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**A STUDY OF SYMBOLISM IN J.K ROWLING'S
*HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE***

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DEDICATIONS

First and for most I dedicate this research work to my dear parents who always supported me, and pushed me to learn the real sense of success in this contradictive life with lots of hope and ambition.

I dedicate it to my dear sister, my little niece, my brother-in-law, my friends, and to everyone who has helped me to fulfill this work.

To my lovely grandparents, and every member of my family.

To everyone who loves me and wishes me success.

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ABSTRACT

Fantasy literature has become an essential part in modern literature, securing its position as one of the most influential genres of written arts. Following the stylistic approach, this research paper is put together in order to present the characteristics of the fantasy fiction novel, with the examination of symbolism in one of the most popular modern fantasy works. This study aims to shed light on the fantastic elements used by Rowling in her book, and how she uses different stylistic devices to deliver her messages. Analysing the various symbolic images used by the author, showcasing its impact on the modern fantasy genre. The first chapter of this work deals with the background information about fantasy as a concept and as a literary genre, with further analysis of its elements that the authors use to shape the plot of their stories. It also accounts for the concept of symbolism, and the reason behind its usage by fantasy literature authors. Then, the second chapter of the research paper studies the images of symbolism and the language usage in J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* (1997) as a case study. The present research paper's findings are the analysis of some symbols used by J.K Rowling in *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's stone* such as: Harry's wand, The mirror of Erised, and The Philosopher's stone. In addition to some examples about her innovative use of world play, and her usage of language such as the use of Latin in names of objects and spells.

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General

Introduction

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The clash between realistic and fantastic elements has always been controversial in literature. Fantastical elements have always been a significant part in literature and storytelling in general. Fantasy fiction has developed through centuries and gained popularity in the literary field. Later on, it became an inspiration for authors to create their own worlds and to express their emotions, fears and motivations. Fantasy literature has a unique ability to connect with readers by allowing them to escape reality and immerse themselves in a world of imagination and magic. It can also reflect the real-world issues through the story events, providing readers with the ability to explore societal and personal matters in a safe and imaginative way. By embracing the power of the imagination, fantasy literature allows readers to encounter emotions and experiences that they may not be able to do so in real life. Even though fantasy literature mostly depicts unreal stories with other-worldly plot, characters and setting, it can affect the way readers engage with the real world around them. Fantasy literature saw a remarkable spread thanks to a new wave of fantasy authors such as: J.R.R Tolkien, George McDonald, C.S Lewis, and J.K Rowling. These authors completely reshaped the genre to fit the new standards, and took it to another level where anything is possible and imagination is the limit.

Moreover, the fact that stories in fantasy literature are mostly out of imagination in a completely strange environment, authors use symbols and stylistic devices to give more depth and meaning to the story, also to get the attention of their audiences and deliver the messages behind their stories. *Harry Potter* by the English author J.K Rowling is one of the modern fantasy fiction works that received the praise of many fantasy writers as well as readers all over the globe, making it one of the most impactful works of literature. For instance, Rowling's *Harry Potter* as a significant part of modern fantasy fiction literature changed completely the perspective of readers about this type of literature. That switch in the children's book genre made it gain the interest of young readers as well as adults after it was marketed as a children product. Besides, Rowling's unique world-building, character-development, and the incorporation of mysterious

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elements in her stories is what makes *Harry Potter* such an interesting topic for this study.

Furthermore, despite *Harry Potter* being a seven-book series, this study focuses only on the first book of the series notably *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*. The main purpose behind choosing to work on *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's stone* in this research is that the latter is full of symbols and puzzles that grab the readers' attention, and make them interested in dissecting it to fully understand the meaning behind those symbols and the messages that Rowling tries to deliver.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the characteristics of fantasy literature, with a presentation of symbolism as a concept and as a stylistic device, focusing on the importance of its usage in fantasy novels. Additionally, providing an account of J.K Rowling's fantasy novel *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's stone* and its impact on modern literature. Primary and secondary resources gathered for this study in order to analyse the symbolism and language usage in *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*, and to show how they contribute to the overall meaning of the story.

This dissertation will precisely answer the following questions:

- What are the symbols in J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*?
- How did J.K Rowling succeed to draw images in readers' minds?

This work consists of two main chapters. The first chapter which deals with the theoretical concepts and some definitions related to fantasy literature and symbolism. It also consists of the characteristics of fantasy, as well as the elements of modern and classic fantasy literature, with some examples about the authors of the genre, and a short introduction to J.K Rowling and her famous fantasy book-series *Harry Potter*.

To carry on, the second chapter includes an overview of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*, and the examination of the elements of symbolism and language usage in the novel, in addition to the impact of Rowling's literary work on her audience and their literacy.

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1.1. Introduction

Folklore, ancient mythology, tales and religious writings all attest to the fact that fantastical aspects have always been a component of storytelling. As a literary genre, fantasy is far more recent and unique than its predecessors. Fantasy literature has been around for decades and has always sparked readers' imaginations. It transports us to an alternate reality where magic rules and anything is possible. The beauty of fantasy literature remains in its ability to attract feelings and carry readers into a different world. Readers can feel a variety of feelings, from excitement, to fear, to delight as they follow the characters on their journey and face the problems they face in their world of magic. This emotional trip is what draws readers from the different layers of society into fantasy fiction. This chapter sheds light on the fantasy as a general concept, and as a literary genre of fiction. Besides, it touches upon the concept of symbolism, and a short introduction to J.K Rowling and her most famous book series *Harry Potter*.

1.2. Fantasy Literature

When readers first hear the word “Fantasy”, most of them think of imagination and out-worldly subjects and places. Fantasy literature is a genre that is full of adventure, magic, and unforgettable characters. Fantasy literature deals with magical, supernatural, and mythical creatures and worlds. The genre has been around for centuries and has evolved over time, creating a unique blend of themes and characteristics that provide readers with an opportunity to escape reality. The universes that fantasy writers create feature creatures such as: dragons, elves, unicorns, and landscapes that have no resemblance to the real world. Fantasy literature splits into a range of subgenres, including high fantasy, urban fantasy, and low fantasy, each with its own unique characteristics.

1.2.1. Definition

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The term fantasy refers to “illusion, an idea or a pleasant situation that you imagine but that is unlikely to happen”. (*Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries*). The term also refers to a genre of fiction literature, it includes characters and events that could not exist in real life. Fantasy is a "type of story that is set in a world, or a version of our world, that does not really exist and involves magic, monsters, etc" (*Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries*). Magical and supernatural elements are the foundation of the setting, plot, characterization, and the storyline in general.

"Fantasy, also spelled phantasy, imaginative fiction dependent for effect on strangeness of setting (such as other worlds or times) and of characters (such as supernatural or unnatural beings). Examples include William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, and T.H. White’s *The Once and Future King*.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d.).

Nowadays, fantasy is popular in all kinds of media-film, television, comics, games, art, and literature, but its primary and most significant place has always been literature. According to Brian Stableford, “Fantasy is the faculty by which simulacra of sensible objects can be re-produced in the mind: the process of imagination. What we generally mean when we speak of “a fantasy” in psychological terms is, however, derived from an exclusive rather than an inclusive definition of the term” (Stableford, 2005, p.35).

1.2.2. Fantasy as a Literary Genre

In the literary genre of fantasy, there are supernatural and magical elements that do not exist in reality. It is also one of the most popular and significant literary genres because of its ability to be adapted in any form of media. Fantasy is hypothetical in nature and is not constrained by truth, laws or science. For example; people are not likely to see a witch or a wizard, a person with supernatural powers, a talking animal or a castle built on clouds in real life. As J.K. Rowling states: “What is the difference between fantasy and real life? It's the amount of dragons that exist.” (Rowling, n.d). While some authors use fanciful elements to contrast the real world, many others develop wholly imaginary universes with their own set of physics laws, populations of invented races, and other elements. Fantasy allows the writer to explore creatures and settings that

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would never exist in the real world and create rich, immersive stories that capture the reader's imagination. Fantasy now holds a particularly important place in pop culture, much more than most of other genres. From fantasy classics such as: C.S Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* and J.R.R Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* to modern fantasy hits such as: the *Harry potter* series by J.K Rowling, and the *Twilight Saga* by Stephenie Meyer.

