

# Elements of folktale and fairy tale in Harry Potter and Deathly Hallows

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**SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU**  
**UČITELJSKI FAKULTET**  
**ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE**

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**Diplomski rad**

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**Zagreb,rujan 2021.**

## Zahvale

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## SUMMARY

The aim of this thesis is to analyse folk and fairy tale elements in the final novel in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series – *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. It should be noted that the thesis does not claim that the novel is a fairy tale; it merely points out the elements it shares with the fairy tale. The analysis focuses on the following fairy-tale elements: form (beginning and ending), characters, themes and motifs. The analysed themes and motifs include the battle between good and evil, mothers and maternal love, family relationships, magical creatures and magical objects. The thesis examines how Rowling uses familiar folk and fairy-tale characters, themes, and plot elements and adapts them to the complex story of her novel. The thesis also examines “The Tale of Three Brothers”, a fairy tale which plays an important role in the novel.

**Key words:** fairy tale, folk tale, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, J. K. Rowling, “The Tale of Three Brothers”

## SAŽETAK

Cilj ovog diplomskog rada je analizirati elemente usmenih priča bajki u posljednjem romanu iz serijala o Harryju Potteru J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter i Darovi smrti*. Važno je naglasiti da cilj ovoga istraživanja nije dokazati da je roman *Harry Potter i Darovi smrti* bajka, već odrediti koje elemente dijeli s žanrom bajke. Analizom su obuhvaćeni sljedeći elementi bajke i usmene priče: forma (početak i kraj), likovi, teme i motivi. Analizirane teme i motivi uključuju borbu između dobra i zla, majke i majčinsku ljubav, obiteljske odnose, čarobna bića i čarobne predmete. U radu se istražuje na koji način Rowling koristi likove, teme i elemente zapleta poznate iz bajke i usmene priče i prilagođava ih složenoj priči njenog romana. U radu se također analizira „Priča o tri brata“, bajka koja igra važnu ulogu u romanu.

**Ključne riječi:** bajka, *Harry Potter i Darovi smrti*, J. K. Rowling, „Priča o tri brata“, usmena priča

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Almost everybody has heard at least one fairy tale in their lives. In western societies, these stories are mostly read or told to children before bedtime. Even though many people regard fairy tales as little more than bed-time stories which, “cannot be taken seriously” since “children believe in them, read them and listen to them” (Zipes 2012, 95), they still encounter fairy-tale plots and themes through mass media, such as movies, TV series, game shows, video games, etc. Many contemporary writers find inspiration in folklore and folk tales, especially fairy tales. This inspiration is found in one of the most popular book series of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter*.

The main question in this thesis is which fairy-tale elements can be found in the final novel in the *Harry Potter* series— *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007). The aim is to determine how elements of the novel such as themes, motifs, and characters, can be compared to those found in fairy tales and how they are different from them.

The importance of fairy tales for the *Harry Potter* series has already been recognized by many scholars, who have used various approaches to study the fairy-tale elements found in Rowling’s books. The collections of articles *Critical Perspective on Harry Potter* (2009), edited by Elizabeth E. Heilman, includes several chapters on the influence of folklore and fairy tales on Rowling, especially Anne Hiebert Alton’s “Playing the Genre Game: Generic Fusions of the *Harry Potter* Series” and Maria Nikolajeva’s “*Harry Potter* and the Secrets of Children’s Literature”. *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter* (2002), edited by Lana A. Whited, which only explores the first four books, also contains papers which examine the novels’ roots in myths, folklore, and fairy tales, especially Marry Pharr’s “In Medias Res: *Harry Potter* as Hero-in-Progress” and M. Katherine Grimes’s “*Harry Potter*: Fairy Tale Prince, Real Boy, and Archetypal Hero”. Mohammad Kawish Haider (2016) examines the elements of myth, folklore, and fairy tale in fantasy in general and *Harry Potter* in particular, while Joel Hunter (2014) uses Vladimir Propp’s theory of fairy tales to explain why Rowling’s books have gained such success. In “The Phenomenon of *Harry Potter* or Why All the Talk” (2009), Jack Zipes claims that the story of *Harry Potter* is not something new and expresses his concerns regarding what it teaches children. Mark Patrick Hederman (2007) explains why *Harry Potter* can be seen as an archetypal hero. While most of these studies focus on the entire series, this thesis focuses only on the final novel.



The thesis consists of five chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 dives into the significance of the *Harry Potter* series, its global success and influence on readers. It also summarizes the events in the series and describes the plot of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* in more detail. Chapter 3 is dedicated to fairy tales: it defines the genre and discusses its key elements, specifically, form, language and style, characters, themes and motifs. Chapter 4 uses the knowledge about fairy tales to analyse *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. It starts by discussing fairy-tale themes and motifs in the novel: the battle between good and evil, mothers and maternal love, family relationships, and magic (magical creatures and objects). It then analyses four characters – Harry Potter, Lord Voldemort, Professor Severus Snape and Draco Malfoy – and questions whether they can be described as purely good or purely evil. The chapter ends by examining the novel’s story within a story, “The Tale of Three Brothers”. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis and summarizes its main findings.

While the *Harry Potter* series has already been researched and discussed many times, what encouraged me to explore this topic is how in *The Deathly Hallows* (perhaps naturally since it is the final novel in the series) Rowling sums up everything she had previously written and everything she had learned about folklore, folktales and fairy tales. By combining all the creatures, characters, magic, and so much more into one book, she has created a happy place for readers to come back to, because “Hogwarts will always be there to welcome you home” (Cetin 2011, 1).

## 2. The *Harry Potter* series

The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, its popularity and influence. The chapter will also provide a summary of the plot of the series, as well as a more detail description of the plot of the final novel, which is the main focus of this thesis.

*Harry Potter* is a series of seven fantasy novels for young adults, written by British author J. K. Rowling. It encompasses the following novels: *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005), and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007). The books were immensely successful: the SYFY Wirewebsite reports that the final book in the series became the fastest selling book in history (Weiss 2018). According to the official *Harry Potter* site, *The Pottermore*, the series "hit a huge milestone" in 2018 "with more than 500 million books sold all over the world, in 80 languages" (500 million, 2018). Furthermore, as Anne Hiebert Alton points out, the series "has been credited for a renaissance in reading for children all over the world [...] and has already become an integral part of our popular culture and academic discourses" (2008, 199).

When talking to Albus Dumbledore, Professor Minerva McGonagall predicted: "There will be books written about Harry – every child in our world will know his name" (Rowling 2015, 12). She could also be talking about the world outside the novel, in which Harry Potter is a character known to adults and children around the world, even to those who have not read the books.

Not only is the series so well accepted, but the vocabulary within the books is widely known and used to the point that the word *Muggle* ("nonmagic folk"; Rowling 2015, 41) has been added to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (McCaffrey 2003). Even *Quidditch*, a sport described in the books, has been brought to "our" world and played in 2005 at many universities, even at Harvard University to this day as the official sport ("Harvard Quidditch Club"). Following successful movies adaptations of the novels –*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002), *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2005), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2007), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2009), *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 1* (2010), and finally *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2*

(2011)–Universal and Warner Brothers created two theme parks: The Wizarding World of Harry Potter (located in the Islands theme park at the Universal Orlando Resort in Florida) and The Making of Harry Potter (located at the Warner Bros. Studios, Leavesden, where all eight of the *Harry Potter* films were made). If you have somehow missed any information about the books, or simply want to find out which Hogwarts house you belong to or what is your *Patronus*, you can visit the previously mentioned Pottermore website, where Rowling herself often writes and interacts with her fans.

