Constructing the child in *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Harry Potter*

A thesis submitted to the Miami University Honors Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for University Honors

by

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May 2005
Oxford, Ohio
ABSTRACT

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This project examined two series of children’s fantasy literature: The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis and the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling. The process of maturation in each series, and especially the structure of character growth in children, is similar enough to warrant exploration and research. Different elements that contribute to maturation are discussed in this paper, including the expectations our society places on children, reward and punishment, the relationship between children and adults, the importance of role models, and the influence of the external power structure.

Despite the decades that separate Lewis and Rowling, each writer seems to be communicating similar values to young readers. Because each series is so widely read, it is worth our time to discover what those values are, and what each author might be communicating to young people. The starting point for character growth in every child is the choice between good and evil. Every subsequent choice or action by the child stems from this basic allegiance. The children who ally themselves with the good side possess similar characteristics in both series, including humility, imagination, loyalty and selflessness. These children accept the fact that bad things happen and admit to making mistakes. Children who choose evil also possess a common set of traits that include arrogance, pride and selfishness.
Acknowledgments

I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to my thesis advisor, Dr. Anita Wilson, for the invaluable advice and support she has given me throughout the duration of this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Mary Fuller and Dr. Bill Hardey for devoting the time and effort it took to read and comment upon this paper.
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Introduction

Fantasy books geared towards children are a popular means with which to communicate values to young people. The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis and the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling are both widely read fantasy series written in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Both series are extremely popular with children as well as adults, and they illustrate the progression of children from youth to a higher level of maturity. Each series uses a non-reality-based construct as the setting for the growth and development of their respective main characters. The role of adversity in the character development of protagonists in The Chronicles of Narnia and the Harry Potter series is a topic that merits further study.

The Potter series and the Narnia series complement each other in the sense that they were written within 60 years of each other, yet represent such different social and political settings. C.S. Lewis wrote in the period after World War II, illustrating the social expectations people held at that time, which were stricter than those people hold today. Compared to the 21st century, women were given less authority and had fewer opportunities to work outside the home. The language was more formal than it is today. For example, Jill called Aslan “Sir,” because “it sounded cheek to call him nothing” (Lewis, Silver Chair 24). In contrast, Harry Potter and his friends are constantly referring to professors without their proper titles. Even Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, has to remind Harry to call Snape “Professor Snape” (Rowling, Order 827).
Though Lewis’s social construct is representative of his time period, his values are not so typical. In many ways he exemplified medieval ideas in the Narnia books:

Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the medieval model, Lewis argues, was its ability to integrate a vast amount of speculative material (both pagan and Christian, philosophical and theological, scientific and poetic) into a unified system. Out of a chaos of forms and ideas, the medievals (like the God they worshipped) forged a unified system in which order and hierarchy were the rule. (Markos 27)

Many aspects of Narnia illustrate Lewis’s fascination with combining Christian and pagan beliefs and practices, such as the presence of Bacchus in several books of the series, under the unified construct of Aslan as King, God and Creator. Other books in the series depict a culture that worships a cruel, angry god; this god is in direct conflict with Aslan (who, of course, triumphs in the end). Lewis’s combination of ideas from different theologies and philosophies creates a world where magic is governed by a Christian morality.

In accordance with his Christian beliefs, Lewis construes life as including both the present experiences in Narnia as well as the life to come after one dies. It is this view of life as never-ending that allows Lewis to glorify certain attributes, especially ones that allow characters spiritual longevity (such as innocence). Rowling, on the other hand, can’t really be considered to “glorify” any certain person or characteristic. Certainly she favors good over evil, but she doesn’t deal with life after death; she is very ambiguous about what happens after one dies. When Harry’s godfather, Sirius, dies, Harry goes to ask Nearly Headless Nick, the Gryffindor house ghost, what happens to people when they
die; however, even Nick can’t (or won’t) answer his questions. Death is alternately seen as the end (complete cessation of life and consciousness) or, according to Dumbledore, as “the next great adventure” (Rowling, *Philosopher* 215). Either way, attention is only given to what happens in this (corporeal) life.

According to Farah Mendlesohn, idealization of an older England can be seen in Rowling’s work as well: “In terms of the authoritarian structures of the book, however, this Old Englishness places Rowling in the company of Tolkien and of Lewis in constructing their fantasy worlds as a lament for old England, for the values of the shires and for a ‘greener’ and simpler world” (166). Rowling’s portrayal of the magical world has a sort of medieval essence, considering the lack of modern technology. Electricity is replaced with candles and torches, school is held in an old stone castle, quills are used instead of pens and pencils, and so on.

J.K. Rowling writes at the turn of the century, placing her characters in a contemporary atmosphere (despite the lack of modern technology in the wizarding world), causing them to experience different and arguably fewer social constraints than characters in the Narnia books. Harry Potter and his friends are given more liberties, even though parental involvement increases. This is particularly evident in the Narnia series, where the children’s parents are hardly ever mentioned. In the Potter books, parents, whether or not they are still living, play an extremely important role.

The political setting in which Harry Potter exists is quite different from the post-World War II environment Lewis dealt with. The Cold War is over and no world wars
have occurred for over half a century. This could perhaps explain the frequency of warfare in Narnia and the absence of direct warfare (thus far) in the Harry Potter series.

However, despite the differences in social and political settings, the authors are communicating similar values to their audiences about growing up and making choices. Lewis’s use of morality to govern a world full of magic can also be seen in Rowling’s books, despite the fact that her morality is not obviously Christian. Today’s conservative Christian audience has attacked the nature of magic and the occult in the Potter books, even though moral (including specifically Christian) behavior is constantly upheld and rewarded in the series. Children in both series learn from experiences with the help of role models, and good is always touted over evil.

The very nature of the fantasy genre allows the construction of a world in which opposing forces focus the reader’s attention. The boundary between good and evil in particular presents an area for exploration. The contrasting nature of elements set forth in fantasy literature forces the characters to choose an allegiance. This choice is the basis of the formation of each character’s personality; from this basic orientation spring many smaller choices each person must make. These choices result in consequences he or she must accept and deal with. The way in which these consequences are dealt with shapes the character’s development throughout the series.

In both the Harry Potter series and The Chronicles of Narnia, the essence of free choice and the characters’ reactions to the consequences of their choices are the driving forces for growth. The characters may see the consequences of their actions as positive
or negative. When the consequences are positive, they affirm the person’s choice and the progress he or she has been making in becoming an individual.

When the consequences are negative, the character can deal with them in two ways. He or she can react bitterly and resentfully. The stubbornness and pride by which this attitude is driven prevent the character from reacting effectively. The character will place the blame for the negative event on something or someone else, which blocks him or her from growing as a person. Regardless of whether the negative consequences are his or her fault, the character must accept the fact that bad things happen and begin trying to fix the situation.

The other way a character can react to negative consequences of his or her actions is to remain open to experience. This requires humility and allows the character to progress toward some goal he or she has been striving for. Admitting that bad things happen or that one has done something wrong doesn’t block character growth as pride does. Characters who accept the negative consequences and try to deal with them learn lessons, giving them more knowledge and more wisdom.

Both series show children progressing as characters as they are allowed free choice. A person’s choices determine what he or she becomes. Each series also features the idea of forgiveness and the opportunity for second chances. The consequences of a child’s actions often entail rewards or punishments from a more powerful adult. The relationship between children and adults, and the resulting effect on children’s character development is an area worthy of further exploration. In particular, both series feature an adult (or adult-like character in the case of Aslan) who leads the children in a positive
direction, providing advice, encouragement and wisdom that the children could not have
gotten elsewhere.

Questions that this paper will address include: What is the source of power in the
created universe, and how much of it do children control? How do the children come to
make the decisions they do? Do they achieve goals by acting alone, or do they need help
from other characters (whether child or adult)? Who serves as a role model for the
children? Who is responsible for reward and punishment?

Once these questions are answered, a prototype for character development in
modern children’s fantasy literature will become clearer. These two series do not have
the last word on children’s development in this genre, but the continued popularity of
each exposes millions of child readers to the type of growth each author presents. It is
significant, then, to reveal what these series may be saying to the young people of this
and future generations.
Part I: Shedding imposed expectations

One way that writers use the fantasy genre is to create a universe in which characters can become more truly themselves. The Chronicles of Narnia and the Harry Potter series are unusual, even in the genre of fantasy, in that they present characters that experience a reality-based world like our own as well as a created fantasy world. Moreover, the children in each of these series are not only aware of the different universes, but are functioning members of each. These characters, then, have two different existences that are brought together by their enduring personalities. These different existences experienced by the same individual can show aspects of character we would otherwise never see.

This is significant because our reality, as readers, exists in an imperfect world; by creating characters that can fully become themselves only in a fantastical universe, a writer shows that the essence of character can sometimes only be revealed when freed from the constraints of our society. In the process, the writer exposes certain faults in our society or in the way we, as readers, view the world.

