

ENGLISH B
EXTENDED ESSAY

The representation of the Greek forms of love reflected through Harry, Hermione and Ron's growth from Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone to Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Word count: 3990

Book: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone and Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Research Question: How are the characters in the Harry Potter series presented to convey different forms of love?

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of love is multifaceted and often considered as magical. It is a common theme in movies, books, and songs, and is depicted to be a solution to all our problems. However, love does not just consist of romance nor does it only consist of strong feelings or an unbearable passion. On the contrary, people live through and feel other forms of love, a lot more frequently in life. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines love as “an intense feeling of deep affection or fondness for a person or thing; great liking¹,” meaning it does not have to be a romantic feeling. To elaborate, the love you would have for a mother, a child or a sibling and the love you would have for a husband or wife are both considered to be love despite the fact that they might seem like two completely different feelings. In this regard, according to many Ancient Greek philosophers, love is a concept divided into six different categories: storge, philia, eros, philautia, xenia and agape, and these divisions of love are evident in the dynamics of the characters in the Harry Potter series. Storge is thought to equal familial love, this would be the love you have for parents, siblings or other close relatives. Philia is considered to be platonic love, so the love you would have for a friend. Eros is romantic love, this is presumably the form of love that is most associated with the word itself. Philautia equates to self-love, Xenia is thought to be hospitality or societal love and lastly Agape is translated as divine love and is known as love in its “highest form”, which is sacrificial, unconditional and is referenced in the Bible². Presumably, the lines between these different forms might blur, however individually they are evident and not too difficult to identify in relationships.

These Greek divisions of love are debated and developed into individual theories often. C.S.

¹H.W. Fowler, F.G. Fowler. The Concise Oxford Dictionary. *love*.

² "Definitions [of love]" (PDF). *mbarlington.com. Greek word study on Love*.

Lewis, for example, tackles the topic of love having different forms in his book, *The Four Loves*, in which he develops Storge as Affection, Philia, Eros and Agape (who he names Charity)³, in this very order. Although Lewis, tackles these forms by differentiating them slightly from their original form, the way in which the characters in the Harry Potter series are developed, with their experiences and outcomes, perfectly align with both the Greek forms of love and with Lewis's interpretations.

To provide a general understanding of how the series came to be, J.K. Rowling had a love of writing. Rowling first began writing the Harry Potter series on a train from Manchester to London whilst living in poverty, with her struggles relating to Harry's rough start in the books, and developed the first book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, for the next seven years⁴. The book was rejected by 12 different publishers, however met immense success instantly after finally being published and was quickly adapted into a movie franchise. The whirlwind success of the series made J.K. Rowling one of the most successful authors in the literary world.

Getting to the general plot and short summary of the Harry Potter books, it starts off with eleven-year-old orphan Harry, living with his terrible aunt, uncle and cousin until one day when everything changes as he receives an abundance of letters from a place called the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. He finds out that he is not a normal boy, but a wizard and a famous one. He discovers the real reason behind his parent's death, the mystery behind his own survival and his celebrity status therefore as "the boy who lived." He befriends many people

³ Guest Post: Harry Potter and C. S. Lewis' Four Loves. *Hogwarts Professor*. July 12th, 2012.

⁴ J.K. Rowling. *jkrowling*. 2016.

along the way, most notably Ron and Hermione, and together they try to defeat Lord Voldemort as every year his plans to end Harry's life get more and more deadly. Lord Voldemort is arguably the most powerful and evil wizard in the wizarding world and the very person who killed Harry's parents as well as mysteriously failing to kill him as a baby and vowing to succeed in this with Harry's return to the wizarding world. The series indirectly alludes to the cause of evil and the spawn of Lord Voldemort being a product of the failure of certain types of love, like storge and philia. Rowling, develops her characters in such a way that it is visible that their development in these divisions of love, is also the very reason that they do not end up like the representatives of "evil" in the book, like Lord Voldemort⁵.

