

# Freaks and Muggles

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Intolerance and prejudice in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

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**Autumn 2007**

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## 1. Introduction

As is widely known, the Harry Potter books have become a huge success. The first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, has sold over 100 million copies worldwide becoming the tenth most sold single-volume book of all time; and if religious and political works are omitted, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* moves up to second spot on that list (Wikipedia: List of best-selling books). Even though this estimate does not take into account the number of people on the planet at the time of publication, Harry Potter has nevertheless become a major hit and as such, it has also had a major effect on contemporary culture and youth.

In Harry Potter the reader is presented with a whole new world: the magic community inhabited by Wizards. The traction and intolerance between this and the non-magic community, also known as Muggles, is one of the book's major themes. There is resentment between the two communities where some Wizards look upon Muggles as less worthy, and where Muggles consider Wizards freaks. As Harry Potter moves between the two worlds, the reader gradually discovers what both communities think of each other.

In today's society where immigration and many different nationalities are common, racism and prejudice are real problems which need to be addressed. Young pupils need all the support they can get to facilitate their understanding of these issues. This essay argues that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* helps young people to better understand social intolerance and racial prejudice in today's society. Specific examples will be analyzed with the aid of New Critical close reading.

## 2. Intolerance and prejudice

Collins *Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* defines *intolerance* as “unwillingness to let other people act in a different way or hold different opinions from you”. If you consider different opinions from your own as unacceptable you are intolerant. The same dictionary defines *prejudice* as an “unreasonable dislike of a

particular group of people or things, or a preference for a one group of people or things over another”. If you see a group of people (that you might or might not belong to) as better than another group then you are prejudice. These two terms are used exactly as stated throughout the essay and are considered common traits for people who have racist tendencies.

## 2.1 Racism

People tend to approach things that are different with suspicion. It is human nature that what we know little or nothing about frightens us. “Racism is [...] not merely ‘xenophobia’ – a term [...] to describe a reflexive feeling of hostility to the stranger or Other. Xenophobia may be a starting point [...] but it is not the think itself.” (Frederickson, page 6). So what is racism?

Collins *Cobuild Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary* defines *racism* as “the belief that people of some races are inferior to others, and the behavior which is the result of this belief”. Racism is the idea that people can be divided into races and that some races of people are better than others. But racism is more than just ideas and theory. It often expresses itself in actions and organizations. It also “either directly sustains or proposes to establish *a racial order*.” (Fredrickson, page 6). In which one group is in control.

Racism remains a major problem in contemporary society. Or as George Fredrickson puts it: “It is widely believed that racism remains a major international problem at the dawn of the twenty-first century.” (Fredrickson, page 139). Fredrickson also concludes that “Unfortunately racism survives even in the carefully delineated sense that has governed this study of its history.” (Fredrickson, page 141). With this in mind literature still has a major part to play in investigating the cause and consequences of prejudice.

## 2.2 Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy is basically the idea that literature can heal and help readers to better understand different situations. “At its most basic, bibliotherapy consists of the selection of reading material, for a client that has relevance to that person's life situation.”

(Wikipedia: Bibliotherapy) When the reading has a connection with the reader's life, the reader will gain insight in its own situation and will be able to think about it without too much emotional stress. This is because the subject becomes more abstract and distant when it is discussed in literature.

Tom McIntyre, a Professor of Special Education and Coordinator at Hunter College at the City University of New York, has written extensively on how bibliotherapy can be used by teachers in a classroom environment. He argues that there need to be three steps for bibliotherapy to be effective. First *identification* where “the youngster identifies with a book character and events in the story, either real or fictitious”. The next step is *catharsis* where “the youngster becomes emotionally involved in the story and is able to release pent-up emotions under safe conditions”. The final step is *insight* where the youngster [...] becomes aware that his/her problems might also be addressed or solved.” (McIntyre). If a book has identifiable characters easily understood by the reader and a story that involves the reader emotionally, there is a good chance that the third stage will be reached. Insight is the result of successful bibliotherapy.

Once the above process is complete, bibliotherapy yields many positive results. “Literature allows a reader to identify with characters and problems in a book and relate them to their own lives. A reader [...] gains insight into alternative solutions to their own problems.” (The International Child and Youth Care Network). As this essay demonstrates, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* has the potential to bring about such an insight.

