

Harry Potter & the Nazi Regime

The *Harry Potter series* written by J.K. Rowling explores a fictional magical world that exists parallel to the non-magical world. The series' conflict progresses throughout seven books to a point that leads to a war in the wizarding world. Many view the war in black and white terms—good vs. evil. To some, especially those that watched the *Harry Potter* films and did not read the books, the villains in the series may seem to be absolute evil, while the heroes are absolute good. In actuality, most character in history and in fiction are neither absolute good, nor absolute evil. The novels while reminiscent of many events in history and politics closely align to World War II and The Third Reich.

Discrimination

The wizarding world, just like the non-magical world has a wide array of individuals. While one can consider Lord Voldemort an absolute evil, every other character falls into lesser extremities. The magical world has accepted practices, which while seem harmless in times of peace eventually become more problematic and morally questionable. One practice, in particular that is socially accepted as neither cruel nor harmful, is the use of house elves. These creatures are the property of their respective families, and perform tasks such as cooking and cleaning. Some are subjected to cruel living environments where they are beaten, tortured, or worse; while others are treated somewhat favorably, and almost as a part of the family; however, they all serve as slaves unless their owner decides to free them (*Harry Potter and The Chamber of Secrets*, 2002). Many house elves enjoy cooking and cleaning. Once free they may continue to do just that, like with Dobby, however are not forced to obey every order of their masters.

“‘Professor Dumbledore offered Dobby ten Galleons a week, and weekends off,’ said Dobby, suddenly giving a little shiver, as

though the prospect of so much leisure and riches were frightening, 'but Dobby beat him down, miss. . . . Dobby likes freedom, miss, but he isn't wanting too much, miss, he likes work better'" (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, 2000, p. 21).

Once practices like this become a norm in society, it is easy to see how things can progress to a more extreme state. There is incredible emphasis from Albus Dumbledore, Hogwarts headmaster, that every creature from humans to giants to goblins should be treated equally prior to the war. Those treated badly in times of peace are more willing to turn to the side promoting change in times of war. If human society is willing to accept the negative treatment of even one living, breathing, thinking creature they will eventually be willing to do so with more advanced creatures and eventually with one another.

Throughout the novels, Muggles (non-magic people) and wizards are completely segregated, and appear to remain so after the war. It is common practice in the wizarding world to ridicule and look down on non-Magical individuals amongst those considered good and bad. Additionally, the distinction of magical blood classifications: "half-blood," "pure-blood," and "Muggle-born," while not as important in times of peace, becomes a dividing factor in times of war.

Pure-blood Agenda

The eventual war is centered on Lord Voldemort, a dictator that never holds an actual government office. He attempts to rid the world of those he considers not worthy of learning magic—those not of pure magical blood. During his quest, Voldemort murders those of magical and non-magical descent, though he specifically focuses on those who are not of pure-blood or those that get in his way. To many in the magical world, what seemed to be in their best interest was looking the other way while injustices continued to be practiced. Instead of banding

together, people isolate and segregate themselves. People attempted to stay out of the way of Voldemort rather than attempt to fight him.

Those looking passed evil to protect themselves is not a new story, by any means. Slavery existed for hundreds of years in the United States, genocide still exists all over the world, and World War II is the horror story of those willing to let evil happen.

Propaganda, Media & Opposition

During *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the situation escalates to a point where speaking Lord Voldemort's name would allow the government (controlled by Voldemort) to instantly find and track the speaker. Freedom of speech is eliminated, and some take to underground radio as a form of salvation, resistance and hope. A clip of the radio show, "Potter Watch" featured a dialogue between Kingsley Shacklebolt and Lee Jordan, where they discuss the implications of discrimination, and encouraged hope, compassion, and togetherness.

Royal (Kingsley Shacklebolt): "We continue to hear truly inspirational stories of wizards and witches risking their own safety to protect Muggle friends and neighbours, often without the Muggles' knowledge. I'd like to appeal to all our listeners to emulate their example, perhaps by casting a protective charm over any Muggle dwellings in your street. Many lives could be saved if such simple measures are taken."

River (Lee Jordan): "And what would you say, Royal, to those listeners who reply that in these dangerous times, it should be 'wizards first'?"

