

A Feministic Study Of Selected Female Characters Of The Harry Potter Series

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Abstract

Harry Potter is responsible for fostering a love of reading in a generation with a good cause. It fights bravely for racial and gender equality and love's triumph over evil. All of this is accomplished while keeping an excellent narrative, and its success is well-deserved. Harry Potter is full of unexpected joys, even when it comes to the female cause. Hermione is smarter than Harry and Ron, Bellatrix Lestrange and Minerva McGonagall are among the best fighters in the universe, the main heroine (Hermione) does not fall in love with the main hero (Harry), and prefers Arithmancy to Divination, the latter implying being ungrounded in hard facts. Harry Potter, on the other hand, fails feminism by ignoring the issue of the underrepresentation of women. It does not mean that they are not portrayed appropriately but they are few in numbers comparatively. It would be a mistake to believe that the Harry Potter series is all about Harry Potter. Even though the series is named after him, it nonetheless has numerous female role models while one studies them with feministic perspectives. J. K. Rowling, the popular series' author, did not use her full name as a stage name because she was afraid that fewer people would read her work just because she is a woman. Female empowerment, however, is still strongly prevalent in the series through various characters. Males are always portrayed as being more powerful than women in so many texts and movies, and there is frequently a concept that men must vanquish evil to save women. Harry Potter is unique in that there are several major female characters in the novel that help build the road for Harry's victory against Voldemort, and like men, they equally combat evil. The paper studies the following female characters in the light of feminism.

Keywords

Harry Potter, gender, stereotypes, masculine, feminine, power, strength

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Hermione Granger

Hermione is unquestionably a perfect role model from a feministic perspective. She is immensely intelligent and powerful and frequently helps Harry and Ron by giving them wise advice throughout the series. When it comes to knowledge and spell mastery, she is always one step ahead of everyone and tells Ron how to pronounce rightly “it’s Wing-gar-die Levi-o-sa, make the “gar” nice and long” (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* 184). Apart from this, another example of Hermione’s cleverness is that Hermione is the only one who identifies the creature, which is the students’ killer, and despite being petrified, she leaves a clue for Harry and Ron on the piece of paper which proves beneficial because Harry not only saves Ginny’s life but kills the creature (a huge snake named Basilisk). In the book third, she successfully handles the time-turner that she originally utilizes to attend extra lectures and eventually becomes the savior of two innocent lives Sirius Black and Buckbeak (the hippogriff) by using the time-turner wisely. More significantly, her slapping of Malfoy highlights the strength of her character, and she comes out as a revolutionary spirit as the series progress further. She cannot tolerate any type of exploitation of the weaker by the hypocrite or snobbish elite and raise her voice against it and warns Draco “Don’t you dare call Hagrid pathetic; you fool – you evil” (*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* 312). Although Hermione is shown logical, practical, and strong character, she never favors the idea that to be strong means to instill masculinity inside. She does not neglect her femininity and accuses Ron and Harry of not considering her a suitable match for Yule Ball. When they fail to find any girl partner for the ball, they ask Hermione, she replies that “Just because it’s taken you three years to notice, Ron, doesn’t mean no one else has spotted I’m a girl!” (*Goblet of Fire* 338). She never tried to hide or suppress her femininity, whether it was dressing up for Yule Ball or having feelings for Ron. Dalia Saffideen and Natalia Rodriguez Moskalkova stated, “This could be compared with other characters, such as Black Widow from the Avengers, who has all her femininity repressed, which sends the wrong message that to be strong, one has to be masculine. Hermione, therefore, e, therefore, girls to be themselves, in a world where there is a lot of ridicule for stereotypical female interests” (*Kings Women in Law*).

Nonetheless, her character has certain flaws. In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, when Ron goes out with Lavender Brown, Hermione is not only envious, but she deliberately sends a flock of Canaries to attack Ron. Though this feeds into the idea of jealous irrationally emotional crazy women, we call her a bold character who does not fear to show her true self. She also shatters the most prominent stereotype regarding females that they fall for heroes only. But Hermione chooses

Ron while neglecting the ‘Chosen One’ the famous Harry Potter. Thus, Hermione comes forth as the series’ most powerful character because she never leaves Harry alone amid the difficulties. 19 years later, she is still shown as one of the most prominent figures in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* as Minister of Magic, which is the highest post in the magical world. Furthermore, it might be claimed that Hermione Granger represents not just feminists but also minorities because she has two muggle parents and belongs to a non-magical family. Malfoys and Voldemort’s followers referred to her as dirty blood. Draco Malfoy uses derogatory language for her throughout the series - for instance, “No one asked your opinion, you filthy little Mudblood” (*Chamber of Secrets* 117). However, such a type of criticism never deters her spirit as she fights ferociously against evil and injustice she could. Like feminists, she raises her voice against the injustice of the weaker. So, she advocates tirelessly for the upliftment of house elves. Hermione forms “The Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare” (SPEW) in *Goblet of Fire*, to raise awareness of elves’ plight and to demonstrate her ideas that they should not be mistreated. She tells Harry and Ron that “I was going to put Stop the Outrageous Abuse of Our Fellow Magical Creatures and Campaign for a Change in Their Legal Status – but it wouldn’t fit. So that’s the heading of our manifesto” (189).

