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# Resisting Authority

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*Breaking Rules in J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and the  
Philosopher's Stone"*

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J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997) is one of the classics of children's literature and has been read by children and adults all over the world. Translated into 67 different languages (Dammann 2008), the book was on the *New York Times* list of best-selling fiction for almost two years (1999 to 2000).

One of the most debated themes of the book is the ease with which the children repeatedly break the rules (Gibbs). Religious groups have been concerned by the harm the Harry Potter-book may bring to young readers in particular, believing that children will be encouraged to imitate the immoral behavior Harry Potter displays. This essay argues that the novel does not advocate either following or breaking rules but instead demonstrates the importance of maintaining a balance - either option may be advisable depending on the situation. The novel promotes the importance of bravery as well and that the possession of this trait is what defines a character as good or evil. This essay argues that the reasons for making the choice to break a rule are as important as the consequences. This is something that Rowling's characters gradually learn.

While Harry, Hermione and Ron are all of great importance for the story and the three protagonists' decisions to break rules, this essay argues that Harry Potter breaks most of the rules but also escapes punishment. The essay furthermore argues that Ron is the character who most frequently approves of rule-breaking and can thus be viewed as a counterweight to Hermione who fiercely abides by the rules. The instances of rule breaking and subsequent punishment in *The Philosopher's Stone* will be analyzed through close reading.

Gender will also be taken into consideration, as other authors have contended that there is a connection between J.K Rowling's characters' gender and their relation to rules. For reasons of space, only five authority figures have been included as they are the ones best described in *The Philosopher's Stone*. A range of pupils will also be discussed but with emphasis on Harry, Ron and Hermione. Beyond close reading, analysis has on this point been conducted from a feminist perspective. The focus is on the first book in the Harry Potter series.

Some important definitions are provided in order to clarify terminology. "Rules" is defined as "An authoritative, prescribed direction for conduct, especially one of the regulations governing procedure in a legislative body" (American Heritage's Dictionary, 2001). When

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writing this essay that definition of the word “Rules” has been considered as the only one and no multiple meanings of the word will be dealt with. “Authority” in the present essay refers to “the power to enforce laws, exact obedience and command, determine, or judge” as well as “one that is invested with this power, especially a government or body of government officials”. These two definitions of the word will both be used continuously during the following pages as their meanings do not challenge but instead complement each other. The last word that needs defining is “Resisting”, a concept described as “withstanding or opposing; refuse to accept or comply with” which in this case is opposing authority (American Heritage’s Dictionary, 2001).

Many books have been written on the subject of J.K Rowling’s wizard world and its characters. But authors of Harry Potter-related books seem often more interested in the life of J.K Rowling or are writing a description or addition to the Harry Potter series. They do not seem as interested in the depths or underlying meaning of the novels but instead want to make young readers buy their books. However, whether the novels advocate rule breaking is not a foreign subject in the literary world. A number of essay anthologies discuss the subject of Rowling’s characters and authority as well as why or how they are breaking the rules. However, this is not their main argument but instead a means to get a different point across or add weight to some alternate thesis, like whether the novel is gender biased or should be banned or not. Books on the Harry Potter-phenomenon that have been used in this essay is Colbert’s “The magical worlds of Harry”, Mitchell’s “The magic of Harry Potter”, and Nel’s “J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter novels”, all three dealing solely with the world and characters of the novels and not with any in-depth analysis. These have been used to give more weight to certain arguments; especially concerning the critique the Harry Potter books have received.

Three literary works with a greater focus on gender in children’s literature are Sunderland’s “Language, gender and children’s fiction”, Mayes-Elma’s “Females and Harry Potter” and Nilsson’s “From Gossip Girl to Harry Potter”. These three have been used to get a perspective on gender in literature for the present essay and also to account for what others have said about Rowling’s books. Together with critical parts in the other books and articles, one literary work that criticizes the Harry Potter series has been used; Abanes’s “Harry Potter and the Bible”. This book has been used to give an alternative view on the subject of rules. Without this addition to the references, the essay would be one sided and no fair conclusions could be drawn. The books most notably used are however the dissertations and essays that

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deal with in-depth analysis of the Harry Potter books. Baggett's "Harry Potter and Philosophy" and Heilman's "Critical perspectives on Harry Potter" have added some weight to the present essay's arguments but it is clearly the essay anthologies that have been most useful. "The ivory tower and Harry Potter" as well as "Reading Harry Potter" have a lot of essays that to some extent touch on the same arguments that this essay does. As the authors discuss a variety of subjects, they all have analyzed Harry Potter from different viewpoints, discussing a range of approaches.

