THE MAGIC OF A MOTHER’S LOVE:
MATERNAL ATTACHMENT IN J.K. ROWLING’s

HARRY POTTER SERIES

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Foreword: The Boy Who Changed the World

Children, both young and grown, all over the world are still meeting, mostly on the Internet, raising their butterbeers and saying, “To Harry Potter – the boy who changed our lives.” I will never forget the Christmas I met Harry. I was in second grade, and my aunt and uncle sent me the first two Harry Potter books as my gift that year. “I would like to read those,” my mother said as I opened them. “I heard they’re good.” For a while, the books remained dormant on our table in the dining room until the day when a boy in my class offered to have a contest with me: who could finish Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone first? At the start, he was winning, but then I was able to pull ahead and finish first. Immediately after, I started Chamber of Secrets. Later that year, when I was in third grade, a family event forced me to grow up a bit faster than the rest my classmates. The only friend I felt comfortable turning to was Harry. He knew what is was like to be alone and scared and friendless. The Harry Potter books were my childhood, but, even more than that, they became my life. I was present at the midnight releases for the last three books, and, when I closed Deathly Hallows at 9 a.m. on Saturday 21 July 2007, I was finished. I had completed the book in nine hours. All I could do was lie in my bed and stare at the vibrant orange cover knowing that it was all over. My childhood had finally reached its end.

In October 2013, I gave a presentation at my church on Christianity in Harry Potter. As I looked out at my friends, I said that my whole life, even the fact that I was an English major, was because of Harry Potter. As soon as I said it, I knew it was true. Reading Harry Potter made me want to learn. It made me hungry for information. Where
did Rowling get those names? What were her favorite books? Oh, wow, I want to read that, too!

The rest is history.
Introduction: Making Sense through Books

Every time I read the *Harry Potter* books, I discover something new about them, things I did not pick up on during my 100\(^{th}\) reading but noticed during my 200\(^{th}\). It can be easy to dismiss *Harry Potter*, as it is to dismiss most children’s books, of just being “kid books” of no literary merit. However, Lanes disagrees saying, “Books encountered in childhood are often remembered with affection throughout life, and some of them color the child’s response to many subsequent experiences” (Lanes 3). I had a debate with a friend once regarding the question, “Should adults read books for kids?” His argument was no, because there comes a point when a person must grow up, and, in taking that step back and embracing childhood, one forgets that there is a future ahead. While I understand his point, I strongly disagree. For a children’s book to be a good, lasting one, it has to pass the “adult test”: does an adult enjoy the book as much as a child? In my own experience, the books I love most from my childhood are the ones that I can read as an adult and still enjoy. Though I try to branch out and read other books, I naturally gravitate to children’s books when looking for something new to read. While it can be easy to forget what it was like to be a child, our childhood experiences shape us into the adults we become. In my present life, the pastimes I enjoy and the literature that captures my attention most is, in some way, related to my childhood experiences. So, what exactly makes the *Harry Potter* books so special?

To start, the books are scary. Harry’s parents are dead, and he is an orphan. While not all of Harry’s readers will empathize with Harry for being orphaned, everyone knows
what it feels like to be alone and unwanted. No person grows up without experiencing some sort of psychological trauma. As Greenspan says,

Certain basic emotional foundations for security are laid down in the early years of life and reworked and solidified during the grade school and adolescent years. If these foundations are not in place, children may run into problems during both early and later development. When they are firmly established, they constitute a base upon which all future emotional development is grounded and a sense of inner security can be built.

(Greenspan 45)

Not all children experience all these emotions at once, or at the same time, but some do. Some are like Harry, born into a world of lies, violence, and heartbreak. There is a line from Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows that always brings tears to my eyes. When Harry and Hermione visit the Potters’ ruined home in the village of Godric’s Hollow, they see a sign that says the ruined home has been “left as a monument to the Potters and to the violence that tore apart their family” (Hallows 332–333). Upon my seemingly hundredth re-read of Deathly Hallows, I stared at the end of that sentence: “the violence that tore apart their family.” That struck a chord with me because, while in the midst of reading the Harry Potter books, it is hard to see Harry as an orphan or even as a victim of violence because he seems so like us, yet he is a victim, and so are his parents. Naturally, these experiences shape him and define him, particularly as he grows up and learns more about the world of which he was not a part for ten years.
Many children in the *Harry Potter* universe have destroyed lives. There are few “traditional” families, and in many cases, even the traditional families are broken for some reason or other. There is no perfect family. The Dursleys can try to say “that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much” (*Stone* 1), but, in Rowling’s world, appearances are meant to be destroyed. Nothing is ever as it seems. The heroes are not always the strong and powerful. These include children, as well as other “lesser” creatures, who are “given roles with initiative and courage” (Wolosky 153). Elves, teenagers not old enough to join the Muggle military, centaurs, imperfect wizards such as Tonks and Neville who have difficulty mastering spells, half-bloods such as Hagrid struggling to integrate themselves into society, and werewolves such as Remus Lupin are summoned to fight together for the betterment of the wizarding world. These people are embraced by a calling higher than their own. Despite humble beginnings and past histories of loneliness and sadness, these characters rise above their traumatic origins and emerge, like the phoenix from the ashes, as the heroes and leaders who bring the wizarding world into the next generation.

**Childhood Trauma**

The *Harry Potter* books are about life, death, sacrifice, and love. When Harry’s parents are murdered, he lives with his aunt and uncle who do not want him. Then, one day he discovers that he is a wizard possessing magical powers. He goes to school to learn how to control these powers, and there he meets people from all different types of backgrounds, two of whom become his best friends. Though primarily about the story of
a boy with a lightening-shaped scar on his forehead, Harry’s story can still teach us much about the other characters in the book. For example, Rowling draws many similarities between Harry and his greatest, most formidable enemy, Lord Voldemort. Both are orphans who grow up without a mother’s love, yet the two become entirely different men. Rowling always points readers to the significance of choice, that our decisions define who we are as people as establish who we want to become.

Because the entire story is told from Harry’s point of view, it is easy to forget that orphans, or even those with only one parent, outnumber the “traditional” families with two parents in the books. Interestingly enough, however, Harry is not the only orphan to be considered “special” in the eyes of the Hogwarts staff. More than fifty years before Harry is born, another young boy is approached by Albus Dumbledore. Dumbledore visits a young orphan named Tom Riddle, who lives in a Muggle orphanage, and tells him the same thing that the half-giant Hagrid tells Harry: You’re a wizard. However, life for these two boys, a couple of generations apart, could not be more different, despite their similar upbringings. Each boy goes to Hogwarts, which he sees as his first home, and makes his mark. For Harry, it is his incredible talent on the Quidditch field. For Voldemort it is superior academic grades.

Why this big difference between Harry and Voldemort? Why is one so good and the other so evil, yet they are so similar? The answer is simple: mothers. No book in the series passes without a mention of Harry’s parents and the knowledge that they loved their son enough to sacrifice their lives for him, particularly Lily Potter, Harry’s mother. Lord Voldemort’s mother, Merope Gaunt, makes a guest appearance in only one book,
though she is briefly mentioned in *Chamber of Secrets*. Nevertheless, the parental, mainly maternal, presence in each character’s life, particularly in infancy, makes all the difference when the child matures and grows to adulthood. While Harry’s parents watched him grow until just after he turned a year old, Voldemort’s mother Merope died after giving birth to him, and his father walked out before that event, without bothering to discover what happened to his offspring. This lack of parental attachment on Voldemort’s part and the presence of attachment on Harry’s widens the schism between the two characters.

Of course, other characters share these characteristics of Voldemort and Harry, and their stories are just as tragic. Harry’s classmate Neville Longbottom is cursed with the saddest predicament because his parents are alive yet unable to care for their son or even remember who he is. Rubeus Hagrid, Harry’s deliverance from his miserable life with his awful aunt and uncle, inherited his mother’s giant blood, making him seem more fearsome than he is. Also, Hagrid’s mother abandons him, forcing him to grow up without a mother. Finally, Merope Gaunt, the mother of Lord Voldemort, is a classic case of domestic abuse. Her father both verbally and physically abuses her to the point where she abuses another in order to escape her tragic life. However, despite these tragedies, each person is able to overcome adversity in his or her own way.

Dealing with past traumas and sorrows is never easy. Sometimes, like Harry, we want to break under the stress of too much pressure. However, this is the difference between “being dragged into the arena to face a battle to the death and walking into the arena with your head held high” (*Prince* 512). To keep walking and standing tall even
when all is lost is a struggle, but it is a rewarding fight. To rise above your past or your grief is an even greater feat. For Rowling, this comes from several different aspects of life, including views on death, respect of life, being yourself and using your talents for the betterment of others, understanding the power of love, and a willingness to sacrifice yourself for others. How one perceives all of these things is a choice, but how we define and shape our choices is dependent on our parents, the ones who raised us. However, lacking parents does not mean a child is completely helpless. A child’s development all depends on that crucial first year of life.
Chapter One

Applying Mother Theory to *Harry Potter*
Mommy, Do You Love Me?

Michelangelo’s masterpiece, the Pietà, depicts the Blessed Mother holding her dead son Jesus as one would hold a newborn baby. For Mary, losing her son is the ultimate sacrifice: the death of one’s child in exchange for the salvation of the entire world. In the final book of the Harry Potter series, after Harry meets his death in the Forbidden Forest, Voldemort forces Hagrid to carry Harry back to the castle. Illustrator Mary GrandPré draws Hagrid holding Harry the same way Mary holds Jesus in the Pietà, cradled in his arms like a baby as he gazes at his now lifeless face (Hallows 724). The expression GrandPré depicts on Hagrid’s face is similar to that of the Blessed Mother: sadness and pain as each grieves silently. Thus, Hagrid carries the body of his surrogate son back to Hogwarts with all the grief of a parent.

This image of the mother depicts one of the most prevalent themes in the Harry Potter books: that loved ones never truly vanish, even after death, and that the mother is essential to a person’s life. A child’s developmental years begin in infancy, and a child’s first year of life is the most critical year. The child that has a mother’s love from birth will be more secure in his attachments and maintain the ability to form close relationships and connections later in life. While characters like Harry know their mother’s love immediately after birth, there are other characters, such as Voldemort, who do not know the their mothers’ love, having lost them in the early developmental years.

Naturally, Rowling is not the first to utilize the absent mother plot or the rags-to-riches plot. These ideas are written and re-written over and over again, in which an orphan comes into some sort of fortune that changes his whole life and everything he
knew. In Harry’s story, his “fairy godmother” breaks down the door of the hut on the rock and reveals the best news an orphan lacking a loving family can receive: “You’re a wizard, Harry.” Come to Hogwarts and learn how to do magic. Meet new people. Have adventures. In the process, learn that you are famous. Know that the entire wizarding world is looking to you and what you are doing. Be incredible. There at Hogwarts, Harry learns more about who his parents were. Harry particularly learns his mother sacrificed herself for him, and her love kept him alive. Lily Potter gave her son life twice, and Harry mirrors her love, especially in Deathly Hallows when Harry makes the ultimate sacrifice for his friends.

The Looking Glass and What Harry Found There

In Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone, Harry stumbles upon a mirror with a strange inscription at the top. When he peers into it, Harry sees not only his own reflection, but that of his own parents and other deceased family members. This mirror is the Mirror of Erised, desire spelled backwards, that shows “nothing more or less than the deepest desires of our hearts” (Stone 213). Harry desires life with his family, especially his parents. This mirroring also recalls D.W. Winnicott’s essay on the mother, in which Winnicott says that the baby sees him or herself in the mother’s face (Winnicott 1). This is an example of games the infant and mother play together. When the baby makes a face and the mother imitates the expression, the mother becomes a mirror for the child. The mother then becomes an extension of the child himself.

However, there are negatives to the child always seeing his face when he looks at
his mother. Dumbledore tells Harry the Mirror of Erised is dangerous because “It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live, remember that” (*Stone* 214). Indeed, Harry does spend a period of time unable to eat or focus because he spends so much time thinking about the Mirror and seeing his parents again. However, Harry “must resist the strong pull to give up the quest for truth in favor of succumbing to a regressive desire to dwell upon the ‘family romance’ of his lost, idealized parents” (*Camden*). The parents are gone, unable to be recovered, and the child must banish the idea that the mother is an extension of himself and find his own identity. However, Harry can do this because his mother gave him the gift of security. She gave up a part of herself to be a mother, enabling her son to have his early needs met.

However, there are children who are not blessed with this maternal care. When the mother cannot or will not respond to the baby’s needs, the child looks, and “they do not see themselves” (*Winnicott* 2). The mother is never an extension of the child; rather, she is separate, and the positive connection is never formed. Winnicott says that “a baby so treated will grow up puzzled about mirrors and what the mirror has to offer. If the mother’s face is unresponsive, then a mirror is a thing to be looked at but not to be looked into” (*Winnicott* 2). While Harry is graced with this maternal mirror, enabling him to finally break away from the tug of the Mirror of Erised, Lord Voldemort cannot pull away because his mother was never a part of him. His mother, Merope Gaunt, lived without love, just like her son. The mirror connection is broken, and Voldemort grows up unsecure. Combined with despair and trauma, this loveless existence causes Merope to
abandon her son from the moment of his birth. Love is foreign to her, just as it is an anomaly to Voldemort.

