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Time Changes Ideology Changes

Differences in What Children Can Learn from

Little Women and Harry Potter and the

Philosopher's Stone

Almost all classic children's literature is didactic. Whether it is a domestic story like *Little Women* or an adventure story like *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, children can be more or less influenced by the ideologies the author transferred to them. So what the adult wants the children to learn from the book has always been an important topic in children's literature. As days go by, the ideologies that the adult wants to transfer to children have changed a lot during 150 years time. Some principles that seem to be important in *Little Women* do not adapt to modern life. But through them we still can see their ways of life, education at that time and the social status of women in those days. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is a contemporary novel for children. Quite different from *Little Women*, the ideologies Rowling wants to transfer to children is much associated with modern life. It focuses on how the children are expected behave in the new century, and also the equality of man and woman. There are some ideologies shown in the two books that have not changed at all through one and a half centuries, however, there are also many differences. Time changes, thought changes.

This essay compares some different ideologies that children can learn from *Little Women* and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* to see what has changed during 150 years. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* the word "ideology" means: "a set of beliefs, especially one held by a particular group that influence the way people behave" (873). Of course ideology changes through out time and through the behaviors of a person in a certain time we can see the ideology they promoted at that time. *Little Women* is a famous example of children's literature from mid-19th century describing the life of a family of the

American Victorian Era. At that time the puritan spirit was very popular and wide accepted. They preferred a simple life and saw hard work as one of the most important quality of a person. The moral concerns played an important role in the whole Victorian Era and a lot of instructive literary works appeared to help with the children's moral education. Children were required to have a high ethical level, to work hard, to believe in God, to behave properly.

Little Women tells the story about how three little girls grow up into elegant and moral women under the instruction of their mother. It is often regarded as a didactic book for children's growth. In *American Children* Macleod says: "In fact they [Alcott's books] were quite didactic. Alcott consistently pushed her convictions on upbringing, family life, womanly virtue, and values in her writing for children"(15). Some virtues in *Little Women* remain influential and valuable today, but some others that do not adapt to modern life are abandoned. Especially in the aspect of women's social status, the 19th century girls and modern girls are taught in different ways. What they can do or cannot do is quite different. The Victorian Women were expected to be a good wife, to prepare their husband with a "bright fireside and well-ordered dinner presided over by a home-loving, neatly gowned, womanly wife"(Yalom 194). And in *Little Women* there are so many speeches of Mrs March that teach her children how to be a good and elegant Victorian girl.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone was published in 1997. After so many years we can see some moral standards has in some level changed. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* we seldom see the didactic conversation between adult and children. It

emphasizes the necessity of group work, the importance of confidence and self, and what to do when facing the evil. Especially in the aspect of gender, Rowling shows the equality of boys and girls. Girls do not have to stay at home being an attachment for man. They can do whatever men can do and even better. With the help of Historical Criticism and in some parts Feminism, this essay goes deep into the books and through close reading, it compares the didactic elements shown in *Little Women* and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* trying to find the differences of what children can learn from them.

While reading *Little Women*, children can feel a domestic atmosphere. Everything is so peaceful and beautiful; everybody is so lovely and caring. Through the book children can see that the world is a wonderful place and people are friendly and full of love. The environment described in *Little Women* is usually calm and bright making the whole story full of domestic atmosphere. As the house is described in the book:

December snow fell quietly without, and the fire crackled cheerfully within. It was a comfortable room, though the carpet was faded and the furniture very plain, for a good picture or two hung on the walls, books filled the recesses, chrysanthemums and Christmas roses bloomed in the windows, and a pleasant atmosphere of home peace pervaded it"(Alcott 14).

Even in winter the hardest days of the March girls' life, when daddy is injured, mommy is away and Beth is sick, there is also hope lying ahead. When children are reading the book, they could feel the home-like feeling all through the book and this could also provide a feeling

of safety and protection for them. No matter what happened there will always be family and love around them preventing them from being hurt.

The characters in *Little Women* are all very loving and adorable. Not only the March girls but also Laurie, Mr Laurence, Mr Brook and even Aunt March (though sometimes she is a little harsh) are very nice persons. Though the girls described in the book all have their own weaknesses, these cannot make the other people love them less. Macleod states in *American Childhood*: “Without suggesting that perfection was a likely human attainment, she [Alcott] nevertheless saw Meg’s envy, Jo’s temper, and Amy’s selfishness and vanity as serious matters that it was absolutely necessary to correct. Even Beth’s timidity had to be conquered in some degree”(24).

