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**Exploring child abuse in the Harry Potter Series through the characters  
Harry Potter and Severus Snape**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores how child abuse is represented in the Harry Potter saga through the characters Harry Potter and Severus Snape. A close reading analysis of scenes and the use of psychological studies that discuss the central elements of these characters' experiences with abuse. This will help prove that they are representations of abused children. The two characters represent different aspects and experiences of abuse, making it important to explore both experiences.

The Harry Potter saga is part of pop cultural literature and is aimed at a young audience. It is important for a story as widespread as Harry Potter to address these kinds of topics, as it can go from being a representation of abuse through a character to a representation of an abused child.

### **KEYWORDS:**

Harry Potter, Severus Snape, Abuse, Neglect, Favoritism, Cruelty, Love, Loyalty, Anger



# 1 Acknowledgements

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## **2 Abbreviations**

*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (HPPS)*

*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (HPCP)*

*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (HPPA)*

*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (HPGF)*

*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (HPOP)*

*Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince (HPHP)*

*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows (HPDH)*



### **3 Introduction**

*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is the first book of seven in the *Harry Potter* series. It was written by the author J.K. Rowling in the United Kingdom and was published by Bloomsbury Publishing in 1997. One year later, in 1998, the book was published in the United States, however, the title had been changed to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. When the book was published in the United States it went through an Americanization. During this process, words and phrases were changed to be more American, including the title. Over the next ten years, Rowling wrote seven books in total, and the story of Harry Potter became an international phenomenon. The books were developed into eight movies, they were translated into eighty languages, the books sold over five hundred million copies, and the story has gained a massive fanbase all over the world (Series Overview). To this day, J.K Rowling is one of the highest-grossing authors in the world, and she is still receiving earnings from this franchise she created close to thirty years ago (BBC News).

The Harry Potter series is intended for children and teens. Throughout the series, the characters grow and mature along with the story. One example of this is how the ages of the main characters align with the publication order, in the first book they are eleven, in the second book they are twelve, in the third book they are thirteen, and so on. It is in other words, a coming-of-age story. We also see how as they mature, so does the content. This is explicitly shown in HPGF, where after Lord Voldemort returns, we see a genre shift in the series. Before this, the books had the tone of children's books, having been lighter and happier, even just by including a sense of a happy ending. This changes after HPGF, and it transitions from being more of a children's story, into becoming more of a young adult series. Something that comes with darker and more mature storytelling, and not allowing space for happiness and happy endings in the same way as before.

#### **3.1 Story overview**

The story begins after Harry Potter has been orphaned and is placed with his maternal aunt and her family. Harry's aunt's name is Petunia Dursley, she is married to Vernon Dursley, and they have one son, Dudley Dursley. For the first eleven years of Harry's life, he lives with his aunt, uncle, and cousin, where he experiences extreme abuse from all family members. Examples of abuse that Harry is subjected to are having to sleep in the cupboard

under the stairs, being regularly told how huge of a burden he is on his family, and having his aunt and uncle use starvation as a form of punishment. We quickly learn that his aunt, uncle, and cousin thrive on finding new ways of making Harry's life more difficult.

The intention of placing Harry with his maternal aunt was to be able to keep Harry within the protection of his mother's bloodline. Later in the series, we learn that this is an old kind of magic that works by keeping Harry alive if he is under the care of someone from his mother's bloodline. The reason this could work is because Lily, Harry's mother, sacrificed herself to prevent Harry from being killed. Meaning that for as long as Harry could call the place his mother's bloodline lived his home, he would be protected from Voldemort and his followers. It worked as it was intended, however, it did end up being at Harry's expense, as he had to suffer through all those years being abused and neglected by those who were supposed to take care of him and love him. Instead, he was forced to witness how his aunt and uncle gave everything and more to their son, Dudley, while Harry did not even have his most primitive needs met.

On his eleventh birthday, Harry's entire life and existence change. He receives a visit from a man named Rubeus Hagrid, who turns out to be the groundskeeper at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Hagrid reveals to Harry that he is a wizard, a fact that the Dursleys had known, but had been trying to hide from him: "‘We swore when we took him in we'd put a stop to that rubbish,' said Uncle Vernon, 'swore we'd stamp it out of him! Wizard indeed!'" (HPPS57). This interaction shows us that Petunia and Vernon knew that Harry had been a wizard his entire life. It is also revealed that the reasoning behind the cruelty and severity of Harry's punishments growing up was because the Dursleys attempted to stamp out Harry's magical powers. Petunia also tells us how they knew, and talks about how her sister, Harry's mother, was a witch.

‘Knew! Of course we knew! How could you not be, my dratted sister being what she was? Oh, she got a letter just like that and disappeared off to that- that school- [...] I was the only one who saw her for what she was- a freak! But for my mother and father, oh no, it was Lily this and Lily that, they were proud of having a witch in the family!’ (HPPS57)

Harry receives a staggering amount of new information here, and the information ends up being life-altering. Afterwards, he leaves with Hagrid and is introduced to the wizarding

world, and never looks back. It is after Hagrid's revelation, that the story about Harry Potter, *the boy who lived* begins.

One way to keep readers engaged and interested in a story is to include elements that make it relatable to the reader. This helps connect the familiarity the readers experience from their own experience to empathy directed toward a character. Sara Cleto has written an article where she discusses the question of whether it is important to learn about fairytales in school. One of her main objectives is how relatability leads to empathy.

Using relatability as the key criteria for a text “circumscribes the expansion of empathy that you can gain through exposure to new things. When the word ‘relatable’ really means ‘relevant to me,’ as it often does in the classroom, anything outside the purview of ‘relatability’ looks like it’s not worth examining” (103).

In the Harry Potter series, relatability has been introduced through the number of characters we encounter. The characters we encounter vary from young children to elderly people, and every one of them contributes to the story in different ways. Throughout the series, there are characters that we get to know well, and there are characters that we are barely introduced to. There is realism in that, as it is rather homogeneous with how we interact with people in our everyday lives—allowing children to use their own experiences with getting to know people when they are getting to know these characters. Some are just introduced as a part of a team or a group and give no other substance to the story than that, while others are made to be extremely important for a period, then they are forgotten about, and then some are integral to the story throughout. Something that can help ensure that the readers find at least one character they relate to.

There is a lot to explore and discuss about Harry Potter and his character. Abuse is one of the prominent themes, especially due to how early we are introduced to the abuse Harry is suffering. In addition, as the story progresses, we see that Harry's experience with abuse continues throughout and acts as a constant in his life for a long time. In addition, because the story is written from Harry's point of view, we gain much information regarding his experiences and emotions. This is one reason why Harry Potter is one of the characters I have chosen to examine in my thesis. Harry is a representation of children who are being blatantly abused but have no one to help them out of a bad situation. As the story progresses, Harry's situation starts to change as he builds friendships and is in an environment where he feels

appreciated and wanted for the first time. Because abuse is such a prevalent theme in the Harry Potter series, it is expected that other characters have experienced abuse. One of these characters is Severus Snape, who is going to be the other character that I will examine in this thesis. Due to the limited point of view throughout the story, Snape's story is a bit more obscure. Nevertheless, there are scenes scattered throughout the seven books that prove that Snape was an abused child. Before delving deeper into the characters of Harry Potter and Severus Snape, I will also address a few other characters that allow abuse to be such a central theme. This lets us see different perspectives and experiences of abuse, allowing for a broader representation.

### **3.2 Limitations**

Before I continue, it is important to address the limitations of using real psychoanalytical material when analyzing fictional characters. When writing fiction, you are not restricted to the need for realism in your work. You can go beyond the mundane and seek the fantastical elements that often come with this genre. In her writing, Rowling went beyond the limitations of what is possible in the real world. This is prevalent in her characters as well, including Harry and Snape. Throughout the series, there will be instances where these characters act more extremely than one would deem necessary because they can do so in fiction. In those instances, I will focus on the motivations behind certain acts, rather than the act itself. It is also worth noting that when writing, Rowling used a lot of her own experiences with people and drew inspiration from them when creating her characters. This is something that she has discussed in many different interviews. From these interviews, we learn that Dumbledore was inspired by her headmaster from when she was at school, Ron and Hermione were inspired by her friends from college, and Hagrid was inspired by a biker she met one time. Additionally, she drew a lot of inspiration from things such as myths, legends, and folklore. Seeing how she has drawn a lot of inspiration from her own experiences with people when she created them, it should be possible to analyze them using real-world materials, as long as I stay aware of the limitations of doing so (The Oprah Magazine).