## **2.1 The story of Harry Potter**

The aim of this section is to first summarize the plot of the *Harry Potter* series, and then describe the plot of the final instalment – *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* – in more detail.

The story follows three friends – Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger – who are trying to fight the evil wizard, Lord Voldemort, and his army, the Death Eaters. Harry's parents are killed by Lord Voldemort, but Harry somehow manages to survive the Killing Curse, which leaves a lightning scar on his forehead as a constant reminder of the event and, even more importantly, creates a connection between him and Voldemort. Due to a prophecy he heard, Voldemort wants to kill Harry because he is the only one who can stop him from becoming the most powerful wizard in the world. Growing up in the care of his Muggle relatives the Dursleys, Harry is oblivious of the entire wizard community. However, all of that changes on his eleventh birthday, when Harry enrolls in the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, where he meets Ron and Hermione. Hogwarts is also a place where Harry repeatedly duels with Lord Voldemort and overcomes other problems that trouble every young person. Over time, he learns how to stay true to himself, and trust his instincts. But, more importantly he learns how to be a good friend, since Harry's friends are like a family to him, willing to protect him, love him and die for him. And he would without doubt do the same for them, as he did in the end.

### **2.1.1 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows**

The last novel in the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, starts with Harry Potter sitting in his room, reading articles about his deceased headmaster and dear mentor Albus Dumbledore. Before his death, Dumbledore left Harry with a difficult task – to find all the Horcruxes and destroy them. As Harry learned from his headmaster, a Horcrux is an object in

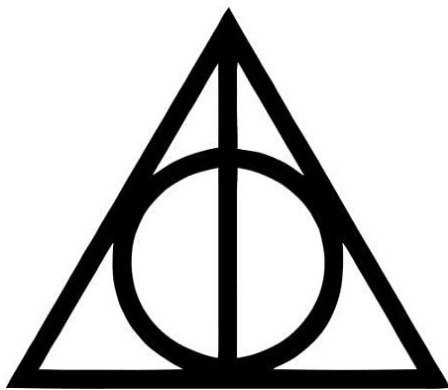
which a person can hide fragments of their soul in order to become immortal. Should a person die, another wizard can take the Horcrux and resurrect the deceased. To make a Horcrux, a person has to commit murder; to destroy it, one can use the Basilisk snake's venom, the Sword of Gryffindor, or the magical flame called Fiendfyre.

As Ron, Harry and Hermione prepare to hunt down the Horcruxes, the Minister of Magic reads them Dumbledore's will. Harry gets a Golden Snitch, the ball he won while playing Quidditch for the first time. What makes this Snitch so special is that nobody but Harry can open it, since he is the one who caught it and it remembers his touch. Ron gets a Deluminator, a magical device used and designed by Albus Dumbledore to create or remove light sources from the immediate surroundings. Hermione receives a storybook entitled *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*. Dumbledore also passed on the Sword of Godric Gryffindor, but the Ministry refuses to give it to Harry because it was not Dumbledore's property. What is more interesting, the sword has gone missing. During the wedding of Ron's older brother Bill, the Ministry of Magic is taken over by Voldemort. The wedding guests and the entire opposition to Voldemort's reign (the so-called Order of the Phoenix) is hunted and interrogated to find out Harry's location. After that night, Voldemort begins hunting down and arresting every Muggle-born witch and wizard, and Harry's detested Professor Snape becomes the new Headmaster of Hogwarts.

The trio hides in the house that Harry's godfather Sirius Black left him, where they learn that Sirius's brother Regulus stole a Horcrux locket and hid it in the house. However, the locket was stolen by Mundungus Fletcher who handed it to Harry's former professor Dolores Umbridge, who now works at the Ministry of Magic. Harry, Ron and Hermione infiltrate the Ministry and steal the locket, but their safe place is discovered, forcing them to stay in the wilderness. Since they are unable to destroy the Horcrux, they decide to take turns wearing it. The darkness of the locket gradually affects all of them, most of all Ron who ultimately decides to leave. After some time, both Harry and Hermione travel to Harry's birthplace – Godric's Hollow – where Harry's wand is destroyed, but they manage to obtain a book containing all the "secrets" of their headmaster's life.

A few days later, Harry discovers the Sword of Gryffindor under a thick layer of ice. When he tries to get it, the locket around his neck nearly kills him, but Ron – who decided to re-join his friends and found them with the help of Dumbledore's Deluminator – saves him. In the book about Dumbledore, Hermione finds a connection between the sign drawn in *The Tales of*

*Beedle the Bard* and the one on a necklace worn by Xenophilius Lovegood, father of one of their schoolmates. Lovegood explains that the sign is the symbol of the Deathly Hallows: the straight line represents the Elder Wand, the circle on top is the Resurrection Stone, and the triangle which encloses both the line and the circle is the Cloak of Invisibility (see Figure 1). The trio gets really excited about this discovery, but then they find out that Lovegood's daughter Luna has been captured by the Death Eaters. The only way for Lovegood to save her is to betray Harry, so he calls the Death Eaters. Luckily, the trio escapes.



**Figure 1. Symbol of the Deathly Hallows. Source: [popartmachine.com](http://popartmachine.com).**

Harry realizes that Voldemort is after the Elder Wand, which was put in the coffin next to Dumbledore. What makes the Elder Wand so desirable to Voldemort is the fact that it is said to be the most powerful wand that ever existed, able to perform feats of magic that would normally be impossible even for the most skilled wizards. However, Harry mentions Voldemort's name, which reveals their position, and they are captured and taken to the home of the Malfoy family. There they meet other prisoners: Luna Lovegood, Griphook the goblin, the wandmaker Ollivander, and another schoolmate named Dean Thomas. One of the Death Eaters, Bellatrix Lestrange, believes they stole the Sword of Gryffindor from her vault in Gringotts Wizarding Bank and tortures Hermione. With help of Dobby the elf, all seven prisoners escape. Before they leave, Harry takes all the wands his classmate and rival Draco Malfoy held in his hand.

After some time, Harry has a vision of Lord Voldemort breaking into Dumbledore's tomb and stealing the Elder Wand. This puts the trio in even greater danger, since Voldemort now has the greatest weapon. They decide to break into Bellatrix's vault at Gringotts, believing it to be

the location of the next Horcrux since she was so determined to make sure that they were not in there. With the help of Griphook, a Gringotts employee, they get inside the vault, but he tricks them and steals the Sword of Gryffindor. However, the trio manages to steal another Horcrux – Hufflepuff’s cup.

During the escape, Harry has another vision of Voldemort, which reveals that another Horcrux is at Hogwarts. Harry, Ron and Hermione get inside the school with the help of Dumbledore’s brother, Aberforth. When Voldemort finds out where Harry is, he decides to attack Hogwarts. While the teachers and students are defending the school, the trio tries to find and destroy the rest of the Horcruxes. Ron and Hermione destroy Hufflepuff’s cup with a Basilisk fang, and Harry looks for Rowena Ravenclaw’s diadem, which is destroyed with the help of a cursed fire.

Voldemort realizes that the Elder Wand he is using is not performing as it should. He believes that this is Snape’s fault, since he is the one who killed the wand’s previous owner Dumbledore. Voldemort therefore kills Snape, who allows Harry to see his memories before he dies. The memories reveal that Snape was in love with Harry’s mother and played double agent against Voldemort the whole time. They also reveal that the last Horcrux is Harry himself.

