using the Mandrake Restorative Draught, a potion made from matured Mandrakes with powerful healing properties. Once administered, the potion revives the affected individuals, restoring them to their full health. However, as was suggested, not all magical creatures are dangerous. Rowling's creatures are more than just fantastical elements; they often serve as metaphors for deeper themes within the story, whether it is the embodiment of depression in Dementors or the symbol of understanding death in Thestrals, as she uses them to add layers of meaning to her narrative.

In conclusion, Fantasy Literature thrives on the intricate weaving of languages, rich landscapes, and a diverse spectrum of creatures that breathe life into its worlds. Rowling creates a secondary reality that coexists with the Muggle world yet operates with its own rules. The magical creatures in the Harry Potter story mirror the complexities of the wizarding world. Each creature is not simply a part of the setting but also holds symbolic significance, helping to bring life to a world where magic and nature meet to create a sense of wonder, mystery and adventure. Collectively, these elements invite readers to engage with the narratives on a deeper level. As readers journey through these imaginative worlds, they discover that the boundaries between reality and fantasy blur, offering a profound experience that deepens their understanding of the nature of good and evil.

³⁴ Rowling, *Chamber of Secrets*, 306.

3. The Theme of Evil and How It Is Depicted in Fantasy and Children’s Literature

Despite the fact that most of us have a clear understanding of it, defining evil proves to be a rather complex task. In the broadest sense, the concept of evil covers all that is harmful, inappropriate, immoral, and everything that inflicts pain and suffering. As Baggett and Klein point out, evil is traditionally understood as a privation, a lack of something that ought to be present – specifically, a deficiency in goodness.³⁵ In this sense, evil is not an independent or inherent quality but rather the absence of what is good, a deviation from a conventional moral standard. Evil often presents itself in various forms and can be perceived differently by individuals. When the word “evil” is used, it usually carries a vague or imprecise meaning. Even when its usage seems clear, the word frequently functions in a narrow sense, serving as an intensifier. While it can be seen as the absence of good, its meaning varies across cultures and philosophies, making it difficult to define universally. In Fantasy and Children’s literature, the battle between good and evil often plays a significant role in the story, with the contrast between the two sharply defined. Villains are frequently depicted as embodiments of evil, while heroes represent goodness, creating a clear moral dichotomy. Representation of evil in Children’s and Fantasy Literature can be categorised into different forms, including natural, moral, and supernatural types. Natural evil encompasses events that occur without human intervention, while moral evil arises from human actions and choices. Supernatural evil, on the other hand, embodies forces or entities that transcend the physical world. Recognising such distinctions emphasises the complicated nature of evil and highlights the complexity involved in understanding its role in both the reading experience and narrative structure. This chapter explores the distinct types of evil depicted in Fantasy and Children’s literature, serving as a foundation for a deeper examination of evil in the Harry Potter series. The story is filled with depictions of evil, with the central theme being the battle between dark forces and the triumph of good. Throughout the books, the various forms of evil are, for instance, embodied by Dolores Umbridge or by the Ministry of Magic, which discredits Harry and Dumbledore, turning the wizarding community against them rather than acknowledging Voldemort’s return. Additional threats like the Basilisk and cursed objects such as the Diary of Tom Riddle further illustrate

³⁵ David Baggett, Shawn E. Klein, *Harry Potter and Philosophy: If Aristotle Ran Hogwarts* (Chicago: Open Court, 2004), 10, <https://www.pdfdrive.com/harry-potter-and-philosophy-if-aristotle-ran-hogwarts-popular-culture-and-philosophy-e191308797.html>.

the pervasive nature of evil in the magical world. This chapter, however, focuses specifically on the primary manifestations of evil within the Harry Potter series. Analysing these representations provides a clearer understanding of how evil is constructed and perceived within this enchanting story.

Scholars generally agree that something can be labelled as “evil” if it inflicts any harm, whether it is minor or severe, to the physical or mental well-being of a creature. This encompasses unjust treatment, such as the denial of fundamental rights – voting rights or employment opportunities, for example – as well as actions that ensure the success of the wicked at the expense of the virtuous. When it comes to categorising the types of evil, academic perspectives diverge. Trakakis, for instance, notes that dividing evil into moral and natural has become a standard distinction in literature.³⁶ Upon further analysis, this distinction becomes clearer: moral evil emphasises the misuse of free will by an individual, making them morally accountable for the resulting wrongdoing. It refers to actions or behaviours that are intentionally harmful or immoral, stemming from the choices made by individuals. Moral evil thus highlights the responsibility individuals bear for their actions, as these choices are made with the knowledge of their potential to cause harm. Such actions, whether driven by malice or greed, result in harm to others and are typically judged as morally unacceptable because they could have been avoided or prevented through better choices. The concept of moral evil thus underscores the significance of human agency in the creation of suffering and injustice. Examples of moral evil include actions such as deceit, betrayal, violence, and theft, in which the person committing them is fully conscious of the ethical consequences of their behaviour. This type of evil not only involves direct harm to others but also reflects a deeper violation of trust, social norms, and ethical principles. The individual making such choices actively disregards the well-being of others, often prioritising selfish desires or malicious intent over moral responsibility. Contrastingly, natural evil arises from events beyond human control, such as natural processes or events. It causes suffering and harm, but it does not result from human actions or choices. Therefore, no human can be held accountable for the result. This type of evil includes natural phenomena like floods, earthquakes, and other disasters or even diseases and disabilities. These events often lead to significant destruction, loss, and pain, yet there is no conscious agent to hold accountable. However, the concept of natural evil raises challenging questions about nature's suffering because of the negligence and acts of humans. For example,

³⁶ “The Evidential Problem of Evil,” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed November 27, 2024, <https://iep.utm.edu/evil-evi/>.

some natural disasters may have been brought by deforestation, pollution or excessive mining. Certain diseases can be caused by heavy smoking or unhealthy lifestyle. As it is the misuse of free will that has caused these evils, a flood resulting from human pollution of the environment would still be categorised as natural evil, provided that the individuals involved could not be held morally responsible – such as if they could not reasonably foresee the consequences of their actions. This overlap of human action and natural evil complicates the boundary between the two, blurring where responsibility begins and where nature follows its own way. Trakakis further adds the category of horrendous evil and defines it as actions or experiences so extreme that they cast doubt on whether the participant's life could still be considered a great good overall.³⁷ These acts are so severe in their cruelty or suffering that they undermine the overall value of goodness of a person's life. The idea is that certain evils are so extreme – such as severe torture, genocide, or profound personal trauma – that enduring or participating in them may make it difficult for someone to view their life as worthwhile or meaningful, even if there are positive aspects in other areas. These evils go beyond ordinary suffering and strike at the core of a person's ability to find overall goodness or fulfilment in life. Horrendous evil encompasses both the perpetrator and the victim. For the victim, it can result in profound trauma, suffering, and a lasting sense of injustice or loss, which can fundamentally alter their perception of life and its value. After committing such acts, the perpetrator may struggle with the impact of their action and the potential loss of their moral standing. In this way, horrendous evil not only reflects the severity of the act itself but also the complex psychological effects it has on both the victim and the perpetrator. Overall, examining moral, natural, and horrendous evil in literature reveals the interplay between human agency, the forces of nature, and the profound impact of extreme suffering on both individuals and society.