These weaknesses make them round characters and because of these flaws, they seem to be more real. Macleod also points out that “It was the responsibility of adults to help children overcome their character flaws, to guide them along the right paths to creditable adulthood” (24). And in *Little Women* Mrs March gives the girls protection and guides to the right way them when they are confused. In the process of overcoming these flaws, the March girls grow up, learn to accomplish themselves and become gentle graceful little women. In spite of this or that kind of weakness, there is no moral problem in the girls’ personality. They are good girls after all. There is no evil character in *Little Women*. While reading *Little Women* children can feel that the world described in the book is peaceful and the people are nice. There is nothing to worry about the outside world and in this circumstance children can keep their

precious innocence as long as possible.

Different from *Little Women*, what children of today can learn from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, is to distinguish good from bad. In Rowling's novel the world is not all bright and lovely, in contrast, there seems to be danger everywhere. The environment described in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* might give reader "gothic" feeling. Compared to *Little Women*, Hogwarts should play the role of family in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, but it is not a warm and safe place at all. It is just like a giant labyrinth, as Rowling described in the book:

"The narrow path had opened suddenly on to the edge of a great black lake. Perched atop a high mountain on the other side, its windows sparkling in the starry sky, was a vast castle with many turrets and towers"[...] "They were carried along a dark tunnel, which seemed to be taking them right underneath the castle, until they reached a kind of underground harbour, where they clambered out to rocks and pebbles"(83). \

When one thing happens, you never know what will happen next. It should be one of the safest places as Hagrid says, but still, the devil has infiltrated and almost got the philosopher's stone. While reading *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* Children can get the impression that the world is not always a pleasant and safe place. It is not perfect. It is complicated and has a dark side. It is necessary to keep a clear mind and learn how to survive in the world.

The characters who appear in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* are not all positive characters. Clearly, there are two sides in the book: one is the positive side that is the side of Dumbledore representing the justice and straight. The other side is the negative side: the side of Voldemort representing evil and greed. And the characters are complex and sophisticated, such as Snape and Quirrell. The former seems to be a bad man and not so friendly to Harry. He even makes Harry misunderstand that it is he who wants to kill Harry and steal the philosopher's stone. And Quirrell, a cowardly and weak man, no one suspects him. But it turns out Snape is the one who always helps Harry and Quirrell is the really evil one. Karin E Westman states in "Perspective, Memory, and Moral Authority: The Legacy of Jane Austen in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter": "Rowling encourages readers to use their imagination to sympathize with, reflect upon, and then value those characters who balance generosity of feeling with integrity of self" (146).

Children can learn from Rowling's novel that one cannot be judged by appearance and the human nature is not so easy to be identified. When facing the choice of justice and evil, one should always be steady and make the right choice. As in the book, as soon as Harry begins the journey of becoming a wizard, he is faced with the choice of being good or evil. On the train to Hogwarts, Malfoy tries to get him to his side but Harry refuses. On the start-of-term ceremony, the sorting hat also finds it hard to decide in which house Harry should go:

"Difficult, very difficult. Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind, either. There's a talent, oh my goodness, yes- and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that's interesting...."[...] "You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that- no? Well, if

you're sure- better be – GRYFFINDOR!” (Rowling 90-91).

Harry has the chance and potential to be a great but evil wizard, but he makes up his mind not to make friends with Malfoy and not to go to the Slytherin House. He is conscious of which side is good and which side is evil and makes the right decision.

Children were always taught to be obedient in the old time. As a student one should obey the school rules and as a child, one should obey his parents. Being good, loving and obedient should always be the duty of a child. As in *Little Women*, girls are always told what kind of things they should do and should not do. When they break the rules they get punished, and they learn some lessons from it, then being a good girl again. As Amy brings some limes to school and is hit by her teacher on the palm, Mrs March tells her “for you break the rules, and deserved some punishment for disobedience” (Alcott 96).

One of the most important puritan principles is working hard, and that is also a social rule in 19th century America. Children are taught to work hard in their life. Macleod argues: “Most nineteenth-century children knew work at least as well as play.”[...] “Girls learned how to knit, sew, and cook, to wash clothes, clean house, and preserve food. They were expected to help care for younger child in the family” (9). Mrs March is a role model. She often goes out working for the poor people. The two older sisters Meg and Jo both have jobs. And the younger ones also have to help Hannah with the housework or go to school. When they obey the rules and try to do their work well, they lead a happy and peaceful life. But when they neglect working and just play for fun they end up feeling guilty and remorseful.