Knowing what he must do, Harry tells his friend Neville Longbottom to kill Voldemort’s snake because it is also a Horcrux. On his way to meet Voldemort, Harry takes his Snitch which holds the Resurrection Stone and is briefly reunited with his parents, Sirius Black, and Remus Lupin, who all promise to stay close to him. Voldemort immediately casts the Killing Curse, but Harry is not dead. He awakens in a dreamlike location somewhat resembling King’s Cross station, where he meets Dumbledore, who explains how Harry turned out to be a Horcrux and that now that connection is lost. Believing that Harry is dead, Voldemort and the Death Eaters go to Hogwarts to display his body. As Neville kills the snake, Harry reveals that he is alive and the battle continues. Harry explains to Voldemort that it was not Professor Snape who was the master of the Elder Wand, it was Draco. Since Harry disarmed Draco, he was now the master of the Elder Wand. Voldemort tries to cast the Killing Curse on Harry, but the spell rebounds, killing Voldemort instead.

The novel ends with an epilogue: 19 years later, Harry, Ron, and Hermione are saying goodbye to their children as they board the train to Hogwarts. Harry’s scar has not hurt in 19 years and “all was well” (Rowling 2012, 529).

After introducing the *Harry Potter* series in general and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* in particular, the thesis now turns to its second key term: fairy tales. The next chapter will therefore provide a general definition of the fairy tale and discuss its key elements.

### 3. DEFINING FAIRY TALES

Before we move on to which fairy tale elements can be found in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, we need to define the genre a little bit more. In *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales*, Donald Haase writes that, for some, “the term fairy tale denotes a specific narrative form with easily identified characteristics, but for others it suggests not a singular genre but an umbrella category under which a variety of other forms may be grouped” (2007, 363). In order to better understand this quote and put emphasis on specific genre elements that are relevant for our analysis (see Chapter 4), this chapter will first explore how different scholars define the fairy tale and then examine its individual elements, specifically, form, language and style, themes and motifs, setting, and characters. In the end, the chapter will sum up what scholars have stated in a working definition of the fairy tale.

#### 3.1 About fairy tales

According to Jack Zipes (and many other fairy-tale scholars), the fairy tale “is nearly impossible to define” because there are “thousands of literary fairy tales” which exist in many different versions and media, such as films, ballets, and advertisements (1988, 7). We do not know for sure when, where, and how fairy tales first appeared, but many scholars, such as Steven Swann Jones (2002, 3) and Marina Warner (2014, xviii), connect them with folklore and the oral tradition. The literary fairy tale “erupted and began to evolve and spread its branches and seeds” in the seventeenth century, and it continues to transform, and inspire artists and readers even today (Zipes 2013, 1).

Each fairy tale exists in many different versions created by different narrators, societies, and cultures, and “shaped over centuries of retelling” (Swann Jones 2002, 5). Familiar plots, characters, and images have become part of popular culture and inspired new generations of artists (Bernheimer 2009). They have survived over centuries without losing their popularity, adapting to new tastes, trends, and media. According to Marina Gabelica, we can trace fairy tales in digital media by following elements of fairy tales such as characters and motives that have been adapted and shaped in the spirit of the culture they were created in (2014, 48). Swann Jones believes that the popularity and long life of fairy tales is “a confirmation not only of aesthetic appeal, but also of their ability to speak to the human heart” (2002, 4–5).



To say that something is a fairy tale, you do not need fairies. On the other hand, magic needs to be implied and present (Warner 2014, 4). Fairy tales can therefore be defined as stories in which magical and wondrous events, characters, and objects are a part of normal, every-day life (Bernheimer 2009, 69). We do not know much about the characters since they are one-dimensional, but we know that, in the end, the good will usually win and the evil lose. Fairy tales were originally probably not meant for children, but around the end of seventeenth century, they gradually became part of children's literature (Zipes 1988,7) and started teaching child readers lessons, such as listen to your parents and do not stray from the path ("Little Red Riding Hood"), or be good, kind, and patient ("Cinderella"). To better understand this type of tales, let us explore their individual elements: form, language and style, motifs and themes, setting, and characters.

### **3.2. Form**

For some scholars, the key element for defining the fairy tale is form. The most famous among them is Vladimir Propp with his influential study *The Morphology of the Folktale*, in which where he structurally analyses fairy tales. Based on his analysis of one hundred Russian folk tales, Propp(1968) identified thirty-one structural elements (or functions, as he calls them) that typically occurred in those stories. For him, any story that does not fit into his scheme of functions – which he defines as stable units of action (Propp 1968: 21)– is not a fairy tale.

A common element found in almost all fairy tales is the protagonist's departure from home in the beginning of the tale, which brings about a complication or a conflict. Maria Nikolajeva writes that the "home → departure from home → adventure → homecoming" plot pattern is typical not just of fairy tales, but children's literature in general (2005, 101). The departure from home is the moment in which something exciting happens to the character, something that would not happen if he or she stayed at home. For example, Little Red Riding Hood would not bump into an evil wolf, Snow White would not meet the seven dwarfs, Cinderella would not meet the prince, and so on.

Homecoming brings the resolution of the conflict started by the departure from home. It is important to point out that the resolution is not necessarily the end of the story, but merely the moment in which the conflict is resolved (Nikolajeva 2005). Being away is an exciting period for the protagonist, a time for them to learn, grow, gain knowledge and maturity. In the words of Swann Jones: "The objective of the fairy tale quest is personal happiness, measured as a

rule by domestic satisfaction and tranquillity. [...] [T]he focus of fairy tales is apparently on journeys of self-discovery, recognition and confrontation of internal anxieties and desires” (2002,16–17).

Fairy tales often have a happy ending, commonly “expressed by the *coda* ‘lived happily ever after’” (Nikolajeva 2005, 103). For Swann Jones, “[t]he happy ending, which affirms the moral propriety of the universe, is a clear and definite characteristic of the fairy tale genre” (2002, 17).

### **3.3 Language and style**

Fairy-tale language is characterized by the use of literary devices such as simile, metaphors, epithets, and especially repetitions of words or phrases, which give the story an almost song-like quality. It is without doubt that if you read a sentence like this: “A short time later the queen gave birth to a baby daughter whose skin was as white as snow, whose cheeks were as red as blood, and whose hair was as black as ebony wood” (Grimm& Grimm 1991, 3), you will instantly know it is about Snow White. Known and repetitive epithets such as evil witch, brave huntsman, wicked stepmother, or even just a name like Simpleton tell us all we need to know about the characters.

Phrases such as “Once upon a time” or “They lived happily ever after” are almost inevitable in most fairy tales. Marie Kester claims that the phrase “Once upon a time” has been part of the opening of many oral and written narratives since the 1600s (2012, 2). It expresses several things (ibid.):

First, there is that semblance of distance. We are not in the now, but rather in some place in the removed past. *Upon a time*. And second, there is the vagueness, the deliberate lack of specificity. We are not speaking of a defined time, a time you can point to, but rather of a *once*, an indeterminate moment. Not a land or a place you can locate, but *some* kingdom, *some* land, *some* place that cannot be tied to a map or a ready-made travel plan.

### **3.4 Motifs and themes**

Nikolajeva defines literary motif as “a textual element – an event, character, or object – recurring in many works of literature” (2005, 81). For example, the quest is a common motif in children’s literature and can be found in many folktales. True love is a common motif in fairy tales, where a hero must go on a journey to overcome all obstacles and in the end stay with his loved one. In some fairy tales, it is the motif of transportation that creates the

adventure for the protagonist, who uses a traveling cloak or seven-league boots to cross large distances.