Harry and his friends' undermining of authority has caused parents, politicians and school administrations to ban the books from schools and libraries in the United States despite their being beloved children's classics (Stephens, 57). The individuals wishing to ban Harry Potter are primarily parents who are often conservative Christians with a strict view of what is morally permissible (Stephens, 60). These are antagonized by the Harry Potter series' lack of adult authority and the fact that few of the teachers actually enforce the regulations. The success Harry and his friends have with breaking the rules also horrifies these same readers. The clash that many believe occurs between Christian values and the novel series is discussed by Richard Abanes, who claims Harry Potter and his friends are anything but child role models. This claim is primarily based on the children's inclination to resist authority and to lie. Neither do the children appear to be ashamed of their misdeeds (Abanes, 130). This critique, while justified, fails to take into consideration the children's tendency to reflect on what they are doing and consider the repercussions of their actions. They do not act on a whim. The passages where the children choose to disobey regulations are morally defensible as they demonstrate that they are well aware of the after-effects. Readers of the Harry Potter books are told that every choice has consequences but that it is sometimes necessary to deal with these for the greater good. That Harry and the other characters must deal with the consequences of their choices is an important theme in the series. However, Harry does not only suffer consequences when his actions are proven to be mistakes. He does the right thing in going after the stone, saving it from Voldemort but that, too, has consequences. This is demonstrated when he is badly injured by the ordeal. (Heilman, 57)

Critics of the Harry Potter series also complain that the good and evil characters break rules in similar fashion, the difference only being their intentions (Cline). What the critics of Harry Potter do not seem to see is the positive impact the books have on its reader. Rule breaking or not, a fan of J.K Rowling is quoted as having been taught about what is right or wrong and

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how actions have subsequent effects (Hanks). Even though many Christian extremists seem to have a problem with Rowling's books, not all see the books as un-religious. Harry's running through the wall to Platform 9 and three quarters has even been described as "a leap of faith" (Gibbs). Other Christian establishments have also exclaimed that they consider Rowling's books to be entirely appropriate and deeply religious stories (Gibbs). It is apparent that there will be different views concerning whether Harry Potter is proper for children to read.

With regard to the argument of the present essay a crucial observation is made by author Philip Nel who exclaims that the narrator neither advocates following the rules nor breaking them. Instead there is a time for both alternatives and the reason behind your choice is critical (Nel, 29). One should also recognize the influence the children in Harry Potter have on each other and the development that occurs throughout the novel concerning their personalities and friendship. Hermione's sense of right and wrong and her obedience to the rules helps her two friends gradually see that the consequences of breaking rules might be dire. She also shows them the importance of knowledge which is useful when dealing with adventures. At the same time; Hermione's growing understanding that there is sometimes a need to go against authority and to sacrifice the wellbeing of innocent people is influenced by her two male friends. It gives her an ability to better decide on when to follow rules or not.

Harry is a rule breaker, showing that he is just like any other child and does not always abide by the rules (Manners Smith, 79). However, as a fictional character Harry cannot be compared to an ordinary child of today. Instead, he must be compared with other characters in the novel. A good example is Neville Longbottom, as he shares many characteristics with Harry: he is of the same sex, a wizard, in Gryffindor and Neville's parents are also absent. It is Harry, not Neville, who has been through the attack from Voldemort but the fact that it might have been either of the two boys is discussed further on in the series, in the *Order of the Phoenix* (Rowling, 842). Their resemblance is distinctive but they nonetheless support different views on rules. This is evident when Neville tries to stop Harry, Hermione and Ron from leaving:

"You don't understand," said Harry, "this is important." But Neville was clearly steeling himself to do something desperate. "I won't let you do it," he said, hurrying to stand in front of the portrait hole. "I'll -- I'll fight you!"  
"Neville, "Ron exploded, "get away from that hole and don't be an idiot--"

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"Don't you call me an idiot!" said Neville. "I don't think you should be breaking any more rules!" (*The Philosopher's Stone*, 336-337)

Neville's attempt to stop the three from breaking more rules shows what might need to be done to save everyone: casting a spell on a friend. That the Harry Potter novels would argue for breaking the rules is not evident in the end when the three main characters as well as Neville are rewarded for their actions. At the end-of-year feast, bravery appears to be more esteemed than rule-breaking as all four are celebrated for doing the "right" thing (Baggett, 8)