C.S. Lewis and J.K. Rowling each create a mundane reality that in fact forces the characters to assume, at least in part, roles contrary to their true nature. In the fantasy worlds, on the other hand, children have more autonomy and make decisions for themselves. This creates more developed, self-actualized characters.

In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Lucy is an imaginative child who discovers the existence of a world entirely different from her own. We see how her innocence allows her to enter Narnia even when her sister and brothers at first cannot.
When the children meet Aslan, Lucy’s nature becomes even clearer, as she trusts, and seemingly loves him, more than the others do. In *Prince Caspian*, it is Lucy who sees Aslan and tries to convince everyone else to follow him. When they don’t, they run into trouble and have to turn around. Again, it is Lucy who is roused from sleep hearing Aslan call her name, and she who convinces them all to follow Aslan as they should have at first. Her heightened receptivity to Aslan’s presence shows that she is more open to his influence and less centered upon herself. Paradoxically, this allows her to become more of an individual, because in forgetting herself she sheds any false pretences or facades. There is nothing left, then, but the core of who she is.

It is also important to note, however, that children in Narnia don’t have clearly distinguishable characters as they do in the Potter books. Individuality is not as important in Narnia as it is in Rowling’s series, or as it is in today’s society. Character traits such as humility and loyalty to Aslan come through as the children mature; hardly any emphasis is placed on an individual’s idiosyncrasies, habits, preferences or sense of humor, whereas Rowling deals with these traits in great detail.

Susan’s character is also developed more fully in Narnia than in the real world. In England, she is the second oldest child, the practical, grown-up one. In Narnia, her preconceptions of “proper” behavior and “normal” events prevent her to some extent from engaging as fully in the life experiences and lessons to be had in Narnia. For example, after the White Witch kills Aslan, mice crawl all over him, chewing the ropes that bind him to the Stone Table. To Susan, the mice are “beastly” and “horrid” (Lewis,
Lion 159) until Lucy, who took time to examine them, points out that they are chewing the ropes.

Time after time, Susan lets fear get in her way. It prevents her from following adventurous paths and from fully trusting Aslan; it prevents her from taking chances and from growing as a person. At the end of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the four children, now kings and queens of Narnia, follow a White Stag and again come across the lamp post signaling the entrance back into England. They can’t remember where they’d seen the lamppost before, and Susan recommends turning around, but the others want to continue forward and they all end up back in their own world. In Prince Caspian, Susan believed that Lucy had really seen Aslan, but let fear lead her to go in the opposite direction in order to get out of the forest.

It is significant that at the end of the series, Susan is not allowed to go to Aslan’s home, a kind of heaven or paradise. She is excluded because she stops believing that Narnia really exists and only regards it as a childhood game. Perhaps because Narnia forced her true character to come forth, Susan denies its existence. The fear that showed itself in her, and the doubt, lead her to reject Narnia and the qualities of her own character that were revealed. She prefers the cover that the real world allows, permitting her to believe that she really isn’t fearful or too self-absorbed.

Interesting examples of character change wrought by the unusual circumstances presented in the fantasy world can be seen in Edmund Pevensie and Eustace Scrubb. Both boys had stubborn, self-centered, spiteful personalities in their world; however, after entering Narnia they learn humility and generosity. The more tolerant, kind personalities
that came to light in Narnia showed who the boys had really been all along; Lewis showed that they had been mistreated at school or at home in England to make them self-protective in a negative, harmful way.

In *The Magician’s Nephew*, Uncle Andrew was just a crazy old man to his sister, with whom he lived, in London. Once in Narnia, however, his utter selfishness and arrogance revealed itself. He was so caught up in his fixed view of the world that he saw the evil sorceress as a beautiful, intelligent woman and he could only hear senseless animal sounds when the Talking Animals spoke.

The cabby, however, showed himself to be a kind, humble person in Narnia, more so than he had seemed in London:

All the sharpness and cunning and quarrelsomeness which he had picked up as a London cabby seemed to have been washed away, and the courage and kindness which he had always had were easier to see. Perhaps it was the air of the young world that had done it, or talking with Aslan, or both. (Lewis, *Magician* 181)

As a result, Aslan rewarded his goodness, bringing his wife to Narnia and making them the first King and Queen in the land. They weren’t the type of people who would ever be monarchs in England, but their goodness gave them nobility that those in Narnia recognized.

Harry Potter shows his true colors once he realizes he is a wizard. Having spent his first eleven years, or at least all that he can remember of them, living with his horrible relatives, Harry’s life is dull and hopeless. He is unexceptional both physically, being small and skinny with glasses and messy black hair, and socially, being disliked at school
and at home. The only times when Harry has any power over his own life are the times when he’s angry and unexpected things happen. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, Harry goes to the zoo with his malicious cousin Dudley. As Harry looks at a huge snake behind a pane of glass, the glass breaks and the snake gets loose, scaring Dudley badly. At the time, Harry doesn’t realize he made the glass break, but shortly afterward he receives his first letter from Hogwarts.

This letter opens up a world of possibility for Harry. For the first time, he sees that there is something special about him. He is more than the hated nephew whom no one wants around. This possibility in itself allows Harry to experience the new (for him) emotions of hope and excitement. His consciousness is already more expanded and his character more developed than the “real” world ever allowed.

At Hogwarts, Harry has friends for the first time in his life. He deeply values his two closest friends, revealing a capacity for love that couldn’t have existed in his old life. Dumbledore, the Headmaster, shows an interest and affection for Harry that he hasn’t received from an adult since his parents were killed when he was a baby. Most astonishing is the fact that Harry, as an infant, defeats the most powerful dark wizard alive. Harry cannot possibly know, while living with the Dursleys, what potential he really has.

Once he joins the magic community, Harry is given enough power as an individual to take part in the most important struggle of his time: the fight against Dark magic. Harry turns out to be extremely courageous and resourceful; he manages, along with his friends, to prevent Lord Voldemort from returning to full power several times.
Once the fantastical universe is introduced to Harry Potter and to the children who go to Narnia, they are never the same. With increased power in their hands, all the children show themselves to be greater than anyone in the “real” world could have imagined.
Part II: Authors’ approaches to maturation

C.S. Lewis and J.K. Rowling take different approaches in their portrayal of the process of growing up. Lewis views maturation as successful only in so far as it retains youthful innocence. Rowling uses a more mainstream characterization of the growing up process, one that doesn’t glorify childhood or prevent adults from entering the magical world. Portrayals of the process of growing up are worthy of further analysis, because, according to Karen Coats, “Children’s books make us who we are, culturally and individually. They teach us things about language’s relationship to power – the power of self and the power of others” (390). Maturation can be viewed as the acquisition of power; it is necessary to examine the process by which it is gained.

In both series, the children who are a part of the real world as well as the magical world retain their individual personality traits in each place. This character continuity implies that people who choose to fight against evil in the magic world would do the same in our world, allowing the reader to relate the characters’ choices to decisions the reader might make.

The decision to ally oneself with good or evil is the first step in characterizing a child. It is essential to establish each character’s initial orientation, providing a starting point from which he or she can develop. This initial choice, however, must be considered only as a starting point, for both series realistically refrain from portraying any child as all good or all bad.
In the Potter series, according to Jack Zipes, “There appear to be two major types of evil in the books: the vicious sadism of Voldemort and the cruel vindictiveness of the Dursleys. They have evil written over their faces, even though the nature of their evil is different.” *(Sticks and Stones 180)* Each child must choose either to accept or reject evil, no matter what form it comes in. Harry has rejected the Dursleys’ “cruel vindictiveness” ever since he was a small child.

Harry really begins the process of maturation once he reaches Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. According to Mary Pharr, “For Harry Potter, Hogwarts is a place of tests: some academic, some practical, and some moral. Many of these tests include adventure, danger and choice – heady stuff that forces Harry to grow up or fail” (58). At Hogwarts, all the new students must put on the Sorting Hat as soon as they arrive. The Sorting Hat can read the children’s thoughts, sending them to whichever house matches their character best. The hat tells us that Gryffindor, Harry’s house, is where the bravest children belong. Hufflepuff is for the hard workers, Ravenclaw has the cleverest students and Slytherin is for those with a lot of ambition.

Rowling tells us that nearly all of the Dark wizards come out of Slytherin house, implying that ambition to make oneself great is a negative character trait and one that may lead to an allegiance with Evil. Ambition is not always a bad thing, shown by Harry’s friend Hermione’s determination to excel. Harry himself has a measure of ambition. Rowling distinguishes between good ambition and bad ambition by making clear what the character’s goals are. If the person’s aim is to make the world better, it is good ambition. Even if the person’s aim is to prove him or herself, it is not necessarily
bad ambition as long as he or she is not willing to hurt others in the process. If the aim is to gain power and dominance for oneself (Voldemort’s chief goal), it is bad ambition. When Harry puts on the Sorting Hat in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, it tries to put him into Slytherin House, but Harry resists. The Hat thinks through its decision while Harry listens:

Difficult. Very difficult. Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind, either. There’s talent, oh my goodness, yes – and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that’s interesting ... So where shall I put you?”