Another limitation to take into account is that the things we learn about Snape are from Harry's perspective. Throughout the series, there are only a few times where the reader gains any insight that is not from Harry's perspective and only one scene includes Snape. This means that for the most part, everything we know about Snape is from the perspective of a

child who actively dislikes him. It is important to note that Harry is a child, as children cannot reflect and see beyond their interests yet. In HPPS Harry's first encounter with Snape is described, and it is not a good one. Harry quickly realizes that Snape is a mean and cruel teacher, and neither will like the other. When you read something through such a colored lens, objectivity does not exist. This is something that can pose a challenge when trying to look more objectively at Snape's character, which makes it important for me to be aware of and take into consideration whenever I am doing my analysis.

### **3.3 Other representations of abuse**

Before I delve deeper into Harry and Snape's characters, I want to mention some other characters who experience abuse and how it has been portrayed in the books. Starting with Neville Longbottom, a child who is being subjected to abuse, but only at school. He does have a complicated home life, having been raised by his paternal grandmother after his parents were tortured into insanity by Voldemort supporters. Even though his home life was somewhat complicated, he did have a loving and stable home outside of Hogwarts. Here I am using the word "somewhat" due to certain things we learn later that makes Neville's home situation more complicated. Like the way he was treated when they were afraid that he might be a squib, someone born from magical parents, but does not have any magic themselves. Neville does talk about the first time he exhibited any sign of magic. This was when his great-uncle was holding him upside down out of a window, wanting to scare Neville into exhibiting some degree of magical abilities. This resulted in the great-uncle losing his grip around Neville's ankles, who then ended up falling towards the ground. It ended up working and rather than crashing to the ground, Neville bounced (HPPS133-134). In addition, we also see how much pressure Neville's grandmother places upon him to be like his father, who was an Auror, someone who works to arrest dark wizards. However, we do see that he is mainly being subjected to abuse at school, from one teacher specifically, Severus Snape. Neville is often described as extremely clumsy and forgetful, and he is not thought to be brave or talented enough to be placed in Gryffindor. This is something that he does believe himself, because of his grandmother's conditioning, and the bullying and abuse he experiences at school. Snape, for example, goes out of his way to emphasize and weaponize Neville's ineptitude. Throughout the series, we see several instances of this, one example is during a

potions lesson, where Neville yet again messes up the potion they are supposed to make, a shrinking solution. When noticing Neville's mistake his reaction is

Orange. Tell me, boy, does anything penetrate that thick skull of yours? Didn't you hear me say, quite clearly, that only one rat spleen was needed? Didn't I state plainly that a dash of leech juice would suffice? What do I have to do to make you understand, Longbottom? (HPPA132)

This is not what one would call a pedagogical approach to addressing a student's mistake. We see how Snape is targeting Neville here and reinforces the idea of this child being an idiot, because he is not able to follow, what Snape deems, simple instructions. However, this is not even the worst part of this interaction. As a punishment for, what Snape calls, Neville's stupidity, Snape tells the class that he is going to feed Neville's potion to his toad. This means that if Neville makes it correctly, his toad will only shrink, but if he is not able to make it correctly, the toad will be poisoned. Hermione offers to help Neville put the potion right, however, Snape's response to this is simply that he had not asked her to show off and does not allow her to help Neville.

This scene is far beyond cruel, we see how Snape is just finding ways to be horrible towards Neville. Firstly, he calls Neville out for making a mistake, then goes even further and makes him seem as if he is an idiot because he could not avoid making that mistake. Then he escalates it by not allowing anyone to help Neville, to almost ensure the death of his pet. Hermione does disobey Snape and secretly helps Neville correct his potion, saving the toad's life. When Snape gives the potion to the toad, and it becomes apparent that Neville has succeeded in making a shrinking solution, Snape's reaction is to become angry. Where he took points from Gryffindor and ridiculed Hermione for helping Neville despite his orders. This is just one example of the treatment Neville suffered from Snape, and many instances are equally cruel. Demonstrating how Neville was experiencing brutal bullying from one of his teachers.

Draco Malfoy is thought to be one of the most privileged children at Hogwarts and uses this to establish himself in a position where he is thought to be better than everyone else. To be able to see Draco as an abused child, we need to alter our perspective of what abuse traditionally looks like and broaden it. As we get to know Draco's character throughout the beginning of the series, we get an impression that Draco has involved and dedicated parents,

at least his father. Draco's catchphrase is after all "Wait until my father hears about this!". As the story progresses, especially after Voldemort returns in HPGF, we learn more about Draco and the dynamics of his family life. We get to see how much of his family life is controlled by ideology and politics, rather than love and safety. There are instances from early in the series where we see Draco adopt his parents' views and through that ends up using words such as "mudblood" which is a slur used to refer to wizards and witches that were born into non-magical families. It refers to the belief that they have dirty blood because they come from muggles, and to the people who use this slur, muggles are thought to be filthy creatures. These are the types of ideological ideas Draco grew up with, in addition, we also learn about his family's loyalty and relationship with Voldemort and the Death Eaters. This makes it plausible to think that Draco has been subjected to ideological abuse, where his parents' views were forced upon him, and he was forced to assimilate and adopt them as his own. In an ideological sense, extremism is defined by Oxford Languages as "*the holding of extreme political or religious views*", whereas I am going to focus on how growing up in an extremist household can lead to abuse and neglect based upon these extreme political or religious views. This has been relevant for many years; however, we also see how the relevance of understanding the impact that extremism can have on children has once again become important in our society.

The protection of children is important and is something any adult who spends a lot of time in the presence of children should care about. However, figuring out what child protection entails is not necessarily an easy task, which we see in this excerpt:

In the case of child protection, 'the best interests of the child' is the norm that lies at the heart of child protection practice. However, this is open to interpretation. What, for instance, is the child's 'best interest'? Who decides? And what of the child? Does the child have an opinion about his or her best interests, and will the child be listened to in any case? (Rousseau et. al.:229)

All these questions that are being posed here are relevant to how we perceive Draco as an abused child. We see how he is growing up in a household with a strong expectation to adhere to the prospects set by his parents. Then we can start considering who decides what is in the child's best interest. As a child, Draco is not mature enough to be able to make these decisions for himself, which means that this falls to his parents. There is nothing abnormal

about parents having a responsibility for their child's welfare. The problem arises in cases like Draco's where the parents have such strong ideological leanings that it is forced upon their child, which makes it harder for this child to develop their own opinions. According to the American Psychological Association, one definition of abuse is:

interactions in which one person behaves in a cruel, violent, demeaning, or invasive manner toward another person or an animal. The term most commonly implies physical mistreatment but also encompasses sexual and psychological (emotional) mistreatment.

Throughout the series we see Draco navigate the threat of these things happening to him if he does not live up to the expectations set by his family, many of which are rooted in their ideology. Where we see that there is this implication of Draco needing to protect himself from abuse by conforming to his parent's ideals.

There is an expectation that children experience unconditional love from their parents, meaning their parents will love them no matter what. That builds the foundation of the idea that Draco can be perceived as an abused child. When we learn more about Draco and his family dynamic, we see how the expectation of unconditional love does not apply to Draco. Where other children experience security through the knowledge that their parents are going to love them no matter what, Draco must adapt to be deemed deserving of his parents, especially his father's love. It is Draco's relationship with his father that we see the most of, as Draco's mother is introduced rather late in the series. Whenever we see Draco interact with his father there are expectations and conditions tethered to the limited amount of love and sympathy that his father displays towards him. We witness Draco's struggles with the expectations that come with conforming to the life that his parents have envisioned. Then we see how he becomes a part of Voldemort's inner circle, a position that truly forces him to face the severity of his actions. Allowing him to then confront his views, rather than just trotting along in his parent's wake.