Neville does not play a major role in *The Philosopher's Stone* but his character is still of vital importance for the sake of the story. His fall off the broom during the first flying lesson is necessary to give Harry an opportunity to showcase his bravery. Harry is breaking the rules while flying when Madame Hooch is taking Neville to the nurse. His actions are, however, justified by helping Neville retrieve his remembrall from the evil Malfoy. Once again it is then shown that there is always a reason for Harry to break the rules, in this case standing up to a bully. One could argue that it would have been easy for Harry and his friends to explain to Madame Hooch what Malfoy had done, using the remembrall as evidence and without having to break any rules. However, Harry would then not have reached the Quidditch field in the first place; his nemesis Malfoy would have gone from the school and probably the story as a whole. The passage with Harry flying without permission also reveals important features of the relationship between Harry and Draco, as this is the first real falling-out of many between the two. Harry's instinct forces him to stand up to Draco, giving the hero another valid reason to break the rules.

That Harry is relentless in fighting his nemesis Malfoy is also seen in the midnight duel. Harry and Ron do not seem to care when Hermione tells them not to sneak out of the dormitories, as Harry exclaims it is none of her business. Because the two boys are at risk of having points deducted from their house if caught, their business is clearly relevant to Hermione. But this does not seem to matter to the boys. Here too, it comes down to intentions and a valid reason. Malfoy cannot be allowed to win, so losing the points is seen by Harry and Ron as a justifiable sacrifice for the greater cause.

Where the Harry Potter series deals specifically with rule breaking, it always comes back to Harry and his friends having valid reasons or acting with good intentions. Harry is not

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chastised by Dumbledore for the Mirror of Erised despite his sneaking out several times at night to gaze at it. This indicates that Dumbledore believes Harry, who is longing for his parents, has a valid reason for breaking the rules on this particular occasion. However, when Harry and his friends help out with releasing the dragon, reasons seem to be insignificant, or at least, not sufficiently strong. Either there is a protocol for which reasons are valid or Dumbledore and McGonagall have different views on what is acceptable behavior. The constant favoritism that Dumbledore shows towards Harry demonstrates that the headmaster would probably let more things slide than McGonagall. On the occasions where McGonagall is lenient towards Harry, she either does not know the truth, or she has something personal to gain. In comparison, Dumbledore perpetually condones Harry's offenses throughout the series.

Not only is there a variance in terms of the characters' viewpoints concerning rule breaking but there are also differences in how they are punished for their infractions. One example is the passage about the troll where Hermione is in the wrong place at the wrong time but is still punished. But as McGonagall does not know the whole story, the lack of punishment of the boys seems to be dependent on their supposedly good intentions in trying to save Hermione. This implies that how you are punished is dependent on your intentions and whether there is a good reason for breaking the rules. That Harry flies on the broomstick without permission and the lack of repercussions thereafter supports this conclusion; he has good intentions and is indeed not punished by McGonagall. However, Hermione's reaction to Harry's getting away with breaking the rules and receiving a new broom suggests otherwise: "So I suppose you think that's a reward for breaking rules?" (*The Philosopher's Stone, 208*). If intentions and reasons were an acceptable pretext for all rule breaking, it would seem strange for Hermione to react as sharply as she does, indicating that it might have more to do with Harry than anything else.

Despite the injunction that there will be repercussions for flying without permission, Hermione's claim that Harry will get into trouble is proven incorrect. When McGonagall includes a first-year student in the Quidditch team, another exception is made on account of Harry. This exception gives Harry an arena in which to display his heroics and the Quidditch field certainly plays an important part in Harry Potter's life. Hermione believes that McGonagall acts unfairly in this incident with the broom and after this event, she seems to start doubting authority, as she realizes that teachers are not always fair judges. This is

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important because it alters Hermione's character sufficiently to make her go against her own values and she even lies to protect Ron and Harry.

The moment when Hermione lies to McGonagall and takes the blame sparks off the three children's friendship. This shows that friendship is a consequence of breaking rules (Dresang, 232). The theory seems, however, to lose some credibility because the three children remain friends despite Hermione abiding by the rules on several occasions subsequent to the troll situation. That the children's developing friendship is a result of the trauma they have been through, instead of from breaking the rules, is more feasible. The action of saving her friends could indicate that Hermione feels that friendship is more important than rules or truth. From the other novels in the Harry Potter series, it is possible to draw the conclusion that sacrificing oneself not necessarily has to do with friendship. Instead it is an important trait that all heroic characters must possess.