### 3. Two communities

In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the reader is presented with two different kinds of large communities. The first inhabited by Wizards who have magical abilities and a unique world. Those without magical powers are called Muggles, and they live in the “real” world.

The two communities, Wizards and Muggles, live side by side but are largely unaware of each other. Wizards tend to shun Muggles. In turn, only a very limited number of Muggles know about Wizards, most of them belonging to a mixed family of

witches and magicians. Wizards, on the other hand, know about Muggles. However, as a result of hiding and avoiding them, their knowledge is restricted. This is a source of humor in the book when Wizards, for example, try to dress as Muggles in order to blend in. Instead, they end up drawing attention to themselves by wearing a strange set of clothes since they have not seen how Muggles use to dress.

The contrast between the Dursleys and the Potters is another example of how divided the two communities are. In the beginning of the book, even though Lilly Potter and Petunia Dursley are sisters, they never visit each other. Since Petunia is scared that Lilly's son Harry might be a bad influence on her son Dudley their son's have never met (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 8). The Dursleys do not only consider the Potters to be strange people but also believe that the way they behave can influence the Dursley family and their day-to-day existence.

The two worlds are often explained with the aid of the other. Not only the magical world that is new to Harry Potter but also sometimes the non-magic world needs to be explained to a Wizard. One example is when Harry Potter has the game of Quidditch explained to him and he compares it with a sport from the non-magic world when he says "So – that's sort of like basketball on broomsticks with six hoops, isn't it?" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 183). Oliver Wood, to whom he speaks, has no idea what basketball is since he is raised by a Wizard family. The two communities have their own leisure activities and traditions, and are largely unaware of those of the other community.

### 3.1 How Muggles see Wizards

The Dursleys are one of the few Muggle families that knows of the Wizard community. They consider this knowledge and their relation to the Potter family as their secret, and very seldom speak of anything that even can be remotely considered strange. The reaction when Harry Potter explains to his uncle Vernon, while inside a car, that he has had a dream about a flying motorcycle clearly demonstrates how afraid they are of unnatural things. Vernon almost crashes the car and yells that there are no such things as flying motorcycles. It is pointed out that "If there is one thing the Dursleys hated [...] it

was [Harry's] talking of anything acting in a way it shouldn't" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 33). This quotation is later related to the fact that the presence of unnatural things may change the way people act and behave: "They seemed to think he might get dangerous ideas" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 33). The adjective dangerous "dangerous" indicates that it can be risky to be tempted to do something out of the ordinary.

Although Vernon Dursley is not related by blood to Harry, he is the focus of interest at the beginning of the first chapter. The reader does not only see his everyday life but also how he reacts to things out of the ordinary. When Vernon sees a cat first reading a map and then a road sign, he suppresses it as just a silly mistake; and when he sees people in strange clothes he contrives rational explanations as to why they would act in such a way. First he thinks of disobedient youth and then of some kind of charity stunt. The reader sees how fragile Vernon's defense mechanism is when he gets just a small indication that the events on the street might be about the Potter family, and thereby might also affect him and his family. He panics and is very close to calling home before he gets a grip on himself and calms down.

In the first chapter, Vernon says to himself that the Potters know exactly what he and Petunia think of Wizards. The line ends with a small pause that gives the reader a moment to figure out what they might be thinking, although this is not made clear until some chapters later. Vernon and Petunia are pushed to their very limits by the magic world that sends them loads of letters and have taken refuge in a lighthouse. When a giant walks in the door Petunia finally snaps. She starts saying what she thinks of her sister and the fact that she was a witch. "I was the only one that saw her for what she was – a freak!" and continuous later with "Then she met that Potter [...] and had [Harry Potter], and of course I knew you'd be the same, just as strange, just as – as – *abnormal*" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 62). Rowling's italicization of "*abnormal*" emphasizes that being abnormal is something really bad, the worst thing you can be, as far as Petunia Dursley is concerned.