Now we have seen some of the children in the story that have been victims of abuse, Harry, Neville, and Draco. However, there are examples of adults that you learn have been victims as children, and display traits that psychologists have deemed typical of victims of abuse. The most prevalent one is Severus Snape. Snape is one of the characters that are created to be an antagonist to Harry. He is not made out to be good in any way, and we usually see him being



cruel and menacing towards his students. He is made out to be so evil that it is plausible for him to be helping Voldemort return, even before we learn anything about his past as a Death Eater. The way we are made to perceive Snape is through Harry's perspective, something which is important to note as it becomes an essential part of the storyline that Harry actively despises Snape. As we get to know more about Snape and his past, his actions become more understandable, not necessarily excusing his behavior, but it can be considered an explanation.

Through the story, we see several different moments from Snape's past that show us how he was subjected to abuse and neglect from his parents. In HPOP we are shown some brief memories from Snape's childhood, where we see him being abused by his father, these include instances where he was exposed to anger and verbal abuse. The one thing he is looking forward to is escaping to Hogwarts and getting away from his parent's house. Then, as soon as he takes a seat on the Hogwarts Express, he immediately becomes the target of James Potter and Sirius Black's bullying. We get to see how Hogwarts, which was supposed to be his sanctuary and escape from being abused by his parents, becomes tainted by the relentless bullying he is subjected to for all seven years at Hogwarts.

### **3.4 Thesis statement**

The characters I have discussed above are some of the characters that contribute to abuse being reoccurring enough to be considered a theme in Harry Potter. All these characters have different experiences and therefore, complements the theme differently, allowing it to be more dimensional. As I mentioned earlier, Harry is in many ways the obvious character to analyze regarding the abuse he suffered. In addition, he is also the protagonist of the story, which means that he is created in a way that makes the reader champion his success. Snape on the other hand is a controversial character and is one of Harry's main antagonists throughout the story. Despite this, we see much discourse among Harry Potter fans. Where one of the biggest disagreements is whether you believe that Snape redeems himself throughout the story. As the story progresses, we see Snape go from being an antagonist in Harry's story to becoming more ambiguous. It is this ambiguity that forms the foundation of the discourse among the fans. However, for my thesis, whether I believe that Snape's character redeems himself is irrelevant, as I will simply look at his characteristics and actions in different scenes.

A consequence of Snape being written to be Harry's antagonist is that he ends up representing a lot of the opposite of Harry, while also inhabiting likenesses. Some of these likenesses are connected to the traits we see Harry having inherited from James, and other similarities stem from common experiences between the two. Firstly, we see Harry becoming the savior of the wizarding world, but even before that, we see how Harry was written to be this incredible character. He is brave, kind, chivalrous, and powerful. These are all traits that we see represented throughout all seven books. Snape on the other hand is working against Harry in many ways. This allows the perception of him as a bad guy to flourish, even when it turns out that he is not the villain in the plot. Despite this, readers still find themselves relating to a character like Snape just as much as people relate to Harry. This demonstrates why having different fleshed-out characters in a story is important because you never know who your readers will relate to and why. Relating to one of the bad guys can be rough, especially as a child. It can feel embarrassing and confusing, especially if it is hard for you to reflect upon the reasons why you relate to certain characters.

Snape's relatability was something that fascinated me. As surely as Harry is the character everyone is supposed to like, Snape is the character we are meant to dislike. What elevated my perspective was reading the story with an adult's understanding. I realized that much of Snape's struggles and troubles were too complex for a child to comprehend without personal experience fully. With that understanding and a more knowledgeable perspective, I could understand aspects of Snape's character that could be seen as relatable. This is why I wanted to include one controversial character in my thesis, as they represent something different than characters like Harry who are made likable.

There could be several reasons why people relate to Snape, however, I am going to focus on his experience with abuse. Snape is a representative of an adult who has experienced abuse at the hands of his parents while growing up, both emotionally and physically. He represents a group of people who went through something horrible and then did not seek help to navigate how that affected him as an adult. In Snape's case, it did not manifest in a flattering way, but as I will discuss later, it also indicates his personality. Whereas Harry represents the children who are actively being abused and must navigate that experience as they go. These are two different versions of what abuse can look like, and as I have already established, the Harry Potter series includes versions of what abuse can look like. Having this representation is important to showcase considering that child abuse is such a common occurrence around the

world. The commonality of it is represented in statistics from the World Health Organization say that “Nearly 3 in 4 children - or 300 million children - aged 2–4 years regularly suffer physical punishment and/or psychological violence at the hands of parents and caregivers” (WHO). Because child abuse occurs this much on a global stage, there is a good chance that children, teens, and young adults would read this story and recognize and relate to the experiences that Harry and Snape endured. It is also a reason why it is important to examine the background of a character like Snape, as he is a character many believe to be fundamentally cruel. Even though that might be the case, by examining him as an abused kid could help broaden our understanding of his motivations. There can be humanity in cruelty, which is why addressing it and getting a better understanding is important. This expanding understanding of these characters is important for the readers as well, especially those who find themselves relating to Snape, considering, like I have mentioned before, it cannot be fun to be a child and realize that the character you relate the most to is a bad guy.

Snape and Harry represent two different stages of abuse. Where Snape is an adult living with the ramifications of having experienced abuse in his youth, and Draco is a child who is actively going through it and therefore must learn how to navigate it. With Snape, who is no longer a child, I will focus on how he displays the long-term effects of having been abused, while with Harry, who is still experiencing the abuse, I am going to focus more on the short-term effects. Both Harry and Snape represent a rather traditional experience with abuse. The difference between these two characters truly comes when they get to school. Snape had this idealized version of what going to Hogwarts was going to be like and ended up being disappointed. Harry on the other hand had no knowledge nor any expectations before going to Hogwarts, all he knew was that it could not be worse than what he was leaving behind. Throughout my thesis, there are different things that I am going to be addressing. Firstly, I will examine the ways Harry and Snape have experienced abuse by looking at all seven books. Then, I will identify whether their experiences have manifested into any traits or characteristics. Lastly, I will see how these traits and characteristics contribute to their character development throughout the story. Based on this, I have constructed this thesis statement: *In the Harry Potter series, the characters Harry Potter and Severus Snape are pivotal characters when discussing the complex and nuanced theme of abuse. Revealing how it has shaped their identities, relationships, and actions, and highlighting the series' exploration of the psychological impact maltreatment can have on those who are being or*

*have been abused. By utilizing literary analysis and theoretical framework I will further explore how child abuse is represented in the Harry Potter series through these two pivotal characters.*

### **3.5 Methodology**

The methodologies I will utilize when exploring these characters and their motivations are rooted in both literary approaches and psychoanalytical approaches. First, I am going to do a character analysis of both characters, where I will aim to identify significant scenes and moments for the characters—focusing on moments that either amplify the idea of either character as an abused child or lessen the claim. Regarding Harry, I will identify three types of abuse we see him subjected to, while with Snape I will identify three characteristics associated with his character and see whether they stem from him having been abused.

Secondly, after identifying these, I am going to utilize psychological research or theories to analyze how these moments and characteristics could be a manifestation of their experience with abuse. Simultaneously, I will aim to examine whether their behavior or characteristics align with what experts deem to be expected from someone who has been subjected to abuse. Lastly, I am going to include a part where I explore peer reviews and what they say about Harry and Snape. This is something that could be fascinating, as it allows me to address other people's perspectives and attitudes toward these characters and the way they have been treated in the story, but also by the fans.

As I have mentioned previously, I will focus on more than one type of abuse in my thesis. Abuse is something complex and extends way further than solely violence and physical abuse. In addition to physical abuse, I am also going to look at emotional abuse and neglect. Something that will become prevalent in my thesis is that one person can experience more than one type of abuse. If a child is subjected to primarily physical abuse at home, does not mean that this is the only kind of abuse that this child can experience. This is demonstrated in Philip Ney's study named *The Worst Combinations of Child Abuse and Neglect*, where he considered that a majority of children who experience abuse do experience more than one kind. And with his study, he aims to find out which combinations of abuse had the most detrimental effect on children.

