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Undergraduate Research Paper

Potter versus Snape: Vying for the Title of the True Romantic Hero

(102) which Furst describes as essential for the Romantic heroes to bear. Although both Harry and Snape embrace the primary characteristics of a Romantic Hero, it is arguably Harry who outgrows these qualities, leaving Snape to carry on the tradition. It is Harry, then, who transforms from a boy enveloped in his own egocentricities, moods, unbalanced and wavering emotions, isolation, and impending doom into an egoless, sacrificial, traditional literary hero, and Snape who cannot evolve beyond these limitations as he clings to the moments that define Harry Potter.

For Henri Peyre, author of *What is Romanticism?*, Romanticism centers on while redefining social concepts and norms by introducing complete freedom of expression. For the Romantics, , Peyre observes about the Romantic movement, this reduction of boundaries allowed Romantics to b

magical world as Romantic, her protagonist naturally falls into the classification of
ous nature, and so, in
true Rowling fashion, nothing is what it appears to be. Therefore, it is only natural for
Rowling to mislead her readers, drawing them into the labyrinth with the bread crumbs of
romanticism.

THE CASE FOR ROMANTICISM

First, the Romantics have a weakness for imagination because it allows for
complete freedom from reality: tic imagination does not accept limitations.

subject is outside of the experience of the (Global). This use of
imagination creates a natural connection between young adult fiction and Romanticism,
as imagination many times plays a central role for both. Imagination acts as the go-
between for truth and reality, and, because in the Romantic tradition there is a reflection
between thought and imagination, it helps young adult and adult readers alike to make
sense of this world through exploring the subjective and objective, allowing for the

Anne Le Lievre clearly links Harry Potter to this world of imagination in her article

within the limitations the environment imposes and thus to ensure
 world draws on
 imagination to create one
 egocentricities. Not only does she ask readers to open their imaginations to her limitless
 world, but to the characters themselves.

Second, because of the intertwining of magic and imagination in the series and
 characters that for the most part are egotistically driven by their characteristics, a key
 component of Romanticism
 this category. As Tom

sinful, even though their agen

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-wire over

a sea of grey. Harry, Ron, and Hermione constantly break direct orders from their
 professors, though Hermione sometimes less willingly than Harry and Ron, who are in
 search of the truth or the occasional good time. Like many human beings, they follow
 their heart and instinct, but Harry more so than others, and this is what makes him such
 an easy character to enjoy. As Morris further

solved merely by the use of magic, but rather by intelligence, planning, courage,
 determination, persistence, resourcefulness, fidelity, friendliness, and many other
 qualities traditionally kn

If Harry Potter Ran

General Electric 10). By forcing characters to earn their virtues, Rowling weaves the
 narrative plot fabric for the battle of the Romantic Hero.

Finally, it is also worth noting that emotions run rampant in *Harry Potter*, as they play such a critical role in the Romantic Movement by governing how a person acts or behaves without consequence to traditional and proper order. Furst describes how the Romantic ideology invested personal significanc

magic, as it is by

predilection towards living the Romantic Hero life.

Even though the readers are thrown into a world that demands their imagination, as Tom Morris discusses in his article *The Courageous Harry Potter*, Rowling is trying to convey that taking the easy way is not how to trek through life. Rather, the process of developing these virtues is what fulfills a life and not magic. By exploring the building of virtues, readers are further able to distinguish Snape as the Romantic Hero. Snape is one of the most virtuous and moral characters in the book; yet, his virtues never grow. The

Is Ambition a

Virtue? Why Slytherin Belongs at Hogwarts in the book *Harry Potter and Philosophy: If Aristotle Ran Hogwarts* discusses Severus Snape as an extremely virtuous man, with his most prominent virtue being ambition. Not only does Snape spend his entire career at Hogwarts coveting the position of the instructor of Defense Against the Dark Arts, but he also continuously pushes his Slytherin house to succeed in winning the house cup. But more than just ambition, Snape possess unwavering loyalty to Dumbledore, and follows his exact orders until the very end, no matter how extreme or how much he disagreed with Dumbledore. As Rowling unfolds the tale throughout the last book, readers learn that

-- to kill Dumbledore if Malfoy

failed to kill him--is

him uncomfortable and confuse him because he is not told everything, Snape still follows

s extreme courage as a double

Eaters by continuously entering i

is in his teenage

years, learning about himself and developing virtues, Snape is tabled; his three main virtues, ambition, loyalty, and courage, prevent him from evolving past Romantic Hero behavior. Although the practice of his virtues displays his selflessness, this practice also keeps him recycling his feelings for Lily Potter by forcing him to be around Harry day in and day out for its own sake,

Lily Potter and if he somewhat enjoys being there. Insisting on reliving emotions, not matter life of the
Romantic Hero.