The unsuccessful experiment is a good example. The “resting and reveling” process is not fun and it is even unbearably boring, “the days kept getting longer and longer, the weather was unusually variable and so were tempers, and unsettled feeling possessed everyone, and Satan found plenty of mischief for the idle hands to do” (146). No one does the work and it becomes a mess in the family. The order of the everyday life is broken and the girls become messed up. They do not get even a little fun from the “resting and reveling”. It is not what they expect. After the whole week out of order, they finally learn how important it is to obey the rules and do their own little work well, as Mrs March says, “Work is wholesome, and there is plenty for everyone. It keeps us from ennui and mischief, is good for health and spirits, and gives us a sense of power and independence better than money or fashion” (156).

But in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* obeying the rules seems not as important as it is in *Little Women*. One of the most impressive characteristics of Harry Potter is his rebelliousness. From the moment he arrives at Hogwarts he starts his journey of breaking the rules. On the start-of –term ceremony the head master Dumbledore had told the students three rules in Hogwarts,

“First years should note that the forests in the grounds are forbidden to all pupils.” [...] “I have also been asked by Mr Filch, the caretaker, to remind you all that no magic should be used between classes in the corridors.”[...] “And finally, I must tell you that this year the third-floor corridor on the right-hand side is out of bounds to everyone who does not wish to die a very painful death” (Rowling 94 - 95).

But Harry, a first-year student, breaks all of them. As a punishment for wandering around in the school at night in order to send Hagrid’s dragon away (that is also a breaking of Hogwarts’

rules), Harry, his friends and Malfoy are asked to help Hagrid search in the forbidden forest for the murderer of the unicorns. There he learns from the centaur, Firenze, that Voldemort plans to steal the philosopher's stone. Then he decides to protect the philosopher's stone. Even though Professor McGonagall asks them to stay away from the issue, Harry and his companions decide to get through the trapdoor. Though they are risking both suspension from Hogwarts and their lives, they do not care. They decide to sacrifice their lives to protect the philosopher's stone. Finally they succeed and win respect from the other students and teachers and also help Gryffindor win the House Cup.

What *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* wants to transfer to children is sometimes it is necessary to break rules. But before doing something that is not allowed, one has to identify the situation. Is it a correct decision? Is the purpose of breaking the rules justice? Is it worth the consequence they might bring? What is the meaning of breaking the rules? Rules are made by people to help us lead a better life. But when they lost that kind of quality, they are meaningless.

Learning to forgive is another virtue *Little Women* tries to transfer to children. When getting hurt one choice is to seek revenge, but that will lead to a trail of revenging and hate. Jo refuses to take Amy to the play, which make Amy very angry. That is not a big deal, but instead of forgiving Jo's impatience and bad temper, Amy decides to get revenge and do something to make Jo regret treating her rudely. That leads to a trail of revenges. Amy burns Jo's book to make her angry and Jo, to make her little sister out of her way, even almost lets

her die. That is the consequence of getting revenge. Fortunately Jo realizes the serious consequences of her mistake: “As if she heard, Amy opened her eyes, and held out her arms, with a smile that went straight to Jo’s heart. Neither said a word, but they hugged one another close, in spite of the blankets, and everything was forgiven and forgotten in one hearty kiss” (Alcott 113). Children can see the magical power of forgiveness: it turns the hate between two persons into love and it is not hard to forgive someone, even though she has done something that hurt you really bad. As soon as she shows her repentance and eager to correct her mistake, you can forgive her. Just show a smile or a hug, and it will turn enemies into friends.

However what children can learn about forgiveness from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, is quite different. The situation of forgiveness has changed in Rowling’s book. Not all kinds of fault can be forgiven. Children should try to distinguish the forgivable vices from the unforgivable sins. Harry himself has done so many things which seem to be wrong and against the rules. He secretly investigates the source of the Philosopher’s Stone; he rides the broomstick to compete with Malfoy in spite of his teacher’s warning; he sneaks in to the Restricted Section to check out Nicolas Flamel; he helps Hagrid to send his dragon away; he decides to protect the Philosopher’s Stone ignoring Professor McGonagall’s warning. Even a model student Hermione has lied once. But they are all forgiven just making Gryffindor lose some score,. Because it is not a sin, what they do, they do it for a reason. Though the way they do it might be improper and it might bring some bad effect, it is not sinful. They do it to try to protect the Philosopher’s Stone, and their little mistake may finally be forgiven. When Harry has finally beaten Voldemort and protected the Philosopher’s Stone, he and his companions help Gryffindor win the House Cup.