I am going to spend a lot of time discussing emotional abuse and neglect. To better understand what these terms mean, we can use Danya Glaser's definition:

Emotional abuse and neglect are defined as a carer-child relationship that is characterized by patterns of harmful interactions, requiring no physical contact with the child. Motivation to harm the child is not necessary for the definition. Unlike sexual abuse that is a secret activity, these forms of ill treatment are easily observable. (P:697).

With this definition, we see that emotional abuse and neglect are thought to begin at the hands of one's parents. Regardless of what their parents' intent is, emotional abuse and neglect can occur and, in those cases, where it is present, it will cause damage to the child's mental state. Glaser addresses this by mentioning the idea that emotional abuse and neglect can cause significant harm to a child's development and that we can see how this also extends into adulthood (P:698).

In her paper, Glaser touches upon something essential to address when we are discussing abuse, this is the consequence of refusing to use the term abuse in real-life situations:

This reluctance to use the term abuse leads to under-recognition. However, the importance of using the terms abuse-neglect or maltreatment is that, in practice, these terms embody a professional imperative to intervene to achieve protection and improve the lot of the child. [...] The harmful consequences of delayed recognition are that children are exposed to more prolonged abuse and neglect, and that interactional patterns become entrenched and more difficult to change. (P:700-701).

With statements like this, we see Glaser addressing something that is missing in the discussion surrounding abuse, neglect, and maltreatment of children. She needs to address this issue because it helps spread awareness that there is a lack in this discussion, which many would not be aware of otherwise. This is also one of the things that makes my thesis important. Examining how these characters can be a representation of different types of abuse could help people understand how people can be affected by abuse both as children and later adults. In addition, I will not shy away from using terms such as abuse, neglect, and so on, due to the importance of acknowledging that there is power in using these terms and that not using them could lessen the brutalities that these characters' experiences represent.

### 3.6 Scholars

The main scholar when it comes to the Harry Potter series is John Granger, who was coined *the Dean of Harry Potter Scholars* by TIME Magazine. He has written many works about the series, books, journals, and so on. The areas where he has contributed the most as a Harry Potter scholar are classical literature, mythology, and Christian symbolism (Savage). He wrote a book named *The Deathly Hallows Lectures*, where he points out likenesses between the adventures of Harry and his friends and the hero's journey archetype found in ancient myths and legends. He has discussed the layers of meaning behind Rowling's narrative choices, including how she can incorporate timeless motifs that help the story resonate with readers on multiple levels. Granger has also done analyses that extend to the moral and philosophical dimensions of the Harry Potter series. This was done in works like *How Harry Cast His Spell* and *Looking for God in Harry Potter*. However, his perspective has been rather limited, in the sense that his area of focus has been restricted (Grossman).

Some other notable scholars of Harry Potter are Tolonda Henderson from the University of Connecticut and Dr. Peter Appelbaum from Arcadia University. Henderson's scholarly focus was mainly on Harry Potter fan fiction. They have, however, chosen to step back from being a Harry Potter scholar due to Rowling speaking out publicly against transsexual people (Henderson). One example of an article Henderson has worked on is "Text mining, Hermione Granger, and fan fiction: What's in a name?". This article focuses on how fans who write fanfiction engage in these characters to be able to write their versions (Rowe). Dr. Peter Appelbaum on the other hand focuses more on how and why Harry Potter became such a phenomenon to begin with. He also discusses what we can learn from Harry Potter and compares it to a *bildungsroman*, considering that Harry, Ron, and Hermione are constantly learning throughout their experiences. Dr. Appelbaum's most controversial opinion is that the Harry Potter series is not really about Harry at all, but about Severus Snape. His reasoning for this stems from the portrayal of Severus Snape done by the late actor Alan Rickman in the Harry Potter Movies. According to Dr. Appelbaum, Rickman's portrayal of the character was so masterful that it allowed Rowling to create more complexities surrounding the character as the story progressed (Emma W). One of his works is an essay written about John Nettleship, who has been said to be the real-life Severus Snape (Appelbaum).

Because the Harry Potter series is so well known, there has been a lot written about it by scholars, but also bachelor theses, master theses, doctoral dissertations, and so on. This volume of work does mean that there are not many topics and themes that have not been explored at all. I was not able to find any scholars who have written about abuse in Harry Potter, however, I did find some theses about it, and they are mostly focused on the abuse suffered by Harry. For example, Emilie Figenschou master's thesis from 2020. Where she explored how language, specifically humor, can aid a child-reader in their understanding of physical and psychological violence being inflicted on a child by a parent or guardian. She used Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, *Harry Potter*, and *Goodnight Mister Tom* to explore this.

I was able to find works done on Severus Snape, also scholarly works, but here the focus was his morality and his ambiguity as a character. Especially his position as a Death Eater and then becoming one of Dumbledore's most trusted was explored in several works I found. Like the article "Sobbing over Severus Snape? Sentimentalism and Emotional Ethics in J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter*" written by Tison Pugh. This article aims, like the title suggests, to explore sentimentalism and emotional ethics in *Harry Potter*, and through that, he uses Snape's ambiguity as a huge part of his discussion. Then there is Rachel Lee Hall who wrote a master's thesis in theology where she compares Severus Snape with Judas, to integrate modern literature and the gospel. I was not able to find either scholarly work or theses written about Snape and his experience with abuse.

## 4 Harry Potter

Harry is a character that gradually becomes more of a heroic character as the story progresses. Considering that the Harry Potter series is a coming-of-age story from Harry's perspective, we get a thorough insight into his life and development. This includes his experiences with abuse from the Dursleys. Throughout the series, we see Harry struggle with many traumatic experiences that do not relate to the abuse he suffered before going to Hogwarts. These include him almost being killed by Professor Quirrell in HPPS, fighting a massive Basilisk in HPCS, nearly having his soul sucked out by a Dementor in HPPA, witnessing his friend be murdered by Voldemort, and almost being killed himself in HPGF, having his mind infiltrated by Voldemort and forced to witness gruesome acts in HPOP, then watching as his mentor is murdered by one of his professors in HPHP, and at last being faced with the casualties during the war in HPDH. These are all examples of some of the traumatic events Harry experiences throughout the seven books, however, these traumas are separate from the abuse we see him going through.

When addressing my thesis statement regarding Harry, I will focus on his experience with the Dursleys. Harry lived his first eleven years with his aunt, uncle, and cousin, who all participated in the abuse he experienced. Throughout this chapter, I will prove that for the first eleven years of Harry's life, he did not have any family member or significant adult who cared for him as a parent or guardian should. In the wizarding world, you come of age at seventeen. Because of this, Harry must stay with the Dursleys, at the very least, every summer holiday, until his seventeenth birthday, when he is considered an adult wizard and can care for himself. This is why we see Harry return to the Dursleys every summer, even after having started attending Hogwarts. It does become clear that Harry does not wish to keep going back, however, he has no choice but to return. Something that allows him to be continuously abused by the Dursleys throughout the story.

To address the statement of how Harry is a representation of what abuse can look like in the series, I have identified three different kinds of abuse we see him experience. These are neglect, restriction of food, and favoritism. There are other kinds of abuse that we see Harry be subjected to as well, however, these three are reoccurring and rather prominent throughout the series. Neglect forms the base of Harry's experience with the Dursleys, and we see this



reflected in both subtle ways and more blatant ways throughout. Restriction of food is used as a reoccurring punishment for Harry and throughout the story we see him go through periods of near starvation according to himself. Lastly, is favoritism. For anyone who has ever read Harry Potter or seen the movies, it is blatant that the Dursleys favor their son over Harry in extreme ways. It is because of these extremes that favoritism can be considered abuse in this case, as it demonstrates to Harry how little he is worth according to the Dursleys.

The Harry Potter series is written from Harry's point of view, this allows the reader to gain a thorough understanding of how the abuse affected Harry. Being abused has been proven to have a detrimental effect on a developing mind and it can impact their trajectory later in life.