The books teach readers about the value of love, friendship and family, and conveys that the power of love outweighs that of the evil. The main characters, Harry, Hermione and Ron are, in a way, the tools with which many of these themes as well as different forms of love are conveyed. As Harry's grief is reflected in the series alongside his mother's special connection with him, it becomes more and more evident that the series not only revolves around magic but the power of motherly love. Love is the most significant device in Rowling's storytelling, to move the series' plot from beginning to end. Harry's character development through the seven books shows how much his self-respect and self-love suffer highs and lows as he begins to experience life changing events. On the other hand, Ron's inner conflict is due to his insecurities socially as he is constantly overshadowed by his six other siblings and his parents and grows to appreciate both himself and his family, representing familial love and again, self-love. Lastly Hermione starts the

⁵ Brett M Rogers. *The Greek Tragedy of Tom Riddle Tyrannos. Eidolon. 2022.*

series as an excluded character with few friends, if any, and grows to be a much more understanding, likeable character who later becomes easy to get on with as she befriends the two boys, symbolizing platonic love.

All three of the main characters are tested throughout the series and face their own inner conflict as they grow into adults. These inner conflicts can almost always be traced back to the three main characters being tested throughout the books by the Greek forms of love as Rowling uses the trio and love as the device that moves the plot forward. Whenever the balance in any of the forms of love is lost, there is a general sense of wrongness in the tone of the series, fixed only when the concept of love that was endangered, is back in place⁶. This essay will be an analysis of how the concepts of love are tackled for each character individually. So, how are the characters in the Harry Potter series presented to convey different forms of love?

DEVELOPMENT

HARRY

The book starts off introducing Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, who are described from the very first sentence to be “perfectly normal” (*Sorcerer, 1*) and the least likely people to be involved in mysteries or “nonsense” (*Sorcerer, 1*) as their nephew, fitting all of these categories is found at their doorstep, with a lightning bolt shaped scar on his forehead. Eleven-year-old Harry Potter is then seen being used doing household chores and being treated awfully by his uncle, aunt and

⁶ Guest Post: Harry Potter and C. S. Lewis’ Four Loves. *Hogwarts Professor*. July 12th, 2012.

cousin Dudley. More than anything what is glaringly obvious is that Harry has at that point spent ten years in a household with no affection, he had not been properly cared for and grew up deprived of familial love, in particular. Generally, Harry and his relationship with the concept of love, or the lack thereof, is seen by The Dursley's speaking of Harry "*as though he wasn't there or rather as though he was something very nasty that couldn't understand them*" (Sorcerer, 22) proving his mistreatment and lack of love.

From the very start of his venture into the wizarding world Rowling shows that Harry receives an immense amount of admiration and popularity as "the boy who lived". This could very easily be considered Xenia, societal love. Ironically what is glaringly obvious is that Harry does not find Xenia important or fulfilling as, despite his young age, even in the Sorcerer's Stone, Harry is only ever surprised of his popularity, remaining humble and modest throughout the series. Instead of putting focus on his popularity, he unconsciously always attempts to form connections in the wizarding world with older, almost parental figures.

Throughout the Sorcerer's Stone, his willingness and automatic connection to fatherly figures like Hagrid and Professor Dumbledore are very evident, as both are crucial parental figures throughout the rest of Harry's life at Hogwarts. He also always feels the need to be on good terms with Professor McGonagall and is ecstatic to receive attention and praise from Ron's mother, Molly Weasley. Rowling also makes it evident that Harry craves parental affection through a scene with the Mirror of Erised. The Mirror of Erised, with "erised", spelling "desire" backwards, shows the greatest desires of the person looking into it. In this instance, Harry sees himself with his family there beside him and it proves to be a pivotal scene as it adds depth to

Harry's character, struggles and deprivation of love, as can be seen in the scene, "*The Potters smiled and waved at Harry and he stared hungrily back at them, his hands pressed flat against the glass as though he was hoping to fall right through it and reach them. He had a powerful kind of ache inside him, half joy, half terrible sadness.*" (Sorcerer, 209) It is also quite symbolic that the person who saves Harry from the misleading and oftentimes dangerous mirror, is Professor Dumbledore, who happens to show up right behind him similar to where his parents stand through the mirror's reflection, foreshadowing Dumbledore becoming Harry's biggest source of guidance in the following books.