Royal (Kingsley Shacklebolt): "I'd say that it's one short step from 'wizards first' to 'pure-bloods first', and then to 'Death Eaters'. We're all human, aren't we? Every human life is worth the same, and worth saving." (Rowling, *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows*, 2007, p. 358)

While the radio show in *Harry Potter*, helped individuals in hiding or unaware of the whereabouts of family members, short wave radio helped people find their family members during WWII, as well. "POWs were allowed to state their names and hometowns on the radio, and sometimes relay a short message to their families" (Spahr, 2007). WWII brought significant

rise in the importance of radio. Franklin Roosevelt, United States president, was a voice of hope in times of darkness.

“Roosevelt’s broadcast words made war a shocking fact. At the same time, they were the first step in rallying Americans around the war effort and reassuring them of his confidence in victory. FDR continued his radio broadcasts as the war unfolded. His series of radio Fireside Chats, which had helped see the country through the Great Depression, were now devoted to the war.” (Sopronyi)

During *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Lord Voldemort and his supporters take control of the government and media, thus insuring their ability to spread propaganda and manipulate laws such as “half-blood” and “Muggle-born” registries similar to the lists for the Jewish during World War II. Once propaganda about the Jews spread, the apparent need to exterminate them for the greater good of the country influenced many. Though many were afraid of Hitler and his capabilities, people were also afraid that the propaganda was true and that if actions were not taken it may result in disastrous consequences. Similarly, some people, due to media’s influence, genuinely believed that Muggle-born wizards were attempting to steal magic and destroy the bloodlines, thus they believed the actions of Voldemort were for the greater good.

Gellert Grindelwald

Before Lord Voldemort rose to power the wizard, Gellert Grindelwald had a similar agenda, “In a list of Most Dangerous Dark Wizards of All Time, he’d miss out on the top spot only because You-Know-Who arrived, a generation later, to steal his crown.”(Rowling, *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows*, 2007, p. 357). Grindelwald also had an agenda for wizards to rule over Muggles, implementing the phrase “for the greater good.” That phrase was written on Grindelwald’s own prison, Nurmengard, where he held his opponents. The name Nurmengard sounds very similar to Nuremberg, the city in Germany used as a site to hold Nazi war criminals

(Harry Potter Wiki). Though Grindelwald murdered all over Europe, raising an army and creating his prison, similar to Hitler he never took Britain, because Grindelwald feared his former friend Albus Dumbledore (Harry Potter Wiki), and was defeated during the height of his power in 1945 (The Leaky Cauldron, 2006).

Grindelwald wanted to overturn the Statute of Magical Secrecy, because he felt that wizards were forced to remain in secrecy while Muggles ruled the world, though he felt wizards were of a higher race than Muggles (Harry Potter Wiki). Grindelwald used this idea to present a logical less cruel appeal to glorify the magical race.

Grindelwald's appearance in the later Harry Potter books may represent a warning that great injustice and evil can happen more than once in a span of only 50 years. Grindelwald's reign may have made it easier for Voldemort to gain initial power because people did not want to believe that a darker individual could exist and cause such terror again. Similarly, the Europeans recovering from "The war to end all wars" hoped that it would happen again.

Dumbledore as Churchill, Minister for Magic as Neville Chamberlain

Head master of Hogwarts School of Witch Craft and Wizardry, Albus Dumbledore, and prime minister of Britain during most of WWII, Winston Churchill, were both strong British political figures. As a small comparison, Albus Dumbledore is recognized as Order of Merlin, amongst other distinctions while Churchill has many honorific prefixes including Order of Merit (Wikipedia, 2010). Superficial comparisons aside, Churchill was one of the first to recognize the evils of Lord Voldemort, long before the Second World War, and his warnings were often disregarded. Dumbledore's warnings of Voldemort's return were largely ignored, as well. Once recognition of the oncoming war was universal, people turned to Dumbledore and Churchill due

to their eloquent public speaking, and ability to motivate the public. Due to Dumbledore's death in the *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, obviously Dumbledore was not able to physically lead to the downfall of Voldemort, however; he did defeat Grindelwald in 1945, the same year as the demise of Hitler (Harry Potter Wiki).