Draper, Brian et. al. created a study where they wanted to examine whether physical and sexual abuse had a long-term effect on someone's mental health. From their study, we learn that "The findings from this study suggest that childhood sexual and physical abuse are associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes well into late life." (269). It is important to note that I will not be focusing on sexual abuse at all in my thesis, however, this study helps prove that abuse can affect your mental state even though several years have passed since the abuse took place. We see further proof of this in Norman et. al.'s study where they have specifically avoided using subjects who have experienced sexual abuse to address the long-term consequences of physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect more accurately.

Both prospective and retrospective studies consistently showed an association between exposure to child physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect and adverse health outcomes. The availability of prospective studies provides conclusive evidence of a temporal relationship between exposure to non-sexual child maltreatment and the later development of mental health outcomes, drug use, and STIs and risky sexual behaviour, as in these studies abuse and neglect preceded the onset of health problems in adulthood. (22)

Based on their findings in the study, being subjected to abuse as a child increases the chance of engaging in risky behavior as an adult. Here they specifically mention risky sexual behavior which can lead to exposure to things that can have a negative effect on your physical health. From this study, we can see that Harry in many ways prospers better than what one could expect from someone who has experienced the abuse he has. Rather than allowing those

negative experiences to take control, he channels them into righteousness and a strong sense of justice. One example is how he reacts to bullies, like Draco Malfoy and Severus Snape. Instead of allowing himself to be further bullied and abused, we see a resilience in him that allows him to fight back. We also see how his experience of having been abused helps him develop a strong sense of right and wrong. This motivates him to go against the injustice he witnesses, which is one of the reasons why he becomes the savior of the wizarding world in the end.

Throughout the story, we see how Hogwarts and Privet Drive bring out different versions of Harry and his personality. At Hogwarts, he is *the chosen one* or *the boy who lived*, he is a fantastic Quidditch player, and the list goes on. At school, he is liked and has friends, something he never experienced before leaving Privet Drive. The first time Harry makes a friend is on the Hogwarts Express when Ronald Weasley asks to sit with him in HPPS. Before this, all his interactions at school and such were affected by Dudley and his gang, as people knew that if they became friends with Harry, they would be beaten up by Dudley. Whenever he returns to Privet Drive the dynamic changes and he becomes powerless and friendless once again. In addition, he is forced to be at the complete mercy of the Dursleys again, which is something that subjects him to further abuse. This also contributes to Harry retreating more and isolating himself while he is staying with the Dursleys.

When addressing the three kinds of abuse I have identified I will use scenes from the books where these types of abuse are prevalent and first do a literary close-reading analysis of the scene, then use psychological papers and theories to further analyze it from that perspective.

Firstly, I will do a close-reading analysis of instances where we see neglect prevalent in Harry's life. To support my psychological analysis, I will use the article "Latent classes of child neglect types and associated characteristics", written by Christin Ogle et al. to address the neglect Harry is experiencing. Ogle et al.'s article is a study that aims to gain a broader understanding of what neglect can look like and what some of the different kinds of neglect are. With this, I aim to identify whether Harry's experiences align with their findings and what type of neglect he is subject to. Secondly, I will identify scenes where we see the restriction of food being used as a punishment and continue using the same structure as previously. Restriction of food falls under the umbrella term neglect and because of that, I

will continue to use Ogle et al.'s article in this analysis. Here I will aim to see whether this variation of neglect has had any deeper impact on Harry and his development. Lastly, I will address the blatant favoritism that the Dursleys express towards Dudley. One of the first things we learn about the family dynamic within the Dursley household is that Dudley is their pampered little prince, while Harry is treated like an unwanted stray. Favoritism is not in itself abusive, however, there comes a point where also preferential treatment becomes so detrimental to the other child that it does become abusive. To navigate this, I will use an essay written by Ph.D. Ellen Weber Libby called "When Favoritism Becomes Abuse", where she discusses the line between non-abusive and abusive favoritism. then assess whether the favoritism Harry is a victim to qualifies as abusive and how it affects him.

#### **4.1 Neglect**

According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, *neglect* can be defined as a

failure to provide for the basic needs of a person in one's care. The neglect may be emotional (e.g., rejection or apathy), material (e.g., withholding food or clothing), or service-oriented (e.g., depriving of education or medical attention).

From this definition, we see that neglect is a complex term that covers several aspects of maltreatment. In this section, I will identify scenes from the Harry Potter books where we can see Harry being subjected to maltreatment that falls under the term neglect. Due to frequency, I have chosen to give the restriction of food its own section and will therefore not address that aspect of neglect in this section. Rather, I will focus on the other types of neglect Harry experienced from his family. There is one important sidenote to mention, which is Dudley Dursley, Harry's cousin. In many cases, we see him gladly participate in subjecting Harry to this abuse, however, it is important to remember that Dudley is a child himself. Harry and Dudley are close in age, meaning that they grew up together, Dudley is mirroring the examples set for him by his parents. This view is also discussed by scholar S. Joel Garver,

When we first meet Dudley Dursley, he's an utter prat. [...] Dudley always wants his own way, and when it comes to his parents, Petunia and Vernon, he knows how to get it. Dudley thinks he's always in the right and can do no wrong. He can't see himself as anything but God's gift to the world – a model of juvenile perfection, entitled to every good thing that comes his way. And Dudley can't recognize Harry as anything but a

nuisance – a worthless distraction, a potential threat to ickle Dudders' own comfort and ease. (172)

These parents directly and indirectly tell their son that it is fine to target and bully Harry, it is often encouraged. With this in mind, we must accept that even though Dudley is horrible to Harry, he simply does not know better. When he gets older, he becomes a bully and children are afraid of him, but he has been taught that he cannot do anything wrong and gets away with everything every time. When you parent with that amount of leniency, there is no surprise that they would get a son who had no respect for others, especially the child he was raised to disrespect.

The story begins in HPPS, with Harry being orphaned and left on the Dursleys' doorstep as a one-year-old. In the second chapter, ten years have passed since Harry was left on the doorstep and we are quickly caught up on how Harry's life is. We get our first indication that things are difficult for Harry from a narration that describes photographs on display around the house.

the photographs showed a large, blond boy riding his first bicycle, on a roundabout at the fair, playing a computer game with his father, being hugged and kissed by his mother. The room held no sign at all that another boy lived in the house, too. (HPPS:19)

This narration introduces the reader to how the Dursleys treat Harry. While the pictures show a loved and happy boy, there is no sign of Harry in those pictures, only Dudley. Through this brief narration, we learn that it is important for the Dursleys to put Dudley on display and prove how great parents they are to him to everyone who enters the house. At the same time, the pictures represent the time and effort they have put into Dudley and that they are engaged parents to him. The ominous aspect here is the exclusion of Harry in all pictures. Harry has lived with the Dursleys since he was a baby, yet there are no pictures of him anywhere. After raising two children in one house, these pictures only represent the parents' devotion to one of these children, this being Dudley. Harry on the other hand is almost hidden away. If someone did not know they were guardians to another child, they would learn about Harry's existence based on anything in this living room. This is one of the first narrations we get from Harry's perspective and becomes a foreshadowing of how bad things are for Harry at the point where the story picks up.

Following this narration, it does not take long before we learn more about how bad Harry's housing situation is. The previous narration gave the reader an ominous introduction without anything definitive about how Harry lived. Now, we do begin to learn about how things are for Harry.

Harry got slowly out of bed and started looking for his socks. He found a pair under his bed and, after pulling a spider off one of them, he put them on. Harry was used to spiders, because the cupboard under the stairs was full of them, and that was where he slept. (HPPS: 20)

Harry sleeping in the cupboard under the stairs is something everyone knows about the series. It is also the first definite sign the reader gets that Harry is being abused and neglected by the Dursleys. Ogle et al. reference the reluctance to provide an adequate place to stay in their article about neglect "the failure to provide class was characterized by higher severity incidents involving failure to provide adequate shelter and hygiene." (7). We know there is a reluctance to give Harry a proper place to sleep through a description of the Dursleys' house that we get later. We learn that their house has four bedrooms, one for Vernon and Petunia, one is a guest room, and the two last bedrooms are Dudley's rooms (HPPS: 39). Through this we learn that the Dursleys do have more than enough rooms to accommodate Harry comfortably. Instead, they force him to sleep in the cupboard, rather than allowing him his own room. This makes the situation more malicious than before knowing that it was something that the Dursleys had decided upon out of cruelty.