Harry's brotherly love for Ron and him being so happy to frequently be included into the Weasley family's dynamic further proves that what he desires more than magic, money or the fame he has is to be in a warm, loving environment and to feel the sense of belonging somewhere that Mrs. Weasley in particular helps him feel. This can be seen by Harry not caring much about his gifts and cards when he saves the school in the first book, as implied in the scene "*Harry swallowed and looked around him. He realized he must be in the hospital wing. He was lying on a bed with white linen sheets, and next to him was a table piled high with what looked like half the candy shop.*" (Sorcerer, 296) Harry not focusing on the cards and gifts and asking what happened to Ron and Hermione instead shows that all he really values is true friendship, philia being platonic love, is the first type of love in the book that Harry is shown receiving and it becomes particularly evident in this specific extract. Rowling also shows that Harry's sense of belonging also grows stronger as his years go by in Hogwarts, which helps him with his gradually increasing confidence and self- acceptance.

Although Ron and Hermione's constant support of Harry helps him feel more comfortable in Hogwarts, him feeling his parents' support increasingly as he gets older is what makes him comfortable in his own skin, not just in Hogwarts, but in Privet Drive, the Ministry of Magic and everywhere else he is in, whoever he is with. Therefore, Harry's main character development in the form of self-love, Philautia, happens as he begins feeling his parent's presence and support inside of him more and more, so through Storge and even more so, Agape.

Harry Potter's growth is evident by the last book, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows. He is much surer of himself, despite the irony of whether or not he will stay alive getting less and less certain as the years go by. This can be seen in his last conversation with Dumbledore after a series of events when he says "*You had accepted, even embraced, something Lord Voldemort has never been able to do. Your courage won (...)*" (Hallows, 711), in reference to death. He knows he has people who support him, not just Ron and Hermione, but all the Weasley's, his other friends at school like Luna and the Gryffindor students. He also knows that although he cannot communicate with them, his parents James and Lily Potter, and their friends Sirius Black and Remus Lupin are always in support of him. This strong sense of self is assumably first seen when he finds out that what saved him from Voldemort's wrath as an infant was his mother's love for him. Lily Potter's love for his son shielded him from death with an ancient counter-charm. This is explained to Harry and the readers at the end of the Sorcerer's Stone by Dumbledore saying "*Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. (...) to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever.*" (Sorcerer, 299) This type of love transcends Storge, Philia, Eros, Philautia and Xenia, and fits Agape. Agape is "divine" love, known to transcend all

other forms and is similarly, sacrificial. Harry, at the end of the Deathly Hallows, shows the same sacrificial love his mother saves him with, to his loved ones and the wizarding world. Harry goes to Lord Voldemort, with the knowledge that neither of them can live if the other dies, which can be seen in his declaration *“I was ready to die to stop you hurting these people (...) I’ve done what my mother did. They’re protected from you. Haven’t you noticed how none of the spells you put on them are binding? You can’t torture them. You can’t touch them.”* (Hallows, 739). He learns to cast the same counter-charm his mother did for him. So, the series meaningfully concludes with the very thing that spawned the storyline of the entire series, as Harry symbolizes Agape, sacrificial love, as a result of the eros, storge, philia and xenia he experiences leading up to the finale.

RON

Coming from a strong and loving family, to Harry, Ron is the ideal representative of familial love. Rowling shows this through Harry’s perspective showing of how he is in constant admiration for the Weasley family. However, Ron feels deprived of that as just one of seven other siblings, as the youngest brother.