No one is perfect. Some mistakes deserve forgiveness, but some others do not, such as the crime of Voldemort. He is a sinful wizard, though he is talented and has a great ambition. As he is evil, the greater and more powerful he is the more harm he will bring to the world. He does not use his gift to benefit the world but to try to destroy it in order to realize his evil aim of ruling the world. He kills Harry's parents; he kills the unicorn, the most beautiful and innocent creature in the world to make himself live longer; he even has no sympathy for the one who helps him. When Quirrell is hurt my Harry: "Master, I cannot hold him- my hands-my hands!" And Quirrell, though pinning Harry to the ground with his knees, let go of his neck and stared, bewildered, at his own palms- Harry could see they looked burnt, raw, red and shiny. "Then kill him, fool, and be done!" (Rowling 213). Voldemort is evil, and what he does is vicious and unforgivable. Facing this kind of demon the only way is stand up and fight, like Harry Potter does. Sympathy and forgiveness could only connive at its rampancy and make more innocent people hurt.

In Alcott's *Little Women* religion plays an important role. In Alcott's book children are taught to worship God, be faithful, and believe in God. In the Victorian Era, people believed in God's almighty power. Religion played an important role in people's life. Most people went to church regularly and worshiped God. At the beginning of the novel, the March girls mention *Pilgrim's Progress* in their conversation, and we know that they used to play the story. It tells the story of how the pilgrim overcomes so many difficulties and with the help and instruction of God, he finally gets to the Celestial City. Lundin states in "Little Pilgrims'

Progress”: “The power of the pilgrim stems not only from the spiritual tradition but also from the sentimental tradition” (3). The pilgrim story gives them so much joy and makes them understand the journey to a beautiful life. When they come across difficulties they should turn to God to get help. When Christmas comes, the March girls each get one *Pilgrim’s Progress* as a present from their mother. And this book has certainly given the March girls so many influences and been mentioned so many times all through *Little Women*.

Little Women transfers to the children that God is immanence and eternal. When you need help, God is will always there to help you. When Jo finds it is hard to control her bad temper and regrets hurting Amy, she feels helpless and doesn’t know what to do. When she turns to her mother for help, Mrs March suggests her to ask God for help:

My child the troubles and temptations of your life are beginning and may be many, but you can overcome and outlive them all if you learn how to feel the strength and the tenderness of your Heavenly Father as you do that of your earthly one. The more you love and trust Him, and the less you will depend on human power and wisdom, but my become the source of lifelong peace, happiness, and strength. Believe this heartily, and go to God with all your little cares, and hopes, and sins, and sorrows, as freely and confidingly as you come to your mother (Alcott 112-113).

With the help of her mother, Jo feels, “nearer to the Friend who always welcomes every child with a love stronger than that of any father, tenderer than that of any mother” (113). And in the dark days when Beth is ill and neither father nor mother is not around, the girls feel

lonely and helpless, God is mentioned so many times. Beth is so sick that she even cannot recognize her sisters, the girls are so desperate and they don't know what to do as Jo says, "and there's nobody to help us bear it. Mother and father both gone, and God seems so far away I can't find Him" (240). But they still have the hope, waiting for their mother to come back, praying for Beth to recover. Finally they overcome the difficult time. Mother comes back and Beth gets better: "All day Jo and Meg hovered over her, watching, waiting, hoping, and trusting in God and Mother, and all day the snow fell, the bitter wind raged, and the hours dragged slowly by"(243). Children can learn from the book that God is an excellent guide. When the dark days come and there seems to be no hope ahead and you feel lonely, he will always be there waiting to helping you.

But in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, we can not see so many symbols of religion. God is seldom mentioned. Today God is more or less like a symbol in religion. So many young people nowadays rarely go to church to worship God. Besides respecting the individuality, people stress the importance of team work. They believe in human more than in God. Rowling stresses the belief in humanity, self-salvation, and the power of cooperation. Religion does not have a great influence on Harry's Hogwarts time. No one tells him to worship God and respect his almighty power. Instead, what Harry learns in Hogwarts is how to win respect and love through his own effort, and how necessary it is to trust his companions when real danger comes.