Some people consider fantasy literature as a refuge for authors as well as for readers. "Fantasy is an escapist, and that is its glory. If a soldier is imprisoned by the enemy, don't we consider it his duty to escape?" (Tolkien, 2012). It allows us to escape from our realities and dive deep in a world of magic and adventure. In fact, Fantasy stories "will always be popular, as there are always readers who are willing to escape, freely, to the worlds that the authors create, and spend time with the characters we give life to." (Ellis, n.d.). It can also teach us valuable lessons about ourselves and the world around us, and to look at it with a different point of view. Finally, it is the power of the human imagination that makes fantasy literature a timeless and limitless genre.

Fantasy is an intriguing and captivating genre that has kept readers spellbound for many years. It is a genre where anything and everything is possible, and imagination is the limit. The beauty of fantasy lies in its ability to take the readers in a magical journey in a completely different world from their own, where magic exists and mythical creatures roam free. According to George Clayton Johnson "fantasy must be about something, otherwise it's foolishness... ultimately it must be about human beings, it must be about the human condition, it must be another look at infinity, it must be another way of seeing the paradox of existence." (Popular Quotes, n.d.). This simply means that fantasy literature often has or mostly should have messages relating to morality and the meaning of life. Lessons about patience, friendship, loyalty, love, and courage can be conveyed through tales of magic and mythical creatures, making it accessible and interesting for readers of all ages.

Fantasy literature, despite being fantastical, also provides insights into the human condition. Its topics and characters frequently reflect the struggles and the victories of real life, guiding readers through how to manage their own lives. Fantasy literature frequently conveys important themes about ethics and the meaning of life. Readers of all ages can understand endurance via stories about mythological creatures and magic.

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The challenges faced by real-life people, from overcoming personal challenges to standing against the injustices of war and discrimination, are similar to those faced by fictional characters like Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*, and Harry Potter in *Harry Potter* series.

1.2.3. Low and High Fantasy

Fantasy literature with its sub-genres is wide and diverse. Low fantasy and High fantasy are the most common sub-genres of fantasy literature, related yet different from each other. Low Fantasy features surprising magical elements that may shock the characters. Its stories are set in the real world. They are more dedicated for children such as: Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and Gabrielle-Suzan Barbot de Villeneuve's *Beauty and the Beast* (1740). This type of literature was the roots of modern fantasy literature. On the other hand, there is high fantasy which is more complicated, because the stories are set in a completely different environment from ours, with its own laws and physics, and characters with fantastical features, such as: J.R.R Tolkien's *The lord of the rings* (1954) and J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1997). This type of literature is more dedicated to adults because of its complexity and suspense. This type of stories gained attention and popularity thanks to the sudden emerge of Tolkien's books which reproduced fantasy literature as an adults' product. (Manusos, 2022).

1.2.4. Characteristics of Fantasy Literature

The characteristics of fantasy literature are what makes it such an enduring genre. From its mythical creatures and superhuman abilities to its exploration of universal themes and immersive world-building, fantasy literature remains a foundation of fiction writing. Fantasy is the literary genre that has captured the hearts and minds of millions of readers worldwide, and transports them to fantastic worlds beyond their reality. Its characteristics such as its unique setting, use of magic, and diverse cast of characters and mythical creatures are what make it stand out from other genres.

a. Setting in Fantasy Literature:

The first characteristic of fantasy is its unique setting. Fantasy worlds often contain different rules and characteristics that depart from the known natural laws of our world "There is no end to the places fantasy can take us." (Abanes, 2002) Whether it's a magical kingdom, an enchanted forest, an interplanetary universe, or some otherworldly dimension, the setting is where fantasy writers can let their imaginations run wild.

b. The Use of Magic:

Another fundamental characteristic of fantasy is its use of magic. Magic is common in fantasy stories the characters often have mystical powers that they use to achieve their objectives. Most authors use magic in order to solve problem or to develop their characters. As Jill Murphy, the author of *The Worst Witch*, described, "Magic is the stuff of dreams; it's the stuff of fantasy. It packs a punch in the imagination that nothing else can." (Popular Quotes n.d). Things that are found in fantasy include: magic and sorcery, supernatural events, talking animals or creatures, objects with human characteristics, real people in magical places, real people with magical powers.

c. Themes in Fantasy Literature:

Fantasy literature also explores complex themes, even when dealing with imaginary worlds. The themes explored in fantasy literature are often similar to those in realist fiction, although they are presented in a more abstract and imaginative manner. The important themes that fantasy literature often explores include good vs evil, the nature of power, morality, the human condition finding a mysterious object, completing a quest, fate vs free will, love or mastering the darkness. These themes could be found in any other literary genre but with a different approach. (Aquino, 1977).

d. The Plot and Characters in Fantasy Literature:

The plot and characters in fantasy literature are what makes it such an enjoyable and imaginative genre to read. The plot can be characterized by its epic scope, often involving grand quests, battles, and adventures. In fantasy fiction, the characters are just as distinctive and unique as the plot. Some of the character types that can be found in fantasy include: witches and wizards, fairies, princes and princesses, kings and queens, magical creatures such as unicorns and dragons, talking animals, knights, elves, goblins

Chapter One: Fantasy Literature, a Theoretical Review and trolls. The protagonist or the hero of the story is often a character who is not initially aware of their full potential. They may start as an ordinary person who is forced into a dangerous situation, but during their journey, they discover hidden strengths and abilities that allow them to become the hero they were meant to be. The antagonist or villain is usually a powerful and menacing person that poses the greatest threat to the hero and the world they are trying to save. The inclusion of heroes and villains is another characteristic of fantasy fiction. These characters represent good and evil, with the hero standing in for the forces who want to defend and save the world, and the villain for those that want to destroy it, Since the beginning of the genre, these typical characters have played a significant role in fantasy storytelling.

1.2.5. Fantasy Vs Reality

Fantasy is an imaginary world inside the human mind, where the unreal, and the impossible can be brought to life, and it is completely subjective. Everyone has the ability of creating a world of fantasy of his own, by simply letting their imagination run wild far away from the real world. Meanwhile, reality obeys the rules and laws of physics and nature, and is free from imagination. Reality is the outside world from the human mind, the world that we experience through our senses, and it is mostly objective unlike fantasy. (Glausiusz, 2013).

Although fantasy and reality are two different and distinct states of mind, the line between them has always been blurred. The two worlds may appear as separate and unrelated ideas, but the truth is that these two worlds are actually connected and support one another. In addition, our experiences in the real world can often inspire our fantasies, and enhance our creativity and imagination, because "without playing with fantasy, no creative work has ever yet come to birth. The debt we owe to the play of the imagination is incalculable." (Jung, 2016, p.88). The things people imagine are frequently born from our wants, worries, and dreams, and can affect their views and how they engage with the real world around us. This can result in a new and positive perspective of reality, driving us to see and experience things in a completely new light.

1.3. Symbolism in Fantasy Literature

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Symbolism plays a huge role in fantasy literature. It gives the authors the chance to deliver their messages to their audiences through their stories, with more depth and execution. Symbols are typically used to represent abstract ideas such as love, death, and life. They can also be found in literature, art, and even in everyday life.

1.3.1 Definition

Names, objects, shapes and colors can be used as symbols to express abstract thoughts or ideas, this use of symbols is called symbolism. “Symbolism, a loosely organized literary and artistic movement ... influenced the European and American literatures of the 20th century to varying degrees. Symbolist artists sought to express individual emotional experience through the subtle and suggestive use of highly symbolized language”. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2023).

Symbolism is “a type of art and literature developed in the late nineteenth century that tries to express ideas or states of mind rather than represent the real world, using the power of words and images”. It is a literary device used in literature to simplify complex ideas or emotions and make them more understandable for the reader. “The use of symbols to represent the meaning of something as a symbol: Poetic Symbolism. The use of symbols in art, literature, films, etc. to represent ideas: Religious symbolism is very characteristic of the paintings of this period.” (*Cambridge English Dictionary: Meanings & Definitions*, 2023). It is a way of portraying a message or an idea beyond what the eyes can see.

1.3.1. Symbolism and Fantasy literature

Symbolism can be used to add depth and obscure meaning of a character or an idea. Writers can explore complex themes and ideas, and make their works more profound and meaningful by using symbols. Through symbolism, readers are able to connect with the work on a deeper plane, allowing them to discover meaningful insights and profound truths that remain long after the book is finished. Colors are the most frequent form of symbolism in literature, which are often used to symbolize feelings, attitudes, or concepts. For instance, death or loss is often presented in black, while purity or innocence is represented with white. (Glatch, 2022).