**The Father’s Least-Loved Child**

Merope’s name alone is enough to prove that any child condemned with such nomenclature is set up for failure. In Greek mythology, Merope was one of the Pleiades, sisters who were companions of the goddess Artemis. They were turned into stars after being pursued by Orion. According to legend, while all her sisters married gods, Merope married a mortal and therefore condemned her children to a lesser status than those borne by her sisters. Her star was so faint, it was at first uncharted in the night sky. Merope is said to be hiding her face in shame for her marriage (Grimal 271). Rowling was undoubtedly clever when she bestowed the character of Voldemort’s mother with a name that is synonymous with forbidden love gone horribly wrong. The memory of Merope is the first one that Dumbledore shows Harry, as every child’s story begins with his or her parents. Upon seeing Merope Gaunt, Harry’s opinion of her is that she lacks joy and happiness. She is wearing a ragged grey dress [that] was the exact color of the dirty stone wall behind her…Her hair was lank and dull and she had a plain, pale, rather heavy face. Her eyes…stared in opposite directions. She looked little cleaner than the two men, but Harry thought he had never seen a more defeated-looking person. (*Prince* 204–205)
The daughter is not loved or appreciated in her own home. Her father attacks her with such insults as ‘That’s it, grub on the floor like some filthy Muggle, what’s your wand for, you useless sack of muck?’ and “Mend it, you pointless lump, mend it!” (Prince 205). Merope is abused, verbally and physically, by her father and brother, and treated like she is nothing more than an animal or slave. Marvolo and Morfin certainly do not find Merope to be the dream daughter and sister who appreciates her family’s blood status and heritage. When Morfin reveals Merope’s love for the Muggle squire’s son, Tom Riddle, Marvolo Gaunt is furious that his daughter, a pure-blood descendent of Salazar Slytherin, should be “hankering after a filthy, dirt-veined Muggle” (210).

Presumably, Merope was already a problem for Marvolo before he discovered her love interest. Dumbledore explains that Marvolo, whose pure-blood family wasted their inheritance, “was left in squalor and poverty…and a couple of family heirlooms that he treasured just as much as his son, and rather more than his daughter” (212). While Morfin upholds Marvolo’s beliefs, Merope does not, thus driving a wedge between the two.

Merope’s life with her father and brother is one of abuse and threatened violence in a way that recalls honor killings – in which women are killed because of some suspected sexual transgression or merely immodest behavior that is seen to ‘shame’ the family, as they see her to do when they catch her longing after a Muggle. (Wolosky 115)
As evident by the Slytherin prejudices, loving a Muggle goes against everything for which Salazar Slytherin stood, and whether she likes it or not, Merope is in this bloodline. For Marvolo, Merope lacks the proper pride required to be a descendent of such a family.

**Merope’s Escape**

Underneath Merope’s unfortunate disasters, she is found to possess much magical talent. Despite the accidents in her father’s cottage, Dumbledore believes that Merope’s “magical powers [did not appear] to their best advantage when she was being terrorized by her father.” Dumbledore also says that once her father and brother were locked away in Azkaban, Merope was “alone and free” and “able to give full rein to her abilities and to plot her escape from the desperate life she had led for eighteen years” (*Prince* 213). Once her father and brother are sent away to Azkaban, Merope, whose life up until that point had been only to serve them, seizes her chance to live her own life and slips Tom Riddle some love potion. The villagers were naturally shocked by the elopement of Riddle and Merope, but her father’s rage and anger was even more so. He was expecting to find his daughter “dutifully awaiting his return” and instead found a note explaining what she had done, and “…he never mentioned her name or existence from that time forth” (213). Merope escapes eighteen years of abuse, and her father merely cuts her off without a second thought.

Though freed from her father, poor Merope’s life does not improve once she marries Tom Riddle. Yes, she was free from the abuse inflicted upon her by her father
and brother, but now she must weigh the moral choice of magically enslaving her love or doing the right thing and taking him off the love potion. The love potion is dangerous because it takes away a person’s free will. Just as her father controlled her, so Merope controls her husband through love potions, making him a slave to her love. As potions professor Horace Slughorn says, “When you’ve seen as much of life as I have, you will not underestimate the power of obsessive love” (*Prince* 186). However, for Merope, manipulating Tom is the only way to win him. Had she treated Tom poorly or abused him as her father did to her, Tom, obsessively in love, would not be able to do anything about it, nor would he want to, because that is the effect of the portion. Love potions may not be “considered as dangerous as the Imperious Curse, because they don’t last as long, produce only romantic feelings (as opposed to say, homicidal intentions), but don’t result in total control of the affected person” (Bassham 69). While the love potions may not render complete and absolute control of a person’s mind, they are nevertheless manipulative. Before his elopement with Merope, Tom loved a woman from the village, which Merope knew (*Prince* 209). Therefore, not only has Merope ruined Tom’s life, she also ruined the life of another who loved him and believed her love to be returned. Like her son Voldemort, her actions cater to her own inner desires. Eventually, however, Merope realizes what she is doing. She follows her moral conscience and breaks her enchantment over Tom. She hopes that he will have truly fallen in love with her by now, or that he will stay for the sake of his child, with whom she is now pregnant. Unfortunately for Merope, she is wrong. Tom leaves her and her unborn child, wanting nothing to do with her now. After this abandonment, Dumbledore says that “Merope
stopped using magic…it is also possible that her unrequited love and the attendant despair sapped her of her powers” (262). Merope, after tricking Tom into loving her, might have seen magic’s “potential for abuse, especially within herself, and she refused to indulge it anymore” and also did not want to subject another “to the sort of tyranny that she herself had been subjected to by her family” (Bassham 77-76). By enslaving Riddle with magical means, she is no better than her father, and this realization comes at the moment when she most needs her husband.

Merope’s story evokes sympathy the reader. However, her difficult life is unappreciated by her son, Tom, and she is an easy target for his condemnation. The boy who later grows up to become Lord Voldemort holds his mother in contempt, and he will hold death and mortality as a human being’s greatest weakness throughout his entire life. As young Tom Riddle insists, “My mother can’t have been magic, or she wouldn’t have died” (Prince 275). Even Harry, who bases so much of his life on the sacrifice his mother made to keep him alive, cannot help but judge Merope for her choice to die rather than live and care for her son. In traveling through this memory, Harry says his mother did not have a choice to live, but Merope did. Dumbledore corrects him, reminding him that his mother did have a choice. Like Merope Gaunt Riddle, Lily Evans Potter could have chosen life, but that would mean the definite and absolute death of her only child.

Merope, who has completely given up hope, cannot see how she can possibly be a good mother to her son, and abandons him, with or without regret. Merope sinned by choosing death “in spite of a son who needed her, but do not judge her too harshly, Harry. She was greatly weakened by long suffering and she never had your mother’s courage” (262).
Dumbledore understands that a child denied love cannot be expected to emit love when grown, and this is true of Merope Gaunt. A woman who exhibits “specific vulnerabilities, such as the trauma of domestic violence or abandonment, may limit a mother’s ability to understand and respond sensitively to her infant, resulting in the repetition of her own painful past” (Schwerdtfeger 40). Though Harry, and many readers, may not be able to comprehend this, Merope is a victim, but in transmitting her experiences to her son, she also becomes one who victimizes, whether she means to or not.

**The Pattern of Violence**

While young Tom Riddle may inherit Marvolo Gaunt’s ring, as well as Salazar Slytherin’s locket, he also inherits something more lasting from his mother. Like her, Voldemort lacks love, but he also inherits a tragic life. Therefore, it makes sense that “a man who never loved would have come from a loveless union generated and sustained by magic” (Bassham 73). Love is a powerful magic, and it is one of magic’s limitations. True love cannot be generated by humans, just as no spell can reawaken the dead. Just as Harry’s mother’s sacrifice lives in his veins, so too does Riddle keep Merope’s trauma alive. However, Voldemort would not know of this because “the consequence [of trauma] is a defensive dissociation of traumatic affects, such as that the individual is not consciously aware of these feelings” (Bradfield 532). Riddle’s hatred of certain groups of people, his unwillingness, or inability, to forge relationships, and his desire for immortality all point to a case of inherited trauma, or intergenerational transmission of trauma, which he earned from Merope and her lifetime of abuse. This history is said to
pass from either “direct exposure” to the parent’s symptoms or through the parent’s abusive behavior (Schwerdtfeger 40) and can be transmitted another way. Before Merope ever gave birth to Voldemort, she was already suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder after the abandonment of her husband, while Voldemort was still in the womb, as it is possible for women to “have a very different sense of attachment to their unborn child early compared to later in their pregnancy” (Schwerdtfeger 48). When Merope became pregnant, she was most likely happy, but once her husband left, she lost the initial joy of having a child. As Bradfield says,

A parent whose trauma has negatively influenced her or his parenting capacity may exhibit tendencies such as child neglect, abandonment, and a disrupted capacity to be emotionally attuned to the child. This pattern of relating to the child may impact the child’s expectations regarding being cared for, so that they know to expect the absence of an empathically attuned parent. (Bradfield 533)

Voldemort, while still in the womb, felt his mother’s stress and displeasure with her pregnant state because she was missing the one joy from her life, namely Voldemort’s father. Even though Merope left her son, the two are extraordinarily different people. While Merope stopped her life of manipulation and control, even at the cost of losing her husband, Voldemort does not stop showing his hatred. The two are similar in that “the blood of Slytherin coursed through each of them, but their lives went in diametrically opposite directions” (Bassham 74). While it is true that Merope still continued the pattern
of her family’s violence in her son, she also broke the pattern at the same time, even if only for herself. Merope could have easily ended up similar to her son and kept her husband on love potion, but she chose to let him go rather than remain a monster.

Interestingly enough, when Merope ran off, she stole the locket of their beloved ancestor, Salazar Slytherin (Prince 365). Stealing this heirloom that is worn around the neck like a noose is representative of Merope’s inability to let go of her past, which was so full of hate and devoid of love that it followed into her marriage. While carrying emotional baggage, there is no possible way that the person will ever be truly “okay.” Even in spite of all they did to hurt her, Merope still loves both her father and her husband, taking care to mention them on her deathbed. Before she dies, she expresses hope that her son will look like Tom Riddle senior, and she insists that her baby be named Tom Marvolo, after the two men whom she loved and hurt her the most (266). With the names of these loveless men on his birth certificate and a complete lack of love in his heart, Voldemort’s mother leaves him to become a tyrant.

If Merope shows no love for her son, then it is likely that if Voldemort were to have children of his own, they would be loveless, too. Thus, the pattern would continue, particularly since research shows “these early maternal representations of the caregiver relationship have an effect on a mother’s experience of the relationship with her infant, which ultimately influences how she may interact with and become attached to her child” (Schwerdtfeger 41). When Dumbledore stresses the power of love, it is because he is aware of how dangerous a loveless existence can be. The person is not just harmful to him or herself, but the person is also dangerous to others. Dumbledore’s words to Harry
ring true not just for fictional characters like Voldemort and Merope, but also for all people: “Do not pity the dead, Harry. Pity the living. And above all, pity those who live without love” (Hallows 722). To know love is to know joy, and one’s existence will be more bearable, and it is a parent’s duty to provide this love. When the parent has not performed this, he or she has failed the child.

In the Harry Potter series, Rowling showcases diverse mothers. We see Lily Potter, who died for her son. There is Narcissa Malfoy, who would lie to the most powerful evil wizard in the world just so she could find her son. Molly Weasley adopts Harry as a surrogate eighth child. Petunia Dursley does her son Dudley no favors by letting him have his way all the time. Hagrid’s mother leaves him for not being good enough to suit her. Merope Riddle chooses death over trying to live for her son. Merope’s lack of love shown in life causes her to live selfishly in the end, enslaving her husband by means of love potion and letting her son live without her, and it also makes Voldemort the person he becomes. For Merope, acquiring love becomes a means of control, and thus, she enslaves her husband, and then when he abandons her, she also abandons her son, who begins to formulate his own speculations about his mother. If the mother of Lord Voldemort had been a truly powerful witch, she would not have died. Death, the ultimate weakness in Voldemort’s eyes, makes him see Merope as her father and brother did: as a weak woman who could achieve little success in life. Love is a weakness, not a virtue.

What Voldemort does not understand is that his followers are human and all value and love someone or something, in most cases, more than they value him. Narcissa
Malfoy aids Voldemort’s decline because she wants the battle to be over and done, knowing that “the only way she would be permitted to enter Hogwarts, and find her son, was part of the conquering army. She no longer cared whether Voldemort won” (*Hallows* 726). The Dark Lord is foiled by humans who love, including one he believed to be on his side. How could Voldemort ever understand this pure maternal love when his own mother did not show it to him? How could she understand it if her own mother did not show it to her? It is an endless pattern of abuse and violence and psychological repression that sadly continues in our world and tears families apart. Merope is a victim of this violence, and later, her son inflicts it. Other characters, like Hagrid and Neville, are also affected by the loss of their own mothers, but their circumstances turn out different from Voldemort’s or Merope’s. Knowing and feeling love from a parent, especially a mother, changes a person’s entire life for the better.
Chapter Two

Psychoanalysis and *Harry Potter*:

A Literature Review
Maternity and Attachment

The theories regarding mother-child attachment are the building blocks of this thesis. Without maternal care, a child has a more difficult time maintaining and feeling secure in relationships. In her book *Deprivation of Maternal Care: A Reassessment of Its Effects*, published in 1962, developmental psychologist Mary Ainsworth concludes that without a secure mother-child attachment, the child will not develop properly. In 1991, psychologist Hugh Gee wrote an article called “The Oedipal Complex in Adolescence,” in which Gee describes the conflict between the self’s “inner and outer realities” (Gee 193) and the adolescent’s struggle and desire to separate from the parents, particularly those parents who left the adolescent feeling abandoned as a child. Psychiatry professor Stanley Greenspan wrote about a child’s need for relationships in his book *The Secure Child: Helping Our Children Feel Safe and Confident in an Unsecure World*. In this book, Greenspan discusses how parents can help their children live securely from infancy to adulthood. Greenspan especially focuses on relationships and their importance in the secure child’s development.