Harry gripped the edges of the stool and thought, “Not Slytherin, not Slytherin.”

“Not Slytherin, eh?” said the small voice. “Are you sure? You could be great, you know, it’s all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that – no? Well, if you’re sure – better be GRYFFINDOR! (Rowling, *Philosopher* 90-91)

Since the Hat puts Harry in Gryffindor instead, we learn a truth that Dumbledore clarifies toward the end of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*: “It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities” (245). Farah Mendlesohn qualifies Dumbledore’s statement:

Although Albus Dumbledore and other good people preach moral freedom, the evidence is all around Harry that very little is about personal choice. The visible illustration of this sits in front of him once a year: the Sorting Hat. The role of the Sorting Hat is to tell people what they are and what they may become. That Harry gets a choice is entirely due, as we later learn, to his contamination by
Voldemort, so that his ‘choice’ is actually between two heredities or destinies. It
is not a free choice. (171)

Mendlesohn’s view, though shared by some, doesn’t tell the whole story. The Sorting
Hat takes into account each child’s natural talents and inclinations, but as we see with
Harry, the final verdict comes down to where the child chooses to be. Even by the tender
age of 11 children have the ability to discern between right and wrong and make their
own decisions regarding how they want to behave. Mendlesohn says that Harry has been
“contaminated” by Voldemort, but even though the prophecy states that either Harry or
Voldemort must eventually die, Harry still has the freedom to choose whether he rivals
Voldemort’s power via good or evil. It is a free choice.

As a result of Harry’s decision (voiced by the Sorting Hat), Harry’s alliance with
good instead of evil is clarified for us almost as soon as he enters the magic world. His
two best friends, Ron and Hermione, are also put in Gryffindor. Draco Malfoy, a boy
with a nasty, malicious personality as well as the son of a Dark wizard, is of course put in
Slytherin. Rowling uses this process as a way to clearly delineate between good
characters and evil characters.

There is an exception, however, in the otherwise clearly defined line between
good and evil. Professor Severus Snape is a hateful character that picks on any students
who aren’t in his own house of Slytherin. He especially detests Harry and is extremely
unfair towards him in the classroom. Dumbledore, the wise, benevolent headmaster of
Hogwarts, trusts Snape. This suggests that there is a difference between being evil and
just being nasty. Veronica L. Schanoes agrees:
...Rowling forces her reader to distinguish between nastiness and wickedness, between subjective hatred and objective evil. She forces her reader to think beyond herself and her private identification with Harry to develop an awareness of the alliances necessary in order to do the right thing. (132)

Dumbledore is shown to have nearly flawless judgment; he is far more merciful than any other adult in the series, and anyone who earns his trust is loyal to the forces of good, not evil.

In the fourth book, we learn that Snape is a former Death Eater (a wizard loyal to Voldemort) who is now working for the good side. We know that Dumbledore trusts Snape, so we want to believe that he is good; however, his spiteful personality and his past make us suspicious. Rowling no doubt intended this ambiguous character to show that we cannot always tell whether a person is good or evil based on his or her personality. Schanoes agrees: “Harry, and possibly the reader, misinterpret Snape’s behavior because they confuse unpleasantness with depravity” (133). Again, it is the individual’s choices that determine the kind of person he or she is.

C.S. Lewis also shows whether characters are good or evil almost as soon as they enter Narnia. The most obvious example of this is Edmund, who meets the White Witch the minute he enters Narnia. He talks with her and eats her food, which is enchanted to make the person who eats it want more and more. The Queen promises to make Edmund a great king, which fuels his already strong ambition to become more powerful than his older brother Peter. Ambition is again shown to be a bad emotion when focused on gaining power and prestige for the individual alone.
Lucy recognizes the witch as evil and wants no part in her schemes. Once all four children get into Narnia, Peter and Susan agree with Lucy; these three ally themselves with the good side. Edmund shows his true colors by deserting the others and going to betray them to the White Witch.

The great lion Aslan, the Witch’s greatest adversary, can be compared in power and personality to Jesus, the Christian Son of God. Aslan allows the true character of each child to reveal itself. Peter, Susan and Lucy gain a sense of joy, quiet and peace when they meet him. Edmund feels fear and shame. When Aslan sacrifices his life for Edmund’s sake and is resurrected, Edmund feels forgiveness and joy.

Thus it is revealed that Edmund is not a bad character and is not allied with evil. He made the wrong choice at first, blinded by ambition, pride and greed, but he was redeemed through Aslan’s sacrifice. No child who gets to Narnia (in any of the books in the series) ever permanently allies him- or herself with evil.

Each child who gets to Narnia is called there by Aslan. In some cases, the experiences the child has had in the real world have caused him to become spiteful and self-centered. Edmund Pevensie and Eustace Scrubb are examples of this. Each had negative experiences at their respective schools, and in Eustace’s case, at home as well. The process through which each child “went bad” is not detailed in the books, but the reader can see the resulting insecurity the children experience, which they disguise with cruel behavior toward family and friends.

In the fantasy world, as the children are given more agency and power, they realize with greater clarity which side, good or evil, they are actually devoted to. This
occurs because the real world allows characters to drift in one direction or the other without forcing them to decide, while in Narnia, the children have to make an explicit decision.

The two children who choose evil seem to have been led in that direction by their experiences in the real world. The example set by Aslan and the other good creatures in Narnia eventually turns them around and they choose good. It is important to examine the process by which these children realize their mistakes. It is also necessary to look at the character growth of children who choose good from the start, as well as characters that choose evil and never realize their mistakes, thus becoming more and more evil.

Whether in Narnia or the magical world of the Harry Potter series, children are given more room to make important choices than in the real world. When the consequences of a person’s choice are positive, the motives and values leading to that particular choice are reinforced. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, Hermione at first seems to be a pretentious, bossy girl who tries to stop Harry and Ron from having fun. When a troll gets into Hogwarts, Harry and Ron accidentally lock it into a bathroom with Hermione. Despite their disdain for her, they go back to rescue her. When the teachers find them, Hermione lies to prevent the boys from getting into trouble for being out of their House common room. The boys act mercifully in going back to help her and she does the same by lying to the teachers for them. As a result, the boys are praised by the teacher and even better, they gain Hermione as a permanent friend. This situation shows kindness and mercy resulting in rewards that reinforce the behavior.
This situation also brings up the issue of rule breaking. On the surface, Harry’s frequent rule breaking seems to subvert the authority of the established system, such as when he uses the invisibility blanket to sneak into the neighboring village of Hogsmeade. However, Rowling creates a higher morality than the legal system of rules and laws that govern behavior. Harry has the ability to distinguish between breaking rules for selfish reasons and breaking them for the greater good of others.

According to Roberta Seelinger Trites, Harry “is able to confront authority, [but] he never completely overthrows it. He is never an agent of anarchy. Ultimately, all of his actions serve to support the intentions of the headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, so while Harry may appear rebellious, he is no iconoclast” (477). Although Harry sometimes disobeys rules for selfish reasons, he never seriously harms another person in doing so. When Harry sneaks off to Hogsmeade to have fun, Professor Lupin tells him his parents didn’t die to save him in order for Harry to take foolish risks for fun. Harry takes this criticism to heart, feeling guilty for his behavior instead of angry at Lupin. On isolated occasions Harry breaks rules to get revenge on Draco Malfoy, but the worst thing he ever does is throw mud at him. The vast majority of his rule breaking involves helping save something or somebody, such as when he rescues the Philosopher’s Stone from Voldemort.

In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Harry refuses aid from a Ministry official who offers to help him cheat in an international competition (the Triwizard Tournament). It is important to Harry to win the competition, but he refuses to accept an unfair advantage. At another point in the same tournament, he inadvertently discovers that the
competitors will have to face dragons in one of the tasks. Harry knows two of the other competitors will have found out about this, and he feels it is only fair to tell the fourth competitor.