One of the most famous examples of symbolism in literature is Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. Throughout the novel, the green light serves as a symbol of Gatsby’s

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desire for his lost love, Daisy. The color green represents hope and optimism, which Gatsby clings to as he strives to win Daisy back. The light, which is visible from Gatsby's house across the water, represents his longing for Daisy to return to him. The green light becomes a potent symbol of unrequited love, ambition, and the great Gatsby's inexorable quest to reconnect with Daisy. (Fitzgerald, 1925).

In Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the title itself is symbolic. The mockingbird serves as a symbol of innocence, kindness, and purity. When the children are told not to kill mockingbirds because they are harmless and do not do one thing but make music for people to enjoy, they learn a valuable lesson about the importance of respecting and protecting the innocent. The mockingbird is also a symbol of the vulnerability of innocence and the fragility of kindness, while the word "To kill", resembles violence, discrimination and the distraction of innocence. (Lee, 1960). Characters also could be used as symbols in fantasy literature. They can represent different personalities, beliefs, and values. For example, Albus Dumbledore from *Harry Potter* represents wisdom, while the villain Voldemort represents evil and darkness. Objects and animals are another important symbol in fantasy literature. Objects can represent power or magic such wands and brooms in Harry Potter. Animals can represent a variety of things in literature, from strength to the wildness of nature. For example, wolves are often used to represent the strength and power of the wild, while birds can signify freedom and purity.

When we say fantasy, it must be followed by symbolism. According to Manly Hall: "Symbolism is the language of the Mysteries. By symbols men have ever sought to communicate to each other those thoughts which transcend the limitations of language". (Popular Quotes n.d). The use of symbolism gives writers and novelists the ability to deliver their personal and unique thoughts, ideas, and views to the real world in a different way that could be difficult to do so in a simple and straightforward way. For example, in *The Lord of the Rings*, the Golden Ring is a symbol of power, selfishness and greed. Some started out with good intentions, but eventually the Ring corrupted them and turned them to its will. They even tried to kill in order to possess it. The symbolism of the story comes to the fact that power seduces, corrupts, controls, and destroys the inner goodness of those who possess it, the same way as the ring does to its owner.

1.4. Evolution of Fantasy Literature

Fantasy literature is a timeless genre. It can be said that fantasy writing has been around since the beginning. People always expressed their fantasies and imaginations by spoken stories, and later those stories were passed through from generation to another. From their oral form, those tales were gathered and transformed into books and novels. From the thirteenth century to the 1900s, fantasy writing kept evolving with the emergence of new waves of fantasy writers bringing new qualities that impacted the genre. Both classic and modern fantasy play important roles in shaping the future of the genre.

1.4.1. Classic Fantasy

It is largely common that classic fantasy is what was written during the twentieth century, but the actual classical fantasy works are far old than that. *One Thousand and One Night* also known as *The Arabian Nights*, is just one example of classical fantasy works, the stories included in it have been passed from generation to generation. Then they were collected by several authors and scholars, later on to be one of the pioneers of fantasy literature heritage. Classic fantasy is a genre that normally involves a world of magic, mythical creatures, and epic storytelling. It often features heroes and villains engaged in battles of good vs evil, quests to destroy or save kingdoms from evil villain, and journeys of the protagonists filled with dangers and wonders. Classic fantasy works are often inspired by folklore, mythology, and fairy tales, and have been popularized by authors such as George Mc Donald, Charles Dickens, and Lewis Carroll. Notable works in this genre include *The Lord of the Rings*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Princess and The Goblin*. Many of these classic fantasy works were originally aimed for children, but eventually they were getting interest by adults as well. (Pagan, 2020).

There are several well-known classic fantasy authors that made their mark in the genre, creating some of the most beloved stories of the literary history. We name a few of them:

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson also known as Lewis Carroll (1832-1998), an English novelist who is mostly remembered for his works such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), and his poem *The*

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Hunting of the Snark (1876) is nonsense literature of the highest order. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2023). His most celebrated work is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). The novel tells the story of a young girl named Alice, who dreams that she falls down a rabbit hole and enters a strange and surreal world full of nonsensical characters and bizarre incidents. The plot of the novel represents a story of a child's fantasies and imaginations, and their developmental process "The impact of the book is obvious. Alice's fairytale adventures are dramatic presentations of a child's life in the adult world: Alice's frustrations are his and her triumphs." (Morton, 1960).

Charles Dickens, in full Charles John Huffam Dickens (1812-1870), an English novelist, who is considered as the greatest author of the Victorian era. He is widely known for his outstanding works such as: *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *David Copperfield* (1850), *Bleak House* (1853), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2023). One of Dicken's most popular works in fantasy is *A Christmas Carol* (1843). The book depicts the story of a rich, self-obsessed miser man called Ebenezer Scrooge, who has been visited by a ghost on the Christmas eve, giving him a last chance for redemption from his cruel behavior against others. After receiving visits from the spirits of Christmas past, present, and future, Scrooge is convinced to change. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2023). Dicken's short novel has since become a standard of Christmas stories in modern literature, and its message about the importance of compassion and kindness continues to inspire generations.

George Macdonald (1824-1905), a Scottish novelist and poet. He is one of the most respected and celebrated authors in the history of English literature. He is known with his infamous fantasy works such as: *Phantasies: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women* (1858), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and its sequel, and *The Princess and Curdie* (1873). (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2023). One of Macdonald's prominent fantasy works is *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872). In MacDonald's story the goblins live in mines and dig into the house, in which young Princess Irene lives, to seize her and make her the wife of their Prince Harelip. (Colin, 2007). After that, the princess gets saved by her friend Curdie from the dangerous creatures who live beneath her castle. The story in general is "concerned with the preservation of royalty and the destruction of its bestialized antagonists". (Colin, 2007). MacDonald's thoughtful and spiritual exploration of morality, left a remarkable impact on readers of all ages and backgrounds.

1.4.2. Modern Fantasy

Modern fantasy usually considers all the fantasy works from the twentieth and the twenty first century until the present. Modern fantasy mostly explores deeper themes, and it focuses on the characters more than classic fantasy. It often has a darker tone as well, with more violence content. It also takes on a more diverse cast of characters, such as George Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series. Modern fantasy often eschews the traditional fantastical creatures and puts a spotlight on human condition and struggles. It explores complex issues such as politics, religion, and morality. Many of these modern fantasy books were aimed for adults, because the stories and themes that they include may not be suitable for children. Examples include *The Hobbit*, *Harry Potter*, and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Modern fantasy writers do more than just create unrealistic tales. They have to create a world with original features, new laws and rules, believable characters, and a credible storyline. The worlds represented in fantasy novels have become an essential part of modern literary culture.

There are some modern fantasy authors, that have revolutionized the genre with their unique and imaginative storytelling, and world-building. This is what made them part of the most influential and successful writers in the history of fantasy.

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, artistically known as J.R.R Tolkien (1892-1973), English writer and scholar. The creator of “Middle-Earth”, a world that has become an iconic part of modern fantasy literature. His novel *The Hobbit* (1937) was his breakthrough to fame. Tolkien’s most celebrated fantasy book is his epic fantasy *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), the novel tells the story of a group of heroes who are willing to save the world from the infinite evil. While they continue their journey, Frodo Baggins receives a magic Ring of Invisibility from his uncle, which afterwards he will discover that it contains evil powers that corrupts its owner. After that a group of fellow men is formed to destroy the ring and save the world. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2023). With his fascinating world-building, the focus on the details, and his ability to create a

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new language, Tolkien's impact on fantasy literature is immense and timeless. As was being said: “If you did not read Tolkien, then you never read fantasy”.

George Raymond Richard Martin, his pen name is G.R.R. Martin (1948-), an American fantasy writer. His most notable works are: *A Game of Thrones* (1996), *A Song of Ice and Fire The Ice Dragon* (1980). Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, which was adapted for television show as *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019), has become an international phenomenon, being one of the most watched shows in history. The series tells the story of seven kingdoms in an imagined land of Westeros. The story mostly contained political conflicts, wars and battlefields, savagery and the race for the throne and the power it holds. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2023). Martin's writing style combines elements of high fantasy and medieval times to tell the complex story of a world where no one is safe from the dangers of the rulers' thirst for power.