In addition to learning that Harry is sleeping in a cupboard, we learn how Aunt Petunia speaks to Harry in this scene. It is not shown in the excerpt above, however, leading up to that scene, she wakes Harry up. "'Up!' she screeched" (HPPS20), is how she chooses to wake him. She is harsh, shrill, and impatient with him. The way Petunia interacts with Harry in this scene is the first indication that Petunia does not exude motherly warmth towards Harry. Combine this with her excessive doting on Dudley "'[...] I want everything perfect on Duddy's birthday.'" (HPPS20) it strengthens the idea that she is capable of motherly love, just not towards Harry. Having to sleep in the cupboard under the stairs is one stark example of the neglect Harry was suffering while he was growing up.

Having privacy and experiencing that your boundaries surrounding privacy are being respected is essential for an adolescent's development (Hawk et al. 511). In Harry's case, the only place he has some concept of privacy is in his cupboard. This cupboard, however, does not allow for much privacy, and it is not likely that the Dursleys would be capable of respecting his boundaries even if he had them. Children need a space where they feel safe and can escape the world. Instead, he is forced to sleep in a cupboard under the staircase that everyone uses. With a door that locks from the outside, giving him no control over the locking of his door. Considering that there barely was enough room for Harry in that cupboard, there was no space for him to express himself or his interests either. In cases where abuse is present, this becomes even more prevalent. Depriving Harry of privacy correlates to another subtype of neglect that Ogle et al. identified in their study, *failure to provide* (7). Not allowing Harry to have any privacy and personal space is something that based on Ogle et al.'s article falls within the scope of neglect. Because privacy and personal space are an important part of his development, and they are depriving him of it. When Harry finally is given one of Dudley's rooms, it is done to protect the Dursleys' reputation. As the letter Harry receives is addressed to:

Mr H. Potter

The cupboard under the stairs

4 Privet Drive

Little Whinging

Surrey (HPPS36)

Where the address exposes their treatment of Harry. When the Dursleys realized that someone knew they were cruel enough to force a young child to sleep in a cupboard, they relented and gave Harry Dudley's spare room instead.

We learn about Harry's appearance through a description of himself, which is influenced by his self-perception. From this description, we learn more about how he is being neglected.

Perhaps it had something to do with living in a dark cupboard, but Harry had always been small and skinny for his age. He looked even smaller and skinnier than he really was because all he had to wear were old clothes of Dudley's and Dudley was about four

times bigger than he was. Harry had a thin face, knobbly knees, black hair and bright green eyes. He wore round glasses held together with a lot of Sellotape because of all the times Dudley had punched him on the nose. The only thing Harry liked about his own appearance was a very thin scar on his forehead which was shaped like a bolt of lightning. (HPPS: 21)

In this instance, we again see the concept of failure to provide that Ogle et al. write about. In their study, failure to provide covers many of the different subtypes of neglect. They do, however, stress the importance of separating them.

the non-specific class was characterized by failure to provide adequate food and appropriate clothing as well as failure to provide healthcare in incidents that were likely to be low severity. In contrast, the failure to provide class was characterized by higher severity incidents involving failure to provide adequate shelter and hygiene. Although these caregiving failures are commonly combined into a single neglect type referred to as physical neglect, our results indicate these subtypes of physical neglect are unlikely to co-occur during a single maltreatment incident and should therefore be differentiated in operational definitions of neglect. (7)

From Harry's self-description, two elements constitute neglect, access to clothing, and his broken glasses. Firstly, Ogle et al. directly reference clothing in their article, and that failure to provide falls within the scope of neglect. Harry is consistently given Dudley's old clothes, and receiving hand-me-downs is not necessarily uncommon or abusive. It does become problematic when these clothes do not fit, and yet being forced to wear them. In addition, Harry is never given anything new, or anything meant for him, he only gets whatever Dudley is finished with. It is also frequently pointed out how obese Dudley is, while Harry is small and skinny, which tells us how unfitting these clothes are on Harry's frame. Based on Harry's reactions, he does seem annoyed about this, however, he does not seem to think that there is anything he can do about it.

Something that consistently reoccurs throughout the series, is how much of a financial burden Harry is. Despite this, we never see the Dursleys spend money on him. First, demonstrated through his lack of clothing, but also the state of his glasses. This brings us to the second element we learn in Harry's description, his glasses. We learned that his glasses are held

together using Sellotape. At this point, we do not know how bad Harry's eyesight is, however, we can assume that he needs these glasses to see. Rather than paying to have them fixed or buying new ones, they let them be in that condition. Considering that Harry owns this one pair, they would have had to buy him this pair at one point. It does look as if the Dursleys deemed it enough to get that one pair and did not concern themselves with replacing them or upgrading them when needed. If you must wear glasses as a child, breaking them is rather common because you use them when you play and sometimes kids are uncareful. Catering to Harry's need to see is not difficult now that glasses and optometrists are so accessible. In addition, we see throughout the series that the Dursleys do have the resources to take Harry to an optometrist. Instead, they care so little for Harry and his well-being that they do not cater to his most primitive needs. This is something that we see repeatedly with the Dursleys. Throughout the books, there are endless encounters where we see them treat Harry horribly.

The last example I will discuss is also from HPPS, and it is the scene where the Dursleys have driven Harry to King's Cross station in London, where he is supposed to board the train to Hogwarts. He is supposed to take the train from Platform 9  $\frac{3}{4}$ , which Uncle Vernon does not believe exists.

They reached King's Cross at half past ten. Uncle Vernon dumped Harry's trunk on to a trolley and wheeled it into the station for him Harry thought this was strangely kind until Uncle Vernon stopped dead, facing the platforms with a grin on his face.

'Well, there you are, boy. Platform nine – platform ten. Your platform should be somewhere in the middle, but they don't seem to have built it yet, do they?' (HPPS 96-97)

Here we see how little Vernon cares about Harry and the genuine enjoyment he takes in his struggle. Vernon even goes out of his way to ensure that Harry got into the station, in such an accommodating way that even Harry reacted to it. It is difficult to say what Vernon thought regarding the whole situation. In the sense of whether he believed the whole thing was a joke or if he believed that Harry had been mistaken about what platform to go to. Nevertheless, Vernon relishes his belief that there is no platform 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  and goes out of his way to mock Harry for believing it could exist. This excerpt does not show neglect by itself, however, it demonstrates how little the Dursleys cared about Harry and his well-being. While also leading



up to a serious incident of neglect. This is an incident that would fall within what Ogle et al. referred to as *high-severity* neglect. They defines this type of neglect as “exposure to violence, predominantly included incidents with high probabilities of failure to protect from violence and emotional neglect.” (7).

‘Have a good term,’ said Uncle Vernon with an even nastier smile. He left without another word. Harry turned and saw the Dursleys drive away. All three of them were laughing. Harry’s mouth went rather dry. What on earth was he going to do?  
(HPPS97)

In this excerpt, we see the Dursleys leave Harry, an eleven-year-old child alone at one of the busiest train stations in London. Not only do they leave him to fend for himself in the middle of London, but they are laughing about it. This can qualify as high-severity neglect because of the lack of protection the Dursleys exhibit here. Leaving Harry alone in a place like that neglects his need for safety and protection, and if something terrible had happened there would not have been any way for them to find out. Something that most likely means that they did not care what happened to Harry and whether he would have been hurt. That they were laughing at him adds another layer of malice to the situation. They were taking genuine enjoyment in the prospect of Harry being left alone without any money and with no one to contact in the middle of London. Doing something like this is a peak example of neglect and an example where their neglectfulness could have put Harry in tremendous danger. This is the last interaction Harry has with the Dursleys before the next summer holiday, however, we never learn whether they were told that Harry went to school or not. Harry never addresses it and does not mention writing to tell the Dursleys that he got on the train safely and would return next summer. Regardless, based on their actions before leaving Harry behind, it does not seem like they would have cared anyway. From Harry’s perspective, the Dursleys do not care whether he lives or dies, Harry feels that they most likely would prefer it if he died. We see him reference this mentality in HPCS when asked whether his aunt and uncle would be proud of him after his accomplishments “‘Proud?’ said Harry. ‘Are you mad? All those times I could’ve died, and didn’t manage it? They’ll be furious...’” (HPCS360). It does not seem likely that the Dursleys would have cared about what happened to Harry after being left at the train station. They were most likely more thrilled that they could get rid of him, at least for a while.