British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain's blunder with the Norwegian Campaign led to the Norway Debate and Chamberlain's resignation (BBC). Similarly, Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge left office soon after The Battle of The Department of Ministries (Rowling, *Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix*, 2003). Chamberlain's remark of "peace in our time" and his appeasement directly before the announcement of war discredited the politician, leading to his downfall, similarly to Fudge's denial of the return of Voldemort, and constant declaration of peace. Author J.K. Rowling stated that, "[her] model of the world after Voldemort's return was, directly, the government of Neville Chamberlain in Great Britain during the Second World War, when he tried to minimize the menace of the Nazi regime for political convenience" (Snitch Sneaker, 2008).

"Throughout the '30s, Chamberlain, fearing that Churchill was out for his job, conducted a campaign against his fellow Tory. Chamberlain denied the existence of the German menace and ridiculed Churchill as a "warmonger." He used *the London Times*--the government's house organ--to attack Churchill and suppress dispatches from abroad about the Nazis that would have vindicated him" (Right Mind, 2005). Fudge often felt threatened by Dumbledore (Dumbledore was offered and turned down the Minister of Magic position often) thus was eager to discredit him throughout *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, with slanderous propaganda in the ministry controlled newspaper *The Daily Prophet*.

Lord Voldemort & Adolf Hitler as a Leader

Voldemort sought to be the greatest and most feared wizard in history, “I fashioned myself a new name, a name I knew wizards everywhere would one day fear to speak, when I became the greatest sorcerer in the world!”(Harry Potter and The Chamber of Secrets, 2002). In order to progress further in his goal he acquired followers known as Death Eaters, who were in support of his cause (similar to Hitler’s Nazis).

Because of such loyalty exhibited by Voldemort’s followers, one cannot deny that Voldemort had excellent leadership skills. A leader cannot simply place fear in its followers to be sustainable, there must be a level of love, be it false love, to build a connection. The feeling evoked when individuals share the same views—be it religion, politics or general morality causes a bonding that aligned those believing the Nazi and pure-blood agenda. Examples of familiarity amongst Voldemort to his followers includes him referring to Bellatrix LeStrange possibly affectionately as “Bella” (Rowling, Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix, 2003, p. 36), and actually reserving what one may consider compassion for Wormtail by providing him a new magical hand in return for his continuous servitude, though he often treated him subserviently (Rowling, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, 2000).

With the use of The Dark Mark, Lord Voldemort is able to call his followers at any time, and that mark is a physical embodiment of the amount of loyalty he commands and often receives. Voldemort understands the importance of loyalty and is solemnly cruel to The Death Eaters in order to maintain that loyalty. There is an understanding from his followers that betrayal will almost always lead to death, however; Voldemort places a value on his followers and would rather it not come to that unless completely necessary, thus creating a community for The Death

Eaters with all individuals striving for a central goal. Creating and maintaining loyalty maintains power.

Adolf Hitler also exhibited this ability to be both feared and loved by followers. The authoritative figure of Hitler and his ability to evoke fear was used as reasoning for many of the Nazi who acted in accordance to Hitler's wishes. Not many were willing to admit that their crimes and actions were because of a sense of belonging, love, loyalty or familiarity, but instead solely because of fear (Austin). Similarly, after the fall of Lord Voldemort (after Harry's parents deaths), wizards that had been aligned closely with Voldemort claimed to be under the Imperious Curse, "When cast successfully, it places the victim completely under the caster's control (Harry Potter Wiki). Though some individuals were indeed under this curse, many were not. People both during WWII and in the wizarding world were eager to blame their actions on others rather than on themselves and their own insecurities in order to avoid prison or disgrace.

During WWII, many soldiers were eager to acquire status, seniority and recognition from Hitler and his regime, similar to wizarding families. Many orders, decorations and medals served as distinctions for the most loyal and brave Nazi soldiers and allies (Wendel, 2009). Those powerful enough to be given direct orders from both Hitler and Voldemort were seen as revered and special, in a way. Within the *Harry Potter series*, The Malfoys and Bellatrix LeStrange both are in search of the approval of Voldemort. Bellatrix more so, showing resentment and jealousy when Draco Malfoy was given the task of killing Albus Dumbledore over her (Rowling, *Harry Potter and The Half Blood Prince*, 2005).