The idea of parental importance in childhood development is a frequent assessment in psychoanalytic studies. Psychologists Gerald Koocher and Annette LaGreca also discuss the importance of parents in their book *The Parent’s Guide to Psychological First Aid: Helping Children and Adolescents Cope with Predictable Life Crises*. Koocher and LaGreca advise parents how to walk their children through the difficulties of life from the start of life until adolescence. Like Greenspan, Gee, and Ainsworth, Koocher and LaGreca show parents that their child needs them, no matter
their stage of life. University of Minnesota professors Tiffany West and Patricia Bauer say in their essay called “Assumptions of Infantile Amnesia: Are There Differences Between Early and Later Memories?” that few adults can recall autobiographical memories from the first year of life. However, the emotions these adults can recall are emotional in nature. Psychiatrist Colin Murray Parkes’ 2002 article on grief entitled “Grief: Lessons from the Past, Visions for the Future” discusses the importance of dealing with grief rather than repressing it and hoping the emotional pain disappears. He shows the history of grief through human mortality: a mother was not nearly as scarred by her child’s death in the seventeenth century, but in the twenty-first or even twentieth century, an event such as that would be cause for great sorrow.

However, a child does not necessarily have to experience his or her own trauma in childhood because a child can inherit trauma from the mother, called intergenerational transmission of trauma. Kami Schwerdtfeger, a professor of Marriage and Family Therapy at Texas Tech University, and Briana Nelson Goff, a professor of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University, explore this idea in terms of prenatal attachment, saying that the child can inherit a mother’s stress while in the womb. Psychotherapist Bruce Bradfield explores this idea in his 2011 article, “The Dissociation of Lived Experience: A Relational Psychoanalytic Analysis of the Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma.” Bradfield examines the relationship between a mother and her adult child, mentioning the abandonment and anger the child feels as a result of the mother’s inconstancy with her parenting. However, the child could not articulate why. Bradfield deduces the reasoning behind this feeling and why the mother was so
unavailable, concluding that mother and child share themes such as “secrecy, isolation, and disconnection from intense affective experience” (Bradfield 547).

**Psychoanalysis and Literature**

Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim mentions in his 1976 book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* that a child needs fairy tales in order to face their fears symbolically. The emotional growth the child experiences as a result of reading fairy tales is similar to Ainsworth’s idea that a child needs a mother in order to live securely. Theologian and professor Vigen Guroian takes Bettelheim’s ideas and applies them to a wide range of children’s literature. In his book *Tending the Heart of Virtue: How Classic Stories Awaken a Child’s Moral Imagination*, children’s stories are not just important because they help children when coping with their fears, but also because they can teach children right from wrong. Furthermore, writer and critic Selma G. Lanes analyzes children’s literature in her book *Through the Looking Glass: Further Adventures & Misadventures in the Realm of Children’s Literature*. According to Lanes, a good children’s book blends text and images to change the reader’s perception. Her main focus is on the authors she admires most, including Rowling.

**Other Criticism on the Harry Potter Series**

In *Harry Potter*, there are other aspects of Harry’s character, such as his childlike curiosity and similarities and differences between himself and Voldemort. Psychology professor Susan Engel and student Sam Levin present ideas regarding Harry’s curiosity in their 2006 article aptly titled, “Harry’s Curiosity.” The duo questions why Harry is so
curious when most children lose their curiosity at a much younger age. Professor Gregory Bassham mentions Voldemort’s mother, Merope Gaunt, in his essay “Love Potion No. 9¾.” He discusses the ethics of Merope’s love potion usage on Tom Riddle, who became her husband, as well as the father of her son. Bassham speculates Merope did not feel real love for Tom. He also says that in enslaving Tom by magical means, Merope is little better than her father, Marvolo, who abused her. Bassham never explicitly names intergenerational transmission of trauma, but he alludes to it as the reasoning for Voldemort’s own loveless existence. Philosophy professor S. Joel Garver builds from this in his essay “The Magic of Personal Transformation.” He says that although our parents contribute greatly into the people we become, there is also room for our own personal growth based on choice, which Dumbledore reiterates multiple times in the series.

Psychology professor Wind Goodfriend expresses concern for Harry and uses him, Ron, and Hermione as examples to make her points regarding attachment styles. Goodfriend argues that Hermione is secure, Ron is anxious, and Harry is avoidant. She also says that this is a result of the kind of parenting each received. Because Hermione’s parents were readily available to her, she was able to develop properly. Ron, on the other hand, did not have parents who were always readily available, particularly with seven children, which causes Ron to doubt. Harry is an orphan and grew up without any sort of love, making him avoidant of romantic relationships and unable to initiate them. While I agree with Goodfriend regarding Hermione, and, to an extent, Ron, I do not see Harry as avoidant; rather, Harry craves relationships. However, most infantile memories are lost before age four. English professor Vera Camden in her 2013 article “The Touch of Evil
and the Triumph of Love in *Harry Potter*” states that Harry’s dreams and the occasions in which he comes in contact with images or sounds of his parents is his return to infantile memory. Camden also says the mother’s love is necessary for the child’s stability. Psychologist Misty Hook agrees and says that Harry’s grief over the course of his life, starting with his parents’ death, gives him the tools to fight Voldemort. In her essay “What Harry and Fawkes Have in Common: The Transformative Power of Grief,” Hook argues that Harry’s grief makes him resilient, whereas Voldemort’s grief causes him to alienate himself.

However, theory written about the *Harry Potter* books is not limited to psychoanalytic theory, but also to philosophy and the literary tradition in which Rowling is writing. English professor M. Katherine Grimes builds from Bettelheim and focuses on Harry in fairy tale terms. In her essay “Harry Potter: Fairy Tale Prince, Real Boy, and Archetypal Hero,” Grimes discusses the connections in Harry’s story to not only fairy tales, but also to other stories written in that literary tradition. Professor Alice Mills, who lectures primarily on children’s literature, also relies heavily on Bettelheim in her article entitled “Archetypes and the Unconscious in Harry Potter and Diana Wynn Jones’s *Fire and Hemlock* and *Dogsbody*.” Her argument states that *Harry Potter* characters exemplify certain archetypes, such as the hunter, the orphan, and the step-parents. Mills also discusses the unconscious. Mills sees the struggle between Harry and Voldemort as an “Oedipal power struggle” (Mills 4).

Other essayists and authors choose to focus on symbolism, the economy, and even religion in the *Harry Potter* books. Journalist Julia Park’s essay “Class and
Socioeconomic Identity in Harry Potter’s England” focuses on Harry’s story as one of rags-to-riches. She discusses how social class does not denote a person’s character. She cites the Malfoys and Dursleys as having much material wealth, but little moral wealth, whereas characters like the Weasleys possess more of the latter. The Weasleys are more likable as characters than the Malfoys or the Dursleys, which shows that Rowling’s preference does not lean towards a person because of social status. To her, a person’s moral wealth is of greater importance. English professor Shira Wolosky explores the deeper understanding within the Harry Potter books in terms of such studies as literature, allegory, mirroring, psychology, family dynamics, and morality. Her book focuses on the Harry Potter series in a broad context, but her insight into the books is enough to make the reader draw his or her own ideas from Wolosky’s. In English professor Greg Garrett’s 2010 book One Fine Potion: The Literary Magic of Harry Potter, he exemplifies what readers can learn about themselves from reading Harry Potter, as well as the moral implications in the books and the real-world truths readers can learn from them.

**Conclusion**

For this thesis, I am applying this literature and constructing an argument in terms of the mother’s role in the development of the child. All of the above sources are my foundation upon which to build my argument as to the importance and necessity of the mother if the child is to develop securely. Even though much is written about Harry and Voldemort, I am developing the idea of Voldemort’s humanity, for instance, his inability to stomach young children crying. Also, I present a more detailed insight into the
character of Mrs. Longbottom, Neville’s grandmother, and how her feelings for Neville are directly correlated to her pain of losing her son, who was Neville’s father. Also, I make an argument for Hagrid as a maternal character as a result of his correlation to losing his own mother at a young age. Without a mother, and more importantly, without her love, the child cannot properly develop and be able to form strong relationships.
Chapter Three

The Lost Boys:

Harry Potter, Lord Voldemort, and Parental Affection
The Lost Boys

The *Harry Potter* series is filled with parentless children, children with only one parent, and children who do not get along with or lack strong bonds with their parents. In this respect, the wizarding world is not so different from our own. All wizard children feel the same traumatic psychological effects as their Muggle counterparts. Having magic may simplify one’s every day chores and activities, but it cannot solve the problems that come with being human and feeling neglect from a parent or parents.

One of the most critical years in a child’s emotional development is the first year of life. As Greenspan says, “The familial environment during one’s formative years affects one’s ability to begin and maintain normal, adult relationships” (Goodfriend 75). Relationships are the building blocks of mental security, and the children who experience positive ones at a young age are more secure than those who do not. Relationships are the foundation of Harry’s joy at Hogwarts. While Voldemort treasures the Hogwarts castle as his home because it is the first place he feels powerful, Harry values it as the first place where he finds strong, lasting relationships that serve him well for the rest of his life. Harry invites his friends to share both the good and the bad of life because calling “on relationships even when you are upset or worried or scared requires a greater degree of trust than does simply calling on them in times of happiness” (Greenspan 47). Ron and Hermione will always be there for Harry, in both good times and bad. Voldemort forges a network of people he can bully and manipulate, but he would never claim a relationship with them. The “initial relationship that exists between the infant and caregiver serves as the foundation for an infant’s mental health” (Schwerdtfeger 41), and in Harry’s case that
is his mother. However, Voldemort’s lack of a relationship with his mother weakens his mental health and makes him unwilling to forge bonds with human beings. This illustrates the big difference between Harry and Voldemort. Harry, within the first year of life, has parents who cared for him and loved him. On the other hand, Voldemort was raised in an orphanage from infancy. One is trying to live a full human life, while the other is trying to transcend humanity and live forever.

**Harry’s Early Life**

Growing up, Harry is not the happy child that many in the wizarding world would expect from one of its youngest heroes. Harry is mistreated at the hands of his aunt and uncle, who would rather the boy not exist. He is left at home when the Dursleys go out, bullied by his cousin Dudley, and forced to live in a cupboard under the stairs, which is “a strong image of both parental and psychological repression” (Wolosky 6). Indeed, the Dursleys do not even permit their nephew to talk of anything outside of the ordinary, even about his dreams, the world where imagination cannot help but reign. Even though Harry is unaware that his dreams are actually repressed memories from infancy, the Durslys believe that Harry’s true identity must be suffocated until it ceases to exist. “If there was one thing the Dursleys hated even more than his asking questions, it was his talking about anything acting in a way it shouldn’t, no matter if it was in a dream or even in a cartoon – they seemed to think he might get dangerous ideas” (Stone 26). Therefore, any fantasy that might help Harry deal with losing his parents and cope with the cruel treatment he receives from the Dursleys, he is censored, as is the truth about who Harry is
and who his parents were. The Dursleys tell Harry that his parents died in a car crash, and from there, he is forbidden from asking further questions. As Greenspan reminds us, “It’s difficult, if not impossible, for a child to feel secure in a family that’s not providing the kind of nurturing support and empathy the child requires” (Greenspan 13). The Dursleys, so concerned with social appearances, do not take into account their nephew’s psychological well-being. Thus, Harry’s whirlwind mind of questions is stifled.

What Harry does not realize, however, is that his dreams are the key to his past. The “infantile amnesia” prevents Harry from knowing that his subconscious is trying to tell him the details of his past. This amnesia “refers to the relative paucity among adults of autobiographical memories for events that occurred before their fourth birthday” (West 258). Indeed, Harry is just over a year old when his parents are killed. Because Harry’s dreams feature early in Harry’s story, “it suggests the weight Rowling places onto Harry’s early inklings of historical truth” (Camden). The fascinating thing about this truth is that all of Harry’s dreams come from when he was a year old. Most people do not recall many memories from infancy, except for the ones that are “emotional, distinctive in the perceptual information contained therein, and as more often from a third, rather than first, person perspective” (West 258). Harry never remembers the events of his parents’ death in their entirety, nor does he ever remember them from the perspective of the child in the cradle. He sees images of a flying motorcycle, which is Hagrid taking him to the Dursleys’ house (Stone 19). This is because “early memories contain less detail regarding, in particular, the full setting or context of the event” (West 258). Therefore, Harry does not fully assimilate the dreams, but as he grows up, more and more detail
begins to unfold. Harry remembers “the blinding flash of green light more clearly than he had ever remembered it before… and for the first time in his life: a high, cold, cruel laugh” (*Stone* 56).

While Harry seems to merely accept his life with the Dursleys, there are later indications that he did not escape completely unscathed. Harry still feels abandoned at times. He seems confident in at least his friends, but occasionally he doubts them. This is because “traumatic life events can easily shatter these assumptions and leave us feeling insecure, unworthy, and unprotected” (Parkes 380). Throughout his life, Harry does not feel equipped to handle certain situations. He easily dismisses himself, and he believes he will fail. This extends not just to his role as “savior of the wizarding world,” but also to his own relationships with his friends and with girlfriends as they come. Harry often assumes his friends want nothing to do with him when he does not hear from them for weeks at a time. When Dumbledore leaves Hogwarts for a few weeks without giving Harry lessons in how to defeat Lord Voldemort, he admits that he “had felt bolstered, comforted [by the thought of the lessons], and now he felt slightly abandoned” (*Prince* 237). When he finally arrives at Hogwarts, Harry expects Professor McGonagall to remove the Sorting Hat from his head saying there was a mistake and that he should depart on the next train home (*Stone* 120). After Ron leaves him and Hermione during their Horcrux search, Harry waits for Hermione to also tell him that she, too, will abandon him (*Hallows* 314). Harry has not forgiven his parents for leaving him. Whether Harry knows it or not, “the consequence [of trauma] is a defensive dissociation of traumatic affects, such that the individual is not consciously aware of these feelings”
(Bradfield 532). In the return to infantile memory, Harry misses the nurturing and love that his parents once gave him. He also knows why they died, which is why he feels ashamed anytime he wishes he had a parent. After a particularly frightening nightmare, Harry flirts with the idea of contacting Hermione, Ron, or even Dumbledore, but he “wanted (and it almost felt shameful to admit it to himself) was someone like – someone like a parent: an adult wizard whose advice he could ask without feeling stupid, someone who cared about him, who had experience with Dark Magic…” (Goblet 22). This person is Sirius Black, best friend of James Potter as well as Harry’s godfather, who is Harry’s closest parental figure until Sirius’s untimely death.