The language Petunia uses when she is describing Wizards is something we also can find in contemporary society and as Kate Behr points out, "Characters like the Dursleys might also use this language, a compound of fear and disgust, to refer to gypsies, blacks,

communists, homosexuals, or bohemians.” (Behr, page 124) These groups are some of the most frequently named victims of prejudice. For the Dursleys to use this language for Wizards shows that they have clear racist tendencies.

There are countless references to how normal the Dursleys are and how different and unnatural they find Wizards. They are completely stuck with their own way of thinking and when anything is different from their view of ordinary, they try to avoid it as much as possible. Wizards are in the Dursleys’ eyes the very personification of things that are strange, or not at least the way they are supposed to be. They try to avoid them at all costs although they know they have one under their very roof, and that is also the reason why they treat Harry so badly.

The Dursley family goes to extremes, swaying between acting upon strange and new things with suspicion to loathing anything that could be considered abnormal. The characters become easily identifiable for the reader when their traits are clear and this is accordance with the idea of bibliotherapy where identification is the first step.

Vernon actually suggests that the magical properties Harry has been displaying can be cured by “a good beating” (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 66). Physical violence is a contemptible way of trying to make people change their minds. The reader understands that a beating would not be possible and in any case not change the fact that Harry Potter is a wizard.

### 3.2 How Wizards see Muggles

When Harry Potter first becomes a fully-fledged member of the Wizard community and visits Diagon Alley he is greeted as a friend by many strangers who come up to shake his hand. But when Harry meets the character Draco Malfoy in a shop where he is buying a school uniform he understands that not all Wizards consider themselves equal to everyone else.

Draco Malfoy is portrayed as a spoiled boy with a rich family who thinks he is above the rules that apply to everyone else. Draco tells Harry in the shop that he is planning to bully his father into buying him a broom and that he will then try to smuggle it into



school. Harry is first reminded of his cousin Dudley and later describes Draco Malfoy as “liking him less and less every second” (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 89). Harry thinks this when Draco says that he sees Harry’s friend Hagrid as a servant. This is the first indication that Draco Malfoy and other Wizards consider themselves better than other people of the Wizard community. Draco also describes Hagrid as a “*savage*” (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 89) where Rowling’s italicization displays just how much Draco looks down upon Hagrid. A savage is someone who is not cultivated or not civilized, a common word used by “Americans [who] saw Africa as a continent of wild beasts and savage people” (AllAfrica Global Media) during Africa’s earliest days as a republic. People in Africa during that time were looked down upon in the same way as Draco Malfoy looks down upon Hagrid.

When Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy start talking, their conversation quickly becomes about their families and background. Draco first asks where Harry’s parents are and then when he understands that they are dead asks “But they were *our* kind, weren’t they?” (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 89). The italicization is from Rowling, once again showing the importance of the word, that it is important that your parents are of a special kind to Draco Malfoy. Harry realizes right away what Draco is talking about and tells him in a short tone that they were a witch and a wizard.

Draco Malfoy goes into more detail and explains why he asked about his parents in the following statement: “I really don’t think they should let the other sort in” “They’re just not the same, they’ve never been brought up to know our ways. Some of them have never even heard of Hogwarts until they get the letter, imagine. I think they should keep it in the old wizarding families.” (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 89). This quotation is very important since it establishes two important themes in the book. First of all that there are different kinds of Wizards and this is decided by what kind of parents you have. Draco Malfoy expresses the opinion that the kind that does not have Wizard parents should not even be permitted to enter the school, establishing very clearly that there is more than one kind of Wizard as far as he is concerned. He also establishes that he thinks that people from families who are not Wizards should not be

given the opportunity to study magic. This also means that to Draco Malfoy these Wizards are not as privileged as his kind and should be kept separate.

Draco's fixation with intolerance and how he connects it with the idea of family is very interesting. The idea that there are different kinds of people is not something we are born with but "its meaning is communicated through interaction with our own and other racial groups" (Howard, page 85). Draco Malfoy is in close contact with people belonging to his own race and is strongly influenced by his family. "Many of us are inculcated with more negative images than positive regarding racial categories, necessitating considerable unlearning and reevaluation in the process of acquiring positive racial attitudes and identity." (Howard, page 85) Draco has not been told that the ideas he has, that some people are worth less, might be wrong. It is therefore not likely that he will change his mind when he is faced with other races, such as Wizards born of Muggles, and still has support of friends who have the same opinions as him.