If the Nimbus 2000 is not a reward for breaking the rules but for having a natural talent, it would seem that Hermione is wrong to quarrel (Mitchell, 48-50). The personal goal of McGonagall to retain the house cup also plays a part in Harry's gift. The fact that Hogwarts students are hurt by flying would, however, make the rule about not flying unauthorized extremely important. A teacher's personal wishes would not be important enough to jeopardize the students' well-being. McGonagall, who is otherwise a responsible, rule-abiding woman, goes against her normal behavior this time. It is difficult to believe that she would do this purely due to her personal preferences of wanting to win. Farah Mendelsohn (164) argues that all the exceptions made on account of Harry have to do with his destiny as a hero. As such, Harry always needs to be victorious and of course; Harry's status of being a "good boy" cannot continue if he is expelled. This means that there is a need for authority to ignore the rules when it concerns Harry.

Nevertheless, a need for some limitations on behavior is evident as they provide a boarding school framework to the novels (Manners Smith, 80). Harry gives reason for fans' worship by escaping expulsion on a couple of occasions. However, by his being punished for smaller infractions, he is still normal enough for children to identify with. Because of the boundaries Harry is restricted by, parallels can be drawn between Harry's world and our own.

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In the Harry Potter series, there are thresholds or obstacles that Harry crosses that makes him a hero (Colbert, 146). In *The Philosopher's stone*, there are, however not a single large one but many smaller crossings instead. The threshold into the wizard world is one of the most noticeable but even that boundary consists of a lot of smaller ones, the way into Diagonal alley, for example, or the train ride towards the school. The children break many rules prior to crossing the thresholds. When taking that into consideration, thresholds become relevant to the present discussion. The final chapter of the novel, with the grand finale, is the largest test that the children must pass; they cross the obstacle alone, with no other protectors than each other. The degree of rule breaking involved to get the characters to this point, however, is astounding. But this is all for the greater good, as the three children would not have been able to get to the stone without disobeying the authority of Hogwarts's regulations.

By taking care of himself, Harry becomes his own authority (Stephens, 57). From not having been taken care of before, he does not expect anyone to take care of him now either. After eleven years of being ignored by the Dursleys, Harry is used to taking things into his own hands. In the muggle world, he is even his own guardian. In the wizard world however, he is taken care of by many teachers, Hagrid and even the headmaster himself. Many of these characters pop in and out of the story or are childish or clueless about the main plot against Harry. They are nevertheless there at the school and most other students seem satisfied with this. Because of Harry's background of having been ignored for eleven years, his need to handle things himself makes him prone to break the rules. His upbringing with the Dursley's understandably scars him. They do not force any rules on their son even when he is mean to Harry and seem to display no concern at all for Harry's wellbeing. Hogwarts does however have rules and enforces them, even though Harry and his friends break them more than once.

The topic of the teachers' cluelessness is brought up in *Boys and Girls Forever* in connection with child heroes who are often smarter than their adult authority (Lurie, 117). The teacher's cluelessness is also of relevance for what conclusions are to be drawn concerning characters in connection to rules. If the children are smarter than their adult authority, one could imagine the main characters' difficulties in obeying the authority's commands (Lurie, 117). McGonagall is used as an example, favoring the rules but at the same time not listening to her student. This, despite Harry and his friends telling McGonagall that they have knowledge about the Philosopher's stone:

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"Professor, I think -- I know -- that Sn- that someone's going to try and steal the Stone. I've got to talk to Professor Dumbledore."

"Professor Dumbledore will be back tomorrow," she said finally. I don't know how you found out about the Stone, but rest assured, no one can possibly steal it, it's too well protected."

"But Professor --"

"Potter, I know what I'm talking about," she said shortly.

*(The Philosopher's Stone, 214)*

The conversation with the children should be alarming to McGonagall as it shows that something is amiss. According to her, the children should not have had any knowledge about the secret stone. Despite this, she does not even truly question them about how they found out about the secret or what else they know. She does not proceed to find out anything for herself either. This behavior from McGonagall is probably related to her total faith in Dumbledore, which seems to be unwavering in the series. But when the children ask her for help and she declines it results in the children believing that they will not get any help from an authority figure. That furthermore leads the three children to take action towards the stone being stolen, validating their fight against Voldemort at the end of the book.

