

Harry potter and the prisoner of azkaban by j. k. rowling: divination theme

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Dissuasion of Divination

Divination is a very prevalent theme in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban. There are multiple scenes throughout the novel that depict scenes of active divination, identifying omens, and even a scene that could be considered prophetic interpretation. The goal of this specific analyzation of Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban is to understand how divination, prophecy, and freewill intertwine with one another throughout the book, which divination techniques are depicted in the novel and how they are important to the story itself, as well as the role and importance of divination in the book overall. Divination, by the previously mentioned factors, is able to make enough of an influence that the storyline blatantly reflects their inherent importance as the tale unfolds. While divination itself can be interpreted in a multitude of ways, J. K. Rowling accurately depicts multiple possible viewpoints and a variety of divinational arts and outcomes.

In order to fully understand the relationship that divination, prophecy, and freewill have, one must understand each concept individually. Merriam-Webster defines divination as, " the art or practice that seeks to foresee or foretell future events or discover hidden knowledge usually by the interpretation of omens or by the aid of supernatural powers; unusual insight; intuitive perception," and those that practice divination can be referred to as diviners. In short, by practicing a form of divination, a true diviner will be able to accurately predict the future or discover something previously unknown. Divination and prophecy can easily be misinterpreted as being the same thing, however, they are different. Merriam-Webster also

described prophecy as, “ the inspired declaration of divine will and purpose, a prediction of something to come.” As diviners are to divination, prophets are the vessels that house access to divine will and purpose that predict what could come in the future through sharing their revelations (Merriam Webster). Prophets and diviners could look alike in their practice since they both predict the future, but the reality is that their main difference is prophets and prophecy deals with gaining knowledge through divine power or intervention, whereas diviners and divination relies on what could be considered more of a spiritual being and a vessel such as tarot cards, crystals, or candles. Both divination and prophecy can be argued against by the concept of freewill, that individuals are free to make their own voluntary decision to choose which direction or path they travel. By making a different decision or having an occurrence happen that stops the “ natural flow” of things, the future can be overwritten and rerouted. Divination, prophecy, and freewill coincide together in Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban in that there are multiple occasions where characters, such as Hermione and Harry, use their free-will (and potentially a time-turner on occasion) to deter that their future is set in stone, and even go as far as leaving the impression that the majority of divination and prophecy may be a fluke due to their reactions to divination techniques.

There are many different types of divination including astrology, which uses planetary arrangement and numerology, which interprets numbers. In this book specifically, readers are exposed to tasseography, an act in which tea leaves are read, augury, which is the interpretation of omens or prophetic

significance, as well as crystallo-mancy, the use of a crystal ball or other crystal form (Merriam-Webster). Professor Trelawney was teaching a lesson about tasseography where she interpreted Harry's tea leaves. She saw what looked to be the appearance of the Grim, a black dog. This black dog is interpreted through augury as an omen of death or ill-comings and is an ever-prevalent figure whenever Harry is in a near-death situation or before disaster strikes. This is important to the story as it alludes to Sirius Black's return, but also that sheer belief that something grim will happen can cause individuals to make decisions that make the undesired happen. A reference to the impact of sheer belief is Hermione Granger's thoughts that the grim is the "cause of death" from shock, fear, and even paranoia (page 110).

The grim appears yet again in Harry's plausible future during Professor Trelawney's crystallo-mancy class structured around using crystal balls to prepare for questions on the final about the Orb. After offering to look into gazing into the ball for Harry, Professor Trelawney reveals that she again saw the Grim. Hermione's out of character outburst as well as Ron and Harry's disbelief in Professor Trelawney's own conviction in her "divinities" support the idea that the three friends doubted the legitimacy and instead resort to freewill. Though Trelawney's previous attempts at divination may seem phony, there is once scene in which she predicts that Harry will meet one of the dark lord's servants before midnight that evening. She takes on a presence that leaves others feeling that she is not on this plane, possibly even that another being overtook her as she had no recollection of what happened. This is similar to what a prophet could potentially encounter. This

event was exceedingly important as to catalyze the storyline as it preemptively warned Harry of what was to come.

While this information is relevant to its own accord, it can be applied to answer what role divination played in Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban. Professor Trelawney made multiple predictions that never really seemed to come true in the exact way that she foresaw, and she followed her own set of superstitions. It is the unpredictability of these predictions and the WORD of her superstitions that make divination in itself seem dubious. This supports the thought that the future cannot be predicted as it is ever-changing due to our choices of our own free will. The role of divination in this book could be inferred with the thought process that since the future is nearly impossible to accurately predict and the past cannot be changed, the others could live in the world of the present and focus their energy there.

Divination and its relation to Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban is a complex subject to think about as it is deeply rooted in many of the major events of the book. By increasing the amount of knowledge known about not only divination but prophecy and freewill as well, a more in depth analyzation can take place. The skepticism some characters hold toward divination and the belief that others show provides multiple perspectives that tie into real situations. J. K. Rowling is able to have her vision of divination expressed through the variation of different forms of divination, and press the importance of the present through the outcomes of divination.