Later, on the train to Hogwarts, Harry Potter meets Draco Malfoy for the second time as he sits with his new friend Ron Weasley. Draco has learnt that Harry Potter is on this train and when he sees that he is sitting with Ron Draco tells him "You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 120). After refusing his offer, Potter learns that Malfoy was one of the families working for the evil wizard Voldemort. Draco knows about the Weasley family and what they think about Muggles, and he thinks that even though the Weasleys are not Muggles themselves that they are just as bad. This is another example of how Draco favors certain characters; he is clearly prejudiced.

The dynamic between the characters in the novel, where some characters display feelings like hatred and dislike, makes it easier for the reader to be emotionally involved. This is in accordance with the idea of bibliotherapy and the second step *catharsis* where the reader first gets emotionally involved and is then able to release some of her/his feelings in controlled circumstances.

Voldemort, on the other hand, is compared by J.K Rowling to Adolf Hitler when she "likened Voldemort's obsession with the lack of "purity" in his own blood –

Voldemort's father was a Muggle, and his mother a witch – to Adolf Hitler's mania for racial purity" (Nel, page 44). In the same interview with J.K Rowling she also says that "[Voldemort] takes his own inferiority, and turns it back on other people and attempts to exterminate in them what he hates in himself" (Salomon). Voldemort's perceived imperfection makes the reader understand that racism often comes from insecurity within the racist who made the statement. Voldemort is insecure with himself and that is one of the reasons to why he creates a doctrine of hate towards other people in both the Muggle and Wizard community.

### 3.3 Connection between tolerance and other themes

Not everything is bad in the Wizard community, however. There are "good wizards, like the Weasleys and Dumbledore, [who] stand for tolerance and treat other creatures, as Muggles, decently" who stand against the evil Wizards who "detest Muggles, are intolerant and treat all creatures as slaves" (Behr, page 120). There is a clear connection between how tolerant and evil you are in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Good characters like Dumbledore and the Weasleys are tolerant and evil characters like Voldemort and Draco Malfoy are intolerant.

There is also a clear difference in economic status and how tolerant you are.

Intolerance, snobbery and ethnic hatred – all commonplaces of our Muggle world - are reproduced inside the Harry Potter Series via wizard-muggle relations along socio-economic lines. The impoverished Weasleys are tolerant while the upper-class Malfoys are rabidly anti-muggle. (Behr, page 125)

*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* demonstrates how racism can also be connected with the financial status of the racist. Throughout the book Draco Malfoy beats down on Ron Weasley for being poor, on the train when he say "all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles and more children than they can afford." (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 120) and during a Quidditch game: "You're in luck, Weasley, Potter's obviously spotted some money on the ground!" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 242) are some examples. The first time on the train is also

strongly connected to the words “some wizarding families are much better than others” that Malfoy states just after mentioning their financial status. Kate Behr points out once again that the idea that the concept of racism found in *Harry Potter* is something common in our world.

### 3.4 Tolerance among Wizards

Harry learns that there is more than one side to how Wizards think about Wizards from Muggle families when he learns from his friend Hagrid that not all Wizards consider them as worth less. “Some o’ the best I ever saw were the only ones with magic in ‘em in a long line o’ Muggles” (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 90). To Hagrid Wizards with Muggle background are just as gifted in the art of magic as anyone else and he cannot see any distinction between the two kinds.

An example in the book where a wizard from a Muggle family exceeds expectations is Hermione Granger, the most talented student in her class. She is praised in both Transfiguration and Charms classes, this despite the fact that she has no earlier experience of magic. Hermione tells us that “they’re both dentists” (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 215) when talking about her parents. Neville Longbottom, another classmate of Harry, is on the other hand from a long line of Wizards but shows very little talent in magic (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 137). The story suggests that it does not matter from what background you come, and that your origins are not necessarily connected to what fortune you will have in life.