Harry’s decisions to act fairly override strict adherence to the rules, and he is always rewarded for those choices. It seems, then, that in the magical world of Harry Potter, rules are set up to govern the behavior of individuals with the stipulation that moral discernment will sometimes override adherence to those rules. Whether the individual’s rule breaking is rewarded or punished depends on the person’s intentions:

[...] power should always be used with responsibility, in defense against evil; rules may on occasion be flouted, but only for a good reason. [...] Rowling here, as elsewhere, seem[s] to present a clear distinction between good and evil, so that if characters are basically good and have learned that the rules should normally be obeyed, there is little danger that they will use power wrongly. (Pinsent 37)

In fact, individuals who enforce strict adherence to rules, regardless of the situation, are portrayed as ridiculous (such as Hogwarts’s caretaker, Filch) or even malicious. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Ron’s pretentious and obnoxious older brother Percy loves following rules strictly. He ignores rumors that Voldemort has returned, choosing instead to support the Ministry of Magic’s stubborn denial of the evidence favoring the rumors. He goes so far as to disown his parents when they reject the Ministry’s position and join the Order of the Phoenix’s efforts to fight Voldemort’s return. This situation implies that following rules in every situation is not only silly and inflexible; it can be cold and ruthless.
When Hermione tries to enforce strict adherence to rules, Harry and Ron ridicule her. Interestingly, she seems to have great ability to discern when rules are being broken for selfish reasons, and she always tries to stop this from happening. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Harry wants to talk to Sirius, but the only way he can do so is by using the tyrannical Dolores Umbridge’s, fireplace. Hers is the only fireplace still connected to the Floo network. Hermione knows that Harry’s conversation with Sirius could be postponed without serious consequences, and she knows there’s a good chance Harry would get caught, so she strongly discourages breaking into Umbridge’s office. But even Hermione breaks rules when she knows justice is at stake, such as when she helps Harry and Ron retrieve the Philosopher’s Stone in the first book. She is always rewarded for this kind of rule breaking.

There are several times when Harry breaks the restriction on Underage magic at the Dursleys’ house. As an underage wizard, Harry isn’t allowed to use magic in front of Muggles, but in one case he let his anger get the better of him and expanded Uncle Vernon’s sister Marge into a human balloon. When he receives the warning from the Ministry of Magic about his breach of regulation, he doesn’t feel bitter and stubbornly refuse to admit he made a mistake. He realizes he did the wrong thing and is very afraid he will be expelled from Hogwarts. He doesn’t end up getting punished at all, but the fear he felt was enough to result in better behavior. Instead of arrogantly insisting on using magic for revenge on his Aunt and Uncle the next summer, he restrains himself. He has enough humility to admit that he lost his temper with Marge and he gains wisdom by controlling himself better the next time.
Harry’s growing learning curve is apparent throughout the series, but Mendlesohn believes that “[...] all of Harry’s important magical adventures focus on his talents and not his learning” (169). This is not true for several reasons. Harry’s wise choice of friends illustrates his natural association with other brave individuals willing to make sacrifices for the good of others. Harry works hard to learn magic, often outside of class. When he learns to produce a Patronus to ward off the evil Dementors, or when he perfects the Summoning Charm to use in the Triwizard Tournament, he uses self-discipline and a desire to prove himself in order to succeed during his “magical adventures.” Just because Harry has natural talent doesn’t mean that everything good comes his way without him having to exert any effort. The fact is he works harder than the majority of the other Hogwarts students we read about.

A child who chooses evil, Draco Malfoy, reacts differently to punishment. He believes that he and his family are always in the right. He thinks he is better than anyone who is poorer than he is and anyone who has Muggle blood. Any time he is punished, his unrelenting pride and resentment leads him to hate the person punishing him. In _Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire_, Professor Moody sees Malfoy try to curse Harry from behind. Moody punishes Malfoy for attacking someone who can’t fight back. He turns Malfoy into a white ferret and bounces him repeatedly off the floor. Although the punishment is extreme, Malfoy’s response is typical of him: he doesn’t believe he did anything wrong and he bitterly hates Professor Moody.

Malfoy, in addition to hating witches and wizards with Muggle ancestry (whom he calls “mudbloods”), hates any so-called half-breeds, which are wizards who are also
partly another species. For example, Malfoy continually ridicules the Care of Magical Creatures teacher, Hagrid, because Hagrid is half-giant. Snape, who has the same prejudices Malfoy has, manages to get Professor Lupin fired because Lupin is a werewolf. Harry, on the other hand, seems to always befriend these non-pureblooded individuals:

...despite his youth, the Potter heritage calls Harry to become a seeker whose episodic quests for knowledge are unified by the grand themes of self-discovery and selfless valor. That combination is important, for if a hero is to be complete, he must come to know more than himself and his own potential; he must also come to know the value of other creatures, great and small. (Pharr 56)

Harry’s complete acceptance of other races, species and social classes gives him a wider range of experiences. The friendliness he shows these marginal individuals is always rewarded (such as when Lupin teaches him to produce a Patronus to scare away Dementors).

In the Harry Potter series, emotional trauma leads to character development. Harry would not be who he is without the pain he has endured. His first encounter with Voldemort changed everything that would happen in Harry’s life from that point on. Just as Voldemort’s curse resulted in a physical scar on Harry’s forehead, emotional suffering results in character “scars” that shape the person Harry becomes.

After Harry faints in the presence of the Dementors, Lupin tells him, “It has nothing to do with weakness, [...] The Dementors affect you worse than the others because there are horrors in your past that the others don’t have” (Rowling, Prisoner
This shows that Harry has greater capability for emotion (in this case, fear) than other children because of the suffering he has experienced.

The most intense emotional pain Harry experiences in the first five books results from the death of Sirius, his godfather. Aside from the sadness of Sirius’s absence, Harry feels tremendous guilt because he believes it’s his fault that Sirius died. Harry speaks with Dumbledore after the immediate danger has passed. He screams at the Headmaster and hurls Dumbledore’s possessions around his office, yet Dumbledore remains calm: “There is no shame in what you are feeling, Harry, [...] On the contrary...the fact that you can feel pain like this is your greatest strength” (Rowling, Order 823). Dumbledore’s statement is appropriate because only through great pain can Harry develop and mature enough to defeat the power of Voldemort.

The pain Harry feels changes him. After Voldemort returns to his full strength in the fourth book, he kills Cedric Diggory with Harry watching. Then Harry has to fight Voldemort and bring Diggory’s body back to Hogwarts. The anguish this causes Harry is huge, and Dumbledore tells him:

You have shown bravery beyond anything I could have expected of you tonight, Harry. You have shown bravery equal to those who died fighting Voldemort at the height of his powers. You have shouldered a grown wizard’s burden and found yourself equal to it [...]. (Order 606)

Without being forced to confront obstacles and endure pain, Harry would never have “shouldered a grown wizard’s burden.”
A material example of Harry’s growth can be seen with certain things that used to be important to him but no longer are. After Sirius’s death he learns that the girl he had a crush on is dating someone else, but Harry doesn’t care:

Wanting to impress Cho seemed to belong to a past that was no longer quite connected with him. So much of what he had wanted before Sirius’s death felt that way these days.... The week that had elapsed since he had last seen Sirius seemed to have lasted much, much longer: It stretched across two universes, the one with Sirius in it, and the one without. (*Order* 865-866)

The fact that Harry feels like he’s living in a different world after Sirius’s death shows how Harry’s conception of the universe is changing and growing.

Harry learns that the prophecy which foretold the fateful first meeting between Harry (as a baby) and Voldemort had also predicted that eventually one of them would kill the other; both could not go on living in the same universe. This realization adds foreboding to Harry’s anguish over Sirius, causing him to feel completely alone and isolated: “An invisible barrier separated him from the rest of the world” (*Order* 855). This isolation forces Harry to depend on himself and deal with his problems on his own. He knows nobody can help him out of trouble now, not even Sirius or Dumbledore. Forced independence is independence nonetheless.

In the Narnia series, Lewis adheres to a similar model of growth and character development. The children who get into Narnia are individuals who have enough imagination to accept the fact that Narnia exists. Since Lewis glorifies the imagination and wonder children possess, every child who reaches Narnia from our world is good. In
*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, only Lucy can get into Narnia at first. After she insists that it exists, Edmund gets in, and finally Peter and Susan get in after talking to the Professor who supports Lucy’s claims.

In Narnia, Susan experiences fear a number of times. Each time she reacts by wanting to turn around and go home, or take a short cut to safety. Taking the easy way out leads away from growth and toward character stagnation. Fear blocks growth.

Edmund’s initial allegiance with evil is caused by his resentment toward his siblings, especially Peter. Edmund is arrogant and refuses to believe he made a mistake. This allegiance wears off after he realizes that the Witch has no intention of making him a prince. When Edmund meets Aslan, he experiences a rush of shame. This new willingness to admit he was wrong allows Edmund to see things in a new light. His newfound humility results in a positive outcome when he becomes friends again with his brother and sisters and is forgiven by Aslan. These results reinforce Edmund’s willingness to admit he behaved wrongly, allowing him to shed his previous character stagnation and grow in a positive direction.

When Eustace Scrubb first gets into Narnia, he is as arrogant and close-minded as Edmund was at first. He criticizes everyone and everything, spending most of his time sulking alone. The turning point for him comes on a deserted island when he sneaks away from his fellow travelers to avoid having to work. He gets lost and meets a dying dragon. After the dragon is dead, Eustace falls asleep in his cave, resolving to take as much of the dragon’s treasure as he can. When he wakes up, however, he finds that he has turned into a dragon himself. This is not a pleasant discovery for him, and once his
friends realize that the dragon is indeed Eustace, they try to figure out how to change him back.