Luckily for Harry, all is not lost. His eleventh birthday begins inside the hut where Uncle Vernon has dragged his family to run away from the letters that threaten to mangle the “normal” existence he always prided himself in living. Then Rubeus Hagrid, the Keeper of Keys and Grounds at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, breaks down the door, rescuing Harry like a fairy godmother, telling him he comes from a family of wizards. This sparks lots of questions from Harry, through which he shows his repressed curiosity. Even though children supposedly lose their curiosity in early childhood, Harry still maintains his. Theoretically, most children lose their curiosity by age eleven, thus Harry should just be at the cusp of losing his (Engel 22). Even at this age, however, Harry acts very much as a child would in his willingness to accept the truth that Hagrid has told him about the wizarding world. Harry could be so desperate for an escape from the Dursleys, he will believe anything.
Creating a Monster

On the other hand, James and Lily Potter’s murderer is a different story. Unlike Harry, Tom Riddle has not developed properly at all. Without the love of at least one parent and raised by guardians who see him as just another orphan amidst a sea of many, Tom develops insecure attachment, of which he exhibits most, if not all of the signs: an inability to develop or maintain friendships, expressions of defiance toward authority, anti-social and violent behavior, and a lack of compassion or remorse for others (Hook 101). Riddle is used to being in control at a young age. “Tell the truth!” he commands Dumbledore, when the headmaster comes to tell him he is a wizard. This command “sounded as though [Riddle] had given it many times before” (Prince 269–270). Riddle is a bully to the other orphans, and perhaps even to the adults around him. Children fall into a secure path once they “are able to focus, attend, and remain calm within their world” (Greenspan 46). However, if the baby does not develop that focus, the world will be scarier and sometimes “uninteresting.” The baby “may either withdraw from it or never get involved in it, instead attending only to his own inner sensations” (46). When that happens, the child becomes a danger to himself and others. Between the ages of two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half, children become more aware of consequences, and that if they do bad things, like steal, they will be punished (53). At this stage of life, however, Tom Riddle is eleven years of age, or nearing it, and not expecting scolding for any actions he performs. Arguably, the first time Riddle is ever taught right from wrong is when Dumbledore reprimands him for stealing from his peers, telling him that thievery is not tolerated at Hogwarts (Prince 273). This respect, and fear, of Dumbledore follows Riddle
into adulthood.

Riddle wants proof that there is such a thing as magic in his seemingly ordinary life, surrounded by ordinary people, while Harry does not demand evidence, rather letting it come in small doses. Lanes says that “young children are romantics who instinctively hold high hopes for the world and for themselves” (Lanes 12). Young Voldemort is no different. From his childhood, he knows that he is unique in some way. He tells Dumbledore, “I knew I was special. Always, I knew there was something” (Prince 271). While Voldemort is confident and secure in his entitlement, Harry, on the other hand, never felt he deserved anything good. He knew he was different, but he always believed he was a “bad” different. He receives no love at the Dursleys, and he has no friends at school because “everybody knew that Dudley’s gang hated that odd Harry Potter in his baggy old clothes and broken glasses” (Stone 30). Voldemort bullies to avoid being bullied. Harry is bullied, but feels he can do nothing about it. Both boys have a “sense of abandonment,” which “can arise from the object failing to meet certain needs or failing to meet needs some of the time, and it is in reaction to this type of failure that the psyche may retreat into itself and find rescuing resources” (Gee 196). For Harry, this “rescuing resource” is acceptance. For Voldemort, it is bullying. In order to understand the different attitudes between these two characters, examining their upbringings is important.

A Mother’s Love

Mothers play a huge role in the Harry Potter series. This could be a direct correlation to J.K. Rowling’s own mother, who died of Multiple Sclerosis just around the
time Rowling began writing *Harry Potter*. Even though his parents are gone, Harry never doubts their love for him. When he first arrives at Hogwarts, Harry finds that he inherited his father’s Quidditch skills and physical appearance, and that he has his mother’s eyes. After a lifetime of repressed memories, Harry finally sees his parents, even if they are not physically present. After ten years of loneliness, Harry spends Christmas with Lily and James Potter when he sees their reflections in the Mirror of Erised, which is “desire” spelled backwards (*Stone* 208). There is a risk of succumbing to this desire, and Dumbledore cautions Harry against giving in, saying that “It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live, remember that” (214). For a child who only has vague, repressed memories of childhood, the temptation of the Mirror is strong. However, Harry “must resist the strong pull to give up the quest for truth in favor of succumbing to regressive desire to dwell upon the ‘family romance’ of his lost, idealized parents” (Camden). To become the hero he is, however, Harry needs to see his parents in the Mirror because after hearing the Dursleys portray his parents in a negative light, he needs to experience them as the “good parents.” It is the proof of the love that Harry subconsciously knew before the trauma that changed everything. The Mirror brings this knowledge to his conscious state. However, it still poses the danger of hungering for what is past rather than moving forward with his newly acquired knowledge.

This love is further reiterated in a healthier way at the end of the book when Dumbledore tells Harry that Lily died for him. Her sacrifice for Harry is first highlighted in *Sorcerer’s Stone*, and Harry is periodically reminded of it throughout the series.
However, at this point Harry still does not know that much about Lily as far as her personality. Thus, for a while, Lily is an ideal, perfection like the Virgin Mary.

Because his mother, Lily Potter, returns to Harry when he needs her most...she is like both the dead mother and the fairy godmother in ‘Cinderella’ and other stories, a supernatural woman who appears when she is most needed. Such tales allow children to idealize their mothers and trust that, even when they are not physically present, they will still care for their children. (Grimes 96)

This is Lily’s gift to Harry. She gave him life, but she also never abandoned him. The more he learns about her, Lily Potter becomes a comforting presence to Harry. When the Dementors attack, Harry hears his mother’s voice for the first time (Azkaban 84). Each time, Harry listens to her pleas for Voldemort to kill her instead of her baby son. Hearing her voice “allows [Harry] to discover its origins: in his infantile panic at the loss of his mother” (Camden). In these Dementor attacks, Harry is transported back to his infancy, to the day when he lost his parents. The voice of his mother is a long-repressed memory that Harry welcomes. Harry almost wants to meet the Dementors so he can hear his mother’s voice from beyond the grave, even if he only hears her screams. It appears that Harry’s “recovered memory also returns him to a feeling link, through memory, to his mother’s voice and her love” (Camden). When he, Ron, and Hermione hide out in Grimmauld Place, the childhood home of Sirius, Harry discovers a letter she sent to his godfather, in which Lily mentions Harry and his father James. The letter draws Harry
closer to her. He calls the letter an “incredible treasure, proof that Lily Potter had lived, really lived, that her warm hand once moved across the parchment, tracing ink into these letters, these words, words about him, Harry, her son” (Hallows 181). Harry takes his mother’s letter with him as he faces his mission for Dumbledore, keeping Lily’s words close to him. From beyond the grave, Lily helps Harry in his mission. Harry manipulates Potions teacher Professor Slughorn’s preference for Lily by invoking her name when trying to discover more about Horcruxes, which causes Slughorn to relent his hold on the memory that makes all the difference in defeating Voldemort. Lily is a guardian angel, constantly watching over her son.

While Lily Potter only appears in memories, Harry is blessed with a surrogate mother from the moment he arrives at Kings Cross Station to take the Hogwarts Express. Even though Molly Weasley has seven children of her own, she willingly and without hesitating makes an effort to feel Harry included. “Poor dear – no wonder he was alone, I wondered” (Stone 97). Her heart bleeds for this orphan boy, and from then on, Harry is unofficially adopted into her family. She sends Harry homemade Christmas gifts, invites him to stay during the summer holidays, and fetches his school supplies. To Mrs. Weasley, Harry is as good as her own son (Phoenix 90). The Dursleys’ home has Dumbledore’s enchantment upon it to protect Harry, but it is the Weasleys’ home, called the Burrow, that is the warmer and more welcoming of the two, making these two places complete foils of each other. While Aunt Petunia works tirelessly to keep her kitchen spotless, the Weasleys’ kitchen is “small and rather cramped” (Chamber 33). Ron sleeps in a much smaller bedroom than Harry had on Privet Drive, but to Harry, the Burrow is
“the best house [he’s] ever been in” (Chamber 41). For Harry, one is a house and the other is a home. By the end of his first stay at the Burrow, Harry wishes it does not have to end. “It was difficult not to feel jealous of Ron when he thought of the Dursleys and the sort of welcome he could expect next time he turned up on Privet Drive” (Chamber 65). Harry may be jealous of Ron, but he is welcome anytime at the Weasleys’ home. This is something Voldemort does not have. While Harry must return to Privet Drive at the end of every school year, he still has another home to which he can escape. On the other hand, all Voldemort has is Hogwarts, and he must return to his orphanage at the end of every term. Mrs. Weasley goes above and beyond anything Harry would ever expect. For the Third Task of the Triwizard Tournament, families are allowed to come and watch, and Harry is pleasantly surprised to see Mrs. Weasley and her oldest son Bill waiting for him (Goblet 615). After the horrors of the Triwizard Tournament, Mrs. Weasley stays with Harry and hugs him in such a way that Harry “had no memory of ever being hugged like this, as though by a mother” (Goblet 714). Voldemort is deprived of this maternal care. Having never built strong relationships with others, he does not have a best friend like Ron whose mother loves him just as much as her own children.

Thus, Voldemort does not have this knowledge of love or protection. At a young age, Riddle believes that death is weakness. He is convinced that his mother could not be a witch. Dumbledore tells Harry that “Voldemort was obsessed with his parentage…Understandable, he had grown up in an orphanage” (Prince 362). After finding no information about his father’s family, Voldemort eventually researches “his previously despised mother’s family – the woman whom, you will remember, he had
thought could not be a witch if she had succumbed to the shameful human weakness of death” (*Prince* 363). Harry has the “internal ‘good’ parents who give the individual strength and the ability to separate” while Voldemort has the “‘bad’ internal parents that, by way of repetition, compulsion, preoccupy or possess the individual” (Gee 199). Finding his family is a constant preoccupation for Riddle, but he is extremely disappointed in who they are. Neither one is worthy to be his parent. In dying, Merope has abandoned him just as his Muggle father did (Hook 101). Riddle’s uncle, Merope’s brother, recounts the story of his mother’s disgrace and reveals the location of his paternal grandparents. Accordingly, Riddle goes to their home and kills all within. In murdering his father, Riddle “murdered the Muggle man who had abandoned his witch mother” and also kills his grandparents, “obliterating the last of the unworthy Riddle line and revenging himself upon the father who never wanted him” (*Prince* 367). This is reminiscent of the Oedipal Complex, in which the child wishes to kill the father to be with the mother. For Voldemort, this complex happens as a result of childhood abandonment. In fact, a frequent cause of a sense of abandonment in adolescence arises from the adolescent’s need to, as part of his or her struggle towards separation, to ‘kill off’ the parental objects and maintains and spurious ‘do-it-yourself’ psychology in order to prove to themselves that they do not need, or are indeed better off without, their parents. (Gee 196)
In leaving his wife before his son was born, Voldemort’s father has forsaken him, and in killing him, Voldemort proves that he does not need his father, and that he never needed him at all.

What makes the mother especially important is that both Harry and Voldemort are let down by their fathers. Riddle, desperate to know more about his family, “searched in vain for some trace of Tom Riddle senior on the shields in the trophy room, on the lists of prefects in the old school records, even in the books of wizarding history. Finally he was forced to accept that his father had never set a foot in Hogwarts” (Prince 362). Voldemort learns his father has not only left his witch wife, but Tom Riddle Sr. also committed the sin of abandoning his unborn son. As a Muggle, Tom Riddle Sr. further spurns Voldemort’s hatred. Harry also begins to wonder about his father more in his second year, when he questions whether or not he could be the heir of Slytherin because he knows nothing about his father’s side of the family (Chamber 197). In Harry’s fifth year, he sees a memory of his father torturing Snape in Dumbledore’s Pensieve, a thought-sifter. Through this, Harry discovers his father’s moral failing:

What made Harry feel so horrified and unhappy…was that he knew how it felt to be humiliated in the middle of a circle of onlookers, knew exactly how Snape had felt as his father had taunted him, and that judging from what he had just seen, his father had been every bit as arrogant as Snape had always told him. (Phoenix 650)
Harry feels nothing but horror after this episode, having experienced being bullied himself, and it lessens his father in his eyes.

The importance of mothers in the *Harry Potter* series is reiterated on multiple occasions. Part of Voldemort’s downfall is brought about because of a mother. He seals his own fate when he sends Narcissa Malfoy, a loving and worried mother, to examine Harry’s lifeless body. She does not care about Voldemort winning. As a parent, she now only wants the battle to cease so she can find her son Draco, a goal in which she is steadfast. Voldemort is betrayed by one of his own supporters, thus destroying Voldemort’s hate group from within. To Narcissa, as a parent, wanting to save one’s child makes perfect sense, but not to her sister Bellatrix Lestrange, who cannot understand this motherly affection and whose first loyalty is to Voldemort. Bellatrix pays the price for her own ignorance when she is killed by another loving mother, Molly Weasley, who is consumed with grief after the death of her son Fred and will stop at nothing to keep her remaining children alive.

**Disappointed Hopes**

In *Half-Blood Prince*, Dumbledore instructs Harry in his battle against Voldemort. First, he gives Harry a history lesson, with the help of the Pensieve. In explaining Voldemort’s beginnings, Dumbledore gives Harry the chance to step into the shoes of his enemy and see that though Voldemort must be stopped, he also deserves Harry’s compassion since he is the unable to love or know love. Starting before Voldemort was born, Dumbledore shows Merope Gaunt, Voldemort’s mother, an
excellent example of an abused child. Then Dumbledore takes Harry inside his memories of when he went to the orphanage where Voldemort lived. By showing Harry the villain’s story, Dumbledore tries showing Harry that the psychological wounds run deeper than just a surface hatred of Muggles and a desire for power. Those traits were learned somewhere and were brought on by childhood experiences.

