

A Literary Comparison and Contrast  
*Lord of the Ring's the Fellowship of the Ring and Harry Potter and The Sorcerer's Stone*

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring

*The Lord of the Rings* takes into account the formalist, rhetorical, Freudian, archetypal, and reader response schools of literary criticism. In the formalist perspective, the organization of a literature is important to its coherence. Thus, when turning the pages of this Tolkien's work, there is an impression of continuity through its plot. The subplots are presented in such a way that the journey has not ended and it proceeds to the next chapter. A clear but simple example, which was repeatedly used was ending the chapter with the characters at rest or asleep and beginning the subsequent chapter with them awoken. On the other hand, the rhetorical and the Freudian standpoints can be mutually applied to circumstances describing the inner conflicts the ring triggers to heinously dominate those who attempt to use it. Hence, bringing up a rhetorical query whether man is innately evil or inherently good, which also raises issues on Freudian's psychology of the kind of thought process these characters have compared to Frodo's seemingly manageable resistance of the ring's powers. Obviously, the archetypal is a prevailing attribute in *The Lord of the Rings*. The novel itself will remind readers of other literary works that involved heroes chosen to save a community of people or even the whole planet. There are also the typical elements of love and isolation or friendship and acrimony through Aragorn's love for Arwen and Bilbo's preference for solitude or the companionship of Frodo and Sam contrary to the enmity between the cannibal Orcs and the gallant members of the fellowship. As a final point on schools of literary criticism, there is the facet of reader response. Within its storylines are events readers can relate with. A salient demonstration is found in the chapter entitled *Strider*, where skepticism

was abound when Frodo and friends initially met Strider. In reality, readers can react to it based on their prior experiences with new acquaintances: those whose trust was never defiled will disagree about the cynicism on Strider's stature because a man's gold does not measure trustworthiness while those who experienced betrayal will agree that trust has to be earned because caution signifies safety.

There are nine members in the fellowship who represent the nine rings. These are the significant characters in the novel. However, the major character is Frodo, for without him, there is no plot: who will destroy the ring? Frodo is the only character who is not obsessed with the ring. With his incorruptible naiveté to anything fiendish or to everything grandiose, he reluctantly accepts his fate to destroy the ring that is forcefully the source of nefarious temptations. He is a hobbit; plain and content. He is valiant, though not the stereotypical notion of a pompous valor, but a simple and a warm-hearted one. He makes friends but also knows how to keep them. He is determined but resilient. He has a strong mind yet he is aware of his frailties: a consciousness that makes him formidable to the power of the ring. His commitment, though sometimes clouded by doubts and fears, is relentless. As for the other fellows: Gandalf, Sam, Aragorn, Merry, Pippin, Legolas, Gimli, and Boromir, their shared trait is perseverance. Despite hardships and perilous trails, they did not give up. Gandalf is a great wizard who has magical dexterity on fires, smokes, and lights. Level-headed as he is, handling the ring will make him more powerful than he is now yet this power is evil. His temptation is drawn from his "pity for the weakness and the desire for strength to do good," which will do terrible harm. The "good" will be eliminated though the "strength" will multiply at the ring's bidding for atrocious aims. Similarly, Sam, a typical unobtrusive hobbit, has pleasant disposition as Gandalf. He is a steadfast friend to Frodo despite a home and a family at the Shire, he is a protective companion

in this dangerous charge. With loved ones back home, the ring's lure is close by. In the meantime, Aragorn, the unadorned monarch, has the compassion, might, and wisdom of a king. Being a crownless king, it is a weakness the ring can take advantage of. On Merry and Pippin, they are hobbits full of cheer. Their demeanor throughout the novel makes the somber ambience light-hearted with their upbeat attitudes even with their occasional disagreeableness. This fun and adventure seekers are not immune to the ring's trap. As for Legolas, the elf, he has always encouraging words to impart. He smoothes out the wrinkles in dispute but his Achilles' heel can lie on the predicament whether Frodo accomplishes the task or not, his race will lose its dominion on Middle Earth. With the ring's alluring power, it is an inducement for evil. On Gimli, the dwarf, who has a very tough character, adding to the strife between elves and dwarves is a flaw that the ring can rev up. Lastly, the member who came to seek the meaning of a riddle while preoccupied with thoughts of revenge for his lost kingdom and the need to resurrect its dignity, Boromir manifested and acted upon the ring's manipulation that ended the fellowship. This intense yearning made him an easy target for the ring.