Of course, the only way for Eustace to become a boy again is through the power of Aslan. The Lion leads the dragon to a mountain in the middle of the island, on top of which is a garden. In the middle of the garden is a large well with steps leading down into it. Aslan tells Eustace he might bathe, but first he must undress. Eustace peels off his scaly skin like a snake would shed its skin, but underneath is another layer just as tough and scaly as the first. He peels it off too, but there are just more layers. Then Aslan intervenes, telling Eustace he would have to undress him. It hurts worse than anything Eustace had ever felt, but there is also pleasure from the horrible skin coming off. Aslan throws him into the pool and he becomes a boy again.

The shedding of old habits leads to Eustace being reborn through a process reminiscent of Christian baptism. This can only occur once Eustace realizes how selfish he had been before. He finally understands that his former behavior was just as unappealing as the reptilian result of his greed and arrogance. Through a willingness to admit he had been wrong, Eustace grows in wisdom.

As there are no children who permanently choose Evil in Narnia, a discussion examining the choice of evil over good must focus on an adult. Uncle Andrew in The Magician’s Nephew is an ambitious, yet cowardly, character who discovers how to send people to other worlds. He sends his nephew Diggory and Diggory’s friend Polly to a sort of in-between world, from which they get into Narnia.
The children accidentally bring Uncle Andrew and an evil witch with them into the country, which is being created by Aslan. Uncle Andrew and the Witch are very afraid of Aslan, although the Witch understands Aslan and knows who he is. Uncle Andrew convinces himself that Aslan is nothing more than a savage lion. When some of the created animals become Talking Beasts, all Uncle Andrew can hear are senseless roars and howls and barks. He clings to his practical, unimaginative beliefs so stubbornly that even when Aslan tries to speak to him, all he can hear are roars. He shuts himself off from the voice of kindness and love – the voice of good. This illustrates the devastating effects of closing one’s imagination.

Though there are no children in Narnia who permanently choose evil, after leaving the magical world Susan comes to deny that Narnia ever existed. She laughs at her siblings’ discussions of Narnia, surprised that they still believe the “games” they played as children. Lewis warns against Susan’s process of growing up; he shows how narrow-minded and shallow she is by preventing her from ever getting back into Narnia. This is significant because Susan’s experience of becoming more “adult-like” is a process most children go through at some point. Lewis maintains that being “grown-up” is ridiculous and silly, while retaining the wonder and imagination of a child is a glorious thing.

The nature of the child hero in Narnia differs from the type of hero that Harry Potter represents. The fact of the matter is that children in Narnia are just not heroic in the traditional sense. The girls show fear and childish innocence to the point that they are often ineffective in fighting evil. In *The Magician’s Nephew*, Polly tries to stop Eustace
from ringing the bell and bringing the evil witch Jadis to life, but she fails. Lucy does heal the wounded with her cordial, and stands up for Aslan in *Prince Caspian*, but her efforts produce no great victories. Although Lewis glorifies the girls’ innocence, and they choose good over evil, it is difficult to conceive of them as heroes. The boys, especially Peter, are a little better, but there is still the sense that they would be nothing without Aslan. This is exactly what Lewis intended, because for him, the essence of maturity, and even heroism, is to show unerring loyalty to Aslan. A person’s individual accomplishments and personality are valued for the impact they have for or against Aslan; everything is cast in the light of Aslan’s cause, the fight for good.

Harry Potter is entirely different in that he takes action and behaves bravely even after being told *not to* by authority figures, often overcoming Voldemort while facing resistance from his own teachers. Unlike the children in Narnia, he is not fighting someone else’s battle, not even Dumbledore’s. Harry is an unlikely candidate as far as heroes go, as he is skinny and untidy. Growing up, he lived in a house where everyone hated him and he never showed any promise in any way until he found out he was a wizard.

Despite the differences in the types of heroes Lewis and Rowling portray, the intentions and values of all the children are similar. Rowling and Lewis have both taken an approach to character development meant to show readers which qualities are valuable and which ones are harmful. Having examined the moral orientation of each character and the subsequent patterns of maturation, it is necessary to look at the relationship between children and adults more closely.
Part III: Reward and Punishment

In the Narnia series and the Harry Potter books, children in the fantasy world are given more power than in the real world. In Narnia, this occurs because there are very few adults. Children have more autonomy because there are simply fewer older humans whose decisions take precedence. There are Talking Animals who are older than the children, but Aslan structured the world of Narnia so that human beings are the only race who can be kings and queens. Hence, all humans are treated with some measure of respect by the animals. Children naturally take on the responsibilities of the adult role in Narnia, blurring the boundary between childhood and adulthood.

In the Potter books, there are just as many adults in the magic world as there are in the real world, but children in the magic world still have more power because they possess the ability to do magic. The adults in the magic world can also do magic, and they do it better than the children because they’ve had more training. The line between childhood and adulthood, then, is just as strict as it is in the real world. However, J.K. Rowling shows Harry and his friends taking on more and more adult responsibilities as they grow older and face more serious tasks each year.

C.S. Lewis shows how an environment that lacks discipline can lead to thwarted development in children. In *The Silver Chair*, Jill Pole and Eustace Scrubb attend a school called Experiment House. The people in charge allow all sorts of misbehavior to go unpunished:
These people had the idea that boys and girls should be allowed to do what they liked. And unfortunately what ten or fifteen of the biggest boys and girls liked best was bullying the others. All sorts of things, horrid things, went on which at an ordinary school would have been found out and stopped in half a term; but at this school they weren’t. Or even if they were, the people who did them were not expelled or punished. (Lewis, *Silver Chair* 3)

This is the place where Eustace had learned the horrible arrogance he displayed at the beginning of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. An environment that doesn’t punish wrongdoing, according to Lewis, encourages bullying and selfishness because those traits pay off in the short term.

Children in Narnia do experience punishment, although only when they act selfishly and only at the hands of Aslan. In this case, punishment allows children, should they so choose, to become free from the imprisoning aspects of selfishness and arrogance. Apart from Aslan, children are treated as equals by all the other animals and creatures in Narnia. Though the animals often know more than the children and take time to explain things to them, the children’s ideas are treated with just as much respect as everyone else’s. The few adult humans who live in Narnia are kings and queens, such as King Caspian and Prince Rilian in *The Silver Chair* and King Tirian in *The Last Battle*. These adults also treat the children as equals. As a result, all creatures except Aslan (and Tash, who appears only in *The Last Battle*) have a comparable amount of power.

Aslan is Lord over all creatures, even Tash, the evil god of the Calormenes and Lewis’s fictional conception of the devil. It is up to Aslan to give out punishments and
rewards, which he always does although usually not immediately. Humans and animals alike must wait until Aslan returns to Narnia, or perhaps even until their own death to receive Aslan’s judgment. This gives them the chance to see the results of their actions; by the time they meet Aslan, they often already know if they’ve made the wrong decisions. In *The Silver Chair*, Jill accidentally pushes Eustace off a high cliff as she tries to prove how brave she is. Aslan asks her why Eustace fell off the cliff:

“I was showing off, Sir.”

“That is a very good answer, Human Child. Do so no more. And now” (here for the first time the Lion’s face became a little less stern) “the Boy is safe. I have blown him into Narnia. But your task will be the harder because of what you have done.” (Lewis, *Silver Chair* 24)

Aslan’s punishments usually consist of nothing but forcing the wrongdoer to face the consequences of his or her actions. This fits into the model of character development in which negative consequences of free choice, and the resultant suffering, lead either to growth or stagnation.

Things are set up differently in the magic world of Harry Potter. Adults are more skillful and knowledgeable in the art of magic, generally giving them power over all children. The dominant adult characters in the series are all teachers and parents, which only adds authority to their already powerful adult status. This does not mean that adults are always right; on the contrary, we see character flaws and bad decisions in every adult, with the possible exception of Dumbledore (though he admits to letting emotion cloud his judgment with regard to Harry at the end of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*).
It does mean, however, that adults are responsible for rewarding and punishing the good and bad behavior of the children. As a result, adults in the magic world have a tremendous influence on the character development of children; in the end, of course, everything depends on the child’s own attitudes and decisions.

When a child misbehaves at home, it is the responsibility of the parents to punish him or her. This occurs many times with Mrs. Weasley and her twin sons Fred and George. At Hogwarts, punishment is usually given by the student’s Head of House. Whenever Harry and his friends are caught breaking a rule, which happens on a regular basis, it is Professor McGonagall who decides their punishment. If anyone misbehaves during class, it is the responsibility of that teacher to punish him or her. This happens to Harry all the time in Professor Snape’s class.