Before her death, Voldemort’s mother insisted that her son be named Tom after his father and Marvolo after her father. Mrs. Cole thinks because Merope is so insistent that her son bear those names, someone will come and take young Tom from the orphanage, but no one ever does. Thus, Riddle remains there (Prince 266). There is no possible way that Mrs. Cole could be a mother substitute, particularly with other children to care for. Without loving care, children “may withdraw from other human beings if he experiences them as relatively unavailable or not consistently available” (Greenspan 60). This is similar to Harry’s hopes that someone will come and take him away from the Dursleys, but he never hears from anyone. Rowling says that “when he had been younger, Harry had dreamed of some unknown relation coming to take him away, but it had never happened; the Dursleys were his only family” (Stone 30). If Riddle ever expected a release, he learned at an early age that people will only disappoint him. Therefore, they cannot be trusted.

**Friends or Acquaintances?**

Relationships are the “cornerstones of enabling a child to feel secure” (Greenspan 48). All humans need solid relationships. The themes of the *Harry Potter* books are
“love, friendship, tolerance, and family…and all revolve around our relationships with others” (Garrett 39). Harry’s friends are his greatest joy in life. To someone who never had friends, Ron and Hermione are blessings that Harry does not take for granted. When faced with Dementors, even though it feels like he has nothing good in his life, he sees Ron and Hermione’s faces, and they are his strength when he casts his Patronus (Phoenix 18). Aristotle said that “nobody would choose to live without friends, although he were in possession of every other good” (Aristotle 170). This does end up being true, for without the strong support that Harry has, Voldemort chooses a half-life, pieced together with Horcruxes, broken parts of his soul. This is a perversion of creation because in order to make a Horcrux, one must split his or her soul by committing murder (Prince 498).

Harry, on the other hand, finds two true friends who stick by him through everything. It is through them that Harry finds strength to continue, particularly when the entire wizarding world is against him, when Sirius dies, when Dumbledore dies, and when he is called to hunt Horcruxes. The love and loyalty of true friends is able to transcend time and even death. During the second task of the Triwizard Tournament, each champion must recover a person about whom they care and would not want to see harmed. Ron is taken as the thing that Harry would miss most. To be chosen as a champion by the Goblet of Fire, one must have a pure heart in that the person has someone in the world he or she cares about more than oneself. If Voldemort were to perform that kind of challenge, it is a safe bet that the person he cares for most would be himself, and that he would lose simply because there would be no one to rescue him.

For a time, Harry, like Voldemort, tries to operate solo in order to protect those
around him. Voldemort is correct in assuming that there are some things for which a person must rely on him- or herself. For example, Harry rescues the Sorcerer’s Stone, saves Ginny, releases Sirius from the Dementors, and enters the Triwizard Tournament maze on his own. Eventually, there comes a time when he needs his friends. At first, Harry tries to discourage their help, much like Voldemort.

And Harry saw very clearly as he sat there under the hot sun how people who cared about him had stood in front of him one by one, his mother, his father, his godfather, and finally Dumbledore, all determined to protect him: but now that was over. He could not let anybody else stand between him and Voldemort. He must forever abandon the illusion that ought to have lost at the age of one, that the shelter of a parent’s arms meant that nothing could hurt him…the last and the greatest of his protectors had died, and he was more alone than he had ever been before. (Prince 645)

This passage is indicative of Harry’s grief after losing so many important people in his life, but he cannot cast away his relationships. The difference between Harry’s wanting to operate solo and Voldemort’s, is that Harry does not want to see anyone get hurt or die for him, while Voldemort simply does not want to share glory with others. Voldemort is the “hero” of his own story, whose “‘needs’ have to be met in a totally self-sufficient way” (Gee 198). After learning about the prophecy predicting that either he or Voldemort must kill each other, Harry wants to be alone because “an invisible barrier separated him from the rest of the world” (Phoenix 855). Luckily, Dumbledore sees the danger in
Harry’s Voldemort-like isolation and encourages Harry to tell Ron and Hermione (Prince 78). Snape cannot teach Harry Occlumency, the “art of secrets that is probably as much against Harry’s nature as it is suitable to Snape’s” (Wolosky 121). Whenever something happens to Harry, the first thing he wants to do is run off to tell his friends. Harry’s usage of loyalty, community, and teamwork is his advantage over Voldemort. His love is what saves him, particularly when Sirius dies. Harry comes to regard Sirius as “a mixture of father and brother” (Phoenix 831), and when Bellatrix Lestrange kills him, Harry is overwhelmed with grief. He watched Cedric die, but Cedric was not a close friend of his. Harry was too young to remember the death of his parents. Thus, when Sirius dies, a wound is open in Harry’s heart, and he longs for death so he can be with his godfather again. Voldemort tries possessing Harry in the hopes that Dumbledore will kill Harry to destroy Voldemort. However, Voldemort finds that he cannot possess Harry, a person so full of love for other human beings. It causes Voldemort physical pain to be in a soul so unblemished and so full of love. Harry reflects that grief “drove Voldemort out…though Dumbledore, of course, would have said it was love…” (Hallows 478). For a time, even Harry believes this to be a weak power, but he eventually comes to rely on its effects.

While Harry comes to trust love’s power, Voldemort believes relying on others is weak. Even at a young age, Voldemort prefers isolation. Young Riddle does not want Dumbledore to accompany him to Diagon Alley, insisting that he is “used to doing things for [himself]” (Prince 274). Dumbledore points out to Harry that Voldemort preferred to go alone, and even as an adult held the same mentality. “You will hear many of his Death Eaters claiming that they are in his confidence, that they alone are close to him, even
understand him. They are deluded. Lord Voldemort has never had a friend, nor do I believe that he has ever wanted one” (277). Bellatrix Lestrange, Voldemort’s most faithful follower to the point of obsession, believes herself to be the most trusted of all his Death Eaters, and she wishes to be the one person in whom Lord Voldemort can confide. “‘My Lord, let me–’ ‘I do not require assistance,’ said Voldemort coldly, and though he could not see it, Harry pictured Bellatrix withdrawing a helpful hand” (Hallows 725). In trying to help Voldemort and show him her loyalty, Bellatrix has unknowingly undermined her Master’s power, since, to Voldemort, accepting help of any kind means dependence. He also keeps his Death Eaters from knowing every one of their fellow members. In Dumbledore’s memory, when former Death Eater Igor Karkaroff gives evidence against a select number of Death Eaters, he begins his testimony by saying “we never knew the names of every one of our fellows – He alone knew exactly who we all were–” (Goblet 588). Not only does this guarantee Voldemort a way to infiltrate powerful places like government, magical and otherwise, it also makes it easier for him to divide people, since no one knows who to trust.

One of those who work tirelessly to thwart Voldemort is Albus Dumbledore. Dumbledore is the only one Voldemort ever feared. Even when Lord Voldemort’s name is feared throughout the wizarding world, Dumbledore calls him “Voldemort” while the rest of the world calls him “You-Know-Who” or “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.” Even more than this is that in the presence of the Dark Lord, Dumbledore calls him “Tom Riddle,” much to Voldemort’s disdain (Prince 442). Dumbledore does not fear Voldemort for his name, but rather for what he is capable of doing to others. He tells
Harry that he always feared what Lord Voldemort became and worked to prevent this. Dumbledore’s intention was to “keep an eye upon [Riddle], something I would have done in any case, given that he was alone and friendless, but which, already, I felt I ought to do for others’ sake as much as his” (276). The friendless child is most dangerous. He is the one who brings a gun to school, the one who tries achieving notoriety, even at the expense of others. Dumbledore also had concern for Harry when he first came to Hogwarts, probably due to Harry’s abandonment issues. In fact, Harry sometimes shows Voldemort-like tendencies. For example, after he comes back from his first year of Hogwarts, he enjoys psychologically tormenting his cousin Dudley (*Chamber 8*). Dudley fears magic, and Harry plays on this fear. It is rather like pretending to toss a ball to a dog without throwing it. Dumbledore probably recognizes just how similar both Harry and Voldemort are, and in keeping Harry secluded from the wizarding world for ten years, he keeps Harry from becoming as cruel as Voldemort.

“The Half-Blood like Himself”

The first similarity the reader notices between Harry and Voldemort is that their wands contain a feather from the same phoenix. This is fitting because “both men have to experience the fire of grief and become something different once reborn” (Hook 102). Both Harry and Voldemort are like a phoenix rising from the ashes, but while Harry steps into the Forbidden Forest for the love of his friends, and emerges from it alive, Voldemort emerges from the cauldron in the graveyard as little better than dead. As Dumbledore notes, instead of choosing a pureblood, the type of wizard Voldemort deems
most desirable, he chooses the half-blood as his biggest threat, the one who is most like him.

A central way in which Rowling defines and explores identities is by making different characters mirror each other, revealing things about each through the relationships between them. This method, common in literature, also demonstrates a psychological truth about how we see ourselves in others and our relationships to them. (Wolosky 100)

By having Voldemort and Harry be mirror images of each other, the reader can see which one is in Looking-Glass Land, where everything is distorted and backwards, and which one is still in the real world and working to build a life for himself with what he has.

The obvious similarities between the two catch even the notice of Riddle. As he observes to Harry, “There are strange likenesses between us, after all. Even you may have noticed. Both half bloods, orphans, raised by Muggles. Probably the only two Parselmouths to come to Hogwarts since the great Slytherin himself. We even look something alike” (Chamber 317). When Dumbledore meets Riddle, he sets Riddle’s wardrobe on fire to teach him a lesson. However, Harry “could hardly blame [Riddle] for howling in shock and rage; all his worldly possessions must be in there” (Prince 272).

The reason Harry is struck by that particular moment is because he, too, was an orphan with limited possessions, all kept with him in a cupboard under the stairs. Harry longed to escape the cupboard while Voldemort yearned for freedom from the orphanage, and then comes the Hogwarts acceptance letter. Both Harry and Riddle see Hogwarts as their first
home. Voldemort was “more attached to [Hogwarts] than he has ever been to a person. Hogwarts was where he had been happiest; the first and only place he had felt at home.” Harry grows uncomfortable at this revelation because “this was exactly how he felt about Hogwarts, too” (Prince 431). Harry also understands how certain experiences must have felt, such as seeing a grand building like Gringotts for the first time (Hallows 116). This is the real connection between Harry and Voldemort – the orphan connection. What Harry and Voldemort share is something Ron and Hermione will never understand. Before Harry meets his death, he reflects on his life within the Hogwarts castle and concludes that “he was home. Hogwarts was the first and best home he had known. He and Voldemort and Snape, the abandoned boys, had all found a home here…” (Hallows 697). In this respect, Hogwarts becomes a third parent to Harry and Voldemort, a shelter under which they can finally be themselves and cast away all the feelings of despair and loneliness each experienced in the Muggle world.

The story in the books is told from Harry’s point of view, but through his nightmares and visions, readers also see into Voldemort’s mind. Wolosky comments that “Rowling here ingeniously not only underscores the increasing mutual implication and involvement between the two characters, but also allows an extraordinary exploration into the psychology of evil” (Wolosky 113). In these visions, Rowling shows a first-hand account of Voldemort’s different moods and behaviors. Sometimes, she even reveals his humanity. In Deathly Hallows, when Harry watches Voldemort approach his crib the night of James and Lily Potter’s murder, readers are given a surprising revelation: Voldemort cringes upon hearing baby Harry cry, thinking how “he had never been able
stomach the small ones whining in the orphanage” (*Hallows* 345). Even though he attempts to kill the child in the next sentence, the fact remains that the sounds of children in any sort of pain are too much for the Dark Lord to bear. That is a sign that even Lord Voldemort cannot completely eradicate the humanity within him. This is the part of Voldemort that he repressed: human fear and the connection he felt with other abandoned orphans, whether he wanted to feel it or not. This exemplifies Camden’s observation that “When individuals do not, or rather cannot, integrate traumatic events they become ‘attached’ to the trauma unconsciously, and are halted in emotional development” (Camden). Rather than face this side of him that clearly needs attention and nurturing, Voldemort represses it. In spite of being around sixty years of age, Voldemort is still only a “pseudo-adult,” meaning that he is “in conflict with his child part because it is seen as inferior or bad” (Gee 202). This fear of being alone, however, still lingers in the mind of Lord Voldemort. He can hide behind his wand, he can change his appearance, he can take a new name, but forever he will be the orphaned Tom Riddle who subconsciously longed for love that never came. Voldemort’s survival ability “results in a valuable change in his self-image that he is able to integrate previously projected power” (Gee 198). Voldemort represses any belief of vulnerability or weakness in himself, and he psychologically preys on it in his victims. However, when it comes to children crying, Voldemort sees himself more clearly as broken, lonely, and sad.

House loyalty is another fascinating similarity Harry and Voldemort share. The Sorting Hat tells Harry that “There’s…a thirst to prove yourself,” says. The Hat believes Slytherin will “help [Harry] on the way to greatness,” but Harry, after all he has heard
about Slytherin, does not wish to be affiliated with the House that produced Lord Voldemort (Stone 121). Voldemort values being in Slytherin house, and he is as loyal to it as Harry is to Gryffindor. Like Harry’s genealogical connection to Godric Gryffindor, Voldemort has a blood connection to Salazar Slytherin, even inheriting his gift of Parseltongue, or conversing with snakes. For Voldemort, “it is his genealogical connection with Slytherin that [he] treasures” (Wolosky 114). Arguably, if any of us have a distant connection to someone of note, we, hopefully, are proud of that connection. It is worth noting that this Slytherin connection comes from Voldemort’s mother.