The chapter where Harry is flying on a broom, despite being told not to, can be seen as a way to indicate how little Harry and his friends trust the authority of the school. It also shows how the lack of trust causes them to act on their own accord; once again giving, what the three children believe to be, validation to Harry's disobedient actions. If Harry believed that the teachers would take care of Malfoy he would not have risked expulsion for a remembrall. However, with Harry's background when he was wrongly punished by the Dursleys, it is easy to see that he would question authority. For Harry, it would therefore be imperative to save the remembrall, even if it meant breaking the rules.

In the Harry Potter series, the authority and the hierarchy of Hogwarts are constantly undermined (Stephens, 58). The person most prone to undermining the authority, apart from Harry himself, seems to be Dumbledore. The fact that he is the primary figure of authority should to be taken into consideration as it would make the rules, to some extent, his rules and regulations. It might only be on a whim that Dumbledore is acting. Not that his intention is to undermine authority, as that would mean that he is subverting himself. The only thing that is certain is that Dumbledore gives Harry the cloak, sees Harry by the mirror, talks about how it

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works and rewards the children, despite them breaking the rules. The evidence is however not sufficient to draw any clear conclusion concerning Dumbledore. It can only be established that he goes against his own rules at some occasions and then rewards Harry and his friends for doing the same.

At every turn where McGonagall is the unfair and censorious authority figure, Dumbledore is the flexible and open-minded one. He is willing to listen to Harry's conclusions and does not chastise him despite his having the alternative to expel Harry on a couple of occasions (Cockrell, 17). To Harry, he becomes something of a father figure who lets him explore his talents and destiny and go on adventures. The question is how fair Dumbledore is to all the other pupils, as he constantly makes exceptions for Harry. At the end-of-year feast, the fairness of Dumbledore is questioned as he fixes the result in favor of Gryffindor. Because of Snape's disapproval of Harry, Hermione and Ron, some deductions of Gryffindor's points are admittedly unfair. This, however, is not true for the points they lose for releasing the dragon (Mendelshohn, 171). It is understandable that they do not want to tell on Hagrid because he is their friend, but there must also be consequences for getting caught when doing something forbidden. Stripping the children of fifty points each might seem harsh but is, it seems, considered fair punishment for the infraction. It is hard to see the fairness in Dumbledore's actions as Gryffindor is overtaking Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff as well, and it is only Slytherin that consists of "evil" characters. Dumbledore's actions throughout the Harry Potter series indicate that he favors Harry more than the others, which must be seen to be unfair.

When it comes to Dumbledore, he seems to have knowledge about what is happening to Harry in the novel. He does not concern himself with Harry's smaller infractions and when encountering him in front of the mirror, Dumbledore does not punish Harry in any way, he only orders him not to go looking for the mirror when it gets moved. When he does not openly disapprove, Harry and his friends seem to see this as a sanction of their adventures. As the headmaster, he should abide by the rules and expect the rest to do the same but he does not. It is in fact Dumbledore who passes on the invisibility cloak, even though it gives Harry the opportunity to get into all kinds of danger. As the quotation below indicates, the headmaster is aware that the cloak has been used for unsanctioned actions before:

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"Ah - your father happened to leave it in my possession, and I thought you might like it." Dumbledore's eyes twinkled. "Useful things... your father used it mainly for sneaking off to the kitchens to steal food when he was here."  
(*The Philosopher's Stone* 241)

The cloak could help any pupil overstep the boundaries without anyone knowing, thereby putting them in grave danger. Despite this, the thought of Harry's father sneaking to forbidden parts of the castle makes Dumbledore's eyes "twinkle". This shows Dumbledore's lack of respect for potential dangers.

That the headmaster is lenient towards the main character is, according to author Karen Manners Smith, a typical feature of school fiction; it is apparently common for head masters not to enforce regulations on the hero child (78). It is sometimes necessary for the hero to break rules to succeed in the great adventure, so he or she is beyond the rules. It is, however, hard to understand the need for an eleven year old boy to fight Voldemort. Dumbledore is supposed to be a wizard of great knowledge and power, making it probable that he has no problem taking on Voldemort. He is also well aware of what the children are doing and even helps them to get to the Philosopher's stone. When Dumbledore and Harry are discussing the children's adventure in the final chapter, it seems that Dumbledore has given Harry the chance to face the man who killed his parents:

(Ron)"D'you think he meant you to do it?" "Sending you your father's cloak and everything?"

