

Cinderella and Harry Potter: the role models for youth



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Though most children's literature is not necessarily always intended to be read solely by children, it is important to consider the reception of the child.

In the Grimm Brothers' "Cinderella" and J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, the child-reader is able to learn good from bad.

Cinderella and Harry Potter are both characters who act as models for positive and acceptable behaviour. Cinderella remains morally good, despite her unfortunate situation of her mother passing and her step-family treating her unjustly. Cinderella, however, appears to have birds watching over her and rewarding her for all of her acts of piety, translating to readers that they, too will be rewarded for similar behaviours. Harry has an inward battle in discovering what being good and being bad really means and, in the end, is similarly rewarded for his heroic actions. Cinderella in the Brothers Grimm's "Cinderella" and Harry Potter in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone experience many tests that assess their morals, demonstrating to readers what good behaviours really are and the importance of incorporating them into their own lives.

Young readers are directly influenced by what they read, and at especially young ages children are still navigating right from wrong. Literature plays a crucial role in guiding these children in the right direction. As Susan Ann Beach writes: "young readers choose to take a particular 'lesson' from their reading" (Beach 102). "Cinderella" and Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone are both stories that children are capable of taking lessons from.

Though Cinderella is written for a wider audience than just children, it has since been titled as a fairy-tale for young readers. It is important that these two works present a set of ideals to readers in order to guide them in their

moral journey. In order to do this, both Cinderella and Harry are put through a series of tests that assess their moral character and show readers that people who act morally righteous are rewarded.

There are clearly elements of the supernatural in both the Brothers Grimm's "Cinderella" and J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. In "Cinderella," however, there seems to be a supernatural element actually testing her and rewarding her based on the outcome. Cinderella's first task is set upon her by her dying Mother telling her to "be good and pious, and then the good God will always protect thee" (GRIMM). After Cinderella's mother passes away, Cinderella is given a series of tests to judge the piety of her character. Cinderella asks her father to bring a branch of a tree back for her while her step-sisters ask for "beautiful dresses, pearls and jewels" (GRIMM). Cinderella does not ask for anything of materialistic value, despite owning much less than her step-sisters. This is the first significant demonstration of virtue that Cinderella shows. Her devotion to the tree, and to her mother, is rewarded through the supernatural element of the bird.

A bird appears on the branch given to Cinderella as she devotes much of her time by the tree, watering it with her tears. This appearance of the bird is a direct reward for Cinderella's faithfulness to her mother.; in fact, birds play a central role in creating a supernatural element in this fairy-tale. The birds continue to reward Cinderella by helping her pick the lentils out of the fireplace and even give her proper clothing to wear to the festival, acting as a type of guardian angels to Cinderella and award her for her piety. The birds even ensure that the Prince find his "true bride," Cinderella, and not be fooled by Cinderella's step-sisters (GRIMM). Cinderella's character is

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constantly tested in order to prove that being virtuous offers rewards in order to encourage young readers to act as such. This point is further developed through the juxtaposing of Cinderella's reward with the step-sisters' punishment.

Cinderella's ultimate reward is marrying into the wealthy family of the Prince. She endures insufferable circumstances living with her step-mother and step-sisters; however, because she remains pious, she is given "good fortune" (GRIMM). Cinderella's step-sisters are cruel to Cinderella and "[do] her every imaginable injury" (GRIMM). Just as Cinderella receives a fortune as good as her character, the step-sisters receive a fortune as dreadful as theirs. The step-sisters, despite being cruel to Cinderella, "[want] to get into favour with Cinderella and share her good fortune" (GRIMM). This is a selfish act and because of it, the sisters are punished with blindness caused by the birds who aid Cinderella. Cinderella's virtuousness is tested on numerous occasions by a supernatural element with the power to reward and punish people for their actions. Harry Potter in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is also put through a series of tests; however, instead of a supernatural element judging his character, Harry's real quest lies in discovering the difference between good and bad on his own.

Though Cinderella has a mother who advises her to act virtuously, Harry is an orphan with less than suitable guardians. Harry's aunt and uncle treat Harry as if he is a servant, making him responsible to cook breakfasts for the family and not draw any attention to himself (Rowling 20). Harry is missing a central aspect of his life in terms of learning: proper parental figures.

Without these parental figures, Harry is incapable of learning what is right
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from wrong. All Harry is taught by the Dursleys is to refrain from participating in any “funny business” (23). Due to this lack of guidance, Harry must learn and make his own values.