Aryan Race

A subtle comparison is visible with the representation of the Malfoys, a pure-blood family, with sleek platinum blonde hair comparative to the ideal Aryan race while Hermione, born of complete Muggle-decent has bushier brown hair reflective of Jewish decent (Mibba, 2010). Hermione represents the opposite of The Malfoys in nearly every way, including her tolerance and ethical treatment of all beings (including house elves). One must note that Narcissa Malfoy has a streak of brown hair amongst her platinum locks (in the movies). The love of her son (similar to Lily Potter's love for Harry) outweighs all other things, and Narcissa lies to The Dark Lord, sparing Harry from death, in order to ensure the safety of her son, Draco Malfoy (Rowling, *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows*, 2007). Grindelwald, the original dark wizard, also possesses the ideal Aryan features of blonde hair and blue eyes (Rowling, *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows*, 2007).

Motherhood's Significance

"In my state, the mother is the most important citizen," Hitler proclaimed in 1934 (*The Biological State: Nazi Racial Hygiene, 1933-1939*, 2010). The *Harry Potter* novels highlight the importance of mother's in wizarding societies. Harry and Voldemort's lack of a suitable matriarch were a key point throughout the books. Narcissa and Lily demonstrated the lengths that a mother would go to save her son, something that may be what redeemed both Harry and Draco from the fate of Voldemort.

Women in Nazi Germany were to have a very specific role. Hitler was very clear about this. This role was that they should be good mothers bringing up children at home while their husbands worked. Outside of certain specialist fields, Hitler saw no reason why a woman should work. Education taught girls from the earliest of years that this was the lifestyle they should have. (*The Role of Women in Nazi Germany*, 2000)

Similarly, while not all women in Harry Potter were homemakers, one of the central matriarchs of the story was a stay at home mother raising children. Molly Weasley acts as a motherly figure to Harry often in the novels. As the “good” mother, Molly’s children all turned out “good” (aside from Percy), compared to Narcissa Malfoy, Petunia Dursley, and Walburga Black. One can assume this lifestyle is ideal for children in the wizarding world. Procreating and perpetuating the pure-blood line (though The Weasleys were thought to be blood-traitors) was accomplished, though not blatantly expressed as a priority. Those that do not marry within the books: Minerva McGonagall, Dolores Umbridge, and Bellatrix LeStrange are posed to look insane or spinster-like. Ginny, Luna and Hermione eventually marry and bare children as well, with wizards, maintaining the magical line (Richards, 2010).

Symbols: The Dark Mark, The Deathly Hallows, German Eagle and The Swastika

While The Dark Mark is heavily present throughout most of the Harry Potter books, The Deathly Hallows symbol aligns most closely with German Eagle. Both are ancient symbols that at once had much more peaceful connotations. The Deathly Hallows was a children’s story from *The Tales of Beetle and Bard*. The necklace worn bearing the Hallows symbol by Xenophilius Lovegood is meant “to show that he believes in them and is used as a symbol to recognize other seekers” (Rowling, Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows, 2007), however; Grindelwald during his reign used the hallows as his sign, tarnishing the story to much darker connotations (Mibba, 2010). The German coat of Arms, featured an Eagle dating back to the Roman Empire, however; during Hitler’s reign he changed the German coat of Arms to a “rather aggressively styled black eagle above a highly stylized oak wreath, with a swastika at its centre” (Wikipedia, 2010). Upon the fall of Nazi Germany, East Germany, choose to replace the German Eagle with a compass and hammer, while West Germany maintained the Eagle (Wikipedia, 2010). The negative

connotations of the German Eagle remains, though the history predates Nazi Germany by hundreds of years and is a declaration of German loyalty, not of anti-Semitism.

The swastika and Dark Mark are symbols that are far more sinister. Hitler was able to bestow the swastika to those loyal to his cause in the form of decorations and war medals (bearing swastikas) (Wendel, 2009), while Voldemort was able to physically brand his loyalist followers with the Dark Mark. The tattoo was seen as a high honor such as the war medals. Unlike the mark created specifically by Voldemort, the swastika was also an ancient mark from Buddhism. Now banned in Germany and many European countries (aside for educational purposes) (Federal Ministry of Justice), the symbol of the swastika turned at the 45 degree angle could be argued as a distinct symbol from its religious and historical predecessors, thus comparative to the Dark Mark in connotation and meaning (Mibba, 2010).