(Harry) "He's a funny man, Dumbledore. I think he sort of wanted to give me a chance. I think he knows more or less everything that goes on here, you know. I reckon he had a pretty good idea we were going to try, and instead of stopping us, he just taught us enough to help. I don't think it was an accident he let me find out how the mirror worked. It's almost like he thought I had the right to face Voldemort if I could...." (*The Philosopher's Stone* 244)

It may seem absurd to most readers that a wizard as clever as Dumbledore could believe it reasonable to let an eleven year old boy, who is just learning how to use his magic powers, face the most powerful wizard of all. However, Harry is destined to face Voldemort over and over again and that it would be more logical for Dumbledore to take care of it instead is irrelevant. However, one may argue that the stone would not have been near Voldemort had it not been for Harry being there: "You see, only one who wanted to find the Stone -- find it, but not use it -- would be able to get it, otherwise they'd just see themselves making gold or

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drinking Elixir of Life" (*The Philosopher's Stone* 242,). This would mean that Voldemort would never have acquired the stone without further aid and that the presence of Harry actually put the stone in danger. That would also mean that breaking the rules to get to the stone is the wrong thing to do.

From a gender perspective, Hermione's part is just as important as Ron's. She is the only one in the group able to figure out the potions when going for the stone, just as Ron is the only one who really knows how to play wizard chess (Nilsson, 99). Hermione is also the one who finds out who Nicholas Flamell is, and who rescues the boys from the Devil snare. But without the help of Ron's exclamation when Hermione loses her bearings; "*HAVE YOU GONE MAD? ARE YOU A WITCH OR NOT?*" (*The Philosopher's Stone*, 223) she could not have done so. Any statements of gender injustice are shown to be untrue when the two characters are equally rewarded in the final chapter (Nilsson, 102). Ron and Hermione are equally important; Ron is the loyal and faithful friend, whilst Hermione is the supporting and helping character. She finds information, questions and reflects over things and acts as a moral compass.

When it comes to Ron and Hermione, their characters are constructed so as to let Harry's heroism shine through (Sunderland 195). With only a few exceptions in the seven Harry Potter books; Ron is mediocre, both in school, during adventures and personality-wise. Hermione is brilliant at school and good at magic, but all of it is acquired through hard work as she does not, like Harry, have a range of natural talents. Hermione's "know-it-all" attitude and need to correct and nag her friends are not redeeming qualities either. As sidekicks, Ron and Hermione's good traits become by extension Harry's (Mendelsohn, 165). All three possess different kinds of knowledge and qualities. As the adventure at the end of *The Philosopher's Stone* is laid out as a symbolic test of what the three children have learned up to that particular point, it would certainly be difficult to get through to Quirrel and Voldemort were it only Harry (Hopkins, 28). Without the help of his friends, Harry would not have been able to succeed in his quest to find the stone. Despite this, Harry gets most of the credit for their adventures and is the accepted hero and Ron and Hermione only side-kicks. Hermione more than once pushes Harry in the direction of personal growth and success. In comparison, Ron often points Harry in the wrong direction (Gallardo-C, 199). One should, however, acknowledge that Ron often does not propose any rule breaking but rather supports any rule breaking that Harry does.

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On the first train ride to school, Hermione's behavior gives an indication of her attitude towards Hogwarts (Mayes-Elma, 79). She is already dressed, excited to go to school and making friends by helping Neville. Hermione has in no way a bland personality but by being studious and bending to authority she conforms to society's ideas of what constitutes as a "good girl" (Mayes-Elma, 82). In comparison, Ron and Harry are mediocre in school, not committed to doing homework or punctual for class. Their focus lies instead on mystery and adventures. They break the rules repeatedly and without any dire consequences. Hermione, however, is in the right circumstances able to compromise her natural desire to obey the rules (Manners Smith, 79). Compared to Ron and Harry, who do not seem affected emotionally by breaking rules, she is always remorseful afterwards. Hermione even withdraws from her classes after being punished for releasing the dragon.

The most rule breaking characters the Harry Potter-series contains are the Weasley-twins. They are not included much in the first book but drop out of school in the fifth book, breaking as many rules as possible on the way out. Even so, they are never expelled. There are no female counterparts to George and Fred Weasley, only another female twin pair: The Parvatis. They are, however, not described to be breaking anything. We cannot be sure if this is supposed to advocate something, but only establish that no female characters are breaking the rules in the same manner as the male twins.