To look at the practical side, evil in the Harry Potter series plays a significant role, shaping both the story's moral landscape and the characters' journeys. While moral evil is epitomised by figures like Voldemort and his followers, driven by a conscious desire for power and domination, natural evil is also present in more subtle ways. This type of evil is represented by events such as the deaths caused by the basilisk in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* or the ominous, uncontrollable effects of the dementors, who inflict psychological torment on those they encounter. These instances of natural evil highlight the dangers of the magical world. The main antagonist and, therefore, the biggest representation of evil in the Harry Potter septalogy is undoubtedly Lord Voldemort. Born Tom Marvolo Riddle, Voldemort rose to

³⁷ "The Evidential Problem"

become one of the most powerful dark wizards, obsessed with immortality and absolute power. Since the first book, Riddle is the one character that is unquestionably evil. This character is, in many ways, more frightening than Acromantulas or Dementors because he is human. Unlike any supernatural beings, Voldemort had a choice, but he willingly chose the side of evil. Which makes him a clear example of moral evil. His deliberate misuse of free will and his conscious choices lead to harm, destruction, and suffering. His actions, such as murder, manipulation, and the overall pursuit of immortality at any cost, stem from conscious choices rooted in malice and desire for power. Even his name gives an evil hint. As stated on one of the official Harry Potter fan pages, Rowling came up with the name Voldemort and explained that it is derived from French, and it roughly translated to “flight from death” or “theft of death”.³⁸ This name fits Voldemort's obsession with conquering death and achieving immortality, a central theme in the Harry Potter series. Additionally, Rowling chose the name carefully to convey the dark, ominous nature of the character. His fear of mortality and desire to defy it is what drives a big part of his villainy. She also created the name by anagramming Voldemort's birth name, “Tom Marvolo Riddle,” into the phrase “I am Lord Voldemort” as a way for the character to reinvent himself into a feared persona and distance himself from his muggle father. Furthermore, he seeks to conquer death by creating Horcruxes, which involve committing murder and tearing apart his soul. This ruthless pursuit of personal gain, with no moral consideration for the lives he destroys, highlights how Voldemort embodies moral evil by choosing to value his own desires above the dignity and rights of others. Marthe Dahlin notes that, due to several factors, it may not be accurate to label Voldemort as morally evil from birth.³⁹ Instead, his nature was influenced by external conditions, which will be explored further. However, this does not excuse any of Riddle's actions. In the sixth book of the series, Harry, along with the reader, learns about Riddle's past, the path towards evil and the motives of his actions. Voldemort's evil can be traced back to his family: his mother, Merope Gaunt, came from a very ancient pureblood wizarding family, known for their hatred against non-magical people. It is revealed that the Gaunts possessed the Peverell ring, indicating their lineage can be traced back to the second Peverell brother, known from the Tale of the three brothers.⁴⁰ Riddle's ancestry can also be traced to Salazar Slytherin since they both speak Parseltongue, a hereditary ability, and Voldemort's family was in possession of the locket of Salazar Slytherin. Another piece of

³⁸ “Lord Voldemort – Harry Potter lexicon,” Harry Potter Lexicon, last modified May 16, 2021, <https://www.hp-lexicon.org/character/lord-voldemort/>.

³⁹ Marthe Dhalin, “‘All Was Well’: The Problematic Representations of Evil in the Harry Potter Series” (MA thesis, University in Oslo, 2014), 21.

⁴⁰ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007) 330-332.

evidence that Tom's evil was shaped by both his inherent nature and his early surroundings is the loveless nature of his conception. His father, a handsome muggle named Tom Riddle, was oblivious to Merope's affection for him. It is believed that Merope slipped Tom Riddle some love potion and that this is how they came together. However, when she stopped giving him the potion, Riddle left her, while she was pregnant with Voldemort, who hence never knew love. By the time Voldemort was born, his mother was left alone, overcome by grief, and resigned to her fate. After she passed away, Voldemort, rejected by the rest of his family, was given to an orphanage, where he was visited by Albus Dumbledore. During this visit, young Riddle confessed he was not like the other children: "I can make bad things happen to people who annoy me. I can make them hurt if I want to."⁴¹ This quotation illustrates that even when he was oblivious of his magical powers, Voldemort had cruel intentions. Furthermore, it shows that Voldemort committed acts of moral evil even at a young age. Later, he attended the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Tom Riddle was an intelligent student with significant potential at Hogwarts, but he turned to the dark side in his pursuit of power and immortality. The more malevolent acts Voldemort commits, the less he resembles a human being. His psychological degradation is reflected in his appearance, as Voldemort's face takes on serpentine features. Throughout his studies, he gathered followers who admired him, later becoming known as the Death Eaters. His loyal followers typically referred to him as the "Dark Lord". This title was used out of both reverence and fear, reflecting Voldemort's position of absolute authority within their ranks. Most wizards, who feared even saying the name, referred to him as "You-Know-Who" or "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named". Voldemort himself reinforced fear around using his name by using dark magic, like the "Taboo" curse, which could track anyone who dared to say his name directly. After his attempted murder of Harry, Voldemort survived without a physical body; his Horcruxes kept him alive, and he existed in a weakened spectral form. During this time, he depended on others to sustain his existence. He eventually began to parasitize Professor Quirrell, and during so, he killed a unicorn to sustain his life. Unicorn blood has powerful, life-preserving properties, and drinking it can keep someone alive even when they are close to death. However, it is considered a deeply immoral act to kill such a pure and innocent creature, as explained in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*:

"That is because it is a monstrous thing, to slay a unicorn," said Firenze. "Only one who has nothing to lose, and everything to gain, would commit such a crime. The blood of a unicorn will keep you alive, even if you are an inch from death, but at

⁴¹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2006) 254.