Joanne Rowling, also known with her pen name as “J.K Rowling” (1965-), English writer and novelist born and raised in England. (Rowling, 2018). The author of *Harry Potter* book series, alongside few popular fantasy novels such as: *Fantastic Beasts & Where to Find Them* (2001), *Quidditch Through the Ages* (2001), and *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*(2008). The *Harry Potter* series, Rowling's most celebrated book to date was “an immediate success, appealing to both children, who were its intended audience, and adults.” (*The Encyclopedia of Britannica*, 2023). It was also her entrance to fame, later on to be known as the best fantasy author of her generation.

1.5. Introduction to J.K Rowling and Her Fantasy Writing Experiences

J.K. Rowling is perhaps the most famous modern fantasy writer, thanks to her creation of the Harry Potter universe in which she introduced readers to a world filled with magic, mystical creatures, and characters each with their unique personality, that a lot of people felt connected with in many ways.

1.5.1. J.K Rowling's Most Famous Fantasy Writings

J.K Rowling is a name that is related to fantasy, magic, mystery, and mythical creatures. She is a popular British author who is famously known with her *Harry Potter* series, which has become a cultural phenomenon. The series is one of the best-selling book series of all time, selling millions of copies worldwide. Being translated into

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different languages around the globe, made the series one of the most well-known fantasy works ever. (Rowling, 2019). With her unique style and delivery, Rowling's writing has captured the hearts of millions of readers around the world.

Beside the *Harry Potter* series, J.K Rowling has written several other books, such as *The Casual Vacancy* (2012), and the *Cormoran Strike* series (2013). These books demonstrate her versatility in writing in different genres, as they are much different from the *Harry Potter* series. They explore themes such as mental health, politics, and relationships, as well as demonstrating her ability to write for different audiences.

Rowling's unique writing style is what makes her works captivating. She has a way of capturing the reader's attention from the first page and keeping them interested until the very end. Her descriptions are vivid, and her characters are well-developed. Rowling's writing also has a touch of humor and wit, which makes her books even more enjoyable for readers of all ages.

1.5.2. Harry Potter

The seven-book *Harry Potter* series, written by British author J.K. Rowling, is one of the most well-known book series of all time. It tells the story of Harry Potter, a young wizard, and his battle against the evil Lord Voldemort. The series is set in a magical world that is hidden from the Muggle (non-magical) world. The story starts with Harry Potter discovering that he is a wizard and being able to be a student at the Hogwarts school of wizardry and witchcraft. All through the series alongside his best friends Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley, we see Harry grow and face many challenges as they try their best to stop the Dark Lord (Voldemort) and his followers (The Death Eaters), from taking over the wizarding world.

Rowling invents a complicated and colorful magical world full of spells, potions, and magical creatures. The world-building that she does in *Harry Potter* is one of the reasons the series is so beloved. Readers from the different layers of society can completely engage themselves in it and experience what it is like to be a part of the story since it is so clearly detailed.

The characters in the *Harry Potter* series are another factor in its popularity. Readers may identify with and root for Harry, Ron, and Hermione since they are all pleasant and sympathetic people. Although they have flaws and make mistakes, they

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grow over the series as a result. The series also features several enduring antagonists, like Voldemort and his devoted Death Eaters.

The *Harry Potter* series' themes are also current and timeless. Throughout the entire series, the value of friendship and loyalty is a constant subject. The series is excellent for starting serious discussions with young readers, because it also touches on issues like prejudice, racism, and the abuse of authority.

1.6. Conclusion

Fantasy literature has always been a genre that dive deep into our imaginations and allows us to explore worlds beyond our own. By embracing their ability to tap into their fantasies, fantasy fiction authors made a huge impact in the literary history. Their literary masterpieces will continuously inspire generations to come. Though fantasy literature is entirely fictional, it affects the individuals' experience profoundly, resetting their moral compasses as there is no power switch in the brain between fantasy and realism. People often incorporate lessons from fictional stories that match their current status and life situations. The next chapter will be a study about the aspects of symbolism and language symbols in J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* or *The Sorcerer's stone* in the US version (1997), with the analysis of the novel and its characters.

Chapter Two:
The analysis of Symbolism
and Language Usage in J.K
Rowling's *Harry Potter and*
The Philosopher's Stone

Chapter Two: The Analysis of Symbolism and Language Usage in J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*

2.1. Introduction

2.2. An Overview of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*

2.2.1. Plot Summary

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2.3. Symbolism in *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*

2.3.1. Harry's Scar

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2.5. J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*, a Synthesis of the Main Assets

2.6. Conclusion

2.1. Introduction

J.K Rowling's contribution to the modern fantasy literature with her iconic *Harry Potter* book series is immense and undeniable. She had a big role in redefining the genre by blending the traditional fairy tale elements with modern storytelling techniques, becoming an inspiration for the upcoming generation of fantasy writers. In addition, her focus on character development and the exploration of complex themes is what make her stories more interesting to readers. Rowling's use of symbolism and symbolic language added more depth and complexity to her stories, making them more than just simple tales of adventure. The use of symbolism in modern fantasy literature became an essential element, but not just any simple symbol would deliver the idea. Furthermore, some symbols can be overused and they may lose their significance, so the authors had to be more creative and make their own symbols by letting their imaginations go wild. This chapter includes an overview of the novel *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* with a plot summary, and a study of the characters. It also sheds light on the marks of symbolism and symbolic language in the novel.

2.2. An Overview of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*

J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* was the first attempt by the author in fantasy writing, as the first part from her seven-book series Harry Potter. The series depict different themes such as: love, friendship, sacrifice, and self-discovery. Just after its release the first book saw an immediate success and became a global phenomenon. It also has become beloved by readers of all ages and had a significant impact on popular culture. Afterwards, the story was an interesting product for the film-making industry, later on to be adapted to a film by the same name as the novel, with Rowling as co-producer to the franchise. It saw a big success all over the world, becoming a sensation in the history of cinema

2.2.1. Plot Summary

Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone (1997) by the English novelist J.K. Rowling tells the story of an orphan child named Harry Potter who was born in a family of wizards. The story starts with Mr. Dursley noticing the happenings of weird things near their house, owls, a cat reading a map and people wearing cloaks, but he did not want to engage with anything. Eventually, they found out that those people were wizards and witches, and they brought them their one-years old nephew Harry "The Boy Who Lived" who survived the attack of the Dark Lord (Voldemort), but unfortunately his parents James and Lily Potter could not and died at the incident. Few years later, Harry had a miserable life of isolation and desperation, trapped in a very small room under the stairs, and being tormented and bullied by his spoiled cousin Dudley. Because he has no other relatives but his aunt Petunia, her husband Vernon and their son Dudley, Harry had to accept the situation and stay with them.

One day, mysterious letters began arriving to the Dursleys' house for Harry, and they tried to hide them from him, but that was hopeless because the letters kept arriving from every small gap in the house. Mr. Dursley felt that something is wrong so he decided to move to a hidden island with his family on the evening of Harry's eleventh birthday. In the middle of that night, Hagrid came to Harry and told him that he's a wizard and delivers him the letter of acceptance to the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and that his parents were killed by Voldemort not in a car accident as he was told by his aunt. The next day, Hagrid took Harry to London in a hidden place called Diagon Alley to claim his money that his parents left for him from the Gringotts Bank, then took him to buy magic supplies for his magic courses at Hogwarts. At the Gringotts Bank, Hagrid visits a vault and grabs a small package and hid it in his pockets saying that it is "Very secret. Hogwarts business" (Rowling, 1997, p.74), when Harry asked him about it.

Afterwards, Harry gets on Hogwarts Express heading to the school, and throughout the ride he meets his new friends Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. Harry is also introduced to a boy called Draco Malfoy whom he does not like much. They arrive at the Hogwarts and before starting courses, the new students enter a big room with a very high ceiling, with odd things and flying ghosts all around the place.

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The new commers to the school get sorted into houses (Gryffindor, Slytherin, Ravenclaw, and Hufflepuff) by the Sorting hat. Harry joins the Gryffindor house alongside Ron and Hermione, meanwhile Malfoy joins the Slytherin house. Harry's first class in Hogwarts, the potion class with professor Snape was like a nightmare for him, because he had no idea about potions nor magic. Later on, Harry discovers that professor Snape does not like him after he was humiliating and mocking him in front of his classmates calling him as "The new celebrity". (Rowling, 1997, p.136).