## 4.2 Restriction of food

Restricting access to food is considered a form of neglect that falls under the subtype of failure to provide (Ogle et al. 7). It is a well-known fact that people are reliant on proper sustenance. Especially children, as proper sustenance is essential for their development. In cases where children do not have access to proper sustenance, we can see that it affects many aspects of their development, especially cognitive and physiological development (UNICEF). Some instances can occur where children do not have access to food, but they are beyond the parents' control. Examples of this can be homelessness, financial problems, and eating disorders. None of these situations are prevalent regarding the Dursleys and their treatment of Harry. One of the reasons we know this is that we are repeatedly reminded throughout the series, how well off the Dursleys are. First is being able to afford a four-bedroom house. Then, in HPCS, we learn that the Dursleys are one good deal away from being able to afford a holiday home in Mallorca. Lastly, is the fact that they can afford all of this with only one income, as Petunia is a stay-at-home mom. This all means that the Dursleys have more than enough resources to feed Harry and care for him. Instead, they choose not to do so.

Starvation and food restriction were frequently used as a punishment for Harry whenever the Dursleys deemed his actions inappropriate. The first time we see Harry experience being locked in his cupboard without food is in HPPS after a trip to the zoo. During this trip, Harry accidentally removed the glass casing surrounding a snake, Dudley fell into the snake's enclosure, and the snake escaped. This caused a lot of uproar from the Dursleys and the workers at the zoo, who were dumbfounded regarding how the glass could have just vanished. When they got home later, Harry was subjected to Vernon's anger regarding the situation.

Uncle Vernon waited until Piers was safely out of the house before starting on Harry. He was so angry he could hardly speak. He managed to say, 'Go – cupboard – stay – no meals,' before he collapsed into a chair [...]

Harry lay in his dark cupboard much later, wishing he had a watch. He didn't know what time it was and he couldn't be sure that the Dursleys were asleep yet. Until they were, he couldn't risk sneaking to the kitchen for some food. (HPPS: 30-31)

This scene shows us how premeditated the angry outburst and the cruel punishment are because Vernon chooses to wait until Dudley's friend leaves their house. It gives the

impression that Vernon has some control over his fits of rage, as he can contain it until people have left. There have already been signs that the Dursleys wish to hide Harry away, and not integrate him into the family properly. The scene above tells us that in addition to hiding Harry away, they do not want other people to know how they are treating him either. Something that indicates that the Dursleys understand that their treatment of Harry is unacceptable. In the scene, we see how strongly Vernon reacts to the incident at the zoo, and how easy it is for him to take it out on Harry. Despite that, we also know how chaotic things had been at the zoo and that no one knew what had happened. Nevertheless, Harry became the guilty party, not knowing what he had done to make the glass disappear. Considering how little information they had, it is also fascinating how angry Vernon became. Undoubtedly, it was a scary situation, but there was no real reason for them to think it was Harry's fault. Still, we see Vernon be so angry that he is incapable of uttering complete sentences. The amount of anger expressed by Vernon in this scene feels excessive based on the incident. Especially considering that no one knew how the glass vanished, and mostly assumed it had been Harry.

The other aspect represented in the excerpt is Harry's reaction to the punishment. His response makes it seem like he has established a routine for these instances, Specifically, when he ponders whether the Dursleys are asleep yet. Harry's way of thinking about it gives the impression that this has happened before, and he has been forced to figure out how to work around the punishment to get food. There is also an implication that Harry knows what would happen if he got caught trying to get some food. He never actually says this directly, but his apprehension is telling. Either he has attempted to sneak out for food before and been caught, which means he would know what the consequences are. Or he has enough experience with the Dursleys and their punishments that he does not want to risk getting caught disobeying them. Either of these options tells us that Harry's situation is problematic, and no child should have to plan to this extent to access the food in their home. Another element that supports the argument that Harry has experienced this before is his initial lack of shock at his punishment. Vernon told Harry to go to his cupboard and that he would not be receiving any meals, and instead of opposing this, Harry just obeyed. Logic dictates that receiving a punishment that deprives you of food should be shocking if it is a first-time occurrence. Instead, we see Harry react with complacency and acceptance. He does not challenge his uncle on any aspect of the cruel punishment. Harry refers to his ten years of

living with the Dursleys as “ten miserable years” (HPPS: 31), this is reflected in how he is treated and his reaction to the mistreatment he receives.

Harry then leaves for his first year at Hogwarts. After he returned, he knew how terrified of magic the Dursleys were and used that as protection. When children are accepted into Hogwarts it is made clear to them that they are not allowed to use magic outside of school. This is information Harry neglected to tell the Dursleys, allowing them to believe that he could curse them if he wanted to. When the Dursleys believed this, it allowed Harry some agency, and they left him alone. The Dursleys’ fright of Harry and his magic became a protection from the abuse he suffered. His needs were still being neglected; however, he was not experiencing the daily tormenting in the same way, and he was able to force the Dursleys to do things with the threat of cursing them. At the beginning of HPCS, however, it is revealed to the Dursleys that Harry is not allowed to use magic at school, and if he uses it, he is risking expulsion from Hogwarts. This revelation made Harry lose the little agency he had gained. The Dursleys were also exceptionally angry at Harry for having deceived them, so when they got angry at him the next time, they spared no expense with his punishment.

He was bearing down on Harry like a great bulldog, all his teeth bared. ‘Well, I’ve got news for you, boy... I’m locking you up... you’re never going back to that school... never... and if you try and magic yourself out – they’ll expel you!’ (HPCS: 22)

In this excerpt, Vernon’s explosive anger is directed toward Harry again. As I have mentioned before, the Dursleys knew that Harry was a wizard as early as when they took him in and had made a conscious choice of trying to squash it out of him. Here we see another attempt to prevent Harry from integrating too much into the wizarding world. Based on how the Dursleys react in scenes where magic is involved, we get an idea that their apprehension stems from fear. They are afraid that their secret will be exposed, but more prominently, they are afraid that Harry will be able to avenge himself on them using magic. Magic is a phenomenon they have no control over, and they do not know how to restrict Harry from using it. This is why they regularly try to restrict Harry’s access to the wizarding world, as that might prevent Harry from learning to control his powers. The excerpt above is one example of this where Vernon relishes the fact that he can lock Harry in a room, unable to get out and go to school. This punishment demonstrates how far Vernon is willing to go when

enforcing punishments. Vernon installed a cat flap on Harry's bedroom door and bars at his bedroom window to ensure he would not leave his room. The cat flap was installed to give Harry food three times a day. He was only let out of his room twice during the day, once in the morning and once in the evening, to use the bathroom. This was Harry's existence for several days, and it had a profound effect on him. Especially the limited amount of food that he receives every day:

Yet life at Privet Drive had reached an all-time low. Now the Dursleys knew that they weren't going to wake up as fruitbats, he had lost his only weapon. [...] but the way things were going, he'd probably starve to death anyway.

The cat-flap rattled and Aunt Petunia's hand appeared, pushing a bowl of soup into the room. Harry, whose insides were aching with hunger, jumped off his bed and seized it. The soup was stone cold, but he drank half of it in one gulp. Then he crossed the room to Hedwig's cage and tipped the soggy vegetables at the bottom of the bowl into her empty food tray. She ruffled her feathers and gave him a look of deep disgust.

'It's no good turning your beak up at it, that's all we've got,' Harry said grimly.