On Halloween, when the three friends face the ferocious monster, they know God would

do nothing helpful under that circumstance. The only thing they can do is to trust each other and help each other, trying their best to survive. When Harry is hanging on the monster, and Hermione is too frightened to stand up and fight, the only thing they can do is to trust Ron can do something to beat the monster. Surely Ron instantly shouts out the spell Hermione tells him before and saves his friends' lives. And in the last battle, it is also the trust in each other and the group work rather than the praying to God that helps them find the place where the philosopher's stone is kept. Especially when they are in the underground labyrinth and have to pass so many magical rooms, in order to survive and stop Voldemort from stealing the philosopher's stone, they have no other choice but to trust each other. They believe Ron's chess skill is good enough to beat the magic; they believe Hermione's inference can bring Harry safely into the chamber and bring him safely out; they also have to believe that Harry, though he does not have so much knowledge about magic, can beat Voldemort, because he is righteous. This has nothing to do with God. When real danger comes, it is better to believe in human being and stand up and fight.

In *Little Women* Alcott puts the love for god before the love for family. Mrs March always tell her daughter the love of God is superior even compared to the love from parents. However, in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* Rowling put the power of family before the power of God. The scar in Harry's forehead becomes a protection for Harry, because it is left by his mother. His mother scarifies herself to protect Harry from being hurt by Voldemort, and the scar is an everlasting sign of love. That is why Voldemort could not kill him when he was a little baby, and, "Quirrell couldn't touch his bare skin, not without

suffering terrible pain” (Rowling 214). As Dumbledore says:

Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign... to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection for ever (216).

The love from parents is the greatest love and will never fade away.

Macleod states in *American Children*: “Nineteenth century American families did differentiate in their treatment of girls and boys” (8). “The idea of woman's place as separate and different from the rest of the universe was central to nineteenth-century society, and there is no lack of evidence on the point” (Macleod 4). In 19th century, the ideal little women were expected to be quiet, lovely, obedient, sensitive, and display a lady-like behavior. All through the book *Ms March* has been teaching her girls to fit in the frame of a typical little woman. Even the most detailed thing as a pocket handkerchief, as a mother *Ms March* would remind her daughters, for the detail shows a lady. As Jo says, “I do believe Marmee would ask that if we were all running away from an earthquake” (Alcott 41). A good appearance was a significant part of a lady, “for real lady is always known by neat boots, gloves, and handkerchief” (41).

A girl in the 19th century should also bear in mind that good manners are also

indispensable characteristics of a lady. Girls often judge Jo's boyish behavior and make fun of her. Meg even blames her bad manner "You are old enough to leave off boyish tricks, and to behave better, Josephine. It didn't matter so much when you were a little girl, but now you are so tall, and turn up your hair, you should remember that you are a young lady" (13). Through the argument of Meg, Alcott stresses the necessity of lady manners. Though Jo doesn't care, the good girl readers should understand that being a good-mannered lady is what they should do.

Good manners are necessary for being a proper lady, but vanity is harmful for a girl. Good girls should not lose their dignity for the superficial things, or they would be laughed at by the others. As what Meg did in the Vanity Fair chapter, when she gives up her self-respect and pride, she becomes a foolish girl and just a doll of the wealthy girls. As Major Lincoln judges, "they are making a fool of that girl. I wanted you to see her, but they have spoiled her entirely. She's nothing but a doll tonight"(127). Meg feels ashamed. The reader can feel the regret from her little sigh. The vanity has hurt her badly and taught her to value her lovely home: "It doesn't seem pleasant to be quiet, and not have company manners on all the time. Home is a nice place, though it isn't splendid" (133).

Girls in the Victorian time were always taught to be good wives, and though they had their own dreams, it seemed impossible for them to complete them. A girl was destined to be some man's wife. And they should be aware that they were different from boys. Boys can go to the front and fight the enemy; boys can have a profession and support the family; boys can

go out and pursue their dream. But as a girl in the Victorian Era, after getting married, the only thing she can do is just being a good wife. Macleod uses the word “woman’s sphere”:
“General consensus in America held that woman’s sphere was moral rather than intellectual, domestic rather than worldly; her power was indirect; her contribution to the world was through husband and children, her reward their love and respect” (Macleod 4). Meg states it clearly: “men have to work and women to marry for money” (197).