The story unfolds in Middle Earth, particularly, the Third Age of Middle Earth when Sauron, the Dark Lord is gaining tremendous supremacy and seeks for the "One" ring that rules all the rings, his ring. Hence, the atmosphere is the struggle between the forces of good and evil with malevolence on the offensive. In Middle Earth, the inhabitants are composed of multiple races but predominantly elves, dwarves, and men with the hobbits, considered by Tolkien as a derivative of men. Evidently, this diversity comes with multiplicity in language and culture. There are numerous kingdoms where the five senses, including the sixth sense, can live and experience variety. With evil expanding its dominion, there are ruins and destruction but for those not yet affected, there is tension and coveting for preservation. The tone reveals urgency

but with thoughtful structure. The dialogues between the characters disclose the exigency of the problem. However, with Sauron's minions prowling to annihilate, precautionary measures are taken into consideration from the routes, supply logistics, and stability of wits on their way to Mordor.

On the Foreword, Tolkien divulged that *Lord of the Rings* has neither "inner meaning nor message" and he "intended not to be allegorical and not topical"(x-xi). True to his words, the book does not have insinuations. The symbolisms are immediately exposed by its salient context clues or the characters directly elaborate on them. These are particularly apparent after every array of verses sung or expressed followed by the character's exposure of their meaning. Moreover, the story may be predictable or the ending foreseeable but the readers get hooked by the clashing and merging of the characters and events that only leave a question lingering: Frodo will succeed but will he succeed unscathed? In the same drift, the novel is filled with symbolism. A few instances are: Frodo's statement about his earnest wish for the Shire to stay safe and peaceful even if it meant that he will never return to it is an allusion, "There is a **firm foothold**, even if my feet cannot stand there again." (68) There is simile in, "In the depths of their eyes; for these were **as** keen lances in the starlight..."(398) A personification in, "A running **water** so **beautiful**, for ever **blending** its innumerable notes in an endless changeful music." (388) In Gimli's adoration, there is hyperbole with, "Lady Galadriel is above all jewels that lie beneath the earth!" There are also cacophonies in the "murmuring of the river" on the chapter *The Great River* and the "roaring of the falls" in the *Flight at the Ford*. It is notable to observe that Tolkien prefers using similes over metaphors.

The main plot of *The Lord of the Rings* focuses on a hobbit named Frodo, who reluctantly accepts his fate to bear the ring made by a Dark Lord, who could wreak massive havoc on

Middle Earth if evil gets hold of it. Frodo's journey begins when Bilbo leaves the burden of the ring to him. He traveled at great lengths with the company of Gandalf, the Wizard; Legolas, the Elf; Gimli, the Dwarf; the band of hobbits – Samwise Gamgee (Sam), Meriadoc Brandybuck (Merry), and Peregrin Took (Pippin) as well as the men – Aragorn and Boromir. So, there are nine members in the fellowship whose aim is to help Frodo destroy the ring by casting it into the Fire of Mount Doom where it was forged. In these journeys, they encounter monsters such as the Orcs, mythical creatures as the Ents, and the diabolical Ringwraiths sent by Sauron to pursue them. While these are taking place, the ring is slowly working its wicked exploitation of the fellows until Boromir succumbs to its will and assailed Frodo who fled in terror. At this juncture, Frodo realized the danger of traveling with the group; betrayal is not far from occurring. Consequently, he leaves the pack and with Sam's insistence, they left Rivendell together towards the treacherous path to Mordor.

The main theme is "evil begets evil." The ring is created by and for maleficence. It is undeniable, its power is also maleficent. The title itself pertains to it as *The Lord of the Rings*: its thrust is domination. It is this ring that the narrative is all about. Some of its sub-themes are heroism embodied by Frodo; friendship exemplified by Frodo and Sam; determination illustrated by the fellowship; trust exhibited through the confidence bestowed to Gandalf by the hobbits; greed epitomized by Gollum; sacrifice displayed by Boromir when he traveled to the House of Elrond; love proved by Aragorn to Arwen; strife showed between elves and dwarves; and resoluteness pictured in Frodo's defiance of the ring's temptations.

J.R.R. Tolkien is John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, a philologist and a professor of Anglo-Saxon. Before he wrote *The Lord of the Rings*, he published *The Hobbit*. Due to the outbreak of war, this

novel was written on intervals between 1939 and 1949. Thus, it paved the way to stories about Middle Earth and its inhabitants.