Coincidentally, when Harry goes to Hagrid's hut he sees an article from the "The Daily Prophet" says that some wizards and witches break into the Gringotts bank. Then he realises that the vault that they were trying to steal was the one that Hagrid emptied when they were together, and a lot of questions started coming to his head. The day after, Harry realises that Gryffindor and Slytherin have a flying lesson together with Madam Hooch. The lesson starts and one of the students "Neville" breaks his ankle after trying to fly with his broomstick. Madam Hooch has to take him to the hospital, then tells everyone to not try to fly while she is away. Draco Malfoy the boy from Slytherin who does not like Harry, glance the remembering ball of Neville that his grandmother gifted him, and he tries tothrough it away. Even though Harry does not know how to ride a broomstick, without hesitation he flies to get it back with such ease. Professor McGonagall sees what happened and was impressed by his flying abilities, then calls Harry immediately to follow her. Harry thinks that she will punish him, but instead she introduces him to the senior Quidditch player Oliver Wood, and asks him to make Harry a seeker in Gryffindor Quidditch team. Malfoy has already challenged Harry for a wizard's duel in the trophy room, and Harry accepts the challenge. When Harry and Ron arrived nobody was there, suddenly they see Argus Filch holding a lamp, with his scary cat, Mrs Norris following him. They run away trying to find where to hide, then they inter the forbidden area, then suddenly a huge scary three-headed dog is asleep on top of a trapdoor. They ran away immediately with a scary look at their faces, wondering about what exactly they saw there.

The day after, Harry plays his first ever Quidditch game as the youngest player in the game's history, using the Nimbus 2000 broomstick that Professor McGonagall gifted him. Harry learns that the seeker's job is to catch the Golden Snitch before the other team's seeker does, and other basics of the game from his teammate Oliver. During

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the Halloween feast while everybody is enjoying his food, the teacher of “The Defence Against the Dark Arts” Professor Quirrell enters the room screaming that there is a loose troll in the school. While the other students run to their dorms terrified and scared, Harry and Ron realised that Hermione is not there and she has no idea about the troll. When they arrived to the girls’ bathroom to tell Hermione, they find out that the troll is there too so they confront him. With the use of magic, team work and courage, they managed to kill the monster and the three become best friends.

The Quidditch season begins and Harry is about to play his first game ever as a Gryffindor seeker. Harry’s suspicions about Professor Snape become more complicated after he heard his speech with Professor Quirrell about the injury that the three-headed dog gave him, and how he interrupted Harry during the game. Eventually Harry helps his team to win the game by grabbing the Snatch ball by his mouth. After the game, Harry and his friends Ron and Hermione go back to Hagrid’s hut to tell him about Snape, but Hagrid did not find a solid reason why he would try to kill Harry. Then they ask him about the three-headed dog in the dungeons, he responded that it is his pet, and it is guarding something secret that nobody knows about but Dumbledore and a wizard called Nicolas Flamel.

It is Christmas season and everyone leaves Hogwarts to spend the holidays with their families and relatives. Harry, and Ron stayed at Hogwarts because Harry does not have any place to go to, while Ron’s parents were going to visit his older brother in Romania. In the next morning, the two awaken for presents beside their beds. One of Harry’s presents was an invisibility cloak for an anonymous person who tells him that cloak belonged to his father James. At night, while Ron was asleep, Harry sneaks out to the library to search for a book about Nicolas Flamel from the forbidden area in the library wearing the invisibility cloak. He enters the library, grabs a book and suddenly the book screams. Filch hears the sound and comes running. Harry flees the place before he catches him, in his way out, he sees Snape too then both Professors start looking for the invader. Harry runs away afraid that they will catch him, he enters an empty dark room he finds in his way. Few moments later, Harry glances at the Mirror of Erised, a huge old mirror with a gold frame, he stands in front of it and sees his parents instead of seeing his own face, and tries to talk to them but they only waved to him. Harry returns to his dorm and cannot stop thinking about the mirror. On another night, he returns to

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the mirror and finds Albus Dumbledore there. He thought that he would be angry, but Dumbledore explains to Harry how the mirror does not reflect people's faces but their deepest desires, and warns him about it.

Nicolas Flamel, the name that still rings bell in Harry's head. With the help of his team, Harry discovers that Nicolas Flamel is an alchemist who made the philosopher's stone. The stone has a supernatural power which can turn any metal into pure gold, and the person who possesses that stone can have the power of immortality with the Elixir of Life that it produces. A Quidditch game between Gryffindor and Hufflepuff is on, and Snape will referee the match. Harry catches the Snitch and Gryffindor wins. After the match, Harry sees Snape heading into the forbidden forest, then he follows him. Snape secretly meets Professor Quirrell, then he mentions to him the philosopher's stone. Harry thinks that Snape is forcing Quirrell to help him to find the philosopher's stone so that he can have its powers.

Harry goes back to Hagrid's hut with Ron and Hermione. Then Harry tells Hagrid that the place is too hot than usual. Hagrid tells them that there is a dragon egg that is he was hiding because it is forbidden to have a dragon or its eggs at Hogwarts. The dragon egg cracks and a little dragon comes out while everyone is watching. While everyone is amazed by the view, Hagrid is thinking how he would hide when it gets bigger. Hermione suggests that he should send it to Ron's brother and Hagrid agrees. Until then, Harry and Hermione take the dragon to hide it in a tower in the school. Malfoy sees them and follows them. On their way back from the tower Filch sees them and tells Professor McGonagall what happened. McGonagall punishes them by taking 50 points each, and gives all of them detention to serve together. The next day, they receive a letter from Professor McGonagall that they will be going to the forbidden forest alongside Hagrid to do some research. Suddenly they find some silver liquid, then Hagrid tells them that it is a blood of a wounded unicorn. They split up and start looking for the unicorn, few moments later they found it dead with somebody in a black cloak drinking its blood. They get confused with a lot of questions in their heads. The strange person attacks Harry, but he gets saved by a centaur and tells him that the person who attacked him was actually just a soul, the soul of the dark lord Voldemort and he is trying to get his body back by drinking the blood of the unicorn until he claims the philosopher's stone. Eventually Harry finds out that Snape does not want the philosopher's stone for

Chapter Two: The analysis of Symbolism and Language Usage himself, but he is helping Voldemort as one of his followers (The Death Eaters) to bring back his powers.

Harry, Ron and Hermione take the challenge to save the philosopher's stone from being in the wrong hands after finding out that Professor Dumbledore is in London, and it is the perfect chance for Snape to take the stone. The trio heads on to get the stone, but first they have to pass the Seven Philosopher's Stone Chambers that were put by the teachers: McGonagall, Quirrell, Sprout, Flitwick, and Snape. With bravery and team work they finally manage to pass the magical barriers of the professors, and to get Harry to the stone. Being the only one from the trio, Harry passes the last barrier and reaches the last room where the stone is.

Harry arrives, and he sees a person wearing a cloak inside, Harry thinks that it is Snape, but it turns out that the person was professor Quirrell. He tells him that Snape was actually protecting him, and never had the intention to hurt him. Quirrell continues and tells Harry that the reason why Snape was acting with him like that is only because of his father James Potter. Later on, to distract him from the stone, Harry asks Quirrell why he is trying to steal the stone, Quirrell answers that he is serving Voldemort. Quirrell is unable to pass the mirror test to get the stone, but a sound like a snake sound tells him to use Harry and that he is the key to pass the mirror. Harry stands in front of the mirror and sees a reflection of himself holding the stone and puts it in his pockets. He lies to Quirrell about what he saw, but the sound in his head tells him that Harry is lying. Quirrell takes off his turban from his head, turns around and reveals that the snake-like sound was actually Voldemort's face in the back of his head. Harry is shocked from what he sees. Voldemort demands the Stone from Harry, but Harry refuses. Quirrell tries to seize Harry, but once he touches him his skins burns. Harry faints after the confrontation with Quirrell and he manages to save the stone from Voldemort. Dumbledore visits Harry at the hospital after the incident, he thanks him for his heroic actions, and informs him that the stone is successfully reclaimed and destroyed, but there are other ways for Voldemort to get his body back and returns. Ron and Hermione give Harry a visit at the hospital, and tells him that Slytherin won the final Quidditch match the House Cup.