Voldemort & Hitler's Ancestry

Lord Voldemort was born as Tom Marvolo Riddle. His, Merope Gaunt, mother was a pure-blood witch from a long ancestry of pure-blood families. His father was a Muggle that his mother bewitched into love, thus produced Tom. Once the spell was lifted, Tom Riddle Sr. fled from Merope. She died soon after childbirth leaving Tom orphaned. Because of his disgust of his father's actions and the weakness of his mother, Tom took on the name Lord Voldemort.

Voldemort felt that his Muggle father was responsible for all of the hardships in his life (being orphaned, his dead mother, imprisoned grandfather and uncle, etc.). Lord Voldemort murdered his genetic father and grandfather at age sixteen, when he discovered his less than admirable ancestry (Rowling, Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix, 2003).

The Gaunt family, prior to the Merope's involvement with Tom Riddle, Sr., was of pure-blood lineage, and direct descendents of Salazar Slytherin, a co-founder of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The Muggle blood of Tom Riddle soiled the pure bloodline in Voldemort's eyes, thus causing immense resentment of his father and of Muggles, in general. His tarnished and sad childhood and family reputation left Voldemort with a need to be unlike his parents. He viewed his father as a coward who left his pregnant wife, also as a possessor of common blood. He also believed that his mother was not a strong enough witch, or else she would not have died. (Rowling, *Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix*, 2003).

Hitler "was deeply hostile towards his strict, authoritarian father and strongly attached to his indulgent, hard-working mother, whose death from cancer in December 1908 was a shattering blow to the adolescent Hitler." Similar to Voldemort, Hitler was resentful towards his father and lost his parents at a young age (in his teens rather than during childhood). Hitler and Voldemort strived to be the opposite of their fathers. Hitler's father proudly served the Austrian government (Wistrich, 1997), thus Hitler grew strong ties to German nationalism, while Voldemort, in order to deny his father's "common" Muggle-blood, went on a crusade for pure-blood superiority and continuously displayed his extraordinary magical abilities.

Though Voldemort was indeed half-blood, as he so deeply resented, he also had ancestry full of inbred and simple-minded wizards, which he wanted to hide (Rowling, *Harry Potter and The Half Blood Prince*, 2005). Hitler often attempted to deny his family. Alleged rumors of Hitler having traces of Jewish blood surfaced during his reign, however, "Few, if any, of the reputable historians on the Holocaust believe that this is so. It is more likely that Hitler tried to keep the murky history of his family quite secret because there was a high incidence of insanity and feeble-mindedness in his ancestors" (Mazal, 2004).

Adolf Hitler viewed the ideal Aryan to possess blonde hair and blue eyes; neither of which Hitler possessed. One must note that prior to his return, Voldemort shared the same physical characteristics of Hitler, dark hair and eyes. It is obvious that Hitler and Voldemort have the same complex of not aligning to their ideal.

Conclusion & Restrictions

With a series that spans thousands of pages over seven books, and a seven year World war, it's impossible to reference all the similarities and nuances of the story arcs. As a work of fiction, J.K. Rowling may have pulled experiences from many aspects of her life, as well as history and religion, evident from titles such as "The Chosen One" and "The Dark Lord." In addition, it must be noted that the absolute evil and cruelty of The Holocaust is not and should not be represented in a children's book, and this paper is in no way attempting to mitigate the horrors of the war.

Not every allegory mentioned within this paper aligns completely with the WWII comparison, however; the similarities are apparent and significant. Many works of fiction have aligned with WWII and Nazi Germany, therefore, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter series*, is not unique in its similarities. Due to the significance of the war, the use of classic archetypal characters such as "the villain" will lend itself to Hitler comparisons for years to come. In addition, it is possible that such a close reading of the text may illicit more than the author had intended in terms of comparison and meaning.

I must also admit that my knowledge of WWII is far less than my knowledge of the *Harry Potter series*, thus it is possible that some details of the war are overlooked or misinterpreted. I also found it difficult to distinguish the Harry Potter novels from their movie counterparts, occasionally throughout this essay. Through researching this topic, I discovered many theories

on sites and within essays that I choose expanded upon in addition to my own theories and analysis. A further exploration of Nazi propaganda, Adolf Hitler's ancestry, Nazi trails, other world leaders, and battles could strengthen the comparison of the Harry Potter series to WWII, though I think a suitable argument is made given the scope and breadth of this paper.

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