**Power the Dark Lord Knows Not**

Despite being lost boys, both Harry and Voldemort both find their life paths. Voldemort desires to be more powerful than any wizard ever before, while Harry wants to live a full life, surrounded by those for whom he loves and cares. As Dumbledore tells him, “It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities” (Chamber 333). While Harry chooses a life of love and friendship and eventually starts a family of his own, Voldemort makes an imitation family with his Death Eaters, but he only tells them what they need to know, never letting them get close to him. Even Bellatrix Lestrange, “his last, best lieutenant” (Hallows 737) knows only what is necessary for Voldemort to advance his plans. He rewards them or punishes them based on their performance as his followers and uses the belief that someone is in his confidence to control and manipulate his Death Eaters’ efficiency. For example, when Lucius Malfoy fails to deliver the prophecy to him, Voldemort takes his wand from him
for his own use to try and kill Harry (*Hallows* 8). The mental castration of the object that marks the wizard or witch is one of the greatest punishments Voldemort can inflict on a servant of his, like a cat playing with its food before devouring it. This “family” Voldemort creates is not only dysfunctional; it is dangerous because it does not have the key ingredient: love.

The emphasis placed on love is great. Harry tends to get impatient with Dumbledore’s constant reiterations about it, but it is love that saved his life in the first place. A mother’s love, far greater than any evil ensured her son’s survival. In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry “ventures into his traumatic past only to discover the holy grail of his mother’s love between the rubble of his shattered infancy” (Camden). His mother had to leave him so he could live. Though he may have difficulty accepting this, he still manages to keep the fire of her love kindled within him. Despite Harry’s “privileged insight into Voldemort’s world…[Harry has] never been seduced by the Dark Arts” and this is because he loves his parents, whom Voldemort killed (*Prince* 511). Sadly, Voldemort cannot light that fire. He comes to resent love, and he does not see its value. Because Voldemort does not possess compassion and empathy and “doesn’t ever want them, and he is destroyed—physically and spiritually—because he fails to see the importance of communion” (Garrett 42).

One of the most powerful showcases of love comes during that crucial moment when Voldemort tries possessing Harry at the Ministry of Magic. He cannot because of Harry’s great love for Sirius, and the hope of reunification with him, Voldemort has no choice but to flee this undamaged soul (*Phoenix* 816). However, the grief of losing Sirius
becomes too much even for Harry to bear. In one night, he has lost the closest parental figure in his life, and he feels like the pain could kill him. After Sirius dies, Harry feels like there is a giant empty void within him. “Harry could not stand this, he could not stand being Harry anymore…He had never felt more trapped inside his own head and body, never wished so intensely that he could be somebody – anybody – else…” (Phoenix 822). This is another example of repressed grief. As a child, Harry never properly grieved over the death of his parents, so now when Sirius dies, he is not only upset about losing Sirius, he also grieves for his lost parents. “‘Harry, suffering like this proves you are still a man! this pain is part of being human–’ ‘THEN – I – DON’T – WANT – TO – BE – HUMAN!… I DON’T CARE!…I’VE HAD ENOUGH, I’VE SEEN ENOUGH, I WANT OUT, I WANT IT TO END, I DON’T CARE ANYMORE–’” (Phoenix 824). Dumbledore knows the intense pain and grief Harry is feeling: the pain of humanity. “You do care…You care so much you feel as though you will bleed to death with the pain of it” (824). Voldemort spends his life running from this unbearable grief, wishing to be above this. However, “Harry’s capacity to triumph over Voldemort in their final showdown depends in almost every particular upon the success of his recovery of infantile memory” (Camden). In losing Sirius, Harry goes back to the night his parents died. He subconsciously remembers the pain and acts it out after losing his second father figure.
Only One Can Survive

From the time Rowling revealed the prophecy to readers, it should have been obvious who would survive. Voldemort may have the protection of Harry’s blood within him, but he does not have the love in his heart that makes the blood powerful. Harry takes his example from so many powerful people: Dumbledore, Sirius, Lupin, Tonks, his father, but, most importantly, his mother. Her sacrifice was the first act of selfless love Harry ever experienced, and he takes this with him as he walks to his destruction and his friends’ salvation.

Naturally, the one who fears death is the one who experiences it. Harry does not wish to die, but if death means the rescue of those he loves, he sees it as a worthwhile cause, just as Lily Potter did. Thus, “Harry’s surrender to death, wherein he repeats his mother’s sacrificial surrender is, then, his true triumph” (Camden). Voldemort fears death, and he will do whatever he can to live forever. He believes that death is the end of everything, failing to understand how many times Harry’s parents, though deceased, come back to offer guidance and support. Harry’s acceptance of death for the sake of his friends is one of his most admirable quality. “You have accepted, even embraced, the possibility of death, something Lord Voldemort has never been able to do” (Hallows 711). True love conquers all.

The Journeys of the Broken

In exploring Harry and Voldemort, the issues faced by abandoned children raised without parents become clearer. Being the characters at the forefront of the story, the
childhood trauma experienced by Harry and Voldemort is easier to notice than background characters like Neville, Hagrid, and Merope who also have traumatic lives. However, in studying Harry and Voldemort’s trauma, it is easier to understand the psychology of childhood development and how instability can affect people’s growth. The important thing to remember, however, is that just because a child has experienced some sort of emotional trauma that does not mean that they are irreparably broken. Even Voldemort could have been saved. At the end of Deathly Hallows, Harry encourages Voldemort to “try for some remorse” (Hallows 741). Naturally, Voldemort refuses. On the outside, remorse to Voldemort is a weak thought, but Voldemort is also scared. The same way he fears death, so too does he fear facing all those he has killed and all the lives he ripped apart. To show remorse would be to admit an entire lifetime of evil and cunning was wrong. Therefore, just as he chose a cursed life, Lord Voldemort chooses an easy, and unwilling, death.
Chapter Four

The Boy Who Wasn’t Chosen:
Neville Longbottom and His Present, Yet Absent, Parents
The Boy Who Wasn’t Chosen

In the *Harry Potter* books, there is one “orphaned” character who is not really an orphan at all. Neville Longbottom, raised by his grandmother, “knows” his parents, unlike Harry and Voldemort, but Mr. and Mrs. Longbottom do not know him. Confined to St. Mungo’s Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries, the Longbottoms were tortured by faithful Death Eater Bellatrix Lestrange using the Cruciatus Curse, causing the loss of their memories and rendering them unable to function in society (*Phoenix* 515). The timeline runs as follows: Harry vanquished Voldemort’s power on Halloween, three months after turning one. Then after that, rounding up the loose Death Eaters became a priority. This would mean that Neville, born the same month as Harry, would have enjoyed his parents’ company for over a year of life, just as Harry did. Because Voldemort was gone, the Death Eaters’ attacks on the Longbottoms caused an even greater outrage in the wizarding community (*Goblet* 603). Most people appear to have forgotten the Longbottoms, the great Aurors who were once so respected. It takes a longer time for people to extend a hand of friendship to the bumbling Neville, who believes he is “almost a Squib,” a wizard lacking magical capabilities (*Chamber* 185). Rarely does anyone ever talk about Neville and the psychological implications that his present, yet absent, parents may have on him. While Harry is able to forge a surrogate family with Ron and Hermione, Neville takes longer to form close connections with people, though much of this could also be attributed to his social awkwardness. Eventually, he does develop close friendships with Luna Lovegood and Ginny Weasley, thus tying him to Harry’s friend group. By the end of the series, he emerges a hero, and
he eventually becomes a Herbology professor at Hogwarts.

Before all this glory, however, Neville is as below average as a boy can be. Extremely forgetful, accident-prone, and a favorite target of bullies like Draco Malfoy and Severus Snape, Neville is the Charlie Brown of the Harry Potter universe, never quite being able to kick the football of life. Neville’s grandmother, often described as “formidable,” is always pushing her grandson to continue the tradition of excellence set forth by his talented parents. In reality, however, Neville is the one who most exemplifies a “true Gryffindor.”

**The Boy Who Should Have Been**

The prophecy by which Voldemort follows could have referred to two different boys born at the end of July. One, of course, is Harry. The other is Neville. The interesting aspect about this is that he “should” have been the one chosen. He is a pure-blood, which is the kind of witch or wizard Voldemort deems most worthy. Unbeknownst to Neville, he was close, just a Killing Curse away, from taking the fate that ended up being Harry’s:

Neville’s childhood had been blighted by Voldemort just as much as Harry’s had, but Neville had no idea how close he had come to having Harry’s destiny. The prophecy could have referred to either of them, yet, for his own inscrutable reasons, Voldemort had chosen to believe that Harry was the one meant.

Had Voldemort chosen Neville, it would be Neville sitting
opposite Harry bearing the lightning-shaped scar and the weight of the prophecy…Or would it? Would Neville’s mother have died to save him, as Lily had died for Harry? Surely she would…But what if she had been unable to stand between her son and Voldemort? Would there then have been no ‘Chosen One’ at all? An empty seat where Neville now sat and a scarless Harry who would have been kissed good-bye by his own mother, not Ron’s? (Prince 139–140).

However, Neville is not the boy from the prophecy because, as Dumbledore points out, Voldemort chose to mark, not Neville, but “the half-blood, like himself,” namely Harry (Phoenix 842). Rowling never says in the books if Neville ever did discover his proximity to Harry’s fate, but, as Harry observes, Neville was just as affected by Voldemort as he. Furthermore, in this passage Rowling once again points the reader, not to the father’s role, but to that of the mother. How much did Neville’s mother love him? Was it enough that she would give up her own life for her only son?

Neville’s relationship with his parents is akin to someone in the Muggle world watching a family member battle Alzheimer’s disease. All Neville can do is visit his parents on holidays and watch them live out their lives. In Goblet of Fire, Harry begins to observe the effect that losing his parents has on Neville. The Defense Against the Dark Arts professor in fourth year, Professor Moody, demonstrates the three Unforgivable Curses for his students: the Imperius Curse, which is the control curse; Avada Kedavra, or the killing curse; and the Cruciatus Curse, which is the torture curse. The latter is the one Neville knows best, as this was the curse to which his parents lost their memories.
While Moody’s victims are spiders rather than humans, the effect on Neville is the same. “Neville’s hands were clenched upon the desk in front of him, his knuckles white, his eyes wide and horrified” (Goblet 214-215). Witnessing the spider experience the same torture as his parents strongly bothers Neville. As Greenspan says, “The trauma of the loss of a parent at an early stage is an extremely severe wound both to the emergent structure of the nuclear self and to the dissolving ability of selfhood, as well as to the oscillation between the two” (Green 231). Indeed, after this incident with his parents, Neville seems to have lost himself. Just as Harry must embrace his infantile memory in order to defeat Voldemort, so too must Neville battle his if he is ever to work through the trauma of losing his parents to a senseless act of violence. However, Neville’s memories appear to be more vivid than Harry’s.

**Family Ties**

Seeing how Voldemort’s lack of emotional attachment to his parents and Harry’s intense emotional attachment to his brings up a new question for readers: Where does Neville fit into the grand scheme of things? How does Neville feel about the situation with his parents? “‘Well, it’s nothing to be ashamed of!’ said Mrs. Longbottom angrily. ‘You should be **proud**, Neville, **proud**! They didn’t give their health and their sanity so that their only son would be ashamed of them, you know!’” (Order 514). While Neville may not be ashamed of what brought his parents to their current state, he probably does not talk about it like his grandmother thinks he should because even all these years later, he may still not be over this tragedy. Children have no “normal” or “typical” grieving
pattern; their “responses are influenced by the ways they experience loss and the meaning they attach to it. Parents can play a valuable role in helping their children to be resilient” (Koocher 334). A footnote should be added to this mentioning “another parent figure,” as well. Though Mrs. Longbottom is well-meaning and appears to love her grandson, it does not seem like she helped Neville recover emotionally after this loss. In the series, the only times Mrs. Longbottom mentions Neville’s parents is when criticizing Neville’s intellectual ability. While Neville may not be vocal about his parents, he speaks often about his grandmother, saying she wishes he were more like Harry. Neville tells Harry that Mrs. Longbottom praises him highly, saying, “‘That Harry Potter’s got more backbone than the whole Ministry of Magic put together!’ She’d give anything to have you as a grandson…” (Prince 139). In the background are Mrs. Longbottom’s feelings toward her grandson. While the reader barely sees her, it is still known that she believes Neville lacks the talent she wants from her grandson.

As a child, Neville had his own questions and grievances about which he wanted to speak to his grandmother, but he may have been too scared. Greenspan says one cannot ask a child randomly about his feelings without first having a solid trusting relationship (Greenspan 32). It is sad to think that instead of encouraging Neville, Mrs. Longbottom spends more time putting him down and is “dismissive of Neville’s powers, annoyed with his limitations, and compares him negatively at every opportunity with either his father or Harry Potter” (Wolosky 104). Mrs. Longbottom even berates him to her friends. Neville is aware of this, and he tells his friends that “Gran’s always telling Professor Marchbanks [the O.W.L. examiner] I’m not as good as my dad…” (Phoenix
Again, by always comparing Neville to his father, it puts the father in a negative light, as one to be feared rather than loved. The father is the unattainable ideal, Mrs. Longbottom’s perfect son. Because of this, Neville is most likely an avoidant child, a child who has “parents who are intolerant to closeness” (Parkes 377). In the Gryffindor boys’ dormitory, Harry and Ron are best friends, as are Seamus Finnegan and Dean Thomas. Neville is the fifth wheel. Children like this “avoid too much intimacy, and their main relationships are with the group – often a combined boy and girl group” (Greenspan 132). This is evident when Neville joins Dumbledore’s Army, which is co-ed. Until sixth year, it does not appear that Neville spends time with many people outside of the classroom setting.