It is now the end of the term, everyone at Hogwarts is around the big table for the feast. Dumbledore stands up gives a speech and rewards Harry, Ron and Hermione with

Chapter Two: The analysis of Symbolism and Language Usage extra points which makes their house “Gryffindor” on top. They eventually won the House cup against the Slytherin. Soon, the terms ends and everyone packs their trunks, taking the Hogwarts Express heading back to the Muggle world.

2.2.2. Main Characters

Rowling’s character development is one of the main reasons behind the massive success of her book-series *Harry Potter*. Rowling’s first book *Harry Potter and The Philosopher’s Stone* introduces the readers to a rich and diverse world of magic, inhabited by remarkable variety of characters, each with their unique personality and qualities. The friendship, struggles, rivalry and adventures are what connect these characters with each other, and that is what makes the story more relatable and captivating to readers.

These are the main characters in Rowling’s *Harry Potter and The Philosopher’s Stone*:

Harry Potter: the protagonist or the hero of the story. A young orphan boy who lives with his neglective and abusive relatives, the Dursleys. Harry’s journey of personal growth and transformation begins when he receives the letter of acceptance to Hogwarts School of witchcraft and wizardry. Harry goes from being a timid lonely boy who always doubts himself, to a hero who is surrounded by friends and admires, and eventually defeats the villain Voldemort and saves the wizarding world. Representing the good in the story with such humility and modesty, Harry is the type of character that anyone can relate to.

Ronald Weasley: a red-head funny and clumsy boy. Harry and Ron first meet at Hogwarts Express then they become best friends. Although Ron’s family members are all wizards and witches, he is still not good at magic and spells. Despite his stupid actions most of the time, Ron always gets Harry’s back with such loyalty and bravery. He also does not rely on his family connections, but instead he works hard and tries to live up to his family’s expectations.

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Hermione Granger: an intelligent and a very ambitious girl who always values knowledge and education above anything else. She respects and follows the school rules. Despite coming from a muggle (non-magical) family, she is excellent with magic spells and potions. She becomes the third member of the trio (Harry, Ron and her), and start the quest together to save the philosopher's stone and defeat Voldemort. Throughout her journey at Hogwarts, she challenges the social adjustments and other student's judgement, and proves that nothing can decide what you deserve, but hard work and the good will can.

The Dursleys: A muggle family. Harry's only living relatives, his aunt Petunia, her husband Vernon Dursley, and their spoiled son Dudley. After his parents were killed by Voldemort, Harry has to live with them in their house at 4 Privet Drive. Harry's Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon's greatest fear was magic. Petunia feels that magic is the reason why her parents loved her younger sister Lily more than her, and also the reason why her sister died. Their only son Dudley Dursley, a chubby white boy who always gets what he wants even if it is too much. He bullies Harry and mistreats him all the time and makes sure that he does not rest.

Neville Longbottom: a student at Hogwarts school, and Harry's fellow member in the Gryffindor house. Neville is so nice and loyal to his friends. He is first portrayed as clumsy and foolish character who lacks confidence and courage, also obeys the rules and fears punishments. Eventually, Neville's self-confidence and bravery grow over time thanks to the adventures with Harry and their friends, later to become a key member and plays a significant role in the war against the Dark Lord. Harry's effect on Neville's personality is portrayed throughout the story.

Albus Dumbledore: An old wise man, a great wizard and the headmaster of Hogwarts school of witchcraft and wizardry. Dumbledore is humble and respected by all the students as well as by the teachers at Hogwarts. He always defends the good against the evil, and encourages others to develop a better version of themselves, with high level of wisdom and understanding. Dumbledore is there for Harry since day one, he always advises him, and he is the person who believes the most in his potentials and abilities.

Rubeus Hagrid: a giant man, who works as the gamekeeper at Hogwarts. Hagrid was the one that introduced Harry to wizarding world when he was still with the

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Dursleys. He is a kind and loveable person. He cares so much about Harry since he was a kid, he even dropped tears when he had to leave him with the Dursleys. Hagrid's love for animals is remarkable, he loves raising rare creatures such as: the three-headed dog, the dragon and the giant bird. Even if Hagrid can be foolish sometimes, but his advices and guidance helped Harry a lot in his journey against Voldemort.

Professor McGonagall: a teacher at Hogwarts, and the head of Gryffindor house. Although she is very strict and respects the rules, most of the time she is nice and kind to the students. McGonagall has a big role in the war against the dark lord Voldemort. With her experience and wisdom, she always helps Harry and makes sure that he will reach his goals. Eventually, McGonagall becomes the Headmistress of Hogwarts after the death of Albus Dumbledore.

Severus Snape: the magic potions teacher at Hogwarts. Snape is portrayed as a villain at the beginning of the story, but eventually his true intentions are revealed at the end. His backstory with Harry's parents was the reason why he has some hatred for him. Eventhough Snape was one of the death eaters (Lord Voldemort's followers), he protected Harry in so many occasions. His love for Harry's mother Lily was the reason why he becomes on Harry's side, and this shows that Snape understands what love and loyalty means, unlike his master Voldemort.

Draco Malfoy: A student at Hogwarts school, and a member at the Slytherin house. He is an arrogant and cruel white boy with golden yellow hair, from a rich pure blood family. He always bullies others especially Harry and his friends, and wants them to be submissive to his orders. Malfoy's parents are part of Death Eaters army (Voldemort's followers), so basically, he received his hatred for Harry from them. In spite of the fact that Malfoy is a loyal follower to the Dark Lord, sometimes he shows some moments of vulnerability and weakness.

Quirinus Quirrell: the teacher of the Defence Against the Dark Arts at Hogwarts. He is first introduced as a stutter, harmless shy person who is afraid from his own shadow. But eventually he was revealed to be actually working for Lord Voldemort, and had been possessed by him. It also happens that he was the person behind the weird incidents at Hogwarts as he was commanded by the Dark Lord. Professor Quirrell attempted to steal the Philosopher's Stone for Voldemort, but was ultimately defeated by Harry Potter.

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Voldemort or The Dark Lord: the antagonist of the story and the leader of the Death Eaters. Voldemort was one of the greatest wizards in Hogwarts' history. His greed for power, immortality, and domination over the wizarding world turned him into the most evil creature ever. Voldemort is known for his cruelty, fearlessness, and his great magical abilities, including the use of the Unforgivable Curses. He was the reason behind Harry's famous scar and his parents' death. Voldemort's ultimate goal was to kill Harry Potter, because everyone believed that he is the person that will eventually defeat him, and stops him from destroying the world of magic.

2.3. Symbolism in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*

Rowling uses various symbols throughout her book to convey different themes and concepts such as: good vs evil, friendship, self-development, loyalty, and courage. Rowling's storytelling style is very much based on the use of symbolism and imagery. Throughout the story readers encounter some of the symbols that at first may seem like a cliché to some of them, but if they pay more attention to the meaning behind them, the reader will see the story from a whole other perspective. This part will explore the different types of symbols used in *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*, and how they contribute to the overall meaning of the story.

2.3.1. Harry's Scar

The scar in Harry's forehead that is shaped like a bolt of lightning, that he got because of Voldemort when he attempted to kill him when he was a baby with his death curse. The scar is the first symbol that grabs the reader's attention when they start reading the book. Rowling introduces Harry's scar when Hagrid first took him to Professors McGonagall and Dumbledore in order to leave him with the Dursleys.

Under a tuft of jet-black hair over his forehead they could see a curiously shaped cut, like a bolt of lightning.

"Is that where __?" whispered Professor McGonagall.

"Yes," said Dumbledore. "He will have that scar forever. (Rowling, 1997, p.15)

Here Rowling presents the scar as not just a physical wound in Harry's forehead, but as a symbol of Harry's destiny to represent good, and his connection to Voldemort who resembles Darkness. Professor McGonagall asks Dumbledore: "Couldn't you do

Chapter Two: The analysis of Symbolism and Language Usage something about it, Dumbledore?" he answers "Even if I could, I wouldn't." (Rowling, 1997, p.15). Dumbledore's refusal of doing anything to the scar shows that it is considered as a reminder to Harry of his sufferings, and his significant role in the wizarding world, carrying peoples' hopes in the fact that good will eventually win against evil. Furthermore, Harry's scar is used by Rowling to make the protagonist stand out from the other characters, it also shows Harry's great power as a wizard being the only one ever to survive the Death Curse.

