



Birth of a Magician: Mystery in J. K. Rowling's

Harry Potter and Sorcerer's Stone



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Abstract :

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (1997) is J. K. Rowling's debut novel in the Harry Potter series published by Bloomsbury. It was published in the United States as Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by Scholastic Corporation in 1998. The chief protagonist of this fantasy novel is Harry Potter, a young wizard who discovers his magical heritage in his first year at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. With the help of his friends, Harry faces an attempted comeback by the dark wizard Lord Voldemort, who had killed Harry's parents, but had failed to kill Harry when he was just a year old. This paper deals with the mysterious nature of the birth of a magician, Harry Potter.

Keywords : Wizard, Witchcraft, Hogwarts School, Muggles.

Research Paper :

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone is J. K. Rowling's famous novel, a literary genre with fantasy, adventure, mystery, fairy-tale stuff and the ideal romantic hero. Most reviewers commented favourably on Rowling's imaginative power, humour, simple and direct style and proper plot construction. Rowling's writing can be compared to that of Jane Austen or Ronald Dahl or stories of Homer. Some found the book like the Victorian and Edwardian boarding school stories; however, it placed the genre firmly in the modern world by featuring contemporary ethical and social issues.

Though the novel has been attacked by several religious groups for promoting witchcraft, the book exemplifies the power of self-sacrifice. Alton describes this novel as something new and complete in itself:

“By fusing the genres in this way, Rowling has created something new- a way that allows to keep their original shape while constantly changing their significance... and [interpretation] at any given time by any given reader (159)”.

Kiberd comments on the process of conception and combination:

“...it is really in [Rowling's] imaginative combination of so many disparate elements of previous children's literature that the brilliance of the Harry Potter conception may be found”. (67-68)”.

Rowling not only hits each literary genre on the mark but also manages to delight adult readers as well. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is a brilliantly imagined and beautifully written fantasy that incorporates elements of traditional British school stories without once violating the magical underpinnings of the plot. In fact, Rowling's wonderful ability to put a fantastic spin on sports, student rivalry, and eccentric faculty contributes to the humor, charm, and delight of her utterly captivating story.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (1997) is full of mystery where magical events take place. Harry Potter is a protagonist of all seven series by J.K.Rowling. Harry's parents James and Lily Potter were killed by the dark wizard Lord Voldemort but he couldn't kill baby Harry. Harry was one year old then and had a lightning bolt-shaped scar on his forehead.

“...what they’re saying, she pressed on, is that last night Voldemort turned up in Godric’s hallow. He went to find the Potters...the rumor is that Lily and James Potter are – are - that they’re –dead.”(284).

Harry’s only left relatives were Mrs. Petunia Dursley, sister of Lily Potter who are muggles and always pretend that she has no sister. Mr.Dursley on his way to office notices the cloudy sky as a sign of some mysterious event happening. In the corner of the street, he noticed the first thing-a cat reading a map. Later tabby cat standing on the corner of Privet Drive, but there was no map. When Vernon Dursley stared at the cat, it stared back. Again, the cat was reading the sign “Privet Drive”. It was something mysterious, as a cat cannot read maps or signs. Mr. Dursley saw a man wearing an emerald-green cloak. Mr.Dursley in the office was unable to concentrate on drills that morning.

When Mr.Dursley reached full of imagination around him he saw the tabby cat sitting on the wall. Mr. Dursley was listening to the news-report.

“...shooting stars all over Britain? Owls flying by daylight? Mysterious people in cloaks all over the place? and a whisper, a whisper, about the Potters (44)”.

Mr.Dursley on hearing the whispers became fear flooded and wanted to say something but in vain. One of the tiny old man fell on the ground and smiled and said in a squeaky voice that made passers-by stare:

“...don’t be sorry, my dear sir, for nothing could [disturb] me today! Even muggles like you should be celebrating, this happy, happy day! (107)”.

Baby Harry was brought by gigantic Hagrid on his huge motorbike flying in the air and landed on road in front of Dumbledore and McGonagall. They could see under set- black hair over his forehead curiously shaped cut like a bolt of lightning. Dumbledore utters:

“... Scars can come in useful. I have one myself above my left knee which is a perfect map of the London underground.”

Rowling introduces an eclectic cast of characters, first among them being Vernon Dursley. Harry, an orphan, lived his miserable childhood with Dursley family. Rowling imagined him as a ‘black-haired, be spectacled boy who didn’t know he was a wizard’ and transferred part of her pain about losing her mother to him.

Rowling has made it clear in one of her interviews:

“...I knew he didn't know he was a wizard. And so then I kind of worked backwards ...when he was one year old, the most evil wizard for hundreds and hundreds of years attempted to kill him. He killed Harry's parents... but for some mysterious reason, the curse didn't work on Harry. So he's left with this lightning bolt shaped scar on his forehead and the curse rebounded upon the evil wizard, who has been in hiding ever since.”

The eponymous hero becomes an orphan practically as a baby, which according to Maria Nikolajeva is a very common narrative hook, since ‘parents’ foremost obligation in children’s fiction is to be absent, preferably dead’ (237).

Harry spends ten years living with his dreadful, cold-hearted relatives, unaware of his renown among the magical folk. After a decade of loneliness, maltreatment and neglect, ‘The Boy Who Lived’(Rowling, Sorcerer’s 17) is initiated into a parallel, fairy tale- like world where he is celebrated as a wizarding prodigy, the only one who survived the killing curse shot by the wicked dark wizard of the deadly magic, he is also ‘The Chosen One’ who thwarted Lord Voldemort.

“...all three of the main protagonists appeal to readers: everyone can either identify with or knows someone like brainy Hermione, faithful and funny Ron and orphan Harry.”
(Alton 2003:143)

Harry, Ron and Hermione begin school at Hogwarts as energetic pre-adolescents, who worry about friends, school and Quidditch -except perhaps Harry, who worries more about being murdered. Rowling identifies the wizarding world as a mysterious culture as soon as Hagrid introduces it to Harry- ‘we’re best left alone.’ (Rowling, 1997. 65)

Rowling captures her readers with the drab, hopeless, all- too- real life with the Dursley and controls it with Harry’s entrance into the technicolor, wonderland of the wizarding world and by the end of each book, the readers find themselves suddenly realizing that they are not in England anymore.

The ability to combine fantasy and reality is one of Rowling’s greatest strengths, and she makes it effortless for readers to invoke their willing suspension of disbelief. (Alton, 155) Alton mentions that Rowling’s elements of mystery also evoke something- “the audience’s prejudices, which work quite well in relation to both Rowling’s creation of the Dursley’s and her assumption

that most readers will be as offended by Draco Malfoy's anti-Muggle sentiments as Harry, Ron and Hermione (145)".

Rowling explains bluntly that Harry goes off into this magical world and magic does not make his world better significantly. The relationships make his world better. Magic in many ways complicates his life. Nikolajeva explains that this mystery novel 'empower the protagonists by letting them be smarter than the adults, to succeed where real detectives fail, and to happen to be at the right place at the right moment' (130).

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