Adults vary in the degree of the punishments they dole out. McGonagall is always fair and even-handed when dealing with students. She doesn’t show favoritism toward students in her own house, Gryffindor. Snape, on the other hand, is always looking for a chance to punish Harry; he even tries to get him expelled. Snape never punishes students in his own house of Slytherin. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, Malfoy runs into Ron in the hallway one afternoon before the Christmas holidays. He insults Ron’s family about their poverty and Ron tries to hit him. Snape sees this and punishes Ron, even though his anger towards Malfoy was merited.

Hogwarts is set up so that adults are also in a position to reward good behavior. The four houses that the students are divided into compete against each other every year to see who can win the House Cup. Every student can earn points for his or her house by
answering questions correctly in class or displaying other types of exemplary behavior. The teachers award these points. Likewise, teachers can take points away from each house if one of its members breaks a rule, talks back to a teacher, or misbehaves in some other way.

Though the structure of reward and punishment is different in Narnia and in Harry Potter’s world, the results end up being the same: there are figures in each series that are more powerful than the children. These individuals are in a place to punish or reward the children’s behavior. In Narnia, the rewards and punishments are always construed as being fair, since Aslan is good and wise, and he is the ultimate judge. In Harry Potter, the rewards and punishments are not always fair, because many of the figures in power have their individual biases. Ultimately, however, the rewards and punishments are in Dumbledore’s hands, such as awarding final points to determine the winners of the House Cup, or deciding whether Harry gets expelled in the fifth book. This way, the important judgments are fair, because Dumbledore is parallel to Aslan in his goodness and wisdom.
Part IV: Role Models and Authority Figures

A very important element in the development of children is the influence of role models and authority figures. Role models show children through words and actions how to behave and what behavior is acceptable. In Narnia, Aslan is the children’s role model. In the Harry Potter books, Dumbledore is Harry’s role model. Throughout the series, Harry realizes Dumbledore wants to give him a chance, “not just another chance to face his parents’ killer directly but to learn his own ability and possibility” (Pharr, 60). The most important thing about role models is that they allow the children to make their own decisions.

Aslan relates to the children as an authority figure as well as a role model. As an authority figure, he makes rules (though they are unspoken) for their behavior and gives them tasks to carry out. He is responsible for their rewards and punishments. As a role model, he helps them realize when they’ve made a bad decision. If the children are humble enough to admit they’ve made a wrong decision, they are free to develop a deeper, wiser character. If the children reject the role model’s advice and choose arrogance instead, they cannot come to any new realizations or knowledge and they do not grow.

In The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, Lucy comes across a book of magic spells. She says one that allows her to listen to something unkind her friend in England said about her. Aslan steps in as a role model, telling her she had made a bad choice:

“Child,” he said, “I think you have been eavesdropping.”
“Eavesdropping?”

“You listened to what your two schoolfellows were saying about you.”

“Oh that? I never thought that was eavesdropping, Aslan. Wasn’t it magic?”

“Spying on people by magic is the same as spying on them in any other way.

And you have misjudged your friend. She is weak, but she loves you. She was afraid of the older girl and said what she does not mean.”

“I don’t think I’d ever be able to forget what I heard her say.”

“No, you won’t.”

“Oh dear,” said Lucy. “Have I spoiled everything? Do you mean we would have gone on being friends if it hadn’t been for this – and been really great friends – all our lives perhaps – and now we never shall.” (Lewis, *Voyage 159*)

Aslan doesn’t punish Lucy, but he shows her the consequences of putting herself before others. Since she realizes she has been foolish and admits it, she has learned from the situation and is a more mature person for the experience.

Dumbledore’s importance as a role model is similar to Aslan’s, but while Aslan is infallible, Dumbledore can make mistakes. Even so, his judgment is nearly always correct and he proves invaluable to Harry’s development. Zipes agrees: “...Professor Dumbledore is Harry’s spiritual father, the ultimate saintly wizard, who operates behind the scenes to guide and help Harry” (*Sticks and Stones* 180). As the series progresses, we come to realize that Dumbledore has a greater and greater role in advising Harry. It is Dumbledore who utters the themes of the novels, and with each subsequent book he reveals more to Harry about magic and Harry’s own past and destiny.
One instance of this occurs in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* when Harry discovers the Mirror of Erised. The reflection Harry sees is of his parents smiling and waving at him. Since he can’t remember his parents, the mirror makes Harry feel like he’s somehow connected with them. He goes back to the mirror night after night, spending hours staring into it. Dumbledore waits there for him one night and tells Harry about the mirror:

> It shows us nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts. You, who have never known your family, see them standing around you. Ronald Weasley, who has always been overshadowed by his brothers, sees himself standing alone, the best of all of them. However, this mirror will give us neither knowledge or truth. Men have wasted away before it, entranced by what they have seen, or been driven mad, not knowing if what it shows is real or even possible. [...] It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live, remember that.

(Rowling, *Philosopher* 157)

Dumbledore helps Harry learn an important lesson about the danger of desire. Harry’s parents cannot come back from the dead and the mirror is luring Harry into an obsession with the impossible. Dwelling on his dead parents would have been one of the most effective ways to arrest Harry’s character growth. It would have locked him in the past and prevented him from learning anything in the present, but Harry is open to Dumbledore’s advice, preventing this from happening.

In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry saves the life of Peter Pettigrew, one of Voldemort’s most loyal servants. Harry is furious with himself for
saving Peter’s life, but Dumbledore again intervenes. He explains that because Harry was merciful, Voldemort now has a servant who is indebted to Harry and has a bond with him: “This is magic at its deepest, its most impenetrable, Harry. But trust me ... the time may come when you will be very glad you saved Pettigrew’s life” (Rowling, *Prisoner* 311). Dumbledore teaches Harry that showing kindness and mercy to someone else is never a bad thing. He reinforces the principles of goodness in Harry.

Even though adults serve as role models in both series, friends also can teach each other lessons. Lucy and Edmund encourage Eustace in the right direction in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and in *The Silver Chair*, Jill and Eustace learn from each other. In the Potter books, Harry not only learns from his friends but also succeeds in delaying Voldemort’s return to power with their help. Because he is so famous he sometimes gets sole credit for tasks Ron and Hermione helped him with; regardless, situations occur over and over in which the varying talents of his friends help him learn and succeed. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, Harry, Ron and Hermione have to pass through a series of obstacles in order to rescue the Philosopher’s Stone before Voldemort gets it. Hermione figures out how to get past a strangling vine that traps Harry and Ron; Ron, who happens to be very good at chess, gets Harry and Hermione through a dangerous, life-size game of chess. Harry’s the one who rescues the stone at the end, but he would never have gotten there without his friends’ help.

The opposite is true as well; Harry seems less able to learn from his experiences when he is at odds with Ron and Hermione. Harry is “never as anguished fighting Voldemort as he is when he quarrels with these beloved friends. Friendship itself helps
Harry grow toward maturity” (Pharr 62). In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Harry and Ron get in an argument and don’t talk to each other for weeks. In addition to causing feelings of anger and self-righteousness, fighting with Ron inhibits Harry’s concentration on the tasks he must accomplish in the Triwizard tournament.

There is a sense in which children are fighting against adults in Narnia as well as in the Potter series. The vast majority of adults in the magical world of Narnia live in the evil land of Calormen, which Narnia does battle with on several occasions. In Harry Potter’s world, adults are often cast in controlling roles, preventing Harry and his friends from doing what they want or need to do. This causes students to lie to adults or avoid them in order to accomplish their own goals. This subversion of authority is countered by Harry’s loyalty to Dumbledore.

Though Dumbledore is the primary role model for Harry, other adults also play a part. In particular, Harry admires his father and wants to be like him. It is interesting that the protection from Dementors is called a “Patronus,” similar to the Latin for “father.” Here the father figure serves as a protection against fear and harm. The father enables children to keep growing, teaching them to conquer their fear. Extending the analogy, Harry’s Patronus takes the form of a stag (the shape of the Patronus is different for every wizard). His father was an Animagus, meaning he could change voluntarily from a human being into an animal. The animal James Potter turned into was a stag; his close friends nicknamed him Prongs. Dumbledore talks to Harry about his feelings for his father:
You think the dead we have loved ever truly leave us? You think that we don’t recall them more clearly than ever in times of great trouble? Your father is alive in you, Harry, and shows himself most plainly when you have need of him. How else could you produce that particular Patronus? Prongs rode again last night.

[...] So you did see your father last night, Harry ... you found him inside yourself.

*(Prisoner 312)*

Even though Harry never really knew his father, James Potter still plays an important part in shaping the character Harry becomes.