2.3.2. Harry's Wand

In *Harry Potter*, a wand is necessary for every student at Hogwarts. Wands are representations of every character's personality and individuality. Before entering the magic school of Hogwarts, every witch and wizard have their wands customised to fit their personal traits. When Harry first went to Mr. Ollivander's wands shop in Diagon Alley to purchase his wand, he found out from Mr. Ollivander that "It so happens that the phoenix whose tail feather is in your wand, gave another feather...its brother gave you that scar" (Rowling, 1997, p.85). It means that Harry's wand shares the same core "The phoenix's tail feather" with Voldemort's wand, the wand that was used to curse Harry and gave him his scar. Harry's wand symbolises his connection to Voldemort, the link between good and evil, and his destiny to defeat that evil.

2.3.3. The Sorting Hat

It is another symbol used by Rowling to maintain the relationship between her characters and the elements of magic in the story. The sorting hat is a pointy magical hat put by the teachers of Hogwarts on each one of the new students' heads in order to be sorted into four houses Gryffindor, Slytherin, Ravenclaw, and Hufflepuff, each with their own traits and values. The hat has the ability to know the character of its wearer, and even if some of them had a preference for one of the houses, it turns out that only the hat who chooses where they truly belong. When the new students arrive to the main hall inside the castle, the talking hat introduces itself to them with a song: "*__and the hat began to sing:*

*Oh, you may not think I'm pretty,
But don't judge on what you see,
I'll eat myself if you can find
A smarter hat than me.*

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*You can keep your bowlers black,
Your top hats sleek and tall,
For I'm the Hogwarts Sorting Hat
And I can cap them all.
There's nothing hidden in your head
The Sorting Hat can't see,
So, try me on and I will tell you
Where you ought to be.*" (Rowling, 1997, p.117)

Through the sorting, students learn how to embrace their flaws and strengths as parts of their true identities. The sorting hat serves as a symbol of identity and belonging to the place where the students feel welcomed and accepted. Another meaning behind the sorting hat symbol is that the person does not always choose what they deserve, but they rather choose what they want.

2.3.4. The Mirror of Erised

The mirror of Erised was first introduced when Harry was running away from Professor Snape and Filch in the forbidden area in Hogwarts. Then he suddenly entered a room and sees the mirror in front of him, it was "a magnificent mirror, as high as the ceiling, with an ornate gold frame, standing on two clawed feet. There was an inscription carved around the top: Erised stra ehru oyt ube cafru oyt on wohsi." (Rowling 1997, p.207). When Harry came across the huge mirror, he was shocked because instead of seeing his face, he sees his dead parents Lily and James and some of his long-gone family members, whom he never had the chance to know. "It shows us nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts. You, who have never known your family, see them standing around you." (Rowling 1997, p.213). The Mirror of Erised symbolizes the human desire for things they cannot have. The reason why Harry becomes obsessed with it when he sees his family in the mirror, is because his deepest desire was meeting his family. "Men have wasted away before it, entranced by what they have seen, or been driven mad, not knowing if what it shows is real or even possible" (Rowling, 1997, p.213). This means that instead of focusing on what the person has, they would risk it to live in their fantasies and most desperate aspirations. When Harry asks Dumbledore: "What do you see when you look in the mirror?" Then he answers: "I? I see myself holding a pair of thick, woolen socks." (Rowling 1997,

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p.214) This means that he no longer desires anything. This symbolises the idea that true happiness comes from when the person is finally at peace with himself, and satisfied with what they have.

2.3.5. The Philosopher's Stone

The philosopher's stone as mentioned in the title of the book is itself a symbol. Hermione starts searching for information about Flamel the creator of the stone, then coincidentally she finds an article in an old book mentioning the stone saying that:

The ancient study of alchemy is concerned with making the Sorcerer's Stone, a legendary substance with astonishing powers. The stone will transform any metal into pure gold. It also produces the Elixir of Life, which will make the drinker immortal. (Rowling 1997, p. 220).

The stone has the power of immortality and can turn any metal into gold, which can be given to its beholder. The stone symbolises Voldemort's ultimate goal and his desire for power and immortality. Voldemort's hunger for power reflects how the person can do anything by any means to get what they want. The stone is also a symbol of temptation and the corrupting influence of power. Harry on the other hand, even when he was able to use the power of the stone, he did not even think of using it for himself, instead he was just looking for it to save it from being in the wrong hands. Harry believes that he will live long enough to have the life that he always wanted, being surrounded by friends and people who love and support him. After the stone was saved from Voldemort, Dumbledore meets Harry and warns him about the dangers of the stone and how it could be used for evil purposes.

2.3.6. The Characters

Another fascinating thing about J.K Rowling is her unique use of her characters. The characters in *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* are not randomly put together, they can also be considered as symbols. Every character depicts ideas, emotions, concepts that represent the human experiences.

First and foremost, the hero of the story Harry Potter who symbolises the good, the importance of love and self-sacrifice. From his first day at Hogwarts Harry has always shown courage in face of danger and the different challenges at the school, often

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risking his life to save his friends. Harry embodies justice, and the importance of doing the right even when it is difficult and dangerous. Moreover, Hermione Granger represents the value of knowledge and the importance of intelligence and self-development. She always proves that hard work is the key to success. Besides, Ron Weasley represents loyalty and friendship. His sense of humour is reminder that even during dark times, it is totally fine to have some fun with the people who you love. The trio Harry, Ron, and Hermione picture the importance of team work, the love for adventure, and bravery. Another significant character is Albus Dumbledore, who portrays wisdom, self-experience, and respect. His leadership and the decision making are what make him an inspiration for the younger generations. Finally, Voldemort, the antagonist in the story who symbolises evil, hate, the darkness within, and the greed for power. His disgrace to the human life and the people surrounding him is what makes him the face of the ultimate evil in the story. This variety of characters is used by the author in order to reflect the complexity of the human nature, and to provide the audience with the ability to relate to different personalities and to see the story from different points of view.

2.3.7. The Four Houses of Hogwarts

When the new witches and wizards enter the Hogwarts School of magic, they are sorted by the sorting hat into four houses, Gryffindor, Slytherin, Ravenclaw, and Hufflepuff. Each one of them has its own flag, with a specific sign and combination of colours that carries a deep meaning behind it, and as a representation of the members of the house and their characteristics and values.

Gryffindor house's symbol is a lion that is standing tall with pride and confidence. The lion symbolises bravery, courage and determination. The colours red and gold symbolise fiery and fierce strength, and passionate spirit. In addition, Slytherin house's symbol is a serpent. It is often associated with deception and betrayal, but it also represents power and ambition. The silver serpent in the green flag can be seen as a symbol of transformation from weakness to domination. Another symbol is the raven that the Ravenclaw house is named after it. Ravens are often related to fulfilment and intelligence. Raven claw house members are known for their sharp minds, their love for knowledge, and their ability to see the deeper meanings behind the surface. It is also referred to as the place where the brightest minds are found. Finally, Hufflepuff the

Chapter Two: The analysis of Symbolism and Language Usage house which its sign is a badger, that symbolises hard work, patience and determination. Hufflepuff members are known by their loyalty, dedication and hard working. Most of the time they are mocked and overlooked, but once they find someone in need they never hesitate to provide help.

2.4. Language Usage in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

Language symbols plays a big role in fantasy literature, because the stories that the genre depicts are mostly out-worldly and strange, so the writers use a variety of languages and world play to get the readers' attention. Some authors even invent new languages to create a fresh and vivid reading experience such as what J.R.R Tolkien did in *The Lord of The Rings*. J.K. Rowling uses language symbols in spells, names of characters, and names of objects in her book *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* to add more layers to her story, and magical features to the storytelling.