In Order of the Phoenix, Neville’s wand, which belonged to his father, breaks in half at the Department of Mysteries (Phoenix 794). By giving Neville a hand-me-down wand, no matter the original owner, Mrs. Longbottom takes her grandson’s chance to be his own person. This is especially interesting because as the wandmaker Ollivander says, “you never get as good results with another wizard’s wand” (Stone 84). Neville’s ineptitude at magic is most likely because he simply cannot achieve as well with a wand that never chose him. As Winnicott says, “If the child is to become an adult, then this move is achieved…over the dead body of an adult” (Gee 201). His father’s broken wand symbolizes the end of Neville’s suffocation. Just as the Dursleys try to stifle Harry’s natural personality, Mrs. Longbottom also keeps her grandson from his identity. Neville is strongest when he is being himself, rather than trying to be and live up to his father. Annoyed with Mrs. Longbottom’s lack of faith in her grandson, Professor McGonagall
tells Neville, “It’s high time your grandmother learned to be proud of the grandson she’s got, rather than the one she thinks she ought to have – particularly after what happened at the Ministry” (Prince 174). When Mrs. Longbottom finally buys Neville a new wand, it is suited to his personal talents and tastes and is more effective, having chosen him (Prince 137). Neville’s new wand is cherry, which symbolizes new awakenings, and unicorn hair, symbolizing purity. With a new wand, Neville is given a second chance to be himself.

The Boy Who Is Not

One of the saddest, and most disturbing, aspects of wizards and witches is how differently they view and respond to Harry and Neville individually. From the time Neville comes to Hogwarts, he appears to lack his peers’ magical talented. Neville’s forgetfulness is notorious, evident by his grandmother’s gift of a Remembrall his first year (Sorcerer’s 145). While Harry is interesting to everyone, Neville and his family’s role in assisting the demise of Lord Voldemort are never mentioned among students, an indication that these events are not discussed at home. Neville certainly never tells his friends anything about his personal life, or his home life. When Harry does learn about the Longbottoms, he is ashamed that he “never, in four years, bothered to find out [about Neville’s parents]” (Goblet 603). On the train ride to Hogwarts in fifth year, Luna asks Neville who he is, to which he quickly responds, “I’m nobody!” (Phoenix 186). In Half-Blood Prince, Professor Slughorn, in an effort to “collect” as many famous names as possible, invites both Harry and Neville to join him for lunch on the way to Hogwarts.
Slughorn, however, questions how much Neville resembles his parents. “At the end of Neville’s interview, Harry had the impression that Slughorn was reserving judgment on Neville, yet to see whether he had any of his parents’ flair” (Prince 145). Neville is not quite what Slughorn expects because he does not understand that Neville’s greatness takes some time to show through, and it must be brought out rather than scrutinized and forced.

Many adult witches and wizards are eager to befriend the orphaned Harry, but no one outwardly worries or expresses concern about Neville. Harry remarks that he “often got sympathy from strangers for being an orphan, but…he thought that Neville deserved it more than he did” (Goblet 607). There is one person who encourages Neville to pursue his skill in Herbology: the imposter Professor Moody, who is really Barty Crouch Jr., disguising himself with Polyjuice Potion. Harry is pleased to hear that Professor Moody mentioned Neville’s talent for plants because “Neville very rarely heard that he was good at anything” (Goblet 220-221). Unfortunately, even this ends up only happening because of Harry. As Wolosky says, “Every action of Moody that inspires confidence, and is appealing and helpful, turns out to be a meticulously calculated pretence to trap Harry and cause his downfall” (Wolosky 55). Crouch uses Neville as a pawn to guide Harry through the second task of the Triwizard Tournament.

However, despite this false fortune, it is not time wasted for Neville. “‘Apparently, Professor Sprout told Professor Moody I’m really good at Herbology,’ Neville said. There was a faint note of pride in his voice that Harry had rarely heard there before” (Goblet 220). Crouch may be an imposter, but Neville’s talent follows him. Even
more than this, however, is that Crouch appears to openly sympathize with Neville over what happened to his parents, which is more than any other teacher, or student, has done. This is a double-edged sword, however, because Crouch was part of the band of Death Eaters that caused the Longbottoms’ insanity. Wolosky points out that it would be difficult for a Death Eater to pull off something as emotional as that (Wolosky 55), but Crouch appears to be a good actor, or understanding of Neville’s situation, particularly after also growing up with an absent father. Despite this, Crouch extending this hand of confidence helps shape Neville for the final battle.

**Neville’s Triumph**

To everyone’s astonishment, including Harry’s, Neville becomes one of his most valuable allies. When Harry arranges the secret student society Dumbledore’s Army, the students who join want to prepare themselves for “what’s out there,” Neville becomes one of the members. “Ability and effort almost define the relation between Harry Potter and Neville Longbottom,” meaning that while Harry possess the stronger ability of the two, Neville is the one who puts forth the most effort (Kalish 67). In the D.A. lessons, Neville is one of the strongest in the group because he keeps trying and never gives up. Neville is just as shocked by his progress as his friends. “‘I DID IT!’ said Neville gleefully. “I’ve never done it before – I DID IT!’” (Phoenix 393). After Bellatrix Lestrange escapes Azkaban, Harry begins seeing an even greater, but positive, change in Neville. “…in nobody was this improvement more pronounced than in Neville. The news of his parents’ attacker’s escape had wrought a strange and even slightly alarming change
in him” and Neville is “working harder than anyone else in the room” (Phoenix 553). This is when Neville finally embraces his infantile memory, returning to it by both mentally and physically preparing to meet his parents’ attacker, should that day come.

The real turning point for Neville is the battle in the Department of Mysteries with Harry, Ron, Hermione, Luna, and Ginny. Though all fight bravely, Neville is the one remaining to fight alongside Harry (Phoenix 798), and ends up saving his life when the members of the Order of the Phoenix are busy dueling Death Eaters (802). When faced with Bellatrix Lestrange, Neville shows immense bravery and courage, telling Harry not to give the prophecy to the Death Eaters, even when threatened with the Cruciatus Curse (800). In battling with Bellatrix, Neville fights not just for himself and for Harry, but for the parents he lost. By the end of the year, attitudes toward Neville are beginning to change, not just among Neville’s peers, but also in his grandmother’s views. “Yes, I thought Gran would be angry about all the publicity,” said Neville, ‘but she was really pleased. Says I’m starting to live up to my dad at long last” (Prince 137). Finally, Neville is recognized for his talent, and, most importantly, recognized as a success by the woman who has been his only maternal figure for most of his life. Even Professor McGonagall, who “had never paid [Neville] a compliment before,” recognizes Neville’s talent (Prince 174) and praises him for his bravery.

By the time Deathly Hallows begins, the entire wizarding world is in shambles. Harry, Ron, and Hermione are on the run, beloved characters are dead, and the most unlikely people prove themselves to be leaders. Neville is one of these. Following the example set forth by Harry in their fifth year against Umbridge, Neville retaliates against
the two Death Eaters hired to teach the Defense Against the Dark Arts class, now called Dark Arts. He notices that “it gives people hope” when others stand up to those cruel teachers (*Hallows* 574). For his trouble, he sustains multiple cuts and bruises, but he wears them with pride, knowing that he is fighting a much larger battle. Later in that same book, Neville stands up to Lord Voldemort twice. He openly refuses to join Voldemort, who knows that Neville is a pureblood and sees the brilliance that took seventeen years for Neville to show. “You show spirit and bravery, and you come from noble stock. You will make a very valuable Death Eater. We need your kind, Neville Longbottom” (*Hallows* 731). In addition, Neville is the slayer of the snake Nagini, the last of Voldemort’s Horcruxes. In killing Nagini, Neville also kills the supposed “weak” part of him.

Even though Neville is not *the* leader, he is chosen to be *a* leader. Harry leads others, the same way Dumbledore leads him, to be the best he can be, thus mirroring Neville in courage and bravery. Like Winnicott’s idea that children mirror their parents, “other characters become doubles, mirrors, or reflections of Harry as well as of each other – sometimes as opposites, sometimes as likenesses” (Wolosky 100). Neville mirrors the fate of the orphan, but also reflects the positive aspects of Harry. Both rely on their friends, the love that they share with others, and the help they can give and receive. From the time Harry entered Hogwarts, he never sought to make friends with specific types of people, but the ones he does choose, he chooses for their loyalty and their bravery.

Neville is not well-liked or popular, but he has a good heart.

When the students were Sorted into their Houses, Draco Malfoy wanted Slytherin
and Harry desired any House but Slytherin (*Stone* 121). During Neville’s Sorting, the Sorting Hat lingers, like it did over Harry, as if unsure as to where to put Neville (*Stone* 120). The Hat chooses Neville for Gryffindor, the house known for bravery, despite taunts from people like Malfoy, who cannot see anything in Neville apart from weakness. When Harry pulls the sword of Godric Gryffindor from the Sorting Hat in the Chamber of Secrets, Dumbledore later tells him that “only a true Gryffindor” could have pulled the sword from the Hat, similar to King Arthur pulling the sword from the stone (*Chamber* 334). Like Harry, Neville’s loyalty also earns him the sword of Godric Gryffindor, which he uses to behead Nagini (*Hallows* 733). Neville is indeed his parents’ son, a “true Gryffindor,” and a hero.
Chapter Five

Man behind the Monster:

Hagrid and Motherless Magical Creatures
Hagrid’s Heart

Rubeus Hagrid, Keeper of Keys and Grounds at Hogwarts, is a special figure in Harry’s life. Hagrid brings baby Harry to the Dursleys, tells him he is a wizard, ferries him across the Black Lake to the Hogwarts castle, and transports Harry from the Dursleys’ home for the last time. Hagrid also has the special, and tragic, role of bringing Harry’s supposedly dead body back to Hogwarts after Harry’s encounter with Voldemort in the Forbidden Forest. However, Hagrid is cursed with circumstances out of his control: He is half-giant. Giants are feared and few want to take the time to get to know anyone carrying the blood of such a creature in his veins. This lack of understanding sets precedence for the course of Hagrid’s entire life, and leads him to show compassion to other feared creatures. Hagrid is excellent with animals and cares for all creatures, regardless of the rest world’s views.

Growing up without a mother makes Hagrid the person he is. Hagrid, like Harry, has not had an easy life. His mother abandoned him around age three, leaving Hagrid in the care of his father, who loved his son. Hagrid’s father dies during Hagrid’s second year at Hogwarts. Though without motherly care for most of his life, Hagrid still acts as a maternal figure to others, mostly animals. Hagrid likes Harry the moment he rescues him from the Potters’ ruined home after their deaths. Like the animals Hagrid cares for, Harry is abandoned, alone, and in need of love. Harry comes to view Hagrid as a friend, visits him during the school year, and exchanges letters with him during the summer holidays.

Even though Harry, Ron, and Hermione know Hagrid is not dangerous, most people would rather misunderstand Hagrid than get to know him, including Harry’s
archenemy Draco Malfoy and the hated Defense Against the Dark Arts professor, Dolores Umbridge, both of whom judge Hagrid by his massive size. As Rowling proves on countless occasions, however, appearances are deceiving. Hagrid is expelled from Hogwarts after Tom Riddle frames Hagrid for the opening of the Chamber of Secrets. Handsome Tom Riddle masks a more sinister nature, while Rubeus Hagrid looks like a savage mountain man, but he is in fact kind and gentle. Rowling describes Hagrid as “twice as tall as a normal man, and at least three times as broad, Hagrid, with his long, wild, tangled black hair and beard, looked slightly alarming – a misleading impression, for Harry, Ron, and Hermione knew Hagrid to possess a very kind nature” (Goblet 179). Despite all his tragedies, Hagrid still holds on to love and spreads it to others, in particular animals.

**Abandoned by His Mother**

Until Goblet of Fire, Hagrid’s true parentage remains a mystery to Harry. Then after boredom at the Yule Ball leads Harry and Ron to eavesdrop on a conversation between Hagrid and his half-giant love interest, all is revealed. Hagrid’s mother was a giantess, his father was human. Hagrid has his mother’s fearsome giant body with his father’s human personality. Sadly, Hagrid was a disappointment to his mother at a young age. What giantesses want, according to Hagrid, is to have “good big kids” (Phoenix 691). For Hagrid’s mother, the appearance of strength is more important than anything else, and this leads her to make the decision to abandon her son. Hagrid says that when he
was about three years old, his mother left, to the heartbreak of his father (Goblet 427-428). Even though the child attaches itself to the mother during the first year of life, young children separated from their mothers expressed a distinctive pattern of grieving moving in a sequence from a phase of acute Separation Anxiety, in which they cried a great deal, to a period of disorganization and despair to a final phase of recovery in which they began to reach out to others and make new relationships. (Parkes 372)

In spite of his mother’s abandonment, Hagrid grows up in a loving household. Because his mother left before Hagrid was four years of age, his memory of her is most likely distorted by the trauma of her abandonment. Remembering her later, Hagrid says, “Can’t remember her much. Wasn’ a great mother” (Phoenix 434). While Harry subconsciously knows that he was loved by his mother and father, Hagrid only knows that his father loved him. Even before his mother leaves, Hagrid experiences “maternal deprivation,” which in this case is “deprivation that occurs when an infant or young child lives with his mother or permanent substitute mother, from whom he receives insufficient care, and with whom he has insufficient interaction” (Ainsworth 98). Because Hagrid’s memories of his mother are dismissed with the comment that she was “not a great mother,” she probably deprived her son of maternal care after his birth. Once she abandoned him, Hagrid’s mother deprived him even more when he was not the child she wanted.

After the death of Hagrid’s father, Dumbledore once again steps in as the protector of the orphan. Hagrid especially respects Dumbledore because the headmaster
believes in second chances. Even though Hagrid was half-giant and expelled, Dumbledore remains loyal to Hagrid and gives him a job when no one else will. Just as Harry and Voldemort find a home in the Hogwarts castle, so too does Hagrid, saying, “It’s been me home…since I was thirteen” (Prince 628). There is something so special about the Hogwarts castle that it unites all these broken children and gives them a second chance to succeed.