THE CASE FOR SNAPE AS THE ROMANTIC HERO

The argument for Snape as the Romantic Hero begins with an exploration of the drama which surrounded . Tom Morris observes in his book *If Harry Potter Ran General Electric*
frustrating example of divergence between appearance and reality to be found in all the *Harry P* most elusive character, with his true motives always out of reach. But to understand the man Snape becomes, we must examine the boy he was. Born on January 9, 1960 to Tobias Snape, a mud-blood, and Eileen Prince, a pure-blood, Snape was to become a classic outcast, teased by his *The*
-
Deathly Hallows

his clothes were so mismatched that it looked deliberate: too short jeans, a shabby,

fact that he was a mud-blood, does not help him when he enters Hogwarts at age 11, and once he is at Hogwarts, his personal style does not evolve. And as Sirius Black

The Order of the Phoenix

had a stringy, pallid look about him, like a plant kept in the dark. His hair was lank and greasy and was flopping onto the table, his hooked

Since his unhappy teenage years,

according to Furst (89). Sometimes potions need to be edited or expanded, and sometimes new potions need to be created. The very essence of collecting products of nature to combine together follows Romantic ideology, but Snape does not just follow -plot in *The Half-Blood Prince* revolves around Harry and Ron trying to discover who this Half-Blood Prince is. After finding an old potions book with hand-written tips from the previous owner and original potions, Harry and Ron begin to excel at their worst subject. They agree and continuously state throughout the book that the Half-Blood Prince is a genius, and he is, but little do they know it their despised potions master, Snape. By creating, Snape also incorporates the important Romantic element of, again, imagination. Because of Romanticism,

why a Roman

ownership of the title of the true Romantic Hero in *Harry Potter*

Romantic Hero traits are explored next, it becomes obvious that his lack of an artistic nature and his ability to evolve past the cyclical world of self-absorption disqualify him.

While there is a strong argument made for Snape to be the true Romantic Hero in *Harry Potter*, the boy the books revolve around must be addressed. After all, Harry is our hero, no? He meets the criteria: Harry is good natured, fights for the good guys, stands up

to the bad guys, and ultimately kills the ultimate bad guy, Voldemort. However, through examining Harry further, Harry emerges from his Romantic prison into the daylight of the traditional literary hero.

First, comparing Harry to a Romantic Hero is critical, because the Romantic Hero is over-exaggerated, mirroring the self-involvement of a Romantic Hero, but Harry resembles that of a normal teenager. While Snape sports greasy hair that hangs in his face and lugs a long black cape that sweeps the castle floors when he walks, Harry is the complete opposite. Besides the over-sized, ragged second hand clothes Harry wore while living with his aunt and uncle, Harry looked like an average teenager once he arrived at Hogwarts. Although Snape has a pasty complexion, black, soulless eyes, and yellowed knobbly knees, black hair, and bright green eyes. He wore round glasses held together

2). In fact, besides his distinct round glasses, Harry's most noticeable physical feature is the lightning bolt scar given to him by Lord Voldemort. And although his scar is considered the most unique and interesting physical feature, Harry's fashion sense is not very fashion-forward, but more of a practical, no-natured fashion sense and hygiene routine.

Next, Harry, like Snape, also deals with teasing from peers, but Harry has friends on his side rooting for him. This teasing often leads to Harry turning inward, making him more melancholic. However, the support of his friends pushes him forward, forcing him to not let it affect him. Draco Malfoy is another one of Harry's rivals throughout the books. Both only children in the same year, the match is perfect for butting heads, and Draco often

succeeds in making Harry more than angry. As Tom Morris points out in his book *If Harry Potter Ran General Electric* the nastiest little

recounts when Malfoy also picks on friends, like Hagrid the groundskeeper, and fo

Snape does not. As a teenager, Snape practices more spells, writes spells, and sends scathing glances at his enemies. Luckily for Harry, he has friends like Hermione Granger constantly reminding him how to rise above people like Malfoy. In the *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Hermione keeps Harry from attacking Malfoy by telling

dream much more frequently than anyone he knows. His dreams are not only numerous

subject in his dreams, they are leading him down paths that force him to act selflessly, not selfishly.

As Harry leaves his selfish nature behind, his friends look to him as a leader not

true romantic hero is, and

ownership as protagonist, traditional hero, after all, the series is named after him, it forces readers to compare Snape and Harry side by side. When this happens, it is Snape who wins

multiplicity of characteristics and purposes, but all manifestations of the figure have three qualities in common: a deep reverence for nature, a tendency to respond to the world through feeling rather than rational cogitation, and the insistence that the world can only be understood when viewed from a subjective

It is Snape who fully possess these characteristics of a Romantic Hero. His deep reverence for nature is explored through his job as potions master. Everyday he works with the earth to explore its ability to assist in the fight for the wizarding world or to create potions for his own personal use, whereas Harry never masters potions and shows no preference for nature. Because nature is an essential element of Romanticism, it is important

it. And readers see throughout the series how Harry evolves from a boy who reacts with feelings into a man who thinks about his actions and follows through with logic and

reasoning man, Snape is still broken-hearted and clinging to the memory of Lily Potter until death, and through these emotions he views the world through a subjective lens

his life. This causes

Snape to overreact severely to Harry, even though in the end he i
life. Over exaggerating life moments and living in his egocentricities qualify Snape as the
Romantic Hero.

Harry Potter leads readers through seven books, making them
believe that Harry is the true hero, Romantic or otherwise, but it is not until the last book
that readers can see the big picture. They have been tricked. It is Snape, and not Harry,
who is the true Romantic Hero; however, this discovery is not upsetting and a journey
worth taking again and again.

Works Cited

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