Even though her friends do not support this initiative wholeheartedly, she never gives up and continues to seek further support. She attempts to speak up against injustice when no one else does that – for instance, after seeing Winky’s mistreatment, she points out that there was no single wizard who could show concern for house elves. She does a lot of research and finds out that “Elf enslavement goes back centuries. I can’t believe no one’s done anything about it before now” (189). Her perseverance is certainly paying off. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Ron, who was first hesitant to join SPEW, expresses concern for house elves and wants to save them. “Hang on a moment! We’ve forgotten someone! . . . We should tell them (house-elves) to get out . . . we can’t order them to die for us” (510). Thus, it is obvious that Hermione Granger is a prominent female role model. In movies, her role has been played by Emma Watson, a woman’s rights activist and one of the world’s most important persons (according to Time magazine in 2015).

Ginny Weasley

Ginny provides readers with an alternate vision of femininity to Hermione, who is more conventionally feminine. She is a motivated, driven personality who strives for achievement, and who later comes out as a brilliant Quidditch player after surreptitiously training. She has been using her elder brothers’ brooms since the age of six when she is denied playing with them. Until *The Order of the Phoenix*, we do

not get much of a sense of Ginny's personality, partially because the series concentrated on Harry, Ron, and Hermione(three important characters), and partially due to the trauma she has been experiencing and fighting from the first year at Hogwarts. She is duped and persuaded into revealing her problems by Tom Riddle while she is just 11 years old until Tom is "powerful enough to start feeding Miss Weasley a few of my secrets, to start pouring a little of my soul back into her . . ." (*Chamber of Secrets* 327). After that, a series of horrifying events follow, and Ginny is held guilty of being petrified of Flitch's cat and Colin Creevey. Ginny is found "exceptionally pale" at one point in the novel and bawling her eyes out at another. This leads to her departure inside the chamber of secrets, where Tom plans to finish her. Thus, one can notice, how Ginny goes through painful situations throughout the series, yet she is too strong to diminish by even the dark lord and eventually grows into a self-assured and confident girl. Ginny also proves herself as a clever and kind witch throughout the series. Even though she is too shy to talk to Harry, she protects Harry When Malfoy targets him at the bookshop named Flourish and Blotts. Despite having a crush on Harry, she declines Harry's invitation as a dancing partner for Yule Ball because she had already accepted Neville's proposal. It demonstrates her selflessness, honesty, and care for others. She becomes a powerful member of Dumbledore's Army as she matures and gains confidence, even coining the moniker. Later she becomes skilled at hexes, especially in "Bat Bogey Hex". Even Professor Slughorn admits her as a member of "Slug Club". The club is famous to have members who either belong to anybody powerful or meritorious enough. In the case of Ginny, she is not related to anybody powerful, but her famous "Bat Bogey Hex" becomes the reason for the one. In *Deathly Hallows*, she becomes one of the leading members of Dumbledore's Army along with Neville and Luna and revolts against Death-Eaters and Snape at Hogwarts, while Harry, Ron, and Hermione seek Horcruxes. Ginny can be distinguished from other female characters for her unabashed acceptance of her sexuality. In later books of the series, this shy girl goes through several love- affairs before eventually falling in love with Harry. In Book 5, Michael Corner is dumped by her for his immaturity and Dean Thomas is also abandoned by her. She does not tolerate any slut-shaming even from her brothers. She tells Ron after he rants at her for kissing Dean Thomas in a secluded corridor that "It is none of your business whom I go out with or what I do with them" (*Half-Blood Prince* 239). What makes her even more intriguing is that she dates only on her terms. She is the one who initiates their first kiss when Harry develops feelings for her in *Half-Blood Prince*. Ginny is a key feminist role model because she is unafraid to pursue what she wants and achieve despite the challenges and pain she has endured, whether in her love life or as a professional Quidditch player. We can encapsulate her

philosophy and overall attitude In her own words, “Anything’s possible if you’ve got enough nerve”(*Order of the Phoenix* 577)

Lily Potter

Though Lily is murdered in the opening chapter of the book first, she served as an important character because it is she who sacrificed her life to save Harry and protected him with sealed magic so that Voldemort couldn’t harm him even after her death. That sealed charm weakened Voldemort’s abilities for over 14 years. Despite not being there physically, she continues to have a significant impact on Harry’s life and is frequently mentioned by Sirius and Snape. Lily was never afraid to speak up to James when they were both at Hogwarts and before they started dating. This can be evidenced by her shouting at him for bullying Snape in front of their classmates. Because her legacy continues, Lily is a tremendously strong character, while not being a ubiquitous presence. She is the symbol of love and sacrifice, which demonstrates one of the major themes of the series. It is Lily’s love that enables Harry to survive Voldemort’s attack and send Voldemort’s curse rebounding on him.