For some reason he was looking gloomy. ‘I’m the sixth in our family to go to Hogwarts. You could say I’ve got a lot to look up to. (...) Bill was head boy and Charlie was captain of Quidditch. Now Percy’s a prefect. Fred and George mess around a lot, but they still get really good marks and everyone thinks they’re really funny. Everyone expects me to do as well as the others, but if I do, it’s no big deal, because they did it first (...) I’ve got Bill’s old robes, Charlie’s old wand, and Percy’s old rat.’ (Sorcerer, 99).

Ron telling Harry all of this the day they meet, shows that he not only feels like “the forgettable one” amongst a rather large family, but also that he wants to be heard and is in desperate need of a friend he does not have to share with his siblings.

The Weasleys’ do not receive Xenia, and are frequently made fun of by wizarding families with higher titles, like the Malfoys’, with Draco Malfoy even saying “*You’ll soon find out some wizarding families are better than others*” (*Sorcerer, 108*) and even calling the Weasleys “riffraff” with “*red hair, freckles and more children than they can afford*” (*Sorcerer, 108*). So, Ron’s family’s reputation is also one that is often looked down upon as they are considered poor amongst the families of the wizarding world. Unlike Harry, Ron grows up in a loving environment, not being deprived of Storge, however he feels replaceable and insignificant. In most aspects, Ron at first glance seems like the convenient opposite of Harry, considering the forms of love he represents and is deprived of.

Therefore, Ron Weasley is stereotyped to be the sidekick in every environment he is in. This very obviously takes a hard toll on him from a very young age, as it is obvious throughout the Philosopher’s Stone that he has quite an inferiority complex at Hogwarts. He is also in constant fear of not living up to his brothers’ popularity at Hogwarts. It also does not help that his mother Molly Weasley, alongside the rest of the wizarding world, gives Harry more attention than Ron, fueling his insecurities and occasional envy of Harry further. This is actually prevalent throughout the series and him feeling easily replaceable is still evident mid-way through the Deathly Hallows. In fact, his inferiority complex and occasional envy of Harry gets the best of him and takes such a hard toll on the character that the horcrux (almost indestructible tool that

hides a part of one's soul) reflects Ron's fear as *"Least loved, always, by the mother who craved a daughter... Least loved, now, by the girl who prefers your friend... Second best, always, eternally overshadowed..."* (Hallows, 375, 376) With the "girl" and "friend" referring to Hermione and Harry, alluding to the effects of eros in Ron's insecurities and paranoia. This scene is the turning point of Ron's character. He destroys the horcrux which kickstarts his growth into the independent, confident character he was always meant to be, taking charge on countless crucial occasions during the Battle of Hogwarts. This is shown through another scene regarding horcruxes in which Ron, for the first time, take the initiative and find the diadem before anybody else, showing his character development as he never took initiative before that occasion. He finds romantic love with Hermione, further boosting his confidence, as seen in the Deathly Hallows after Hermione's praise: *"'It was Ron, all Ron's idea!' said Hermione breathlessly. (...) 'He was amazing!' / 'It was nothing,' said Ron, though he looked delighted with himself."* (Hallows, 622, 623) His newfound confidence is what gives him peace within his friend group and his family dynamic, as he feels more valued than before.

Ron Weasley finds Philautia through eros and philia, however he most significantly represents storge through his growth within the Weasley dynamic. He is introduced as the boy from a warm and loving family but it takes him many years to actually feel that love and know where he stands in the wizarding world. When he finally does, he proves to be a force to be reckoned with, growing into his own character. All of Ron's struggles originate from feeling unloved and his eventual self-acceptance and development happen when he accepts that he is truly loved and cared for by his surroundings, further proving the importance of love in the development of Rowling's main characters.