**A Surrogate Mother**

Somehow, Hagrid must compensate for the loss of his mother. For him, the way to do this is by caring for those without any sort of maternal care. Hagrid, like Harry, is orphaned. During his father’s life, Hagrid maintains a good relationship with him, saying that his father was pleased that Hagrid was accepted into Hogwarts, after thinking his son may not be a wizard (Goblet 455). This is rather like Neville’s own family’s belief that he would not be accepted to Hogwarts, thinking he “might not be magic enough to come” (Stone 125). Self-doubt is shared trait of those lacking motherly affection. The reason Hagrid acts maternal is so others do not feel that disbelief in themselves. The reason for saying “maternal” rather than “paternal” is because Hagrid is portrayed as having some feminine behaviors: carrying a flowery pink umbrella, wearing an apron, gardening, knitting, and making tea. Also, the creatures Hagrid takes in are rarely adults. Aragog the spider is an egg and so is Norbert the dragon. Once Norbert is hatched, Hagrid exclaims, “Bless him, look, he knows his mommy!” (Sorcerer’s 235). Notice that Hagrid does not say “daddy.” It is more important to him that Norbert have a mother than a father. One
thing all these creatures have in common, apart from the fact that they are highly dangerous, is that no regular person would or should keep them as pets, though Hagrid does.

Arguably, the reason Hagrid repeatedly takes care of, and harbors a fondness for, magical creatures, especially the dangerous ones, is that he sees himself as misunderstood like they are, as he knows what it is like to feel alone, needing care and affection. Aragog knows Hagrid risked much to protect him. “Hagrid is my good friend and a good man” (Chamber 277-278). Aragog is grateful for that and does not permit his children to harm Hagrid (though Hagrid does find out after Aragog’s death that the spiders feel no qualms about eating him now). Even Firenze the centaur views Hagrid with trust and respect, even though it is against centaurs’ ways to side in any sort of human conflict. Firenze says that Hagrid “has long since earned my respect for the care he shows all living creatures” (Order 604-605). No matter the creature, Hagrid is always able and willing to assist it, and for that he gains recognition among the forest creatures. Though the Forbidden Forest is out of bounds to everyone else within Hogwarts, it becomes a domain “where [Hagrid] alone can walk in safety” (Mills 11). This also connects to Hagrid’s view of dangerous creatures because he alone can tame them, particularly the ones within the forest. Hagrid has a special talent with animals that few others possess.

For all the comparisons drawn between Harry and Voldemort, Hagrid notices a different one. He sees himself in Harry. “‘Yeah…I’ve said it before…Both outsiders, like,’ said Hagrid, nodding wisely ‘An’ both orphans. Yeah…both orphans’” (Phoenix 563). Of all the creatures Hagrid takes in, the one he seems to have the hardest time
parting with is Harry himself. Mythology often mentions shepherds who take in abandoned or orphaned children, just as Hagrid does with Harry. Hagrid is the fairy tale hunter, who “is not a figure who kills friendly creatures, but one who dominates, controls, and subdues wild, ferocious beasts” (Bettelheim 205). Just as the Blessed Virgin Mary brings Jesus to the temple, so too does Hagrid bring Harry to the Dursleys so Harry can begin the mission Dumbledore planned for him. Even when he leaves Harry on the Dursleys’ doorstep, Hagrid never forgets the boy with the lightning-shaped scar. Hagrid then rescues Harry from the Dursleys as they are on the run from Harry’s Hogwarts letters. His first birthday present to Harry is an animal, the snowy owl Hegwig, who will be his loyal companion throughout his journey at Hogwarts.

**Hagrid’s Only Remaining Family**

While Hagrid is trying to convert the giants to Dumbledore’s goodwill and away from Voldemort, Hagrid discovers his mother is dead, but he also finds he has one family member left: a half-brother named Grawp, who is all-giant. After leaving Hagrid’s father, his mother had a son with another giant, and didn’t “seem ter have liked [Grawp] much more’n she liked [Hagrid]” (*Phoenix* 691). Grawp looks even more terrifying than his older half-brother. At sixteen feet, Grawp towers over Hagrid’s already impressive height, but he is picked on and mistreated because he is smaller than the other giants. Hagrid knows what it is like to be picked on for being the largest human in the room, so he maternally takes Gwarp under his wing and does his best to raise him and care for him the way their mother should have raised and cared for both of them. Grawp lacks human
speech, prompting Hagrid’s desire to teach him English. “I knew if I jus’ got him back…an’ – an’ taught him a few manners – I’d be able ter take him outside an show ev’ryone he’s harmless!” (Phoenix 691). Through this, Grawp serves a double purpose for Hagrid. In addition to providing a mother for Grawp, teaching him would be proof for Hagrid that not all giants are “bad.” If he can teach a full-blooded giant how to be “civilized,” then maybe his own stigma, that all giants are dangerous, will disappear.

**Deliberately Misunderstanding Hagrid**

When Harry first meets Hagrid, he knows little about his past. Harry’s only concrete information is that Hagrid was expelled in his third year and that Dumbledore keeps Hagrid on Hogwarts staff as the groundskeeper. Hagrid’s giant parentage makes him greatly feared by the wizarding communities. Hermione is unsurprised when Ron and Harry tell her Hagrid is part-giant, and furthermore, she is unbothered by it. She merely tells Harry and Ron that the hatred against giants is “the same sort of prejudice people have towards werewolves…It’s just bigotry, isn’t it?” (Goblet 434). Dishearteningly, not everyone shares Hermione’s tolerant, innocent-until-proven-guilty views. Riddle pins the opening of the Chamber of Secrets on Hagrid, and Headmaster Dippet is willing to believe that blundering Hagrid did it, rather than model student Tom Riddle. For Dippet, expelling Hagrid is also a way to hush the whole thing up. It is easier to believe a half-giant capable of murder rather than a good-looking prefect performing such a deed. Even Riddle is shocked by how easily he was able to persuade people into believing Hagrid was the Heir of Slytherin. “I thought someone must realize that Hagrid
couldn’t possibly be the Heir of Slytherin…as though Hagrid had the brains, or the power!” (Chamber 312). Sadly, Hagrid’s heritage, given to him by his mother, is against him.

Eventually, in Harry’s third year, Hagrid receives a new position in addition to gamekeeper: Care of Magical Creatures professor. For Hagrid, this is a role of immense accomplishment, not just for a person who was expelled, but for a person who carries the blood of the one of the most feared creatures in his veins, which would hinder his ability to earn a job outside of Hogwarts. During his first Care of Magical Creatures lesson, Draco Malfoy, who never liked Hagrid, is determined to get rid of him once and for all by provoking the hippogriff Buckbeak into attacking him, thus bringing trouble for Hagrid. This is one of many attempts to purge the school of Hagrid. When the Chamber of Secrets is opened again, Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge arrives at Hagrid’s hut with the purpose of arresting him and taking him to the wizard prison Azkaban.

“Hagrid’s record’s against him. Ministry’s got to do something…” (Chamber 261). Imprisoning the half-giant to reassure the public seems to be a good idea to Fudge, but Dumbledore tells him that “taking Hagrid away will not help in the slightest” (Chamber 261). Naturally, Fudge takes Hagrid without inquiring any further into the matter.

The media in Rowling’s world is portrayed as highly dangerous, particularly when people believe the lies the papers print. Rita Skeeter, as a member of the paparazzi, plays on the fear people harbor against giants and half-giants (Goblet 437-440). The media attention Skeeter focuses on Hagrid serves a dual purpose. Not only is she trying to defame Hagrid, she is also trying to give her readers a twisted insight into the “boy who
lived,” this boy, of course, being Harry (Goblet 439). Just as Crouch uses Neville to get to Harry, Rita uses her story about Hagrid to make others think negatively about Harry. To be friends with a half-giant, Harry must either be incredibly brave or mentally unhinged. Furthermore, Skeeter also questions the wisdom of Dumbledore in the appointment of Hagrid to a teaching position (437-438). Hagrid, in shame, barricades himself in his hut, refusing to see anyone, until finally Dumbledore comes to reason with him. “I have shown you the letters of countless parents…telling me in no uncertain terms that if I sacked you, they would have something to say about it…if you are holding out for universal popularity, I’m afraid you will be in this cabin for a very long time” (Goblet 453-454). Hagrid is sensitive to criticism, and his behavior at Skeeter’s article is shock because he finally sees in writing what he has believed his entire life: that he is a monster.

Probably the most memorable attempt to hurt Hagrid is when Dolores Umbridge is determined to have Hagrid removed from Hogwarts entirely. Umbridge is notorious for her hatred of “half-breeds,” and she will not stop at anything to have them annihilated. When she is around Hagrid, Umbridge speaks louder than normal and using deliberate hand motions when addressing Hagrid, as if he is incapable of understanding what she says (Phoenix 447). Because giants have their own language, which some may consider “savage,” Umbridge speaks to Hagrid as if he was raised in a cave somewhere in the mountains without exposure to “proper” society. Additionally, Hagrid is decidedly lower class. His speech is fractured, littered with expletives, and loud, is “emblematic of a lack of education, not only in the formal rules of language arts, but also in the social graces” (Park 185). Hagrid is also often seen wiping his mouth on the back of his hand, belching,
and sobbing and snorting into handkerchiefs the size of bath towels. He drinks to the point where he accidentally gives the stranger in the Hogs Head pub information on how to get past Fluffy, his three-headed dog. Harry, Ron, and Hermione, though his friends, learn not to touch the food he offers, and his dishes are a far cry from the extravagance delivered to the Great Hall. The wizarding world, particularly pure-bloods, takes great pride in social class and wealth, but a person’s actions are the true determinant of his or her personality. Hagrid is nothing but kind. Despite his mother’s abandonment, Hagrid does not let that interfere with his goodness and kindness towards others.

Despite his intimidating size and rough demeanor, Hagrid builds a good life for himself. He lives in a hut, not a cave like other giants. He cooks and the meat he eats is not human flesh. He is caring and compassionate, as a good mother should be. As a child, my mother told me if an animal likes someone, then that is a good sign because it means he or she is a good person. If that is true, than Hagrid has one of the purest hearts of anyone in the book. When Hagrid gives his Care of Magical Creatures class a lesson about thestrals, creatures that a person can only see if he or she has witnessed death, he brings raw meat to lure them to him, but calls them as well, simply because the thestrals like to know that Hagrid is the one summoning them (Phoenix 444). Animals see a person for what he or she is, rather than what he or she appears to be. Hagrid’s maternal care for these creatures is “deeply redemptive” (Wolosky 18). Hagrid’s high value on life in all its forms makes him one of the best and most beloved characters in all the entire *Harry Potter* series.
Conclusion: The Child within the Adult

As Rowling reiterates in her books, there is no magic more powerful than love. No wizard or witch can duplicate it, or the effects of its power. However, like all magic within the *Harry Potter* universe, love must be learned, and parents or caregivers are the first teachers of this love. In particular, mother-child relationships are the foundation of this love. Relationships are the bedrock of human love, and these are what carry human beings into adulthood.

Our past experiences – how we’re raised and educated, what happens to us growing up, which responses seem to work for us – mold who we become. The way Hermione values books and education was no doubt shaped by her well-educated parents. The older Weasley twins’ shenanigans, not to mention Mr. Weasley’s penchant for tinkering with Muggle artifacts, likely bolster Ron’s understanding that rules are easily bent and meant to be broken. (Garver 180)

This idea that parents are such strong teachers is reiterated in Merope, Harry, Voldemort, Neville, and Hagrid. These five characters are only a brief overview of how a child’s upbringing can affect his or her entire life. Those without parents do not necessarily “turn out badly,” but it can be more difficult to forge strong relationships with people without a strong foundation. The best time to learn anything is while the brain is still in the early development process, and Harry and Neville know love, particularly from their mothers, within the first year of life that enable them to build strong relationships later in life. Though Hagrid does not have the desired maternal affection, he instead attaches himself
to his father as a primary caregiver. Hagrid’s love of animals is redemptive because in spite of his heritage, he shows love and kindness to all living creatures and acts maternally toward all creatures, as a result of his mother’s abandonment.

When Dumbledore asks Harry to pity those who live without love, he shows a loveless existence for the tragedy it is. Growing up in a violent family that does not know how to love each other, and possibly resulted in the loss of physical and emotional support from her likely-abused mother, Merope learns nothing but hate from her family circumstances. In turn, Merope does not know how to properly love her son. This trauma that Merope passes on to Voldemort is an unbroken pattern, a curse that requires a catalyst stronger than any she could provide. Naturally, without love to support him, and carrying Merope’s trauma within him, Voldemort becomes one of the most feared wizards to ever walk the earth.

Without love in infancy, the product is vastly different from that of those who were cared for emotionally as well as physically. The mother is a powerful figure, the ultimate symbol of selfless love. This is exhibited whenever we come upon an icon of the Blessed Virgin Mother. She is tranquil, kind, lovingly holding Jesus, but, in the Pieta, she is grieving for her son. Lily, the flowers most often associated with the Blessed Mother, becomes rather like the Blessed Mother, in her selflessness which she displays for her son. Just as Voldemort grows with the knowledge that love is weak, Harry comes to understand what a selfless act can mean to another person. Thus, when the mother fails to provide the nurturing required for her children’s survival, the child grows up cursed. As with Hagrid, there are exceptions, but they are not the norm.
Part of what makes the *Harry Potter* books so satisfying is that the good characters are tolerably pleased, the bad characters are not necessarily badly off, but everything comes full circle, and in nineteen years, it is time for the next generation to go to Hogwarts. Harry, Hagrid, and Neville all receive their happy endings, and at the end of *Deathly Hallows*, all is as it should be. Harry sees his children off to Hogwarts, Neville is a Herbology professor, and Harry’s youngest son is going to meet Hagrid for tea upon his arrival at Hogwarts. No doubt Harry raises his family in healthier conditions than the ones in which he grew up at the Dursleys. Thus, Harry keeps his mother alive in him and passes her love to his children, breaking what could have been a pattern of heartbreak. For Harry, this end of incessant trouble is the real accomplishment of his life. As Rowling simply says, “All was well” (*Hallows* 759).
Bibliography