a terrible price. You have slain something pure and defenceless to save yourself, and you will have but a half-life, a cursed life, from the moment the blood touches your lips.”⁴²

This excerpt highlights the gravity of killing such an innocent creature. This act can only be committed by someone willing to abandon all moral considerations for self-preservation. In his desperation to survive, Voldemort does not hesitate to commit such a terrible act, which exemplifies his deep moral corruption. Comparably, the Dark Lord decides to kill infant Harry in his quest for an invincible power. The actions of Lord Voldemort and his followers, the Death Eaters, are marked by acts of horrific violence, including murder and torture, embodying the essence of horrendous evil. The brutal murders of James and Lily Potter leave Harry as an orphan, profoundly affecting his life and sense of identity. This act of murder represents a violation of the most fundamental human rights and creates lasting trauma for Harry, serving as a prime example of horrendous evil. The Death Eaters' attack on Neville Longbottom's parents, Frank and Alice, stands as another brutal example of their cruelty. Led by Bellatrix Lestrange, they tortured the Aurors with the Cruciatius Curse to extract information about Voldemort's whereabouts. The relentless torture left Frank and Alice permanently incapacitated, confined to St. Mungo's Hospital. Another instance occurs during the events of the Triwizard Tournament's final task. Voldemort's return is marked by the ritual in which he resurrects himself using Harry's blood, which leads to the murder of Cedric Diggory. Cedric's death, witnessed by Harry, represents not only the loss of an innocent life but also the emotional turbulence that accompanies such violence. The brutality of Voldemort's actions and the sheer disregard for human life resemble the genuine concept of horrendous evil. Like any villain, Voldemort is deeply convinced of his invincibility. However, he fails to recognise that what he perceives as weaknesses – love and moral values – are, in fact, the most significant strengths and weapons his enemies possess against him. Voldemort's first failure occurs precisely because he underestimates the power of a sacrifice made of love. Simultaneously, he is confident that his Horcruxes remain a secret, leading him to regard himself as the greatest wizard of all time. Examining Voldemort's life and actions reveals how his relentless pursuit of power exemplifies the profound implications of moral evil, shaping both individual destinies and the broader wizarding world.

Coming back to the theory, evil, as such a vast topic, cannot be divided into only two variations, especially regarding how it is represented in Children's and Fantasy Literature.

⁴² Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 277-278.

These genres often allow for a range of interpretations, each adding subtle nuances to its understanding. Here, evil can take many shapes and suggest multiple meanings, reinforcing the idea that it cannot be easily pinned down or simplified. Treloar indicates that in such literature, evil can be seen as personification, deprivation, or corruption of perfection.⁴³ Evil often takes shape as a personification, a tangible figure or entity embodying abstract darkness, malice, or antagonism. This allows readers to confront evil as something visible and knowable, making it easier to understand and analyse. In Children's and Fantasy Literature, evil personified can manifest as a villain, a mythical creature, or even an enchanted object, each serving to engage the audience's imagination. By giving evil a face or form, these stories make them memorable and approachable, transforming an abstract concept into something that characters and readers can directly engage with or oppose. When evil is understood as a deprivation or corruption of an original state of perfection, it signifies a distortion of what was inherently good. Rather than existing as a separate, independent force, evil often arises from the twisting or decay of something pure, creating a sense of loss or imbalance. This idea suggests that evil is not an entity in itself but rather a disruption of goodness, reflecting the complexities of moral dilemmas in human life. Treloar further adds a quote from *The Lord of the Rings* to support the idea: "[...] nothing is evil in the beginning. Even Sauron was not so."⁴⁴ This quote underscores the notion that evil originates from a departure from purity, highlighting that even the most notorious villains can trace their beginnings to a state of innocence or goodness. In literature, this approach frames evil as a falling away from an ideal, emphasising the tragedy of what has been spoiled or lost. Such a perspective invites readers to consider the complexities behind a character's descent into evil, suggesting that circumstances, choices, and internal struggles contribute to their transformation. This understanding prompts a deeper reflection on how societal and familial influences can shape one's moral compass, revealing the intricate web of factors that lead to a character's downfall. By acknowledging that evil can emerge from a corrupted ideal, the narrative encourages a deeper exploration of morality and the human condition. It challenges the simplistic view of good versus evil, revealing a spectrum where characters can shift between light and darkness. This dynamic interplay emphasises that morality is not black and white but rather a gradient influenced by numerous experiences and choices. Ultimately, such understanding fosters empathy for those who stray from the path of goodness, as it illustrates that anyone can become entrapped by their

⁴³ John L. Treloar, "Tolkien and Christian Concepts of Evil: Apocalypse and Privation," *Mythlore* 15, no. 2, (Winter 1988): 57-60.

⁴⁴ Treloar, "Tolkien," 57-60.

own flaws or external influences. It reinforces the idea that redemption is possible and that every individual carries the potential for both light and dark within them, shaping their journey through life. This exploration of evil reveals its complexity as a concept shaped by human flaws, choices, and loss. It is tied to metaphysical ideas of morality and the eternal struggle between order and chaos.

In discussing the representation of evil in Children's and Fantasy Literature, the role of supernatural elements cannot be omitted. Supernatural forces often serve as powerful symbols of metaphysical evil, representing dangers that exist beyond the realm of human morality or comprehension. Such representations allow literature to explore questions of good and evil on a cosmic scale. Treolar highlights the metaphysical conception of evil as a subject frequently discussed in philosophy and theology.⁴⁵ Metaphysical evil questions why suffering exists in a world created by an all-powerful, benevolent deity. It deals with the imperfections or suffering in the world simply because it is finite and imperfect. Those are evils that exist beyond human nature. Such evil includes elements not caused by human choices but by cosmic or supernatural forces that disrupt the natural order and oppose life and goodness. This kind of evil often defies logical understanding, making it terrifying not only for the harm it causes but for its unpredictability and incomprehensibility. In literature, metaphysical evil is embodied by curses, malicious spirits and creatures, or even cosmic entities of chaos, representing forces of pure destruction, moral corruption, or despair. These beings serve as abstract embodiments of an otherworldly evil larger than life and operate beyond the limitations of human morality. In Fantasy Literature especially, these forces are often depicted through characters or symbols that are ancient, powerful, and timeless. For instance, figures like Sauron in *The Lord of the Rings* or It from Stephen King's *It*. These examples represent a darkness that has existed since the beginning of time as an ancient, inhuman force of chaos and terror that lies entirely beyond the typical human understanding of evil. However, Dahlin emphasises the importance of not mythologising or over-romanticizing evil, especially concerning human actions. She argues that attributing mythical qualities to evil risks detaching it from the human realm, thereby losing sight of its actual, often mundane origins.⁴⁶ It is essential to distinguish between an evil force that exists on its own and a supernatural occurrence created or influenced by humans. Evils with a metaphysical nature can indeed be summoned by human actions, thus crossing into the realm of moral evil. For instance, curses, forbidden rituals, or dark magic wielded by

⁴⁵ Treolar, "Tolkien," 57-60.