Even though she has never been confronted with Draco Malfoy, Hermione knows, with all the background knowledge that she has acquired from books, that some Wizards think less of witches born of Muggles. Hermione puts a lot of effort into becoming an excellent witch by reading volumes of books and practicing with her wand whenever she has time. When Harry first meets her on the train to Hogwarts she tells him that she has “learnt all our set the books off by heart, of course” (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 117) but is still very nervous before tests. She often begins her revision several weeks before the examination.

Hermione's diligence stems from a desire to prove to others and to herself that even though she has been raised by Muggles, she can still become something. She cannot use money or any other means to improve her status; she relies on mental sharpness alone. When she is faced with the task of flying on broomsticks, something you cannot learn from books, she is very worried. Before the first flying lesson the reader learns that "Hermione Granger was almost as nervous about flying as Neville was. This was something you couldn't learn by heart out of a book – not that she hadn't tried" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 158). This shows again that Hermione struggles really hard to compensate for what she lacks from birth.

She also suffers from some complexes about her parents. When Ron mentions Hermione's parents and that it will be safe to ask them for advice about the Philosopher's Stone Hermione says: "Very safe, since they're both dentists" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 215). By showing that her parents lack knowledge of magic, Hermione diminishes their importance and shows that she thinks they are nothing to be really proud of. The fact that she thinks magical knowledge is very important together with the fact that her parents know nothing at all of magic tells the reader that Hermione has some personal. She wants to show everyone that she is very talented but still has some issues with how she is going to relate a world where some look down upon her to her strong will of proving herself and finally relate all that to her background without magic.

In the wizard school Hogwarts the students are divided into four houses after what quality they have most of in their heads by a magical hat. Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw, that none of the major characters in the novel are part of, take pride in loyalty and wisdom. Gryffindor, in which Harry, Hermione and Ron belong, value courage over everything else. Slytherin, where Malfoy ends up in, on the other hand "use any means to achieve their ends" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 130). The philosophy of Slytherin where power and status is all that matters is related to how its members look upon people who have little or no power. They see Muggles as worthless and thereby assume that their children, even though they might show some magical attitude, cannot be as powerful as a wizard or witch from a long line of Wizards. "Power" is an important factor in racism. George Fredrickson, who has studied racism

in detail, argues that racism has two parts: “difference and power” (Fredrickson, page 9). Difference is, of course, the idea that some people are different from others, but power is also important since racism implies that one group has a power advantage over another. Just as Wizards have more power than Muggles. Malfoy tells Harry that “all our family have been [in Slytherin]”, and that if Malfoy would end up in Hufflepuff “I think I’d leave” (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 88). Many other people Harry meets express the opposite feeling. Hagrid, for example, tells him that any house is better since all the people following the evil wizard Voldemort were from Slytherin.

Draco Malfoy demonstrates that even young people can be influenced by their parents to dislike and even hate people they have never met. This means there are not only instances of racism between the Muggle and Wizard community but also within the Wizard community itself. Within the Wizard community some Wizards not only see Muggles as insignificant people with no power but also Wizards born and raised by Muggle families as weaker.

Hermione, on the other hand, demonstrates that Wizards from Muggle families are not inferior. Not only being the best and most motivated student in their class, she is also very confident and independent. For Harry to make a choice and become friends with Hermione Granger instead of Draco Malfoy shows that Harry finds it better to do have real friendship instead of trying to look good by beating down on others.

However, to differentiate evil and good people in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* is not easy. “Apparently harmless or innocent characters turn out to be working for dark forces, and wicked-looking characters are revealed to be messengers of light” (Lurie, page 121) which of course refers to Professor Quirrel, who at first seems harmless and then turns out to be working for Voldemort. Professor Snape, on the other hand, first looks like a really bad guy but then actually saves Harry Potter’s life when he plays Quiddich (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 311). Alison Lurie continues her argument about good and evil in *Harry Potter* and ends it with a question:

The world of Harry Potter is complex and ambiguous and fluid. And in this, of course, it is far more like our world, in which is not always easy to tell the [bad guys] from the [good]. When we choose books for our children, do we want them to teach obedience to authority or skepticism [...]? (Lurie, page 121)

Lurie mentions that we should pick books that are more ambiguous because if we read books where things are more complex we are more likely to start thinking. This thinking would go into decisions on what side we want to be on and who we want to agree with. Complex books will help children who are constantly learning about the world to think for them self and make them form opinions of their own. This is also in accordance with the earlier outlined theory of bibliotherapy, i.e. that readers can use novels to solve problems they have and help improve themselves.