In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Harry discovers that his father had been cruel to Snape when they were students together at Hogwarts. For the first time, Harry begins to question the kind of person his father was and whether he really wants to be like his father. This is a crucial turning point for Harry, as he consciously recognizes his independence from his father.
Part V: Power structure

In creating a universe, there has to be some source of power, whether it is a type of Creator or some type of entity or “existence” that contains power. The power that is in charge of a universe determines the initial choice each member of that universe must make. In Narnia, this choice is either for or against Aslan. For Harry Potter, this choice is for or against magic and imagination. Discussing power in relation to children’s maturation is essential:

...the crux of defining adolescent literature as distinct from children’s literature resides in the issue of power. While in children’s literature, growth is depicted as a function of what the character has learned about self, growth in adolescent literature is inevitably depicted as a function of what the adolescent has learned about how society curtails the individual’s power. The adolescent cannot grow without experiencing gradations between power and powerlessness. Consequently, power is even more fundamental to the genre than growth is.

(Trites 473)

The Narnia series and the Harry Potter series are considered children’s literature, but we can see from this quotation that both series, particularly the Potter books, might be considered adolescent literature. However they are classified, the structure of power plays an enormous role in character development.

In Narnia, Aslan is the source of power. It is clear that being “good” means loving Aslan and being loyal to him. Being “evil” means defying him, whether that
happens through loyalty to an evil witch or just being loyal to oneself. For example, in *The Last Battle*, the Dwarfs get to Aslan’s home, which is a kind of paradise. The problem is, they cannot see the beauty or smell or taste the wonders of the land; all they experience is the inside of a dirty old shack, and they huddle together for protection they do not need. They cannot enter Aslan’s home because they were not loyal to him. They did not go to serve Tash because they were not loyal to him either. They only cared about themselves, saying over and over, “The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs” (Lewis, *Last Battle* 169). In the battle that occurred between Tirian, the last king of Narnia, and the Calormenes, the Dwarfs killed members of both sides to ensure that neither would prevail and enslave them. The Dwarfs condemned themselves to eternal ignorance through their preoccupation with not being taken in or fooled.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Mr. Tumnus stops thinking about Aslan. He talks to Lucy for hours about life in the forest and even tells her about the evil White Witch, but he never mentions Aslan. Letting the knowledge and strength of Aslan slip from him leaves Mr. Tumnus vulnerable to the fear the White Witch inspires, and he agrees to work for her. Lewis indirectly shows Aslan’s power by revealing the weakness of creatures that do not constantly trust in him.

It is less clear in Harry Potter what the source of power is. The answer seems to be that power is dictated by the over-arching, pervading entity of magic. Whether it is good magic or evil/dark magic depends on the wizard’s intentions. According to Trites:

> [...] the villain in this series is a figure who refuses to honor socially sanctioned limits on power. [...] He wants to have power so he can use it to dominate others.
In that sense, he is the perfect foil for Dumbledore, who has power that he does not want to use. It is Dumbledore’s self-control that marks his maturity. (481) Both Voldemort and Dumbledore are extremely powerful wizards. The difference is that Voldemort uses magic to gain uncontrollable, absolute power over everyone else, and he harms and murders people in the process. Dumbledore uses magic to help and save people, but he is not all-powerful. In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Dumbledore believes that Sirius is innocent, but tells Harry “I have no power to make other men see the truth, or to overrule the Minister for Magic...” (Rowling, *Prisoner* 287). Still, good intentions lead to good magic.

Being a powerful magician is a skill, developed through study and practice. It is not hereditary, since we know Hermione is a skilled witch with Muggles for parents. It is also revealed that certain individuals exist, such as Hogwarts’ caretaker Mr. Filch, who have a witch and wizard for parents but are not capable of doing magic themselves. There is even a name for these people: they are called squibs. However, the element of magic is available to any witch or wizard who works to master it. As we have seen, evil characters usually have great ambition to achieve personal power; as Voldemort’s follower Professor Quirrell puts it in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, “There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it...” (Rowling, *Philosopher* 211). Characters who are good in the Potter books usually exhibit restraint from using magic to gain additional power for themselves. Ironically, this self-restraint from gaining power still enables them to be extremely powerful, as in the case of Dumbledore.
In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Dumbledore tells Harry and Hermione to save Sirius without anyone seeing them. Hermione knows how to magically manipulate time so it can be repeated – relived. They manage to rescue Sirius, but only through the use of magic. Again, it seems that magic is the source of power.

A person’s power is heightened if he can induce fear in others. The White Witch’s success in ruling over Narnia before Aslan’s return is due in large part to the fear she elicits in all the creatures. In Harry Potter, this idea is even more explicit. People are so afraid of Voldemort that they won’t even say his name, referring to him instead as “You Know Who” or “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.” If someone does say his name out loud, everyone in the vicinity jumps with fright. Harry and Dumbledore, two wizards who must face Voldemort repeatedly, are not afraid to say his name. Voldemort has less power over them than he has over anyone else.

A better example of the power of fear can be seen when examining a type of “monster” called a Boggart. In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Professor Lupin teaches his Defense Against the Dark Arts students to defeat Boggarts, who change shape at will. When a Boggart gets near a person, it will assume the shape of the thing that person fears most. For example, Professor Lupin is a werewolf, so he is afraid of the full moon (which causes him to take his wolf form). Any Boggart near him turns into a large, round, silvery orb.

The key to defeating a Boggart is exactly what one might expect: the person must conquer his or her fear. To accomplish this, Lupin tells the students to picture the Boggart in the form it will take for each of them, and then imagine something happening
to it that makes it no longer frightening. In fact, it should look so ridiculous that the students can’t help laughing at it. For instance, Neville Longbottom is terrified of Professor Snape. When the Boggart comes out as Snape, Neville imagines it wearing his (Neville’s) grandmother’s out-dated dress, purse and vulture-topped hat. He can’t help laughing at it, which forces it to change shape into the next student’s most feared object. Eventually, the laughter kills the Boggart.

The only reason a Boggart is powerful is because it takes on a form that people fear. Defeating a Boggart depends on facing and conquering fear. Lupin doesn’t let Harry have a chance to defeat the Boggart during class. Harry believes it is because Lupin doesn’t think he can handle it. In reality, Lupin thought the Boggart would take the shape of Voldemort when it reached Harry, and he didn’t want the class exposed to that. Later Harry asks Lupin about it and learns the real reason Lupin didn’t let him face the monster. He tells Lupin that at first he had thought it was Voldemort he feared most, but then realized that he most feared the guards of the wizard prison of Azkaban, called Dementors. Lupin says, “Well, well ... I’m impressed. That suggests that what you fear most of all is – fear. Very wise, Harry” (Prisoner 117).

The Dementors themselves feed on fear. They gain power by sucking energy and hope out of human spirits. To defeat a Dementor, one must use a memory to recreate a feeling of happiness. Doing this while reciting a spell produces a “Patronus” that wards off Dementors. Professor Lupin teaches Harry to conjure a Patronus and explains, “The Patronus is a kind of positive force, a projection of the very things that the Dementor feeds upon – hope, happiness, the desire to survive – but it cannot feel despair, as real
humans can, so the Dementors can’t hurt it” (Prisoner 176). Rowling created two kinds of monsters that thrive on fear, showing how much more powerful someone can be if others fear him or her.

The ability of a character to acquire power depends not only on the source of power but also on the identity of the character him or herself. Men control the powerful positions in both Narnia and in Harry Potter’s world. Aslan is a male lion; Peter is the “High King”; the White Witch is obviously female and powerful, but her power is nothing compared to Aslan’s. Further, it is interesting that the only powerful female in Narnia is a very evil character. This calls to mind the traditional idea of woman as temptress, as in the Christian creation story of Adam and Eve.

In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Father Christmas finally comes back to Narnia as the White Witch’s power is ebbing. He gives Peter a sword and shield; Susan and Lucy each get a weapon to defend themselves, but are told not to participate in the fight against the White Witch. When Lucy asks why, he tells them, “Battles are ugly when women fight” (Lewis, Lion 109). Women can be kind and gentle and wise, and Susan and Lucy have some amount of power as queens, but women cannot be significantly powerful for good in Narnia.

In the Harry Potter series, women play almost as small a role in the power struggle as they do in Narnia. The main character is male, as is his best friend Ron. Their other close friend, Hermione, is very intelligent and caring, but she also has a few unlikable traits that come through very strongly. With so few prominent female
characters, these traits, such as bossiness and kissing up to teachers, stand out and reveal girls in a less positive light than boys.

The two most powerful characters, Voldemort and Dumbledore, are male. All Voldemort’s main supporters are male except one, Bellatrix Lestrange. A few teachers are female, but only Professor McGonagall teaches a difficult and important subject (Transfiguration). Professor McGonagall shows stereotypically feminine behavior after Harry returns from the Chamber of Secrets in the second book. She clutches her chest and gasps for air, at a loss for what to do, while Dumbledore keeps his cool and takes charge of the situation.