Though *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is of the fantastical genre and therefore openly establishes more supernatural elements, there is not a supernatural element watching over and helping Harry unlike Cinderella. Instead, Harry's tests to his character appear to be more personal, showcasing a journey in discovering who he is and what he stands for. A very vital test that Harry undergoes is that of choosing his friends. Malfoy is clearly a boy of higher social class than Ron; however, Harry decides that he “can tell who the wrong sort are for [himself]” (Rowling 81). This immediate decision to befriend Ron Weasley, a poor and bullied boy, shows Harry's true character and ultimately puts him on the ‘good’ side. The second crucial test that Harry encounters is the Sorting Hat. Hagrid tells Harry that “[there is] not a single witch or wizard who went bad who [was not] in Slytherin” and with this information, Harry decides he does not want to be in Slytherin (62). Harry understands that Voldemort is an evil man and wishes to be nothing like him. Harry's shows his fear of being evil when he immediately repeats the phrase “not Slytherin” to himself once he undergoes the sorting ceremony (90). He is fearful that perhaps he does have evil inside of him, similar to Voldemort. This is further proved when the hat tells him that he “could be great” in Slytherin (91). The Sorting Hat makes sure that Harry is certain about not wanting to be in Slytherin house and ultimately places Harry in Gryffindor when he chooses not to be in Slytherin. This, again, is another test to his character as Harry is told he could be successful in

Slytherin but chooses Gryffindor in fear of becoming anything resembling Voldemort. In addition to these first initial tests establishing Harry's morality, he also must prove his bravery in his dealings with the Philosopher's stone.

Harry's bravery is put to the test when he goes searching for the Philosopher's stone with Ron and Hermione. Harry encounters a series of tests to gain access to the Philosopher's stone; however, the more important and less obvious tests assess his character. Harry immediately offers to fall through the trap door in order to ensure the safety of the drop (200-201). Harry explains that there is "no sign of the bottom" when he looks through the door; however, he does not wish for his friends to suffer any harm and instead, sacrifices himself (201). During the last obstacle in his quest to get the Philosopher's stone, Harry realizes that there is not enough potion left in the small bottle for both him and Hermione to drink and use to cross the black fire. Harry comes to the conclusion that he must finish their dangerous quest alone. Harry tells Hermione to go back and help Ron, proving his loyalty to his friends while simultaneously expressing undeniable bravery by facing a potentially life-threatening situation. Harry's true and admirable intentions are, however, properly exemplified when he finally meets Professor Quirrell in the last chamber.

Harry comes face-to-face with the Mirror of Erised. Formerly, Harry would see himself standing next to his parents when looking into the Mirror of Erised as this was his biggest desire in life. When he finds himself up against Professor Quirrell, however, this changes. Harry reveals that if he were to look into the mirror, he would know where to find the stone because it is what "[he wants] more than anything else in the world" (211). This is extremely significant in <https://assignbuster.com/cinderella-and-harry-potter-the-role-models-for-youth/>

demonstrating Harry's moral character as it outlines his strongest desire: for good. Again, Harry's pure intentions are proven when Dumbledore explains the final test in reaching the stone: "only one who wanted to find the Stone - find it, but not use it - would be able to get it" (217). Harry passes this final test when the Stone appears in his pocket, proving that his intentions are genuine and is rewarded just as Cinderella is.

As Beach proposes, "Harry, Ron, and Hermione's being caught by the castle caretaker as they are attempting to do something good shows... understanding of the sometimes blurred lines between good and evil" (Beach 102). Harry is continuously getting into trouble at Hogwarts for being out of bed during nighttime; however, he continues sneaking out in order to find more information about the Philosopher's Stone and protect it from falling into the wrong hands. Harry faces another challenging test when he decides not to "interfere in anything that [does not] concern him," showing the sometimes confusing situation that young people face in understanding that 'blurred line' Beach explains (Rowling 179). Harry feels as though he should be keeping to himself; however, he cannot allow Voldemort to come back and ultimately decides that he must interfere, leading to the destruction of Voldemort's return. Harry's knowledge of good and bad is ultimately put to the test and, because of his choices, he is rewarded. Harry is given sixty points for Gryffindor towards the house cup due to his "outstanding courage" (221). Harry's points, along with his friends who help him, put Gryffindor in first place for the house cup. Meanwhile, Draco Malfoy, a boy who is continuously attempting to get Harry in trouble and bullies those

around him, finds himself on the losing side in the Slytherin house, showing young readers that it pays off to be a good and loyal person.

Cinderella in the fairy-tale "Cinderella" by the Brothers Grimm and Harry Potter in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* are both put through a series of tests to prove their righteous character. While Cinderella is being judged and rewarded based on good behaviour by a supernatural element within the birds that follow her, Harry must navigate right from wrong on his own. Both characters undergo a series of tests and prove that their intentions are pure. Cinderella remains pious as her mother asks of her and is rewarded with marriage to a prince. Harry finds himself having to decide his own path in life between good and bad. After choosing his friends and Hogwarts house carefully, Harry then goes through a series of physical tests that actually work to assess his character. These tests prove Harry's heroic and loyal character. Cinderella and Harry Potter demonstrate their positive characteristics through passing a series of tests and are, in the end, rewarded for their behaviour, influencing young readers to act as such.

Works Cited

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