Molly Weasley

Molly is also a feminist figure who represents mom’s strength. she welcomed Harry into her already huge and demanding family without hesitation. She treats Harry like her kid, bringing him presents at Christmas and making him feel loved and appreciated. In the fourth novel, ‘Goblet of Fire,’ she takes Harry in over the summer vacations, making his vacation much more tolerable because he does not have to spend the entire time with his aunt’s cruel family. Initially, we see Molly busy with household affairs, which gives the impression of an ordinary housewife until the first four books. In *Order of the Phoenix*, we come to know the real strength of her character. We see how Molly bears the pain of losing her family members and dear ones boldly and silently without articulating it to others. She even becomes a member of the Order of the Phoenix and takes part in the final battle. She not only safeguards Ginny from Bellatrix Lestrange but kills her also in an epic manner, like a soldier. Karley Adney and Holly Hassel elaborate that “As a woman living in a world where her family, friends, home, and safety are threatened by dark wizards, she has a natural fear. Regardless of this fear, however, Molly soldiers on and continues to serve as a caretaker and host for many characters, providing them with a home, safety, and love” (*Critical Companion to J.K. Rowling* 179).

Luna Lovegood

In retrospect, Luna is a feminist role model who inspires everyone to be themselves despite her initial odd appearance. Luna never tries to fit in or live up to the

expectations set by society. She is the only one who lives according to her norms and beliefs, without caring about others or societal perspectives. Though students tease her by calling them “Loony” at Hogwarts, she doesn’t deviate from her unique ways or beliefs. Later, we see that the students who make fun of her due to her eccentric ways admit her wisdom. Even Harry follows her clever advice. She is always ready to help Harry Potter, especially in the 5th book *Order of the Phoenix*, where she stands with him and Dumbledore’s army against Umbridge and other Death Eaters at the ministry.

Narcissa Malfoy

She is Bellatrix Lestrange’s sister, and Bellatrix is one of the most despised characters in the Harry Potter books due to her fierce loyalty to Voldemort and her murder of Sirius Black in the fifth book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Additionally, Narcissa is Lucius Malfoy’s wife, and both of her parents are well-known Death Eaters. Because she demonstrated her abilities in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the seventh book, Narcissa is a feminist role model. When Voldemort asked her to check if Harry was dead, she saw that he was still breathing but she declared him dead because “Narcissa knew that the only way she would be permitted to enter Hogwarts and find her son was as part of the conquering army. She no longer cares whether Voldemort won “(*Deathly Hallows* 594). She tricked Voldemort which resulted in Harry’s victory over Voldemort, we are aware of the Dark Lord’s viciousness and his potential for violence as well as how every single of his death eaters feared him. The lengths she would go to safeguard her family is shown by her defiance of one of the most formidable wizards.

In addition to being cruel, distant, and happy to see her family with Lord Voldemort once more, Narcissa was also unselfish; she cherished her son and husband and would put her life in danger to protect them. The majority of Narcissa’s actions are driven by her desire to protect her family at any cost. She ultimately put love first. She didn’t stick out as a hero, but she acted honorably when it mattered most.

Minerva McGonagall

Minerva provides feminism with another role model. She does not have a family to devote herself to, unlike the other adult women named. Instead, she represents a rare female character who has committed herself to her profession and her pupils as well as Hogwarts. She is one of the strongest female characters, portrayed in the series. She is the head of Gryffindor House and teaches transfiguration at Hogwarts. She is known for her strictness and fondness for the rules. She is the symbol of fairness because she equally scolds students of her house for their faults. Unlike stereotypical women, she favors rationality rather than emotions and intuitions. She strictly denies

Harry to visit Hogsmeade in the book third, because Harry's safety is her main concern. She takes several decisions based on logic, which proves beneficial throughout the series – for instance, making Harry the youngest seeker of the century, and taking the position of Headmaster amid vulnerable situations. Professor Umbridge is frequently chastised by her with dry, icy retorts “I should have made my meaning plainer . . . He has achieved high marks in all Defence Against the Dark Arts tests set by a competent teacher (*Order of the Phoenix* 585). In Book 7, she refuses to quit it, when Hogwarts is governed by Death Eaters, she eventually fights bravely in the final battle against Voldemort and Death Eaters.

Conclusion

To summarize, several incredibly different women in the Harry Potter series are all smart and inspirational in their own right. The aforementioned female characters each provide something unique to the plot with their own set of strengths and weaknesses despite having different goals, being on opposite sides, and coming from different backgrounds. There is a role model out there for everyone, showing that being a woman is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor.

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