Males teach the other main subjects, like Potions and Defense Against the Dark Arts. There is, of course, an exception to this generalization. In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Dolores Umbridge is a high-up assistant to the Minister of Magic (who is male). The ministry appoints her to teach Defense Against the Dark Arts, but she is a despicable character and does a terrible job. She ends the book in a state of mental instability if not insanity. Rowling’s women, then, can acquire some power, but nothing significant enough to put them in dominant leadership roles.

Socioeconomic class is another individual trait that can affect a person’s ability to gain and wield power. It does not, however, seem to be an issue influencing the structure of power in the land of Narnia. In contrast, class is an issue in Calormen, a large and powerful nation to the south of Narnia. Rich “Tarkaans” rule over slaves and lower classes bow to the upper classes. Property and possessions show who is rich and
powerful. In Calormen, power and money go together as they do in the real world. Interestingly, Calormen is portrayed as an evil, corrupt nation that worships Tash.

All the children who get to Narnia seem to come from a middle class background in England, and money is never mentioned in the world of Narnia. All the creatures who live there appear to be socially and economically equal. Power has nothing to do with material wealth and everything to do with goodness and loyalty to Aslan. Even so, good and loyal creatures don’t acquire power in the traditional sense. Narnia operates on a system of humility; Aslan is the lord of everyone and no creature makes claims of greatness.

In Harry Potter’s world, socioeconomic class complicates the structure of power. In one sense, the rich can be viewed as having more power than the poor. The Malfoys are an extremely rich and influential family, as are the Blacks. The Weasleys are poor and much less powerful. Rowling portrays the rich families as being evil, with the one exception of Sirius Black; the middle class and poor families are portrayed as good.

The slavery seen in Narnia’s neighboring country of Calormen also exists in Harry’s world. The difference is that in Calormen, slavery involves persons of the Calormene race as well as other races and nationalities. In Harry’s world, slavery is imposed on only one race: house elves. These creatures are so subordinate that they feel they must punish themselves if they show any disloyalty toward their masters. House elves are capable of intelligent thought and choosing between good and evil. Good house elves like Dobby punish themselves even if they privately disagree with their masters.
Bad house elves like Kreacher only obey their masters because they are magically bound to do so. These creatures are completely powerless.

Hermione is very angry when she discovers the plight of house elves, especially when she realizes that hundreds of them are employed at Hogwarts. However, no one else is concerned about the house elves. Even the elves themselves, with the exception of Dobby, don’t want freedom or power. They feel that slavery is their place.

Aside from the house elves, wizards do not enslave magical creatures. However, none of these creatures come close to being as powerful as wizards, not even centaurs, unicorns or giants. One must be human to be powerful in Harry Potter’s world. This contrasts sharply with the social structure in Narnia, where equality is the rule rather than the exception.
Part VI: Fulfillment of prophecies

Prophecies are spoken in Narnia as well as in Harry Potter. Examining the source of these prophecies can help explain the power structure in both series because the prophecies have to come from somewhere, and it is sensible to assume that whoever or whatever is in charge of the universe is the source of each prophecy.

The prophecy in Narnia is discussed, as well as fulfilled, in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. It was spoken “at the very beginning” (Lewis, *Lion* 142). The White Witch reminds Aslan of the prophecy: “You know that every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that for every treachery I have a right to a kill” (*Lion* 142). Aslan trades his own life for Edmund’s, telling the Witch that she may kill him in place of Edmund. When Aslan comes back to life after being killed, he explains to Lucy and Susan:

> It means that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different sort of incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backward. (*Lion* 163)

Aslan, of course, fulfilled this prophecy, dying in Edmund’s place and resurrecting to new life. The prophecy implies that there is something that has more power than the
death, or even the Deep Magic. We find out that both prophecies were spoken by the Emperor-beyond-the-Sea, Aslan’s father.

The fact that both came true exactly as the Emperor said indicates that it is he who has all the knowledge and power in Narnia. Readers never meet the Emperor-beyond-the-Sea as a separate entity from Aslan, not even in *The Last Battle* when the world of Narnia ends and all the good creatures go to Aslan’s home. This suggests that Aslan is the Emperor-beyond-the-Sea; he is both father and son, God and lion.

In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the children leave England and enter Narnia by magic. In *The Silver Chair*, the reader finds out that people only get to Narnia if Aslan calls them. Therefore, we might assume that the character of Aslan is synonymous with the concept of magic. This idea makes it easier to draw analogies between Narnia and Harry Potter’s world.

Even so, the source of the prophecies in the Potter books is far more difficult to determine. The woman who actually verbalizes the prophecies is Professor Trelawney, a “Seer” of the future who is really a complete fraud. She makes predictions in all her Divination classes, and the few that ever come true are obviously coincidental. However, on two occasions she seems to be taken over by another force and makes predictions in a voice that is not her own. The obvious question, which Rowling so far has not directly addressed, concerns the identity of this force that speaks through Trelawney. Who or what controls the magical universe?

Since the series never alludes to a god or any Higher Being having control over the magic world, we are left with few candidates. The ultimate Power cannot be a human
being, because the two most powerful wizards in the series are clearly fallible and destructible. This leaves only one alternative: the source of the prophecies, and of all existing power, is the pervading entity of magic. Trelawney was somehow able, unintentionally, to tap into this magic. Perhaps she was able to do this because the gift of the “Inner Eye,” or the ability to see the future, was passed down to her genetically through her great grandmother, a famous Seer. Regardless, the prophecy had to come from somewhere; magic is the power source while Trelawney merely taps into it.

In the first five books of the series, Trelawney’s second prophecy and the first part of her first prophecy have come true. We are led to assume that the rest of it will come true in the last two books. Presumably the seventh book will tell us who wins, good or evil, Harry or Voldemort. Regardless of the winner, the prophecy still comes true and magic proves to be the controlling force in the world.

In a fascinating reversal of the power structure, it is humans who harness the power of magic. According to Jack Zipes, “Harry ‘acts out’ his role with wand, invisible cape, and broomstick to determine his destiny, and though adults may help him, he is literally the one who has the power to use for the benefit of goodness” ([Sticks and Stones](#) 180). Magic does nothing on its own, but wizards can do nothing significant without magic.

Even though magic is the source of all power, it is human beings who wield this power. They develop the ability to use magic through natural skill, study and practice. Magic exists for everyone in the Harry Potter series, but Muggles don’t have the imagination to accept it and use it. Witches and wizards are open enough to possibilities
to tap into the power of magic. It is, therefore, a reciprocal relationship in which some humans are witches and wizards as a result of magic, while magic is used by these humans for their own intents and purposes.

Whether the reader chooses to see Narnia’s Aslan as the personification of magic or as a fictional conception of God, strong similarities between the source of power in both series are undeniable. Humans have access to power in Narnia and in Harry Potter. The primary difference is that in Narnia, Aslan controls all power and humans cannot harness it or use it for their own purposes. In Harry Potter’s world, humans can harness the power of magic and use it however they choose.

This widens the scope of possibilities for Harry and the other young witches and wizards. They might become very powerful and accomplish much for the cause of good or evil. In Narnia, the possibilities are narrower, for children can only aid the progress of good or evil; they have no actual control.

As we have seen, each series deals with many factors that affect the acquisition of power. Additionally, many clues are given about the ultimate source of power. All this influences how children grow and develop, determining who becomes powerful and who doesn’t, as well as how one becomes powerful.
Conclusions

Fantasy stories such as *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *Harry Potter* series offer authors a unique opportunity to create and develop characters. Many factors influence the circumstances surrounding a child’s development, such as societal expectations, social and gender roles, the relation between children and adults and the power structure. Having compared these factors as they appear in Narnia and the Harry Potter books, it is apparent that despite the time gap between the publications of each series, many similarities exist.

While J.K. Rowling and C.S. Lewis have created totally different fantasy worlds with different kinds of characters and underlying themes, the eternal battle between Good and Evil is the foundation upon which everything else is based. When examining character development in both series, the starting point for each child is making the choice between good and evil. Lewis and Rowling both depend on the existence of free choice to develop their characters; the act of choosing one’s allegiance and subsequent behavior is the basis of all knowledge and growth. Suffering in particular forces characters to make decisions; the ones who ally themselves with the Good side end up accepting that bad things happen and admitting to making mistakes. These children progress in their development as a result of suffering, while characters who choose Evil usually regress or anchor themselves even further in character stagnation.

Both Lewis and Rowling, whether intentionally or not, communicate the values they feel are important in growing up. These values are remarkably similar, including the
importance of humility, imagination, loyalty and selflessness and the danger of arrogance, superiority and selfishness. Children reading these books will, on some level, incorporate such values into their consciousness. Thus it is right that authors like Lewis and Rowling support traits that lead to harmony and cooperation; society, whether in the past, the present or the future, benefits from series such as The Chronicles of Narnia and Harry Potter.
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