The teachers at Hogwarts display similar traits to Harry, Ron and Hermione concerning gender differences, as their views on rules seem connected to which gender they belong to. This is evident especially with Hagrid, Snape, McGonagall and Madam Hooch, as these four are the authority figures best described in *The Philosopher's Stone*. McGonagall, Madame Hooch and Hermione are all advising others to abide by the rules, as they are themselves (Lacoss, p.80). When Hermione does break the rules, she is more emotionally distraught by her actions than her male counterparts. Madame Hooch is never described as breaking the rules. In the first book, McGonagall goes against the regulations because of personal wishes and Gryffindor's gain. But Harry's being allowed to play on the Quidditch-team comes with conditions, when McGonagall asks him not to make her regret her decision. During the remainder of the Harry Potter-series, McGonagall only breaks the rules when the reasons are strong enough for other authority figures to break them as well.

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Hagrid continually asks the children to stop looking for the stone, but he also gives them the clues to actually succeed in their quest. He could at any time tell Dumbledore that he accidentally gave the children clues about the whereabouts of the stone, as that would be the right thing to do. Even if Hagrid is too ashamed of not being able to keep a secret, he could at least threaten the kids that he will tell Dumbledore to stop them from inquiring further. By not trying to hinder the children, Hagrid fails in his role as an authority figure. By acquiring a dragon despite it being illegal, he also breaks the rules and by telling the kids about it even makes them accomplices.

Snape, unlike Hagrid, usually abides by the rules but misuses them by bending them to his own whims and favoring certain students. Because of Snape's unfairness, Harry does not respect his authority and Ron follows Harry's lead. Hermione, who is more torn concerning Snape, simply gets her opinions voted down. Snape can also be considered to have broken the rules through his carelessness concerning the house points if one assumes that there are guidelines to when you can deduct points from students. He also goes against important regulations by not reporting to Dumbledore that Quirell is trying to get to the stone.

McGonagall is the character who sticks most to the rules and manages the house points. After Harry, Hermione and Ron encounter the troll and break the rules by being out of their dormitories, Hermione has points deducted for her foolishness. The two boys are rewarded even though they are out of the dormitory just as Hermione. They are rewarded for sheer luck and not talent. McGonagall also rewards Harry with a place in the Quidditch team despite him having broken the rules when flying unauthorized. This seems however to have more to do with Harry being the hero, as McGonagall does not hesitate to punish the students at other instances in the novel series. The point in the novel where she deducts 150 points from her own house says a great deal about her obedience to rules as she does this despite being aware that it will put Gryffindor in last place. Her strictness indicates that she is setting an example.

Madame Hooch is not described very thoroughly in the novel. However, through her demeanor at Harry's first flying lesson one can draw the conclusion that she expects all students to follow the rules. This is seen through her giving clear instructions and threatening to expel students for flying without permission. No expulsion for unauthorized flyers is carried out but that is not necessarily by Madame Hooch's admission. The first Quidditch game redeems her when she exclaims that she is expecting a fair fight. She judges the match

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fairly, giving plenty of penalties to Gryffindor when it is called for and follows the rules of the game.

It is evident that both Snape and Hagrid have trouble sticking to the rules. McGonagall and Madam Hooch usually have not. Because of only analyzing these four authority figures, the results are unfortunately not conclusive enough to draw any convincing conclusions regarding gender. One would have to go through all Hogwart's staff to get a fair conclusion and there is no room for that in this essay. The differences between these four could be related to personality and not gender. Consideration must be taken to age, maturity and upbringing as well. Madam Hooch and McGonagall are, however, more prone to follow the rules and advocate that the students do so as well.

Except for the Weasley twins, Harry Potter is the primary rule breaker in the novel series and is indeed not punished for all his infractions. But the reasons for the lack of punishment are many. The disciplinary actions are dependent on intentions and the reasons for breaking the rules. Harry always seems to have a good explanation. As a hero, he must also be a "good boy" and can therefore not be expelled. It would bring a far too hasty end to the series. Therefore there is a need for authority to ignore the rules but some regulations are, however, needed. Therefore some exceptions exist where Harry is actually punished. Harry, Hermione and Ron do not, for example, get away with releasing the dragon, despite honorable intentions. Otherwise, the story will fully lose its footing in the real world and children reading the books will find it harder to identify with Harry. Whether Harry is punished or not, is also dependent on who is the authority figure. Dumbledore lets everything slide, whilst McGonagall or Snape are stricter with the rules. This indicates that what is considered as valid reasons is dependent on who is responsible for giving the punishment.