⁴⁶ Dahlin, "All Was Well", 18.

individuals. Such examples can give rise to supernatural entities or forces that bring devastation but result from human intent. In these cases, though terrifying and otherworldly, the supernatural evil stems directly from moral choices. This intertwining of metaphysical and moral evil demonstrates how individuals can bring forth destructive forces that appear supernatural but remain rooted in human agency and consequence. By attributing these supernatural evils to human actions, literature reminds us that even the most terrifying manifestations of evil may have ordinary origins, emphasising people's responsibility for the suffering they unleash.

Throughout the Harry Potter series, Draco Malfoy serves as one of the most persistent antagonists, embodying a more personal form of evil than Voldemort's villainy. Nevertheless, he still commits atrocious acts as his character gradually develops from a mere school bully to a more complex representation of evil influenced by his upbringing, social environment and personal choices. The young Malfoy can be seen as a perfect example of evil as a corruption of perfection. Though Draco was born an innocent child, free from the biases and prejudices that would later shape him, he gradually succumbs to the influences of his family's ideals, his pure-blood status, and the societal pressures surrounding him. His transformation from an ordinary, impressionable young boy into a school bully – and, eventually, a Death Eater – reflects a form of evil rooted not in inherent malice but in a corruption of his original purity. Draco's descent exemplifies the idea of evil as a deprivation of goodness, an erosion of the innate innocence with which he began. Each step he takes towards darkness, whether taunting his peers or succumbing to the weight of Voldemort's demands, reveals an increasing disconnection from his initial potential, showing a character trapped within a cycle of moral decay shaped by his environment and choices. Harry first encounters Draco Malfoy in Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions, a shop in Diagon Alley, where Hogwarts students get fitted for their school robes. The young Malfoy boy reminded him of Dudley, Harry's cousin, who has been bullying Potter his whole life. Linking Malfoy to Dudley emphasises that he is meant to be an unlikable character. Draco spends the entire time boasting and insulting Hagrid, the Keeper of the Keys at Hogwarts. Furthermore, he is projecting his pureblood beliefs by stating:

I really don't think they should let the other sort in, do you? They're just not the same, they've never been brought up to know our ways. Some of them have never even heard of Hogwarts until they get the letter, imagine. I think they should keep it in the old wizarding families.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 84.

The quote reveals Draco's prejudiced mindset and sense of superiority, shaped by his pureblood background. His disdain for non-pureblood wizards and his dismissive attitude toward Hagrid signal his alignment with elitist beliefs and reinforce his role as an antagonist. The Malfoy family prides itself on being one of the few remaining pureblood families. This heritage is integral to their identity, placing a high value on "pure" wizarding bloodlines and looking down on those they consider of lesser status, such as Muggle-borns or "half-bloods". This elitist view instilled from an early age shapes Draco's beliefs and actions, as he echoes the Malfoy family's sense of superiority. This attitude marks him as a contrast to Harry's openness and fairness. It foreshadows their ongoing conflict, rooted in deeper themes of privilege and prejudice in the wizarding world. One of the first things Malfoy says to Potter is that he already knows which house he will be sorted into when they arrive at Hogwarts. Draco was so sure he would become a Slytherin because so did everyone else in his family and friend circle. Belonging to this house significantly shapes the identity of a member of the Malfoy pureblood family. As was already mentioned, Draco exhibits signs of embracing his family's elitist and prejudiced views. As the son of Lucius Malfoy, a known Death Eater and supporter of Voldemort, Draco quickly adopts his father's attitudes, especially towards blood purity. His use of derogatory terms like "blood-traitors" and "mudbloods" reveals his early alignment with the dark ideologies that promote the superiority of pure-blood wizards over Muggle-borns and those who associate with them. He shares this trait with Salazar Slytherin, a pure-blood wizard regarded for his abilities as a Parselmouth, one of the four founders of Hogwarts and the namesake of Slytherin House. He mistrusted Muggle-born students to the point of proposing that they should not be accepted at Hogwarts. He also constructed the Chamber of Secrets to house a Basilisk so that one day, the Heir of Slytherin could purge the school of Muggle-borns in his name. Throughout the story, this house is regarded as evil not only for its connection to Salazar. It all begins when Harry is taught about the four houses at Hogwarts; Hagrid states: "There's not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn't in Slytherin. You-Know-Who was one."⁴⁸ It is true that many known dark wizards came from this house, particularly a considerable number of Death Eaters. Even Severus Snape, the head professor of the house, is marked as evil by Harry for most of the story. However, claiming that all dark wizards originated from Slytherin is incorrect. For instance, Peter Pettigrew was a dark wizard from Gryffindor, and Quirinus Quirrell, who aligned himself with Voldemort, was a former Ravenclaw. This portrayal of Slytherin House as inherently evil fosters a simplistic, black-and-

⁴⁸ Rowling, *Philosopher's Stone*, 86.

white perspective on morality. Moreover, this moral ambiguity raises important questions about the nature of good and evil in the series. Harry himself learns that people are shaped by their choices rather than by the groups they belong to. Although initially, Draco is only a bully, his willingness to humiliate and dehumanise others based on blood status foreshadows his potential to become a more dangerous antagonist. It is not until his fifth year at Hogwarts that Malfoy develops into a more complex character, marked by emotional depth and distinct personal motivations. At the end of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Malfoy's father, Lucius, is arrested and sent to Azkaban, the wizarding prison. The following summer, Voldemort exacts his punishment on Lucius by recruiting the young boy as a Death Eater and assigning him the impossible task of killing Dumbledore. Initially, Draco is almost eager to accept Voldemort's offer. However, as the mission progresses, the sixteen-year-old boy becomes increasingly anxious and desperate, his inner chaos affecting his physical appearance. It is only when Voldemort directly threatens Malfoy's life, and he is nearly broken, that the narrative invites empathy for him. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, when Harry, Ron, and Hermione are captured and brought to Malfoy Manor, Draco is asked to confirm their identities but chooses not to, despite his parents' urging. By doing so, he saves the trio's lives, even though he knows that bringing Potter to Voldemort would completely restore the Malfoy family's status. This act marks a turning point in Draco's character development, demonstrating that he retains a fragment of humanity and moral conscience despite his upbringing and past actions. It suggests that Draco is not entirely lost to the darkness that has long defined his family and social environment. His reluctance to identify Harry reflects his internal struggle and fear, but it also underscores his growing resistance to Voldemort's regime and the values he once openly embraced. By the end of the series, Draco's journey illustrates the possibility of redemption and the complexity of evil as a concept. While he never fully breaks free from the prejudices and fears instilled in him, his choices show a capacity for growth and an acknowledgement of the moral dilemmas he faces. The author's approach to Draco Malfoy thus represents a nuanced portrayal of evil, shaped by personal growth and his choices under pressure.