Themes are very often mixed with motifs, but these two terms are different. A theme is a message conveyed in a piece of literature (“Theme” 2012); for example, in “Snow White” it may be pride or vanity. Swann Jones lists some of the most common fairy-tale themes, including feelings “toward parents, siblings and prospective mates”, family relationships, and social values (2002, 9).

### **3.5 Setting: where are we?**

Most fairy tales start with “Once upon a time”, which does not give us a clue when the plot takes place. Since we do not know the time or space, the imaginary world is completely detached from what we do know, which is only our world. However, while this phrase offers some distance from the world we live in and opens our imagination to this magically rich world, we can still find some connection with our known world (Nikolajeva 2005, 142). A forest is still a forest, but it is now an enchanted forest with ogres, talking animals, magical candy-houses and so on. Shoes are still shoes, but this time they are magical glass slippers or iron slippers that make you dance all the time.

In fairy tales, the inhabitants of magical worlds often live apart from human society, sometimes in the depths of forests or far and distant castles. While we do find some familiar settings, that magical world “does not operate as we know it: time and space shrink and stretch” (Warner 2014, 20).

### **3.6 Characters**

Referring back to *The Morphology of Folktales*, Propp described seven characters found in fairytales: the villain (an evil character that creates problems for the hero), dispatcher (any character that sends the hero on a quest), helper (as the name suggests, he helps the hero), donor (gives magical object or something similar to help the hero on his quest), false hero (tries to take the credit for what the real hero did), princess or sought-after-person and her father and hero (1968: 79–80).

The term *fairy tale* might make one think that the main or obligatory characters are fairies, but that is not always true. Fairies are not always present. On the contrary, the focus is usually on ordinary people, who encounter magical events or creatures. Swann Jones claims that the

'ordinary' or 'common' protagonist is someone with whom the readers or listeners can better identify (2002, 14). The human protagonist interacts with magical characters such as talking animals, dwarfs, or witches.

### **3.7 Summary**

Fairy tales are stories which typically include magic, magical creatures, and protagonists who go on a quest or an adventure. One crucial element that makes a fairy tale is the acceptance of magic as part of everyday life. The story is often circular, which means it begins with the protagonist leaving home and ends with his or her homecoming. The language includes lots of repetitions and phrases such as "Once upon a time", and characters are usually defined with one epithet (brave, evil, etc.). The story takes place in an unspecified time and place.

In this chapter, we have discussed some important fairy-tale elements. In the next chapter, we will use them to analyse *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

## 4. ANALYSIS

The aim of this chapter is to discuss fairy-tale elements found in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. The first part of the chapter discusses the form of the novel, how it begins and ends, and how that structure fits the typical fairy-tale plot. The second part of the chapter explores fairy-tale themes and motifs such as the battle between good and evil, maternal love, family relationships, and magic – specifically, magical creatures and objects. The third part discusses Rowling's characters which, unlike the characters in fairy tales, are not entirely good or evil. It focuses especially on the characters of Lord Voldemort, Harry Potter, Draco Malfoy, and Severus Snape. The fourth and final part analyses "The Tale of Three Brothers", a fairy tale which plays an important role in the novel.

### 4.1 Structure: beginning and end

As we have established, one of the most common plot types in fairy tales is the circular one. The story both starts and ends with the protagonist being at home. In the case of *Harry Potter*, this situation is somewhat more complicated. In theory, the Dursley's home is supposed to be Harry's home. However, in the sixth novel, Dumbledore sums up just how far from the truth this is by saying that Harry has been "miserable", "unwelcome", and "badly treated" (Rowling 2009, 36) in the home of his aunt and uncle. However, if we detach all the emotions usually attached to *home*, the Dursleys' house is a home to Harry. In the seventh book, as in all the previous books, the story therefore begins with Harry being 'at home' – at the Dursleys'. He is finally saying goodbye to Privet Drive 4 and his relatives. In this moment, we could say he is indeed going on a quest, like so many fairy-tale heroes. However, that quest is postponed when the Harry, Ron and Hermione have to stay with the Weasleys to prepare everything for Bill's wedding. After the wedding, and after the Ministry of Magic falls in the hands of Lord Voldemort, the trio escapes and this is when their journey truly begins. Their first quest is to infiltrate the Ministry and steal a locket; the second quest happens after they discover that they need the Sword of Gryffindor to destroy all the Horcruxes; and the third quest is to get into Gringotts and steal the Horcrux. Finally, Harry has to battle Lord Voldemort.

The ending of the book is no less complicated. In the epilogue, we see Harry on platform 9<sup>¾</sup>, not exactly at home, nor a place where the book started. On the other hand, this platform is where Harry first felt like he belonged somewhere. It is in Hogwarts Express, a train that

leaves from this platform, that he met his best friends. The train took him to Hogwarts, a place where he first found a real home. Now Harry's children are leaving from this platform to go to Hogwarts. If we say that Harry's departure to Hogwarts is where the 'real story' starts, it is only natural to end the story at platform 9¾, with the next generation of children with whom "the next chapter in the Hogwarts saga begins" (Hunter 2014, 10).

## **4.2. Themes and motifs**

*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* is filled with various classical themes found in well-known fairy tales. It is through the never-ending fight between good and evil that Harry (or the protagonist) discovers love and the ability to sacrifice himself for his friends and family. It is exactly family or the lack of it that shapes Harry (or the protagonist) into the person he (or she) is. One important and key theme is magic, seen especially in objects such as Horcruxes and the Deathly Hallows.

This section analyses fairy-tale themes in the novel, specifically the battle between good and evil, mothers and maternal love, family relationships. It also discusses two types of fairy-tale motifs: magical creatures (goblins, house elves, werewolves, serpents), and objects (Horcruxes, Pensieve, the Deathly Hallows).

### **4.2.1. Good vs. evil**

The struggle between the hero – the epitome of good – and the villain – the epitome of evil – is often at the centre of fairy tales; for example, evil fairy godmother and Sleeping Beauty, the stepmother and Cinderella, or the queen and Snow White. The hero and villain want different outcomes, and that is exactly what creates conflict and competition. The hero does what is right and in the end is rewarded with wealth, marriage, and so on. The villain, on the other hand, is punished by being forced to dance to death in steel shoes, having their eyes poked out by birds, and so on.

In the *Harry Potter* series, we know from the beginning who represents the hero and who is the villain. Harry Potter chooses to do the best he can and try to be a good friend, family member and most of all a good person. He understands that Ron is nervous because of his family and tries to comfort him, he knows he has to break up with Ginny because the Death Eaters will torture her if they find out she is his weak spot. Harry can differentiate between what is easier and sometimes less good, and what is more difficult, but is ultimately good.

Lord Voldemort is the exact opposite. He does not care for anyone but himself, he does not care for another person's life, he just wants to be invincible and will stop at nothing to reach his goal. A good example of this is the Elder Wand and how Harry and Voldemort use it: Lord Voldemort wants to kill Harry with it, while Harry only uses it to fix his old wand. Voldemort is the leader of the Death Eaters, a merciless group of wizards who seek power and enjoy torturing other innocent wizards or Muggles. While Harry is not really their leader, but he is the "face" of the resistance group called the Order of Phoenix, which tries to prevent Voldemort and his followers from taking over. While the novel focuses on Harry, Ron and Hermione, and how they fight Voldemort, in the background we notice that much bigger groups are doing exactly the same – fighting each other, trying to win and create peace (in the case of the Order of Phoenix) or wreak havoc (in the case of the Death Eaters).