HERMIONE

Hermione is introduced as the annoying know-it-all from a “muggle”, non-wizarding family, who knows more about magic than people who grew up with magic. She is an outsider, trying her best to fit in, and doing so well that she attracts negative attention. With description like “bossy” used very frequently throughout the book, Rowling initially plants Hermione into the nerd stereotype almost instantaneously. She is introduced as someone with a “*bossy sort of voice, lots of bushy brown hair and rather large front teeth*” (*Sorcerer, 105*). Although this scene is her introduction to the readers, her turning point as a character is when she is said to be crying in the girls’ bathroom. This scene is significant because it is the first time Hermione shows raw and vulnerable emotions and does not seem in full control of how she presents herself. Her reaction is in response to Ron, “*It’s no wonder no one can stand her (...) she’s a nightmare, honestly. Someone knocked into Harry as they hurried past him. It was Hermione. Harry caught a glimpse of her face- and was startled to see that she was in tears.*” (*Sorcerer, 172*). Hermione’s character arch does not instantly change; however she forms a fantastic friendship with both of the boys, Harry in particular, completing the “golden trio” of the series and displaying her development in *philia*.

A pivotal moment in the book that Rowling wrote into the peak of action in the book is Hermione praising Harry saying, “*Book! And Cleverness! There are more important things- friendship and bravery*” (*Sorcerer, 287*). This scene shows just how much Hermione values *Philia*, as it is the first time she admits that her best qualities are not necessarily superior to others’ and that friendship is the most important. Hermione grows into a character that is much more at peace with herself and her surroundings.

Hermione also suffers from the lack of Xenia at the start of the series, in a different way in comparison to Ron. She is bullied by her classmates for being muggle born. Her growth can be seen through society's attitude towards her as years progress, as she is vaguely mentioned to have been elected 'Minister of Magic' in the Deathly Hallows Epilogue.

Hermione is seen constantly raising her hand and answering questions in Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, however as the series progresses Hermione raises her hand less and less, and changes into a generally calmer character in comparison to her uptight introduction by frequently breaking school rules or lying to teachers to save Harry, Ron and herself from trouble. This can be interpreted as Hermione feeling less of a need for Xenia. Hermione's uptight ways can be connected to her craving affection and attention from the people around her, entering the wizarding world, a foreign setting to her at the time. Rather unsuccessful in the beginning in getting that affection from society, she gains that confidence from Philia, through Ron and Harry. Her growth is evident in the Deathly Hallows through her anger, due to her disappointment in both eros and philia, towards Ron for leaving her and Harry during their search for horcruxes. She noticeably changes the way she expresses her negative emotions from crying in the Sorcerer's Stone (referenced above) to "*punching*" and "*screaming*" (*Hallows*, 380) at Ron, behaving out of character because she is surer of herself and her worth within the trio, knowing her every word will be taken seriously. Thus, proving her character growth, confidence and philautia developed through philia.

CONCLUSION

What is unique about Harry, Hermione and Ron in relation to the concept of love in general is that the three characters are all introduced very definitively. Rowling gives very accurate insight into their characters, their differences and specialties. However, what is particularly special is that Rowling puts each of these characters into certain stereotypes, i.e. the popular orphaned main character, the trusty sidekick and the know-it-all nerd, and develops these characters by giving them depth through love in its many different forms. By relating all these characters to the different forms of love, what they have and what was initially lacking, Rowling develops the characters and grows them out of their stereotypes. Rowling uses the form of self-love and confidence, Philautia, to express the growth and change the trio goes through from Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone to Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows. She shows that the plot of the entire series revolves around love and its many facets, as she starts the series with Agape and shows Harry's growth and journey to Philautia, concluding it with his conquest of Agape (sacrificial love). Similarly, Ron's growth centers more on Storge and Hermione's on Philia. The development of these characters not only prove the presence and significance of the Greek forms of love, but progress in accordance with Lewis's interpretation of the theory. The trio's journey in the theme love, lastly highlights all the insecurities that could have led them to evil, like that of Voldemort, and how the development of love is what led them to symbolize the "good".

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