Some of the most iconic creatures created by Rowling are the Dementors, ghostly beings that feed on human happiness and drain peace and hope from anyone in their presence. These dark entities instil fear through their ability to evoke a powerful, almost paralysing sense of despair. Dementors represent a form of metaphysical evil, embodying a force that transcends human morality and comprehension. In an interview with *The Times* magazine, Rowling revealed that the idea for Dementors came from her individual experiences with depression.

She described depression as the inability to imagine ever feeling cheerful again,⁴⁹ which she embodied in the form of the Dementors and their effects on their victims. This creative decision adds a profound emotional realism to the series, making the monsters more than just a terrifying plot device. The first time Harry encounters a Dementor is in *Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkaban* during the train ride to Hogwarts. It is described as “[...] a cloaked figure that towered to the ceiling.”⁵⁰ and all that Potter saw was “[...] a hand protruding from the cloak, and it was glistening, greyish, slimy-looking, and scabbed, like something dead that had decayed in water.”⁵¹ These descriptions highlight the unsettling, otherworldly nature of the Dementors. The imagery of a towering, cloaked figure immediately establishes the Dementor as an imposing and malevolent presence. The decayed, almost death-like appearance of the hand highlights the creatures' connection to lifelessness, mirroring the emotional and psychological devastation they inflict. One of the few ways to protect oneself from Dementors is by the particularly challenging Patronus Charm. This charm summons a Patronus, a magical manifestation of positive energy and happiness, offering different degrees of protection against the Dementors' effects, depending on the caster's proficiency as a wizard. Later in the story, it is revealed that these creatures can also perform the Dementor's Kiss, which ultimately consumes a person's soul. This act leaves the victim alive but in a state of complete emptiness without the ability to recover. The Dementor's Kiss is considered a fate worse than death, as the victim continues to exist in an incurable vegetative state with no sense of self, no memory, and no emotions. While Dementors evoke the unfathomable dread of metaphysical evil, their existence might reveal a connection to moral evil. It remains uncertain exactly how Dementors came into existence – whether they were created or have always existed. According to one of the official Harry Potter fan web pages, all we know is that they were either discovered or created by the dark wizard Ekrizdis on the island where Azkaban prison was eventually built.⁵² Over time, they became the prison guards at the Ministry of Magic's command. However, their role expanded to guard other locations, escorting prisoners to trial, and even hunting criminals like Sirius Black. This use of Dementors for various Ministry tasks would eventually be misused, such as when they were dispatched to harm Harry near his home on Privet Drive in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Using such creatures as tools of fear and control underscores how human choices can summon or harness supernatural forces, merging

⁴⁹ “Treneman, Ann. “J. K. Rowling, the interview,” *The Times* (UK), 30 June 2000,” Accio Quote, published June 30, 2000, <http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2000/0600-times-treneman.html>.

⁵⁰ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999) 93.

⁵¹ Rowling, *Prisoner of Azkaban*, 94.

⁵² “Dementor,” Harry Potter Wiki, n.d., <https://harrypotter.fandom.com/wiki/Dementor>.

the boundaries between the two types of evil. By attributing the existence and actions of Dementors to human actions, Rowling emphasises that even the most terrifying and otherworldly forms of evil may be rooted in human agency and responsibility. This connection between metaphysical and moral evil illustrates the far-reaching consequences of actions that summon or enable such dark forces. Their presence in the series reflects the omnipresent and paralysing effects of fear and hopelessness and the moral consequences of wielding such entities for control and punishment. Through the Dementors, Rowling explores themes of emotional resilience, the impact of systemic misuse of power, and the enduring human capacity to confront even the most overwhelming darkness. This layered portrayal ensures that the Dementors serve as more than mere antagonists, offering readers a profound commentary on evil's metaphysical and moral dimensions.

In the Harry Potter series, the portrayal of evil includes malevolent people and creatures, dark curses, and inventions. Even though such elements share supernatural qualities, they can be classified as moral evils, as their creation and application are always human-driven. The examples that are examined are Horcruxes and the Unforgivable Curses. The first of the aforementioned to be introduced in the series are the evil curses. Although introduced indirectly, the reader learns about Avada Kedavra, the most sinister of the three Unforgivable Curses, in the first book. This curse killed Harry's parents, and Harry received his iconic scar as a result. Death Eaters are notorious for using these spells, which, despite their supernatural characteristics, are fundamentally human inventions. Like all spells and curses, they reflect the choices and intentions of their creators. Such curses are unforgivable or forbidden because they are so heinous that using them is punishable by life imprisonment in Azkaban. They are considered three of the most powerful and sinister spells known to the wizarding world, as well as the strongest known Dark Spells in existence. The remaining two curses are Cruciatius and Imperius, further demonstrating the extent of dark magic's ethical violations. The Killing Curse causes instant death; the Cruciatius Curse inflicts extreme pain; and the Imperius Curse imposes absolute control over the victim's will. While these spells are supernatural in nature, their impact reveals a profound ethical dimension. They showcase how magic, when wielded without moral restraint, can become a tool for domination, suffering, and murder. Despite their supernatural qualities, these curses are entirely of human creation and use, representing moral evil. Among the most insidious magical inventions are Horcruxes, which exemplify the darkest aspects of magical manipulation and ethical corruption. Far from being mere objects, they symbolise the ultimate expression of selfishness and moral depravity. The Horcrux functions as

a vessel for a fragment of a wizard's soul, enabling the creator to achieve a form of immortality. However, the process of creating a Horcrux demands an act of profound evil – murder – which, as Horace Slughorn explains, “rips the soul apart.”⁵³ This deliberate violation of the natural order not only fractures the creator's soul but also underscores the horrendous evil involved in prioritising personal immortality over ethical principles and human life. As a result, Horcruxes stand as a chilling testament to the devastating moral consequences of unrestrained ambition, embodying one of the darkest and most abhorrent forms of magical evil. Through these examples, the series underscores that the greatest evils stem not from supernatural forces but from the deliberate and unethical choices of individuals wielding power.