### Harry Potter and The Sorcerer's Stone

Harry Potter involves the formalist, rhetorical, Freudian, archetypal, and reader response schools of literary criticism. There is cohesiveness through the skillful and creative manipulation of flashbacks in the chapters. Rowling constantly reminds the readers of the past in order to relate what is going on in the present. As a result, the readers are able to keep track of the storyline from beginning to end. It is a unity that the formalists are concerned with. There are debatable issues pertaining to the characters' psychological well-being. When Harry Potter breaks the rules with Hermione and Ron to save lives, do they exemplify bad behavior or do they prioritize the common good? These questions invite connecting Harry Potter's disobedience to being an orphan: opposing views for rhetorics that delve into the character's mind based on Freud. Clearly, there is a nexus with other literatures, including *The Lord of the Rings*. Heroism, friendship, and the battle between good and evil are the most perceptible attributes. Hence, these satisfy the archetypal standpoint. There are personal triggers for young people such as the pressures of cliques, assignment, and teachers in the school environment: instances that evoke reader response.

The main character is Harry Potter whose parents gave up their lives to protecting him from Voldemort, he-who-must-not-be-named quintessence of pure vile. Harry Potter is an untypical boy in a typical neighborhood of muggles (non-magical beings; people). He was left in the care of uncaring relatives to hide him from Voldemort whose powers were drained from him when he attempted to take away Harry Potter's life as an infant. The scar on his forehead is the manifestation of the dreadful occurrence. His untypical qualities do not pertain to his usual

characteristics and behaviors as a teenager but to his ability to conjure magic. He is modest, strong-willed, a loyal friend, and a brave young man. As for Hermione and Ron, they are also vital characters of the novel. Both are dedicated friends of Harry Potter. The former is studious, knowledgeable, and caring while the latter is simple minded but he is aware of his surroundings and is not difficult to please since his family is not well off. The minor significant characters are Dumbledore, the Hogwarts schoolmaster who looks after Harry Potter's safety and welfare. He is the powerful wizard taking on Harry Potter's father figure. Professor McGonagall plays an essential role in Harry Potter's life as the teacher who encourages his potentials and just as the others, she is also protective of him. A notable character is Hagrid, who is pristinely devoted to his friends even in his unsophisticated, childlike disposition. As a final point, the obnoxious Dursley's, no matter how miserable they made of Harry Potter's life, he remained unharmed in their reluctant care.

The settings are at Privet Drive with the Dursley's at the beginning where Harry Potter grew up and at Hogwarts, the wizard school where Harry Potter went for his magical education. The tone of the narrative is comparable to a storyteller narrating a bedtime story to children. The reader can imagine somebody being told a tale where the speaker uses different voices for different characters and varied contexts. The tone is inviting similar to a song that recounts multiple situations, which set numerous moods from the feeling of amusements to forebodings. The effective conveyance of the story employed several symbolisms. Some of which are: "...**hands** the size of **trash can lids**," which is a metaphor for Hagrid's huge hands or "his **feet** in their leather boots were **like baby dolphins**," which is a simile for his feet (14). There is also the tool of cacophony via onomatopoeia, "**WHAM!** A **roar** of rage echoed..." (188).

The infant Harry Potter was left at the doorsteps of his relatives, the Dursley's, by Dumbledore, Professor McGonagall, and Hagrid because his parents' lives were cut short by Voldemort, a sinister wizard. He had a wretched time growing up with the Dursley's. When he turned eleven, after an enormous commotion from the Dursley's, he started magical school at Hogwarts where he experienced both congenial and hostile reactions toward him. At this stage, he earned the friendships of Hermione and Ron. He was able to play in the Quidditch games as the "Seeker," too. His adventure started when he and his friends discovered the three-headed dog, which aroused their curiosity. After that, they had to duel with a giant troll on Halloween, discover facts about Nicolas Flamel's sorcerer's stone that grants immortality to the beholder, and meet Hagrid's Norwegian Ridgeback pet. For breaking rules, Harry Potter, his friends, and some other students were sent to put injured unicorns out of their miseries in the Forbidden Forest with Hagrid and his dog, Fang. At this event, Harry discovered that Voldemort was reduced to almost an in-existent being and he fed on unicorns to survive but with a price for killing something pure: Voldemort will have a cursed half-life. Upon discovering this information, the climax reached its point when Harry Potter, Hermione, and Ron, went through the trap door, put the three-headed dog to sleep, survived the strangle of the Devil's Snare plant, obtained the winged key out of hundreds of keys to open a secret door, won a heart-wrenching game of chess where Ron almost lost his life, solved the potion spells with Hermione, and meeting Quirrell who happened to be carrying Voldemort on the back of his head. Voldemort did not have a corporal body. A struggle ensued when Harry Potter refused to disclose where the sorcerer's stone is – the stone that will bring Voldemort to life and immortality. Unfortunately, Harry is cloaked with his mother's pure love, that when Quirrell touched him, he disintegrated and so, Voldemort left as a lost spirit.