As in fairy tales, the comfort of knowing that evil will be defeated in the end gives readers reassurance that everything will be well. In the case of *Harry Potter*, Harry repeatedly wins each time evil forces try to take over, letting readers know that everything *will* be good in the end, if you only have faith in people you love and try to choose good.

#### **4.2.2. Mothers and maternal love**

When asked in an interview about maternal love, Rowling talked about a research that shows how children's brains develop differently with and without the presence of their mothers. She used these findings in her work: Voldemort never knew or felt mother's love, while Harry did, which is a fundamental difference between them. Rowling also said that Harry's mother Lily "was representative of safety in a way a father could not be [...] Lily is something different, she stood by the cot and tried to stop her baby dying" ("Mother's Love – J. K. Rowling" 2012).

Many female characters in the series present maternal figures in Harry's life. The first one he meets is his aunt Petunia. She presents a complex kind of mother, because she tries to be a good mother and give her son Dudley everything she feels she lacked growing up Muggle with a witch sister. But she does not give him love, it is more a kind of material or cupboard love. She shows no affection or understanding for Harry and even lies to him about his parents, not to protect him, but because she is still envious of her sister and hopes she can get magic out of him. Grimes points out that Petunia is "reminiscent of the evil stepmother in folk and fairy tales. [...] Perhaps she most resembles the stepmother in Cinderella, as she overwhelmingly favours her biological child over her surrogate" (2002, 95). One might think

that in the last book in the series she would show some kind of remorse or warm feeling for Harry – they are saying their farewells after all – but she says nothing. She just looks at him and leaves. She never cares to check up on him to see if the boy she once took care of is still alive.

A completely different kind of mother found in Rowling's books is Molly Weasley, whom Grimes compares to the character of Mother Hole from German folk tales (2002, 96). Mrs Weasley has seven biological children for whom she feels nothing but love. She is everything a mother should be and even shows the same amount of love for Harry and Hermione. Every Christmas she knits them sweaters and bakes them cakes. She always makes sure that Harry is happy, fed, and that he gets a present for his birthday as well. She does her best to keep everyone she loves safe, even killing Bellatrix Lestrange to protect her daughter Ginny.

An unexpected act of maternal love happens when Narcissa Malfoy, a loyal Death Eater, decides to betray Lord Voldemort and lie to his face. She knows that Voldemort does not put up with disobedience of any kind. So, when she lies that Harry is dead, she puts her own life in danger. This does not matter to her since all she wants is to protect her son and find out where he is. The fear she must have felt when she decided to search for Draco must be something impossible to imagine, but her love for her son is even greater than that.

#### **4.2.3. Family relationships**

Many famous fairy tales start with the death of the protagonist's parent, usually the mother. That leads to the creation of a new family which includes the protagonist, father, stepmother, and, in some cases, a sibling. In the Brothers Grimm's "Hansel and Gretel", the stepmother advises the father to take his children into the woods, start a fire, give each of the children a piece of bread, and leave them in the woods. In this way, the parents will have more money since they will be "rid of [the children]" ("Hansel and Gretel"). In "Little Snow White" the mother dies and the father marries a vain, self-obsessed woman. The new queen tries to kill Snow White many times, so that she can be the prettiest woman in the land. However, unlike Hansel and Gretel, Snow White finds a kind of foster family in the seven dwarfs, who take her in and warn her not open the door to strangers.

When we first meet Harry Potter in *The Philosopher's Stone*, we see a neglected child. He lives under the stairs and has to wear his cousin Dudley's old clothes that do not fit. Harry is also psychologically abused by the Dursleys, who, according to Roni Natov, provide "a model of how not to treat children" (2004, 127). On one occasion, when the entire family goes to the



zoo, Harry notices a caged snake – a boa. Many of us would probably move further from the terrarium the snake is in, but not Harry. He sympathizes with the animal, “whose plight he perceives as ‘worse than having a cupboard as a bedroom’” (Pharr 2004, 57). Although the Dursleys make Harry more empathetic to other people and their troubles, they do not accept the fact that he is a wizard and do not protect him, even though they know who Voldemort is and what he did to Petunia’s sister Lily.

However, not all adopted families are hateful toward Harry. Similar to Snow White, Harry finds comfort and protection in a place where he did not expect to find it – with his best friend’s family, the Weasleys. They never treat Harry as a stranger, he is more than welcome in their home. They are also the ones who show Harry how to get to Platform 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> and board the train to Hogwarts for the first time. It is as though with the possibility of being away from the Dursleys he is finally given a new family and a life he can enjoy, which begins his “development from neglected, unloved orphan, who knows nothing about magic, to world famous wizard” (Griesinger 2002, 464).

Apart from the previously mentioned Molly Weasley, the other Weasleys are also a family to Harry. They accept him as one of them and Ginny falls in love with him. After he leaves the Dursleys, his new (temporary) home is with Weasleys where he can regain his strength and will to fight Lord Voldemort, something he can only do in a loving and safe environment. Arthur Weasley is like an uncle to Harry, always caring for the boy, but not suffocating him, because he knows that in the end Harry will do what he wants to do and nothing can stand in his way. Mr Weasley becomes someone to whom Harry can come for advice because there is an understanding and respect between them.

Another family that is important to mention is the Malfoys. If we say that the Dursleys represent the worst kind of family and on the opposite end we place the Weasleys, the Malfoys are somewhere in between (although they lean more towards the Dursleys). Mr and Mrs Malfoy are both Death Eaters and equally responsible for Draco becoming a Death Eater as well. What motivates them is their social status (powerful, rich, pure-blooded wizards) and above all fear of Lord Voldemort. They are the kind of parents who will sabotage just about anyone if it means that their child will be protected and happy.

It is hard to say that the Malfoys are all evil. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they are three scared individuals who pick the wrong people to associate with and do not know what to do to get out. As Marthe Dahlin writes, they “represent a sort of evil grown out

of selfishness and with personal gain as their driving force” (2014, 32), which, in my opinion, describes them perfectly.

#### **4.2.4. Magical creatures**

As mentioned before, magic is what makes a fairy tale, and more often than not, it appears in the form of magical creatures. They often offer guidance to the protagonists and help them on their quests. In the *Harry Potter* series, Rowling uses well-known magical beings from folklore such as goblins, house elves, werewolves, and basilisks, which will be discussed in this section. She uses information that is well-known about those creatures and adapts it to her story.

In British and German folklore, goblins are “a mischievous, and usually very unpleasant, vengeful, and greedy creature whose primary purpose is to cause trouble to humankind” (Geller 2016). Rowling’s goblins are similar: for example, they believe that when they sell jewellery to a witch or wizard, they should get it back after that person dies. The goblin Griphook tricks Harry, Ron, and Hermione when they ask to be taken into Gringotts; he takes Godrick Gryffindor’s sword, but does not help the trio get out, which nearly gets them killed.

Another important magical being in the series is the house elf. These creatures live in wizarding households, helping and cleaning after their masters. They are very loyal and feel protective of their masters; for example, Dobby (the Free Elf) is protective of Harry because Harry saved him from slavery and Kreacher is very protective of his first master Regulus Black, even though Regulus never cared whether Kreacher lived or died.

