

# Harry potter and the end of perfect tales: building up to 'goblet of fire'



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The Harry Potter series and the world created by the stories is defined as being magical; in the literal sense of there being magical beings such as witches and wizards, but also in that all the stories show our main characters reveling in the beauty of wizardry, defeating the evil that they face and getting a generally happy ending. This fourth book, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire is truly a turning point in the series because it brings an end to that pattern. The views of the main characters mature along with the themes presented in the series. This is one of the first times that they are forced to look past the beauty in wizardry and see the wizarding world as it actually is—flawed and vulnerable just as the muggle world.

One of the greatest traditions at Hogwarts are the feasts that take place; it's one of Harry and Ron's favorite parts. During Harry's first year at school, when Harry enters the great hall for the first time and the feast takes place, he is absolutely swept away by the magic of it: Harry had never even imagined such a strange and splendid place... Harry's mouth fell open. The dishes in front of him were now piled with food. He had never seen so many things we liked to eat on one table: roast beef, roast chicken, pork chops and lamb chops, sausages, bacon and steak, boiled potatoes, roast potatoes, fries, Yorkshire pudding, peas, carrots, gravy, ketchup, and for some strange reason, peppermint humbugs... Harry piled his plate with a bit of everything except peppermints and began to eat. It was all delicious. (SS 116-123)

Through all of this Harry is in such awe of the grandeur of the great hall and the feast, that he never once stops to wonder about where all the food came from.

From here on, there are scenes such as this where Harry and the other characters are simply enchanted by how magical and wonderful the feasts are and never do they dwell on thoughts of what makes these feasts possible. That is until Goblet of Fire where it's revealed that house elves man the kitchen: "There are house elves here?" she said, staring, horror-struck, at Nearly Headless Nick. "Here at Hogwarts?" "Certainly," said Nearly Headless Nick, looking surprised at her reaction. "the largest number in any dwelling in Britain, I believe. Over a hundred." "I've never seen one!" said Hermione. "Well, they hardly ever leave the kitchen by day, do they?" said Nearly Headless Nick. ..."Slave labor," said Hermione, breathing hard through her nose. "That's what made this dinner. Slave labor." (GOF 118-119) Up until this point in the series, in the eyes of the main characters, the eyes of children who look at the world through a fairytale-like view, the food simply magically appeared in front of them, for them and that was that. It's at this point in the series, where they have to look past the beauty of the feast, face that, that isn't the case, and acknowledge that house elf labor is what provides the food for them. More than that, it's the first time where they have to take a stance and form an opinion on an issue of this complexity; house elves were introduced in Chamber of Secrets, but this is the book where the reader learns the full complexity of their circumstances which is an example of how the themes have matured. The elves have masters, they don't get paid for their labor, they receive punishments and yet it's not simple because many of the elves want their lives to be like this. Dobby was the only house elf in Chamber of Secrets, and is depicted as terrified of his masters, constantly being punished and longing to be free.

Goblet of Fire challenges that, with the depiction of house elves that love <https://assignbuster.com/harry-potter-and-the-end-of-perfect-tales-building-up-to-goblet-of-fire/>

what they do and have respect for their masters. For the first time, characters such as the beloved Hermione couldn't view the feast as simply a magical celebration because now it was more than that.

As mentioned in the block quote above, Hermione developed the view that to participate in the feast was to condone elf slave labor. In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, the characters mature through becoming more active politically in that they choose to assist Hagrid in developing a defense for Buckbeak's case (219). Here in *Goblet of Fire*, the characters mature in that they become politically active by themselves—specifically Hermione via taking a stance on the issue of house elf labor. She does her research on house elf labor, publicly takes a stance on the issue and takes it a step further when she creates S. P. E. W. or The Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare (145-146). When Hermione chose to be involved in the Hippogriff trial, it was primarily because of Hagrid. Now she is choosing to get involved in *Goblet of Fire* because of her own stance and beliefs, which shows increased maturity in Hermione and in this particular theme in the series. Especially given that she isn't receiving support for SPEW from her friends or peers. *Goblet of Fire* is also where the series takes the themes of death and loss to a whole new level of maturity. It is made clear that wizards generally view themselves as above muggles; even in the very first novel, Hagrid uses the word muggle as if it is a insult when he tells Harry, " An' it's your bad luck you grew up in a family o' the biggest Muggles I ever laid eyes on," (SS 53). However different than muggles wizards may seem, *Goblet of Fire* puts in perspective for both readers and characters alike, that wizards are just as vulnerable to death and loss as muggles are. While the death of Cedric Diggory is not the first

death in the series, it is the first death that Harry witnesses first-hand and witnesses the direct aftermath of

Up until this point, death was more of an abstract concept in the series; it happened to characters whom the reader never really met and whose lives were before the story being told in the book. Up until Goblet of Fire, every good character ends up being okay in the end; Hermione survives the troll, Ginny survives the chamber, and Sirius escapes the dementor's kiss. This is the first book in the series where the good guy did not get a good end. While the first actual death during the series is that of Quirrell, Harry passed out before Quirrell actually died in Sorcerer's Stone( 295), so the reader and Harry are informed of Quirrell's death after it has happened. Meanwhile, Cedric's death is witnessed by Harry and described to the reader: Cedric was lying spread-eagled on the ground beside him. He was dead. For a second that contained an eternity, Harry stared into Cedric's face, at his open gray eyes, blank and expressionless as the windows of a deserted house, at his half-opened mouth, which looked slightly surprised. And then, before Harry's mind had accepted what he was seeing, before he could feel anything but numb disbelief, he felt himself being pulled to his feet. (GOF 412) Unlike with Quirrell, Harry and the reader witness the death of Cedric Diggory right in front of them.

Goblet of Fire is such a turning point in the series because everything gets a lot darker. It's no longer the case where Hogwarts is magically perfect and good always prevails over evil-Goblet of Fire is the end of perfect tales. It establishes the wizarding world and subsequently Hogwarts as more

complex than the trio previously believed through the introduction of issues  
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such as house elf labor and political activism via Hermione. This, along with the tragedy of Cedric Diggory shows growth and a higher of maturity present in the themes established earlier in the series.

## **References**

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