In summary, the exploration of evil in literature provides profound insights into the complexities of the human experience, and the Harry Potter series serves as a captivating example of this. J. K. Rowling presents various forms of evil – from the supernatural to the morally corrupt – revealing how individuals are drawn toward darkness. Dementors embody metaphysical evil, feeding on despair, while Voldemort represents moral evil, driven by power and a disregard for life. Characters like Draco Malfoy show how societal pressures and personal choices can lead to corruption. In Fantasy and Children's Literature, using evil creates suspense, drives the plot, and explores moral dilemmas. Through these confrontations with evil, both characters and readers are compelled to examine their vulnerabilities and the potential for darkness within themselves. Ultimately, these portrayals of evil encourage us to seek goodness, resist corruption, and embrace the enduring power of hope, love, and redemption, reminding us that even in darkness, the light of decency can prevail.

⁵³ Rowling, *Half-blood Prince*, 465.

Conclusion

This thesis aims to examine the representation of evil in the Harry Potter series. It explores various manifestations of evil, ranging from those deliberately constructed by human intention to more natural forms that arise from fear or the pursuit of power. Through this exploration, the thesis seeks to uncover how evil is portrayed in the books.

Firstly, the books are established as a piece of Children's Literature. The first chapter touches upon the history of the genre, highlighting key examples of influential children's books. Despite its undeniable fantastical elements, the series remains deeply grounded in the characteristics of Children's Literature. By incorporating humour, relatable experiences, and timeless lessons, the story ensures accessibility to readers of all ages. The characters' educational journey at Hogwarts, their coming-of-age experiences, and their struggles with friendships resonate universally. This combination shows how Children's Literature can shape young minds, encourage empathy, build resilience, and offer valuable life lessons through relatable characters. Ultimately, the Harry Potter series exemplifies how Children's Literature can both entertain and educate, leaving a lasting impact on readers of all ages.

Secondly, elements that are central to the fantasy genre are explored and illustrated in the Harry Potter septology. Successful worldbuilding is an integral part of this genre, therefore creating a believable setting is essential. Rowling achieved this successfully by incorporating her magical world into known real locations. Furthermore, she creates a unique language that adds depth and authenticity to her universe, enriching the reader's immersion in the story. At its core, the series revolves around witches and wizards, but its fantastical elements extend far beyond spellcasting. The author provided a rich variety of magical creatures, such as already-known unicorns and centaurs or newly introduced Thestrals. Such elements firmly establish the Harry Potter series as a standout in the fantasy genre, combining magical elements with familiar settings to craft a rich and immersive world.

The last chapter focuses on a common theme between Fantasy and Children's Literature: the battle between good and evil. Specifically, it explores the way evil is manifested in both genres. Voldemort, the main antagonist of the series, is a representation of moral evil. His pursuit of power combined with dehumanising muggles, torturing or killing the innocent personify pure malevolence. Metaphysical evil is represented by Dementors, serving as a chilling metaphor for despair and emotional suffering. Lastly, evil as the corruption of something good is reflected in Draco Malfoy, whose internal conflict illustrates how external pressures and societal influences can distort morality. These portrayals of evil in its various

forms highlight the moral complexity within the Harry Potter series, offering readers a deeper understanding of the consequences of choices and the nature of evil.

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates how the Harry Potter series engages with complex representations of evil, intertwining them with the conventions of both Children's Literature and the fantasy genre. By exploring several types of evil, such as intentionally human-made moral acts, mysterious supernatural creatures, or symbols such as curses and objects, the thesis highlights the multifaceted nature of evil. Through its richly imagined world, relatable characters, and profound themes, Rowling's work captivates readers and encourages critical reflection on morality, resilience, and the world around us.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na analýzu zobrazení zla v jedné z nejvlivnějších a nejznámějších knižních sérií současné literatury, sérii o čarodějnickém učni Harrym Potterovi od britské spisovatelky J. K. Rowlingové. Sedmidílná řada knih, která se za více než dvě dekády své existence stala fenoménem, přesahuje žánrové hranice dětské a fantasy literatury a otevírá otázky, které mají univerzální platnost. Jedním z nejvýznamnějších motivů série je zlo a jeho různé podoby, což je ústředním tématem práce. Práce je rozdělena do tří hlavních kapitol, v každé z nich se prolínají část teoretická s částí praktickou.

První kapitola se zaměřuje na zasazení série do kontextu dětské literatury. Zkoumá, jakým způsobem Rowlingová využívá základní prvky dětské literatury, například motivy přátelství, dospívání či vzdělávání. Je nutno podotknout, že začátky literatury pro děti nejsou přesně datované. Děti četly už od samého zrodu literatury, aniž by se jednalo o knihy pro ně určené. Kapitola obsahuje stručný průřez historií dětské literatury. Zkoumaná historie začíná u Ezopa, autora známého převážně pro jeho poučné bajky. Aktuálnost jeho děl pro současného dětského čtenáře spočívá ve využití personifikace zvířecích hrdinů, kteří figurují v jednoduše pochopitelných zápletkách. Důležitým mezníkem dětské literatury bylo osmnácté století. V této době rostla poptávka po příbězích, které by poskytovaly dětem zábavu a podněcovaly jejich fantazii. John Newbery byl jedním z nakladatelů, který jako první uvedl dětskou literaturu na trh a zajistil jí zde stabilní místo. Dalšími důležitými osobnostmi byli bratři Grimmové a Hans Christian Andersen, kteří svými příběhy výrazně ovlivnili podobu dětské literatury v Evropě i ve světě. Dětská literatura nemá plnit pouze zábavnou roli, je také důležitým nástrojem pro rozvoj dětí, pomáhá jim orientovat se v komplikovaném světě emocí a morálních hodnot. Aby byla pro děti relevantní a zajímavá, objevují se v knihách často témata, která děti znají ze svých každodenních životů, například příběhy o přátelství, škole, sportu a dalších volnočasových aktivitách. Právě školní prostředí je centrálním v knihách o Harry Potterovi odehrávajících se v Bradavické škole čar a kouzel. Mladí kouzelníci mají hodiny magie, bylinkářství nebo létání, dělají domácí úkoly a učí se na zkoušky. Součástí školního roku jsou i zápasy famfrpálu, ve kterém Harry výjimečně vyniká jako nejmladší chytač století. V tomto žánru hrají častou roli zvířecí hrdinové, ať se již jedná o využití personifikace jako v bajkách, nebo zařazení zvířat jako nemluvicích společníků. Zvířata v dětské literatuře představují nástroj pro vzdělávání, zábavu a emocionální rozvoj, čímž podporují učení prostřednictvím příběhů, které děti přirozeně přitahují. V sérii o mladém čaroději hrají zvířata důležitou roli. Žáci Bradavic mají povoleno přivést si do školy kočku, sovu nebo ropucha. Mazlíčky mohou zapojovat do školních

aktivit, například ropuchy zpívají ve sboru a sovy přinášejí poštu. Hlavní hrdina dostane darem sněžnou sovu Hedviku, která je jeho věrnou společnicí během celého příběhu.