To begin with, the borrowing of words from other languages such as Latin is very common in fantasy novels. We take as an example the spells, potion ingredients and curses' names used in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's stone*. One of the most recognizable spell in the Harry Potter series is "Wingardium Leviosa". The spell name was first mentioned when the Gryffindor and Slytherin houses' student were having a spell class with Professor Flitwick, during the practice to make a feather float "Hermione rolled the sleeves of her gown, flicked her wand, and said, "Wingardium Leviosa!". (Rowling 1997, p:171). The spell is used in order to make things float in the air. Another common spell in the book is "Alohamora", the spell is for unlocking, it can open any locked door. It was first used by Hermione when she and Harry were trying to hide from Professor Filch in the room where "Fluffy" the three headed dog was kept. The use of Latin in these spells gives them a mystique touch, and a view of the ancient wisdom and knowledge required to master the magical arts.

Furthermore, a further compelling item in *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* is the names of objects; potions' ingredients as an example. In the potion class with Professor Snape, students are introduced to new knowledge about how potions are made for different purposes with various strange ingredients. During his first potion

Chapter Two: The analysis of Symbolism and Language Usage class, Harry learnt from Professor Snape that: “A bezoar is a stone taken from the stomach of a goat and it will save you from most poisons”. (Rowling 1997, p.138). The use of these strange names such as: bezoar, asphodel, and monkshood add to the mythology of the events in the magical world, deepening its sense of mystery.

In addition, symbolic language can also contain the word play, in which the authors can use a word or a phrase in different manners to make the reading experience more interesting for their audiences. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s stone*, if the reader focuses enough, in chapter twelve “The Mirror of Erised” they will notice that the word “Erised” in the chapter’s title is in fact the word “Desire” spelled backwards. The reason why Rowling uses this modification with the word “Desire” is that she wants her audience to engage with the story and feel the uniqueness of it, keeping them excited to discover more about the events and what will happen next.

To finish with, more examples of the usage of language as a symbol in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s stone*: “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named” and “You-Know-Who”. These two names are given to the villain of the story The Dark Lord “Voldemort” by the magic community. Because of his awful black history, people could not even mention his name without fear or panic. Those names are symbols of great power, authority and position of Voldemort.

These unusual words and phrases are used by the author in order to create a sense of wonder and otherworldliness in the story’s events. By using those word tricks, the author allows readers to interpret the text in a more profound manner. Also, it helps the readers to identify the characters. J.K Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* is the perfect example to study the use of symbolism and the different ways of using language in modern fantasy literature. It is also an example that language can be used not only as a mean of communication, but as well as a tool for creating a complex and compelling environment for the characters in the story.

2.5. J.K Rowling’s *Harry Potter and The Philosopher’s Stone*, a Synthesis of the Main Assets

The English author J.K Rowling is one of the most famous modern fantasy writers that revived the genre, making its stories the most wanted product in different

Chapter Two: The analysis of Symbolism and Language Usage kinds of merchandise including films, television shows, and video games. Rowling's awesome writing skills, her imaginative and creative style, and her focus on details have inspired many authors as well as many readers around the world. Rowling's stories are not only for enjoyment and pleasure, but also for education to the young readers about morals and ethics. Rowling's great experiences in fantasy writing and her impact on literature is shown through her successful and critically acclaimed fantasy seven-book series *Harry Potter*.

Furthermore, *Harry Potter* is considered one of the best works in the children book genre. The plot of story depicts the journey of the young wizard Harry Potter in the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, in a world of magic and adventures. Additionally, in *Harry Potter*, Rowling created a whole new world filled with magic, spells, magical creatures, and characters with different personal traits that can be relatable to many readers. Before *Harry Potter*, the genre was seen as only for children and has been disregarded by adults. However, the success of the book led to regain the interest in children's literature, becoming more acceptable for adult to read and enjoy it. This new twist in fantasy genre created a common space for children as well as for adults to craft their creativity and imagination.

The first book of the series *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* is considered as Rowling's start in fantasy writing and her breakthrough to stardom. The story follows the life of Harry the orphan child who lives with his cruel relatives, until his eleventh birthday when he finds out that he is a wizard as well as his dead parents. Harry receives the invitation to enter the Hogwarts school for witches and wizards, then he meets there his friends Ron and Hermione. Throughout the story, Harry and his friends have a lot of adventures together facing dangers and challenges. Lastly, they sacrifice themselves to save the Philosopher's Stone that the Dark Lord Voldemort was trying to steal in order to restore his powers, and to have his body back.

Lastly, what is appealing about the story of *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* is Rowling's way of stating the events, focusing on the small details, and her original style of storytelling. The use of stylistic devices such as symbolism adds more layers to the meaning of the story, deepening its messages and gets the reader's attention and interest. Some of the symbols used by Rowling are: Harry's Wand, The Mirror of Erised, The Philosopher's Stone, and The Four Houses of Hogwarts. Another

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fascinating element in the story in Rowling's creative usage of language taking as
example the use of Latin in names of objects and spells. Its purpose is to create a link
between the characters, magic and readers.

2.6. Conclusion

To sum up what was stated before, J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* novel is full of symbols and images as was shown above. Through these symbols, Rowling is able to deliver important messages and subjects about identity, friendship, power, and the importance of self-sacrifice. These symbols also give the story depth and meaning, and they help the reader understand the characters, their personalities, and their motivations. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* depicts deeper topics such as: the journey to growth and self-development, respect, loyalty, and the difference between Good and Evil.

General Conclusion

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Fantasy literature is a genre that takes readers on a journey into a world beyond their imagination. Fantasy allows readers to escape from reality and enter into a world of enchantment and adventure, also to be transported to a different time and place from theirs. This genre has been popular for centuries, and *Harry Potter* is a prime example of a perfectly crafted fantasy novel. The *Harry Potter* series by J.K Rowling has become an instant cultural phenomena since the release of the first book in 1997. By releasing the first part of the seven-book series entitled *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*, Rowling introduced readers worldwide to a completely new world where magic rules and everything is possible, then it became an inspiration to many authors as well as many readers. The story follows the self-development journey of the young wizard Harry Potter that enters the world of magic and spells for the first time, representing the good in an adventure to save the Philosopher's Stone from the Dark Lord "Voldemort" who represents evil in the story. In spite of the fact that *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* is a fictional tale, it tackles serious subjects such as: self-development, self-sacrifice, friendship, family love, loyalty, greed, and power abuse.

This research work aimed to examine the elements of symbolism and the use of language in J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*. Based on the data collected, it can be concluded that the original usage of language and the use of symbols by Rowling in her story have indeed helped in elevating the overall meaning of the story, and delivering the messages within. The findings of this research lie in Rowling's usage of language and symbols in order to create a sense of wonder and fantasy. As a result, the various symbols used in the novel are: Harry's Wand, Harry's Scar, The Philosopher's Stone, The Mirror of Erised, The Sorting Hat, and The Four Houses of Hogwarts. The interesting thing is that even the characters of the story are also used as

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symbols and every character stands for something; Harry stands for courage, self-sacrifice, and family love. Professor Dumbledore represents wisdom, experience, and the importance of making the right decisions in hard circumstances. Voldemort represents greed and evil, while the trio Harry, Ron, and Hermione symbolise friendship, the love for adventure, and teamwork.

Moreover, the subjects that *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* depicts are a representation of how fantasy and reality overlap. This means that even if the story is fictional, it still holds different messages and lessons for readers especially the young ones to learn from in real life.

On the top of that, as a foundation to this research work, the first chapter provides a theoretical review about fantasy as a concept and as a literary genre, stating the characteristics that shape the genre. It also covers a controversial topic which is the link between fantasy and reality, which turns out that the two overlap and complete each other. Further, the chapter studies symbolism as a stylistic device used by fantasy authors in their stories, providing an account of J.K Rowling's fantasy novel *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's stone*. In addition, the second chapter deals with an overview about the novel and an analysis of its characterization. It also explores the symbols employed in *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* by J.K Rowling, and the lessons behind those symbols. The last part of the second chapter examines Rowling's language usage in the story and how the two elements contribute to the storytelling process. Lastly, it showcases a synthesis of the main assets in *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone*.

In closing, *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* by J.K Rowling tackles important topics about the power of friendship, the fight against evil, oppression and inequality, the role of education and knowledge, and the significance of love. These themes make the books important not only as works of entertainment but also as stories that can teach important life lessons. The novel remains an inspiration to readers of all ages and backgrounds due to its touching messages. Besides, Rowling's unique style of storytelling, the world-building, character-development, and the incorporation of symbolic elements in her stories is what makes *Harry Potter and The Philosopher's Stone* one of the defining literary works of fantasy fiction literature.

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