While goblins and house elves are less dangerous and less dark creatures, werewolves are the opposite. In folklore, a werewolf is a human with the ability to shapeshift into a wolf, usually on the night of a full moon (“Werewolf Legends” 2018). In the *Harry Potter* series, a werewolf is a creature that exists only for a brief period around the full moon. At any other time, it is a normal human. Werewolves are created when another werewolf bites a person. While many people stay away from werewolves, Harry notes in his book about fantastic beasts that they “aren’t all bad” (Rowling 2016, 41). However, it is important to differentiate between two werewolves in the series. Remus Lupin is a loving, kind, and understanding werewolf who hates the state he is in. In contrast, Fenrir Greyback is the type from horror stories, the kind that does not want to transform to his human form but lives as a human who feels bloodlust all the time. As with everything, Rowling uses these characters to show that there are two types of people/creatures among all of us: the good and the bad.

Serpents have, as all magical beings used in the series, been part of British folklore, and many other folklores from around the world. According to Lauren Berman: “The snake plays a rich and complex role in ancient Egyptian belief, and is frequently depicted as an elemental symbol of chaos and evil” (2008, 46). In the *Harry Potter* series, they are present in almost every book. In *The Deathly Hallows* the only important snake is Voldemort’s Horcrux-pet Nagini. She is capable of embodying humans, she kills Severus Snape, and in the end is killed by Neville Longbottom.

#### **4.2.5. Magical objects**

When a reader reads a story in which there are magical things such as magical objects with supernatural powers it is a sign to them that they are now entering a new world filled with imaginative scenarios. In the *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, this is no exception. Readers understand that this is something contrary to the world they live, and as with magical creatures, J. K. Rowling understands the appeal it has on readers as well as importance when creating a fairy tale so she creates her own objects such as Horcruxes, Pensieve or Deathly Hallows – which will be in detail explained as mentioned.

Horcruxes play an important role in the final *Harry Potter* novel, where death is an important theme. Many of the characters die, including Harry (who comes back to life).Dumbledore tells Harry on various occasions that Voldemort fears death more than anything; in fact, one of the reasons he turned to dark magic is to find a way to become immortal.

A known motif in fairy tales is the conservation of the heart or soul in objects, places or even beings. Much like Koschei the Deathless or the giant whose heart is not his body, Voldemort tries to prevent himself from dying by placing parts of his soul in various objects –Salazar Slytherin’s locket, Rowena Ravenclaw’s diadem, Helga Hufflepuff’s cup,his grandfather’s ring and a diary – as well as beings, such as his snake, Nagini and one, unplanned Horcrux, Harry Potter. Rowling does not really give a lot of information about Horcruxes, but the main idea is that in order to create one, you need to kill another person, which breaks your soul into pieces. By creating the Horcruxes Voldemort shows what he really thinks of life, how frivolous he sees it and that he does not feel remorse Lord Voldemort.

What makes Harry realize he is the Horcrux are Snape’s memories he sees in the Pensieve. The Pensieve is a magical instrument which allows Professor Dumbledore (since it is in his office), and anybody else he wishes to show them to, to see (his or someone else’s) memories. To put memories in the Pensieve, a wizard must retract them from their brain and put them in

the Pensieve, which then makes them visible. The person watching the memories is not visible to the original memory, but every detail the mind observed consciously or unconsciously is on display to the observer.

Apart from the Horcruxes, another set of items which motivate Harry, Ron and Hermione to go on a quest are the Deathly Hallows. The three magical objects – the Elder Wand, the Resurrection Stone and the Invisibility Cloak – make their owner master of Death, since Death itself gave it to three brothers. The Cloak of Invisibility is not a new idea, since it appears in many folktales such as the Grimms’ “Twelve Dancing Princesses”. The functions of the two cloaks are different, but the motif is familiar. Harry’s Invisibility Cloak works in a way that it protects him from other people seeing him, as well as Death. The Elder Wand is the type of wand that can give you everything you need – protection, power, magic, invincibility. In a way, it is like the stick from the story “Jump into My Sack” where the wand does whatever the wizard needs – except the Elder Wand does more. The final gift is the Resurrection Stone which brings back the dead into the world of living, but the problem with this gift is that people who are brought back do not belong to this world.

### **4.3. Characters: good or evil?**

Already in the first book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, J.K. Rowling disclosed that she would not be relying on simple black-and-white characterization typical of fairy tales by saying that people are not divided into good or bad, it is the choices they make that define them. The distinction between good and bad in the series is therefore, more often than not, not completely clear. Characters’ development across the different novels is more complicated than the one in fairy tales, where characters typically stay the same. While fairy-tale characters are clearly good or evil, Rowling’s characters are often “grey”. Some characters are in opposition to each other—for example, Lord Voldemort and Harry Potter – but there are also those like Professor Severus Snape, who cannot simply be placed on the side of good or evil, but more in the middle. Even Harry’s nemesis Draco Malfoy cannot be described as simply good or bad, but more as “complex”. In order to better understand this complexity, let us explore each of the four characters mentioned in this paragraph (Lord Voldemort, Harry Potter, Severus Snape, and Draco Malfoy) separately.

#### **4.3.1 Harry Potter**

Since Harry Potter's journey starts before the final novel, to better understand his character as well as his development as the "ultimate good" to Voldemort's "ultimate evil", we need to take a look at the previous novels.

M. Katherine Grimes points out that readers of Rowling's books recognize them "as part of the fairy tale world and Harry as a fairy or folk hero" (2002, 91). Like many fairy-tale characters (e.g. Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty), Harry Potter is born in a loving and caring family. However, that changes when at the age of one his parents are killed, and he becomes an orphan. This connects him to protagonists of fairy tales who, as Nikolajeva points out, are often orphans or are orphaned at the beginning of the story. After his parents die, Harry is goes to live with his aunt and uncle – the Dursleys – where he has to follow their rules and suffer abuse from their son Dudley. Mary Phaar believes that the Dursleys have a "complicated significance" for Harry's development as a hero: "By abusing Harry, they predispose him to identify with the abused" (2002, 57). Perhaps this is what instantly makes readers care for Harry and identify with him as a hero. Harry's mother dies to protect Harry, and it is this love and sacrifice that protect him for as long as he is underage and living under his relatives' roof. The second he moves out the magic of that sacrifice stops. This leads us to the last novel in which Harry leaves the known and the protection he has had until then.

As with any fairy-tale hero, Harry has helpers on his journey. Professor Dumbledore is his mentor and all-knowing guide. However, after teaching Harry everything he knows, "the mentor has to die to enable his student to find his own way by relying on his own strength" (Boll 2011, 6). With guidance from Dumbledore, who "operates behind the scenes to guide and help Harry" (Zipes 2001, 191) even beyond the grave, Harry knows his path and what he must do. Even more crucial is the help of his best friends, Ron and Hermione, who make everything easier. If it were not for his two friends who follow Harry on his quest to find the Hollows and Horcruxes, his journey would look much more different and much more detached from others in the wizarding community.

On his own journey "of self-discovery, recognition and confrontation of internal anxieties and desires" (Swann Jones 2002,17), Harry tries to be good and kind, because this is who his parents were and he does not want to disappoint them. When Dobby dies, Harry chooses to dig a grave for his friend instead of creating it by magic because he wants to pay the elf respect. He never underestimates any other creature that is 'below' him, because he has a

strong moral compass. On some occasions, however, he slips and feels rage or is unkind to others. There are even times when he wants to quit his quest and stay in hiding for the rest of his life, but he knows he has to go on for others. Despite sometimes being conflicted about choosing good or bad, in the end, when confronted with Voldemort, Harry casts a spell that would not kill his enemy. Before that moment, he feels a tremendous burden, goes into the Forest and lets himself be killed to protect others. This deed proves “to be stronger than the darkest magic and more powerful than death” (Stojilkov 2015, 146).