The reasons for breaking a rule are also of relevance to the Harry Potter series and its characters. Not letting Draco win is just as important as not letting Voldemort win: the means are simply a little different. Dealing with the consequences is also essential. Harry, Hermione and Ron getting frozen out by the other Gryffindors and encountering Voldemort in the woods only happened because they tried to help Hagrid. This demonstrates that even, what is believed to be, right decisions have an outcome. In *The Philosopher's Stone* the consequences of saving everyone from Voldemort is the momentary deterioration of Harry's health. The

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lesson that every choice has consequences is what makes Harry and his friends' actions so much braver. They are sacrificing themselves for the greater good

As previously observed; Harry's upbringing and background understandably influence his decisions as he clearly has problems with trusting authority. The often clueless or sometimes unfair teachers of Hogwarts do not help Harry to change his views either. The only authority figure Harry relies on is Dumbledore, but he instead enables Harry to go on his dangerous adventures by giving him the cloak and not punishing Harry when he breaks the rules. The headmaster's behavior is however a usual feature of school fiction (Manners-Smith, 78). Here too, it comes back to Harry being the hero and needing to be "outside" the rules to succeed. But Dumbledore is also unfair to the other students by favoring Harry and making Gryffindor win the house cup.

The unfairness of Dumbledore and teachers is what makes Hermione start doubting authority, altering her so she becomes more pleasant as a character, according to Harry and Ron. As the counterweight to Ron, she still maintains her appreciation for rules but is able to compromise when necessary. When she supports and helps Harry's personal growth, Ron agrees with all of Harry's ideas, even if it means going in the wrong direction. It comes down to balance. Despite statements of gender injustice in the Harry Potter series, Ron and Hermione are of equal importance. Harry does, however, seem to appreciate Ron's approval more than Hermione's nagging, but they both play an important part in the adventure. Without all three children's talents and knowledge they would not have succeeded in getting to the stone and facing Voldemort. Ron and Hermione are also identically rewarded in the end, for their actions. Statements on gender injustice is generally more based on Harry versus Hermione which certainly is not fair, when Harry is the main character, the hero, and Hermione is not.

No evidence has been found to support the idea that there is a connection between a character's gender and their attitude toward rules. At the instances where male and female characters could be suggested to follow a specific gender pattern the differences could also be accounted to character traits, such as age or background. What is certain, however, is that Snape and Hagrid are less prone to following the rules than McGonagall and Hooch. Hermione is more rule-biding than Harry and Ron, and the most rule-breaking characters of all are the Weasley twins. Neville, on the other hand, opposes Ron and Harry breaking any more rules. All of these facts could, nevertheless, be circumstantial and not at all gender-

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related. If the matter is to be fully determined, a further investigation would be needed where all characters in the Harry Potter-series are analyzed.

Even though there are an astounding number of situations where Harry and his friends break the rules, Harry often escapes punishment. This is, however, tied to Harry being a hero and authority therefore making exceptions on his behalf. As a “good boy” Harry cannot very well be expelled. Despite Harry and his friends going against authority, the novel does not in any way advocate breaking rules. Neither does it advocate following them. Instead, the importance of maintaining a balance is evident and the proper way to go is dependent on the situation. There will infallibly be consequences whatever choices the characters make. Sometimes the repercussions are not as bad, and at other times they are just shown later. But more than often, Harry almost pays with his life when saving the world.

The characters’ essence of being good and bad is not determined by breaking or abiding by the rules but instead by whether they are doing the “right thing” or not. As a hero, Harry is trying to do the right thing by stopping Voldemort even though he might not be the best suited for the task. Despite Harry actually putting the stone in danger, his intentions are good and that is what seems to matter. By risking their own lives, Harry and his friends sacrifice themselves bravely for the greater good, displaying great heroic qualities. And this is what it all comes down to, what the Harry Potter-novels advocates; Bravery. A possession of this character trait is also what divides the habitants of the Harry Potter-universe into good or bad. Not whether they break the rules or not. The characters do not, however, need to save the world every time, to be brave. In some cases, bravery is saving the world from an evil mastermind and in others simply standing up to your friends.

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