Druhá kapitola se soustředí na fantasy literaturu a ukazuje její prvky v knihách o Harry Potterovi. Fantasy žánr je obtížné přesně definovat, protože jeho hranice se často se překrývají s jinými žánry. Typicky zahrnuje prvky nemožného, které se mohou projevovat různými způsoby – nejčastěji prostřednictvím magie, mytických bytostí nebo nadpřirozených jevů. Ačkoli je fantasy založená na fikci, často čerpá inspiraci z reality. Příběh o Harrym Potterovi je skvělým příkladem toho, jak je fantastické úzce propojeno s běžným životem. Ve škole čar a kouzel se Harry učí kouzelnické alternativy, které umožňují obejít náročnou práci a ušetřit čas prostřednictvím magie a lektvarů. Místo jízdy autem se přemísťuje, úklid zvládne mávnutím hůlky a chybějící kosti si nechá přes noc narůst. V magickém světě najdeme metafory pro reálné problémy. Nejvýraznějším příkladem je diskriminace a sociální hierarchie mezi kouzelníky pocházející z nekouzelnických rodin a těmi, kteří mají oba rodiče čaroděje. Důležitým rysem fantasy je tvorba vlastních světů s unikátní kulturou, historií a jazyky. Prostředí je obvykle jedním z určujících prvků příběhu – ovlivňuje témata, atmosféru i výběr postav. Středověký hrad značí příběh o rytířích a princeznách, tajuplný les budou pravděpodobně obývat elfové nebo lesní žínky. Typická fantasy sice často využívá středověká prostředí, ale rozhodně není necivilizovaná. Autoři vytvářejí propracované sociální hierarchie, i bez technologie svět neztrácí sofistikovanost. Mnohé fantasy světy dokonce nabízejí pokročilé systémy magie, které umožňují postavám manipulovat s okolím způsobem, jenž odporuje fyzikálním zákonům. Fantasy dává autorům volnost překračovat hranice reality, takže se setkáváme s létajícími ostrovy, vícenásobnými měsíci či odlišným plynutím času. Důležitým rysem fantasy je tvorba jazyků, které dodávají světům autentičnost a jedinečnost. Tolkienova Středozem či Západozemí George R. R. Martina obsahují detailně propracované jazyky, které prohlubují dojem uvěřitelnosti. V Harrym Potterovi najdeme podobný prvek v podobě hadí řeči. Schopnost používat hadí řeč je vzácná a většinou dědičná, spojuje se s temnou magií, protože ji ovládal černokněžník Salazar Zmijozel a jeho potomek Voldemort. Harry, aniž by to tušil, hadí jazyk ovládá a použije ho například v zoo, kde si vytvoří nečekané pouto s hroznějším královským. Prostředím velké části příběhu jsou Bradavice a jejich okolí. Škola je aktivním magickým prostředím plným tajemství. Ukrývají se zde tajné chodby a skryté dveře, studentům komplikují život pohyblivá schodiště a dělají společnosti mluvící obrazy. Dalším typickým prvkem fantasy jsou fantastičtí tvorové a zvířata. Magická stvoření v sérii čerpají inspiraci z mytologie, folklóru, středověkých bestiářů i reálné přírody. V příběhu se objevují známé bytosti jako

kentauroi – moudří a hrdí tvorové, jednorožci, vlkodlaci a draci. Vlkodlak Remus Lupin, Harryho oblíbený učitel, ilustruje stigma a předsudky, jímž čelí odlišní jedinci. Draci, oblíbený prvek fantasy literatury, mají v sérii také zásadní úlohu, například v Turnaji tří kouzelníků, kde Harry musí čelit maďarskému trnoocasému drakovi. Další drak pomůže trojici hlavních hrdinů utéct z nedobytně chráněné kouzelnické banky. Kromě klasických mýtických tvorů. J. K. Rowlingová do svého světa přidala i unikátní magické bytosti. Jedním z příkladů je Bubák, tvor, který nemá pevnou podobu a mění se podle největšího strachu osoby, která se mu postaví. Dalšími fascinujícími tvory jsou testrálové. Tito okřídlení koně se vzhledem kostlivců, kteří jsou viditelní pouze těm, kdo byli svědky smrti, bývají vnímáni jako špatné znamení. Ve skutečnosti jsou to klidná a inteligentní stvoření. Vrcholným příkladem nebezpečného kouzelného tvora je bazilišek, hadí monstrum s pohledem, který dokáže zabít. Bazilišek hraje klíčovou roli v druhém díle série, kdy ukryt v Tajemné komnatě a ovládn Tomem Raddlem, odkazuje na moc temné magie a její ničivý potenciál. Magická fauna v Harrym Potterovi tedy neslouží jen k obohacení světa, ale často nese i hlubší poselství. Některé bytosti symbolizují obavy a traumata (Bubák, Mozkomorové), jiné zase sílu přátelství a loajality (Fénix, Hipogryf Klofan). Rowlingová tak dokazuje, že magická stvoření nejsou jen fantastickými prvky, ale nedílnou součástí příběhu a jeho témat.