In traditional fairy tales, the protagonist does not change as a character by the end of the story; however, he (or she) does get something he (or she) lacks in the beginning, such as wealth or a spouse. If we focus only on *The Deathly Hollows*, Harry does not change very much either. He is still a humble boy, he does not want eternal glory or the invincible wand; all he wants is peace and the knowledge that everything will be good in the end. For the most part, he fits into Nikolajeva’s description of the “common hero in folktale”, which defines him as “an underprivileged child [...] [who] at the end, hero finds his fortune” and “triumphs over those who seemed cleverer and stronger in the beginning” (2005, 148). Bruno Bettelheim believes that this triumph “symbolizes a state of true independence, in which the hero feels [...] secure, satisfied, and happy” (1975, 217), much like Harry does.

However, the *Harry Potter* series is not a fairy tale. Characters are more complicated in novels and usually develop in the course of the story. In contrast to Voldemort, Harry *is* good and pure, but it takes time for him to ultimately choose the ‘good side’ over the ‘bad side’. As stated above, he does think about an easier way out (e.g. hiding in the forest or somewhere else), not something a fairy-tale hero would do because fairy tales do not depict this kind of dilemma since good/evil characters do not change sides.

#### **4.3.2. Lord Voldemort**

Voldemort is raised in an orphanage, left there all alone because his mother dies. His father is a Muggle, which is one of the reasons why Voldemort is so obsessed with being pure-blooded. Dumbledore tells Harry that Voldemort’s mother gave a love potion to his father and made him fall in love with her. However, this was not real love and nothing pure can ever come out of deception. Voldemort is proud to be a descendant of a famous wizard and ashamed of his mother, who dies poor. Determined not to die like his mother, he begins studying the Horcruxes and exploring how to become immortal at a young age. He soon gets a group of followers who call themselves the Death Eaters.

Courtney B. Strimel states that Voldemort is the only character in the *Harry Potter* books who is unquestionably evil: “[A]lthough there is a tone of death, hate, lack of respect, and sheer evil [in the series], Voldemort is the single character that embodies those qualities. In his desire to reign over the magical world, he gains a complete disregard for life” (2004, 43). The desire to be immortal and take over the Wizarding world makes him numb to any kind of feelings, especially those that have anything to do with love. His obsession to become immortal means he has to kill (to create Horcruxes), since taking another person’s life is the best way to destroy one’s soul. Dumbledore tells Harry numerous times that Voldemort is incapable of love, which will be his downfall. Similarly, Rita Singer points out that “[t]he nature of the dark forces, that is their inability to feel compassion, inevitably contributes to Voldemort’s downfall” (2011, 34). Voldemort never tries to understand his mother, let alone anyone else. Because of this, he can never understand what made Harry’s mother sacrifice herself and stand in the way between him and her son.

Unlike Voldemort, Harry is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice and die for others. He does not try to be great, all he wants is for him and others to be free. However, as mentioned before, Harry often struggles between good and evil, and according to Dahlin, it is this struggle “within Harry (as well as between Harry and Voldemort) that is so inherently fascinating to readers – because it reflects an ongoing struggle that each of us experience within ourselves” (2014,19). What makes the two of them different is the path they choose to take: Harry tries to do good, and even if he does not always succeed, his intentions are good; Voldemort never cares if what he does is wrong, he knows his goal and does what he must to reach it.

#### **4.3.3 Draco Malfoy**

Another character who seems to be the opposite of Harry Potter is the school bully Draco Malfoy. He comes from a pure-blooded aristocratic and influential family of Death Eaters. His father loathes anyone who is not pure-blooded or shows any kind of affection toward Muggles, especially Arthur Weasley, who is enthusiastic about Muggles. Draco often sees his father make snarky comments about the entire Weasley family and bribe his way to the top, and feels no shame nor does he disapprove of his father’s actions. However, throughout the books, Draco begins to feel what Tom Felton, the actor who plays him in the *Harry Potter* movies, calls an “inner conflict”: “[H]e’s terrified of Voldemort, there seems to be some sort of inner compulsion to maybe, not help, but certainly not hinder” (HeyUGuys 2011).

When the snatchers capture Harry, Ron, and Hermione in *The Deathly Hallows* and take them to the Malfoy manor, we see Draco pale and skinny, just like his father who recently got out of prison. His mother Narcissa does not appear to be any healthier or happier than the two men. They are very cautious about how to handle having someone who might be Harry Potter in their house: they know that if it is Harry, Lord Voldemort will come and who knows what might happen to them; on the other hand, if they call Voldemort, and it turns out the prisoner is not Harry, they will not make it out alive. In that scene, the reader might even see something other than fear in Draco's eyes when he tries to identify Harry: "Harry saw Draco's face up close now, right beside his father's. They were extraordinarily alike, except that while his father looked beside himself with excitement, Draco's expression was full of reluctance, even fear" (Rowling 2012, 371). Draco might feel pity for Harry, but he does nothing except go back to his chair without identifying Harry. This shows that in Rowling's books "even people who have behaved in villainous way in the past can make the right decision when the time comes" (McEvoy 2011, 213). He may not actively try to be good and kind, but, as Lucy Andrew points out, he does defy "the Dark Lord and, by extension, his father through absence from Voldemort's army. [...] Draco Malfoy is not a hero, but, perhaps, in the end, he should not have to be" (2012, 64–66).

#### **4.3.4. Severus Snape: Shapeshifter**

When asked in an interview whether she thought Snape was a hero, J.K. Rowling replied ("Web chat" 2007):

"Yes, I do; though a very flawed hero. An anti-hero, perhaps. He is not a particularly likeable man in many ways. He remains rather cruel, a bully, riddled with bitterness and insecurity—and yet he loved, and showed loyalty to that love and, ultimately, laid down his life because of it. That's pretty heroic!"

Despite the complexities in their characters, we can still clearly describe Harry Potter as 'good' and Lord Voldemort as 'evil'. In contrast, the case of Professor Snape is a bit more difficult since he appears to be a shapeshifter, defined by Brad Johnson as "a character perceived by the Hero to have a specific motivation or allegiance that is either discovered to be false, or legitimately changes, as the story plays out" (2019). Through the series, we believe that Snape is evil: he is rude to Harry, constantly abusing him and laughing at him. What makes Snape even worse is the fact that he is Lord Voldemort's follower – a Death Eater. However, in the last book, everything the readers thought they knew about Snape can be thrown into the cauldron. An interesting paradox happens in the last book, when Rowling



turns the tables and makes readers question whether Dumbledore really is good, since, as Peter Appelbaum writes, he is “revealed as a victim of greed in his final failed grasp at the power of the Deathly Hallows” (2008, 86). Readers are also made to wonder about Snape when they find out he has been acting “consistently on more noble motivations, sacrificing his life for the good of all humankind” (ibid.). In this way, Appelbaum believes, Snape presents a model which Harry later follows with his own sacrifice, making Snape “the only teacher Harry has truly had the honor to have studied with, [...] the only teacher who has sacrificed his life specifically to make it possible for Harry to make the same choice” (ibid., 90).