#### 4. Choices made by the characters

As the story is seen through Harry Potter's eyes the reader glimpses two worlds. Harry Potter is unique in that he is from a Wizard family (his father was a wizard and his mother a witch), but he knows nothing about the magical world until he is invited to Hogwarts just as most Wizards from Muggle families are. Now Harry can decide where he belongs, with the elitists who think they are better than everyone else, or with his friends. He makes decisions when he leaves Draco in the clothes shop (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 89), when he refuses to shake his hand in the train (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 120) and when he begs the Sorting Hat to put him in the Slytherin house (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, page 133). These choices are representations of choices people make when deciding to be a bigot, to accept prejudice or to fight against it. Harry battles many times throughout the book, never declining a challenge or backing down from Draco Malfoy.

His two friends come from two different backgrounds, Ron from a Wizard family that is very magical influenced, and Hermione from an ordinary Muggle home. When these different upbringings are contrasted with each other they become even clearer to

the reader. With the three friends having fun and working together the reader see that the different kinds of Wizards can be friends together in perfect harmony.

Neville Longbottom also makes an important decision in the book when he decides to fight Draco Malfoy during a Quidditch game. “Ron snapped. Before Malfoy knew what was happening, Ron was on top of him, wrestling him to the ground. Neville hesitated, then clambered over the back of his seat to help” (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 242). Neville first hesitates but then remembers all the things Draco has done and said to him, just the day before Malfoy jinxed his legs together (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 236), and decides to fight. On the day before, Neville also tells us that Malfoy has told him that is not brave enough to be in Gryffindor but Ron tells him “You’ve got to stand up to him, Neville!” (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, page 236). This shows that even the most frightened can show bravery and fight against people who try to put one down if we wish to.

## 5. Conclusion

Intolerance and prejudice are strong themes in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*. The idea that some people, in this book Wizards, are better than others and that this is something you should not accept are clear examples of social prejudice. Racism is also present in the book with the three different kinds of people, Muggles, Wizards and Muggleborns (Wizards born from Muggles) and the traction between them. The reader understands where racism comes from, that Draco Malfoy has got his idea from his family and friends. The reader also gets to understand the basic idea of intolerance, of putting some people down to make yourself look better from all of the instances in the book.

The book takes us from a Muggle family with strong resentment against Wizards to the Wizard community that is even more divided. There are not many examples of racism where Muggles dislike Wizards but this is not to be expected since most of the book takes place in the Wizard world. Also there are very few Muggles who knows



about Wizards. But it seems that Muggles who have a dislike for Wizards do not look down upon them but are mostly scared of them, as evidenced on the occasion when the Dursleys run into hiding instead of staying when Harry gets letters from the Wizard community.

Although scared of Wizards, the Dursleys still utter many very hateful comments about Wizards, calling them everything from abnormal to freaks. The Dursleys also has done everything in their power to keep Wizards and their community from reaching their home.

In the Wizard the reader notes Draco Malfoy's condescending comments about other Wizard families and Wizards born of Muggles. This is then contrasted with Hagrid's idea that all are equal and the present of the very talented Muggle born witch Hermione Granger. The reader also learns that what family you have does not affect what you can do in life with the example of Neville Longbottom.

Draco Malfoy and his idea of weak families and impurity within the Wizard community are clear examples of intolerance. His idea that Muggles are worth less and Uncle Vernon's idea that Wizards are freaks are examples of racism.

However, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* does not only give many examples of racism but also shows the reader that racism and intolerance are something that can be. Harry Potter and many of the other characters make decisions to fight and when they come out victorious a positive atmosphere of hope is created in the book.

J.K Rowling hopes the book will help people understand intolerance and she has said that "[Harry Potter is] a prolonged argument for tolerance, a prolonged plea for an end to bigotry" (The Leaky Cauldron). With all the examples the reader gets of racism she has succeeded in promoting tolerance in young people by writing a book easy for the reader to identify and become emotionally involved in. All this is in accordance with the theory of bibliotherapy.

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