The theme of the novel is love and friendship. Harry Potter's parents engulfed him with love to protect him. Hence, not even Voldemort and his cohorts can touch him. In the meantime, Harry's friendships fostered his strength and bravery. Even in his task to keep the sorcerer's stone from the evils of Voldemort, love and friendship prevailed.

While writing *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, J. K. Rowling was a single mother whose pastime was writing. Eventually, her work was published after she received an award from the Scottish Arts Council. This was the beginning of Harry Potter's adventures at Hogwarts.

#### Comparison and Contrast

*Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* incorporate the same schools of literary criticism, which are the formalist, rhetorical, Freudian, archetypal, and reader response types. These are reflected in the preceding segments of this paper. In terms of the main characters, Frodo and Harry Potter are surrounded by friends and allies. Both are orphans who grew up with their relatives. They have their father figures in the guise of powerful old wizards: Gandalf and Dumbledore. They are also the villain's focus of hatred because they have what they need to fortify their existence and yet these are also the avenues that will destroy their subsistence. If the ring is destroyed Sauron weakens while a touch from Harry Potter will disintegrate Voldemort because pristine love kills him. If *Lord of the Rings* has the playful Merry and Pippin, *Harry Potter* has the mischievous Weasley twins, Fred and George. As for the setting, Middle Earth and Hogwarts are magical places where elves, dwarves, and men exist. Although at Hogwarts, muggles or ordinary people (men) such as Hermione do not comprise the majority. In addition, the Old Forest in the *Lord of the Rings* corresponds to the *Forbidden Forest* of Harry Potter. So, if the Old Man Willow trapped Frodo's

hobbit friends, the Whomping Tree on Hogwarts grounds did the same. On the aspect of plot, the narratives begin with information related to the main character and continue on with their transformations from an omniscient third perspective. The symbolisms used on the novels are similes, personifications, allusions, and cacophonies.

The difference lies on the feature that Frodo does not defy rules as a peaceful hobbit while Harry Potter does so to accomplish the task. Furthermore, Frodo is accompanied by eight allies on a journey. Harry Potter has two faithful friends to fulfill dangerous undertakings within Hogwarts grounds. The settings are dissimilar because Middle Earth is the expanse of a world in the *Lord of the Rings* while Hogwarts pertains to the perimeters of the magical school in *Harry Potter*. The tone is not the same. *The Lord of the Rings* is more prescribed and ceremonial while *Harry Potter* is more friendly, inviting, and spontaneous. The former entices with multiple plots within a major plot that bring readers to diverse adventures while the latter allures with a single plot with pleasant, down-to-earth lingo. With symbolism, *The Lord of the Rings* uses more imagery especially with its verses than *Harry Potter*. Conclusively, the previous caters to secondary school students and higher while the subsequent accommodates younger students.

#### Implications for Teaching

For my Unit Lesson Plan, I utilized both books. The primary literature is *The Lord of the Rings* and its accompaniment is *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Since the universal theme that can apply to both relates to heroes, I have opted to take on "A Hero's Dilemma" wherein the phases heroes go through from setting the stage to their being, experiencing signs of their unknown fate, facing the dilemmas of realizing their destined fate, going through a painful process that triggers their acceptance, and finally, a confirmation of this acceptance where they are bound not to turn around. In these cases, students can find relevance to their own experiences

because heroes do exist with or without super powers. They can be themselves, people they know, or those in the media. In the English classroom, a multicultural view of varied heroes from different countries is an exposure to diversity. Grammar can be integrated in context by having students include the understanding of the text in their writing and speaking. A comparison and contrast of excerpts from both books for writing is a good start or storytelling of a segment of the text is commendable for oral language. Since both literatures were made into movies, the students' viewing capabilities can be enhanced by writing about the production of the movies from casting to cinematography. Since it is important to integrate these literatures and not merely writing or talking about their summaries each day, students can also be wary of generally accepted rules of sentence construction by looking at the text themselves and making suggestions as to how they should be written in correct form. With *The Lord of the Rings*, numerous writing techniques can be studied since the work itself did not just have narratives but also verses, poetries. The relevance of the pieces can focus on problem resolutions, which can be illustrated with graphic organizers, expressed in writing, or dramatized as plays. Since the themes have bearings on reality, it is also a good momentum for learning journalism. Therefore, there are numerous ways to apply these texts in an English classroom. A mix of classic and contemporary literatures will grant students a multidimensional perspective not only of people and places but also of eras.

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