Třetí a poslední kapitola se zaměřuje na samotné zobrazení zla a jeho různé formy. Přestože většina lidí má intuitivní představu o tom, co je zlo, jeho přesná definice je složitá. Obecně zahrnuje vše škodlivé, nemorální či působící utrpení. Ve fantasy a dětské literatuře bývá boj dobra se zlem ústředním tématem s jasně vymezenými hranicemi. Trakakis rozděluje zlo na morální a přirozené. Morální zlo vychází z vědomých rozhodnutí jednotlivců – patří sem podvody, zrada, násilí či krádež. Přirozené zlo naopak zahrnuje události mimo lidskou kontrolu, jako jsou přírodní katastrofy nebo nemoci. V moderním světě se však tyto kategorie často prolínají, například pokud přírodní katastrofy vznikají v důsledku lidské činnosti, jako je odlesňování či znečištění. Trakakis navíc zmiňuje hrůzné zlo – extrémní události, které mohou narušit lidskou psychiku natolik, že ohrožují smysluplnost samotného života. Sem spadá například genocida, mučení či hluboká osobní traumata. V sérii knih o Harrym Potterovi hraje zlo klíčovou roli, ovlivňuje děj i vývoj postav. Morální zlo zde zosobňuje lord Voldemort a jeho stoupenci, kteří vědomě usilují o moc a nadvládu. Přirozené zlo se projevuje například útoky baziliška v Tajemné komnatě či působením mozkomorů, kteří psychicky mučí své oběti. Tyto prvky ukazují nebezpečí kouzelnického světa, která nejsou vždy důsledkem zlého úmyslu, ale přesto mají ničivé dopady. Nejvýraznějším ztělesněním zla v celé sérii je bezesporu lord

Voldemort, hlavní protivník Harryho Pottera. Narodil se jako Tom Riddle a stal se jedním z nejmocnějších temných čarodějů posedlým nesmrtelností a absolutní mocí. Na rozdíl od nadpřirozených bytostí, které mohou být zlé svou podstatou, si cestu zla vědomě zvolil, čímž se stal příkladem morálního zla. Jeho povahu ovlivnila nejen vlastní rozhodnutí, ale i vnější okolnosti. Pocházel z rodu Salazara Zmijozela a zdědil schopnost hadího jazyka. Jeho početí bylo výsledkem působení kouzel. Jeho matka použila kouzelný lektvar, aby získala srdce Voldemortova otce, a Voldemorta tím odsoudila k životu bez lásky. Po smrti matky vyrůstal v sirotčinci, odloučen od opravdových citových vazeb, což mohlo přispět k jeho neschopnosti cítit empatii a nasměrovat ho na cestu temnoty. Další formou zla ve fantasy a dětské literatuře je nadpřirozené zlo, označované také jako metafyzické. Toto zlo často přesahuje lidskou morálku a pochopení, symbolizuje síly, které existují mimo běžnou realitu. V Harrym Potterovi ho představují například mozkomorové – děsivé bytosti, které vysávají štěstí a naději, čímž v obětech vyvolávají hlubokou beznaděj. Rowlingová se při jejich tvorbě inspirovala depresí, což podtrhuje jejich metafyzický rozměr. Jedinou ochranou proti nim je náročné kouzlo Expecto Patronus, které využívá pozitivní energii k jejich zahánění. Zlo lze také chápat jako ztrátu nebo zkažení původní dokonalosti. Tento koncept se odráží v postavě Draca Malfoye, který začíná jako obyčejný chlapec, ale postupně podléhá rodinným předsudkům a tlaku čistokrevné kouzelnické společnosti. Jeho vývoj od školního tyrana k mladému Smrtijedovi ukazuje, jak nevinnost může být narušena výchovou a okolím, aniž by se jednalo o vrozenou zkaženost. V sérii jsou kromě postav a tvorů zdrojem zla také temná kouzla a magické vynálezy. Nejvýznamnější jsou kletby, které se nepromíjejí – Avada Kedavra, smrtící kletba, Cruciatius způsobující nesnesitelnou bolest a Imperius, která oběť zbavuje svobodné vůle. Tyto kletby jsou natolik kruté, že jejich použití je trestáno doživotním uvězněním v Azkabanu. Dalším extrémním příkladem temné magie jsou viteály, magické předměty obsahující část čarodějovy duše. K jejich vytvoření je nutné spáchat vraždu – akt nejtemnějšího zla, čímž dojde k roztržení duše. Voldemort, posedlý nesmrtelností, využil viteály k upevnění své moci, čímž naplno ztělesnil zlo ve všech jeho podobách.

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Appendix

1. As Lukavská notes, this universal relevance enables young readers to form meaningful connections with the stories.
 - Podle teoretiků dětské literatury je nejnápadnější vlastností „dětské literatury“ to, že má za úkol promlouvat k dětským čtenářům díky své zábavnosti a přitažlivosti, a nepředávat primárně didaktická poselství, která jsou vylíčená tak, že jsou pro čtenáře pouze poučná, manipulativní, dotěrná a hloupá.
 - „Dobré dílo, respektive efektivní používání jazyka [...] pomáhá čtenáři zažívat radost z krásy, údiv a humor. [...] Vybičuje ho ke snění, přemítání a kladení otázek sobě samému.“
2. Yet Lukavská argues that didactic function is not the primary function of Children's Literature, despite the role it plays in their intellectual, moral, and emotional development.
 - „Neexistuje mnoho pregnantnějších formulací toho, jaká moc je literatuře přisuzována v intelektuální, morální a emocionální výchově dětí, a to navzdory všem jejich protestům a deklarovanému odporu k výchovné funkci literatury nebo obávanému ‚didaktismu.‘“
3. Westin adds that throughout history, there has been a shift away from didacticism, which she views as a shift from the adult control over Children's Literature.
 - Ještě dlouho v devatenáctém století [švédské] knihy pro děti bývaly psány hlavně proto, aby zapůsobily na dobré mravy mladých čtenářů, je jich slušné chování a náboženské cítění. Teprve na přelomu devatenáctého a dvacátého století začala literatura pro děti [ve Švédsku] reagovat spíše na dětské potřeby než na potřeby dospělých.
4. Le Guin describes the setting as a place with low population density and lots of greenery in which towns are surrounded by wasteland.
 - Fantasy znamená ústup od průmyslové revoluce a moderní doby a často se odehrává v řídké osídleném světě plném zeleně, v němž města a městečka obklopuje pustina, (za niž přesná a detailní mapa vytištěná na předsádce nesahá.)
5. Le Guin points out that the fantasy land may stereotypically resemble medieval Europe in terms of how preindustrial it is. However, that does not mean that it is not a structured society with its own unique social order.
 - Může připomínat středověkou Evropu v tom, že je preindustriální – ale to neomlouvá chybějící ekonomiku ani sociální spravedlnost.

6. Le Guin further adds that in the fantasy world, humanity is typically not the master nor the centre of everything and may not even be important.
 - Zdálo by se, že zelená krajina fantasy je zcela výplodem lidské fantazie, ona však hraničí s končinami, které skutečně existují a lidstvo v nich není pánem a vládcem, není v nich středobodem všeho, dokonce není ani důležité.