In *Little Women*, the March girls all have their dreams. Meg wants to lead a wealthy life; Jo wants to be a famous writer; Amy wants to be an artist. But they all end up as someone’s wife, and none of them realizes her dream. They can have a job as Jo and Meg did when they were not married, but when they become a wife, their only job is taking care of children and doing housework. Another thing that a girl should also bear in mind is that she should not be so ambitious. In *Little Women* Jo is the most ambitious girl. She always wants to leave home and do something great. But it is not proper for a girl. In the very beginning she has expressed her discontentment “I can’t get over my disappointment in not being a boy, And it’s worse than ever now, for I’m dying to go and fight with Papa. And I can only stay home and knit, like a poky old woman!” (14) But as time goes by, she gradually realizes that in that social situation it is impossible for a girl to realize her dream. So when Teddy attempts to get her to Washington to see her father

she shook her head with sorrowful decision ‘If I was a boy, we’d run away together, and have a capital time, but as I am a miserable girl, I must be proper and stop at home. Don’t tempt me, Teddy, it’s a crazy

plan!' 'Prunes and prisms' are my doom, and I may as well make up my mind to it'. (274)

She has realized that no matter how ambitious and no matter how hard she tries, she would never change her fate of being a wife. So though she goes to New York to find some new material for her writing, she does not become a professional writer and finally comes home and manages to make herself accept the destiny of being a wife.

But in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* being a lady is not a necessary quality for a girl. The gender distinction is not so obvious in the dressing and appearance. Hermione is the only girl in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and her appearance is not so lady-like: "She was already wearing her new Hogwarts robes. 'Has anyone seen a toad' Neville's lost one,' she said. She had a bossy sort of voice, lots of bushy brown hair and rather large front teeth"(79). Her behavior is just like a boy's. She does not say many greeting words to the boys or show her good manner in the conversation with the boys. She is even a little rude. When Ron responds to her question she:

wasn't listening, she was looking at the wand in his hand. Actually she is very proud and is eager to show what she has learnt from the books by herself. She even looks down upon the boys. When Ron fails to turn the rat yellow, Hermione mocks at him 'Well it's not very good, is it? I've tried a few simple spells just for practice and it's all worked for me' (79).

That is absolutely not good manners. Even though she is not so lady-like and adorable,

nobody judges her. Hermione's dressing is also not so girlish: the Hogwarts robes. Both boys and girls wear the same robes at school and she can't wait to put it on. The modern girls do not have to be affected or bothered too much about their behaviors and manners. It is good to be natural, say what you want to say and do what you want to do. There are slight differences between boys and girls in appearance. A girl can be a little boorish, if that is her personality, and she doesn't have to be bothered by that.

In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the situation Hermione faces is simple. She has the gift to be a witch and is selected by Hogwarts. If she wants she can be as great as Harry and Ron. There is no difference in how they treat boys and girls in Hogwarts. Girls also have the right to pursue their dreams. And sometimes they do better than the boys. Before entering Hogwarts Hermione has already read some books required in the book list and learnt some spells. In class she does better than the other students, though in the poisons class Snape ignores her anxiety to answer his question: "Hermione stood up, her hand stretching towards the dungeon ceiling" (Rowling 103). And finally in the exam she, "of course, came top of the year" (220). She is as talented and as brave as the boys and there is no social bound stopping her from being a great witch. Rowling shows the equality of boys and girls. The girls have the same right to make their dream realized as the boys do.

As time goes by, the social ideology has changed a lot through out 150 years, and the education of children has changed too. In classic children's literature now and then we can see the differences. It shows that adults expect children to learn something new and try to adapt to

the new world well. *Little Women* is a domestic novel and is more didactic and the implied readers may be girls. And *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is more like an adventure and magical story. There are not as many didactic words in it, but we still can see that there are some virtues that Rowling expects children to have.

Of course some ideologies changed through time, but there are still others that did not change at all. And there are so many virtues that are both shown in *Little Women* and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. For example: children are taught to be brave and wise. They should be generous and caring about their families and friends, and they should learn how to control themselves, and when facing extreme difficulties they should learn to be self-sacrificial. In this aspect there are still much further researches that can be done. This essay only compares *Little Women* and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. It can not show all the changes appeared in the didactic aspect. And in other classic children's literature there are also many values proposed by the authors that show the differences. And we also can compare some other books to see whether there are other differences.

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