Before Snape dies, he gives Harry his memories which Harry sees in the Pensive. This allows both readers and Harry to understand Snape’s character a bit more. At first, we see Snape and Lily, Harry’s mother, talking about Hogwarts. At the magical school, Lily ends up in Gryffindor and Snape in Slytherin, and we see Snape bullied by Harry’s father James Potter. Many years later, after it becomes clear what Voldemort wants to do with Harry Potter and his parents, Snape goes to Dumbledore to seek protection for Lily. Dumbledore agrees to this only if Snape becomes loyal to him, and not to his Dark Lord. Snape agrees and plays the double agent. We see how Dumbledore asks Snape to kill him and how Snape later protects Harry on his hunt to find the Horcruxes, and then we are left with so many questions.

To conclude ‘the great Snape debate’, we could say that he does turn out to be a good man, as Rowling calls him, “the bravest man”. On the other hand, he never makes Harry’s life any easier and dislikes him because of the way James Potter treated him. However, as Appelbaum says, he is indeed a great professor who teaches Harry how to put his feelings aside in order to protect another human. He also teaches Harry about loyalty, and how not to be hot-headed but remain calm in difficult situations.

#### **4.4 Story within a story: “The Tale of Three Brothers”**

This section combines everything we have said about fairy tales so far and applies it in the analysis of “The Tale of Three Brothers”, a fairy tale from the collection of short stories *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, which Dumbledore leaves Hermione in his will.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, many scholars have noticed Rowling’s passion and understanding of folklore, folktales and fairy tales. In an interview about the *Harry Potter* series, the author said: “I’ve used things from folklore and I’ve used bits of what people used to believe worked magically just to add a certain flavor, but I’ve always twisted them to suit my own ends. I mean, I’ve taken liberties with folklore, um, to suit my plot” (A&E

2002). Considering this love and knowledge of folklore, it is perhaps no surprise that she write her own collection of fairy tales— *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* — and added one of them — “The Tale of Three Brothers” — to the plot of *Harry Potter*. Adding this tale to The Deathly Hallows helps Rowling create “a folkloresque narrative which combines magic and wizarding duels unique to the secondary world within a tale drawn from European tradition” (Castleman 2017, 67). The characters in the novel see the tale as “an ancient wizarding myth based upon the legendary Peverell family and their three sons who are thought to have been the original owners of the Deathly Hallows” (Simonetta & Luis, 2018). The content of the tale is not novel, but inspired by many European folktales. In the novel, it is vital for defeating Voldemort because it helps Harry understand what he must do in order to save everybody from the Dark Lord. Furthermore, with this story and everything he learns from Snape’s memories, Harry also realizes that he is the owner of all three gifts and that he can use the Resurrection stone to say goodbye to the people who died trying to protect him.

The tale follows three brothers who encounter Death. Since they are able to elude a trap constructed by Death, it offers them gifts to reward their wit and knowledge. The first brother asks for a wand that will defeat any wizard and receives the invincible Elder wand. The second brother is given the Resurrection stone, which can bring back the dead, while the third brother, the humblest of the three, is given the Invisibility cloak, which can protect him from Death itself. The first brother defeats another wizard in a duel; however, he is so proud of his accomplishment that he brags about it in a nearby village, so another wizard kills him and takes his wand. The second brother uses the Resurrection stone to bring the girl he loves back from the dead. After he realizes that she no longer belongs in this world he kills himself. After taking the two men, Death searches for the third brother, who is hidden under the Invisibility cloak. It is not until he grows old and passes the cloak down to his son that he greets Death as an old friend.

The tale begins with a typical fairy-tale opening: “There were once three brothers” (Rowling 2008, 103). We do not know where the story takes place, only that the brothers are “traveling along a lonely, winding road at twilight”(ibid.). The information about the time of day sets the tone of the entire story, since not so cheerful events usually happen later in the day or more often during the night. Like typical fairy-tale characters, the characters in Rowling’s story are flat: “silhouettes, mentioned simply because they are there” (Bernheimer 2009, 66). They are described only briefly: the first brother is “a combative man”, the second “an arrogant man”, and the third is the “humblest and also the wisest of the brothers” (Rowling 2008, 105). A

more detailed characterization is not necessary since these traits successfully carry the message. Ultimately, Death takes all three brothers, but it is important to differentiate how each brother dies. Both the “combative” and the “arrogant” brother ends up punished for their personalities, while the “humblest” and “wisest” brother lives his life till the day he feels he is ready to die. A common fairy-tale motif is the number three, which is present in the story. There are three brothers and each of them has one wish, which brings each of them one gift. As previously stated, arrogance and combativeness are punished, while humbleness and kindness are awarded.

In “The Tale of Three Brothers”, Rowling summarized everything she knows about fairy tales and engages with them critically, by “making choices regarding form and function based on her own understanding of how the genre works” (Holl-Jensen and Tolbert, 2016 2). Her love of folklore is visible throughout the entire *Harry Potter* series and in this tale in particular.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This thesis has defined fairy tales as stories in which the appearance of magical creatures and magical objects does not surprise characters, but is accepted as part of everyday life. Another important element of the genre is the quest the protagonist embarks on, for example, to win the hand of a princess or defeat the villain. The simple language contains repetitions of certain words or events, and common phrases such as “Once upon a time” or “Happily ever after”. Characters are simple and often described with one epithet – brave, old, evil, etc.

Fairy tales have found their way into the magical world of *Harry Potter*, created by J.K. Rowling. This thesis has explored fairy-tale elements in the final novel in the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, specifically, form, characters, themes and motifs. When it comes to themes and motifs, the battle between good and evil is mostly presented through the conflict between Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort, also known as the Dark Lord (which is very indicative). We have seen how the absence of a mother and different family relationships – some positive (the Weasleys), some negative (the Dursleys) – can shape a person. A fairy tale is not a fairy tale without magic, and in the world of Harry Potter there is plenty of it. Especially important for our analyses are magical creatures and magical objects. Magical creatures in Rowling’s book borrowed (house elves, goblins, werewolves and serpents) show that good and evil individuals are not only found among people. Important magical objects included in the analyses are Horcruxes, in which a person can hide pieces of their soul, the Pensive, a magical portal in which characters can pour their memories, and the Deathly Hallows, three very powerful items that enable their owner to conquer Death. Unlike fairy-tale characters, the characters in Rowling’s novel are not simply good or evil. The thesis examines this idea by looking at the characters of Harry Potter, who represents good, Lord Voldemort, who represents evil, and two characters who are somewhere in-between: Draco Malfoy and Severus Snape. Because of his ignorance and the influence of his parents, Malfoy is not as evil as Voldemort, but he is not good like Harry. Snape is also not entirely good, since he bullies Harry throughout his education, but on the other hand he does save his life more than once. The thesis has also explored “The Tale of Three Brothers” and how it fits both into the world of Harry Potter and the fairy-tale model.

Fairy tale elements appear in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* in various forms and influence the story both structurally and thematically. Rowling borrows many plot elements, themes and characters from folklore and fairy tales, and adapts them to the complex story of

her novel. These familiar elements enrich the plot and making it more entertaining for readers, who are eager to see how everything will play out. While we cannot say that *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* is itself a fairy tale, what we can say is contains many elements of fairy tales which help create the fascinating magical world of Harry Potter.

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### **Izjava o samostalnoj izradi rada**

Izjavljujem da sam ja, Lea Kalazić, studentica Odsjeka za učiteljske studije Učiteljskog fakulteta u Zagrebu samostalno provela aktivnosti istraživanja literature i napisala diplomski rad natemu „Elements of Folktale and Fairy Tale in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*“.

U Zagrebu, 20. rujna 2021.

Potpis:

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