He put the empty bowl back on the floor next to the cat-flap and lay back down on the bed, somehow even hungrier than he had been before the soup. (HPCS23)

In this scene we see Harry locked in his room contemplating his situation and how bad it has become. From this scene, we see Harry confirm that it was the Dursleys' fear that protected him. Then we see the extent they are restricting food, to the point of near starvation. Harry even comments on ending up starving to death if things continue like this. Unlike when he slept in the cupboard, Harry could not sneak out of his bedroom to get food after the Dursleys had gone to sleep, he was at the utter mercy of their willingness to feed him. They did give him food three times a day, however, whether you can regard them as meals is debatable. As we see in this scene Harry is given a bowl of stone-cold soup as a meal. Even though the Dursleys are feeding Harry, there is an expectation of adequacy surrounding the meals. Ogle et al. preface this in their article and specify that one type of neglect is "failure to provide adequate food" (7). This implies that in cases where inadequate food is provided, it can still be considered neglect. One can debate what adequacy surrounding food entails; however, one bowl of cold soup cannot be considered adequate. It is worrying that Harry is left at the complete mercy of people who have repeatedly shown how little they care about his well-being. The severity of the situation is also displayed through Harry's narration, specifically, about how starving he is and morbidly joking about starving to death.

Another example is where the Dursleys find a way of using food restriction as punishment. There is no doubt either whether the Dursleys knew how essential food was for a growing child as in HPGF we see Aunt Petunia utter the phrase “he was a growing boy that needed plenty of food” (HPGF: 24). This utterance was, however, directed towards Dudley and not Harry. Throughout the series, Dudley’s obesity became an essential characteristic of his. Historically, obesity has not always been perceived as something bad. According to an article written by Marta Sumińska et al. “For many decades, excessive body weight has been considered rather a symbol of health. It was a marker of wealth and prosperity, as well as a sign of high social status.” (1). Considering that the Dursleys are obsessed with being perceived as affluent by the people around them, it could have been a conscious choice of Rowling to implement obesity as a characteristic of both Vernon and Dudley. This also adds another level of differentiation between Harry and the Dursleys as they are actively hindering Harry from becoming like them while enabling Dudley in his overconsumption. What we learn based on their treatment of Harry is that his existence seems to bother them so much that they have created a narrative that he deserves to be abused and neglected. We never learn whether it comes from Petunia’s feud with her sister, the Dursleys’ dislike of the wizarding world, or a combination of both. Regardless, we see that the Dursleys implement cruel tactics in their punishments for Harry, with the full understanding of how detrimental it can be.

At the beginning of HPGF, we get another demonstration of how differently the Dursleys treat Dudley and Harry when it comes to food. Due to his vast size, Dudley had been forced to start on a diet by the school nurse. Neither of his parents was happy about this, making up tons of excuses why this was not necessary. What ended up convincing, at least, Petunia was that Dudley’s school could not offer knickerbockers that accommodated his size. Based on Harry’s narrative “Dudley had reached roughly the size and weight of a young killer whale.” (HPGF: 24), which gives the reader a good understanding of how vast Dudley’s size was. Forcing Dudley to adhere to this diet had not been easy, and as a show of support, Petunia had decided that the entire family needed to be on the same diet as Dudley. Because of this, one morning the entire family is served an unsweetened grapefruit quarter:

She now passed a grapefruit quarter to Harry. He noticed that it was a lot smaller than Dudley’s. Aunt Petunia seemed to feel that the best way to keep up Dudley’s morale was to make sure that he did, at least, get more to eat than Harry. (HPGF: 24)

We see in this scene how ingrained it is for the Dursleys to put Harry down and how accepted it is to restrict Harry's access to food. It is so ingrained that restricting Harry's access and ensuring that he gets the least amount of food, gives Dudley comfort. In this situation, Harry is being fed and is sitting by the kitchen table, rather than being locked away in his room. This interaction falls under the scope of neglect based on what Ogle et al. say about adequacy and restriction. Harry is being fed here, however, it is not adequate based on what he needs, while also seeing how she restricts his access based on what Dudley is served. In this situation, they have one child who has become problematically obese, while also having a child that is close to malnutrition while under their care. It is rather clear that these two children have different needs to prosper.

### **4.3 Favoritism**

The blatant favoritism directed towards Dudley is undeniable when you read the Harry Potter books. Harry on the other hand was grotesquely neglected and was forced to watch this differential treatment every day growing up. Being exposed to something like that from a young age will affect your confidence and perception. PhD. Ellen Libby has written an essay where she explores the line between abusive and non-abusive favoritism. In her essay, she identifies how the unfavored child might be affected in cases where it is abusive.

Unfavored children grow up with distorted, negative views of themselves. They are vulnerable to feeling defeated, believing that hard work and determination will not reap the rewards they desire. Depression often accompanies this experience.

This shows how favoritism can harm children, especially as they are still developing their self-worth. Throughout the series, we see instances where Harry expresses these types of tendencies. One instance is in HPPS when he describes himself and we get the line "The only thing Harry liked about his own appearance was a very thin scar on his forehead which was shaped like a bolt of lightning." (HPPS21). They become less frequent as he grows older and is exposed to more people who care for him rather than ignore him. Nevertheless, Harry grows up in a family where he is consistently reminded that he is not wanted and consistently experiences that his basic needs are not being met. In addition, you see the people who torment and abuse you be present and loving towards another child. Something that proves that they are capable of love, however, they do not believe that you are worthy or deserving of

it. Growing up under such extreme conditions is rough, especially in Harry's case who did not have any adult or significant person who did love him. All he had was adults who actively despised him and others who were passive to his experience. This feeling of alienation and loneliness would be strengthened by the Dursleys' favoring Dudley to such a degree.

One jarring example is from HPPS, and how differently Dudley and Harry are treated on their birthdays. Dudley is a little older than Harry, and Dudley's birthday is the day we are introduced to Harry then as a 10-year-old. As a birthday treat, Dudley is treated to a full day at the zoo with a friend. Harry is not supposed to join, but his sitter cancels, and he is allowed to join them at the zoo. Before they leave for the zoo, at the beginning of the day, we see how Vernon and Petunia go above and beyond to make Dudley's birthday extraordinary. In this excerpt, we see how far the Dursleys are willing to go to appease Dudley and we see Dudley's temperament and de-escalation.

Harry put the plates of egg and bacon on the table, which was difficult as there wasn't much room. Dudley, meanwhile, was counting his presents. His face fell.

'Thirty-six,' he said, looking up at his mother and father. 'That's two less than last year.'  
(HPPS: 22)

This shows us the quantification Dudley is doing regarding presents. He is counting how many there are, not bothering with what is inside them, just that there are less than the previous year. Counting the presents is also the first thing he does when he wakes up on his birthday. As soon as he enters the kitchen, his priority is to assess the quantity of gifts for that year. Then we also see how his face fell doing this, which indicates displeasure. Telling the reader that not only is he focused on how much he received, but he would also become angry or annoyed if this year's number of presents did not exceed last year's amount.

'Darling, you haven't counted Aunt Marge's present [...]

'All right, thirty-seven then,' said Dudley, going red in the face. Harry, who could see a huge Dudley tantrum coming on, began wolfing down his bacon as fast as possible in case Dudley turned the table over.

Aunt Petunia obviously scented danger too, because she said quickly, 'And we'll buy you another *two* presents while we're out today. [...]' (HPPS22)



In this next excerpt, we are given evidence of his explosive temperament. From Harry's reaction, we can conclude that there is familiarity in Dudley's actions, as Harry knows how to prepare. Firstly, is the way he can recognize the signs of a tantrum coming on and then there is the note of Dudley turning the table, both of which indicate that this has happened before. In addition to Harry's preparation, we see how Petunia handles Dudley whenever he is approaching a tantrum. Here we see her deescalate by satisfying Dudley's desire to up the previous year by promising to buy him additional gifts. Seeing this makes it clear to the reader why Dudley is acting this way as we see how he is being enabled here by his mother. It is normal for children to want to test and push boundaries, however, it is therefore essential for parents to uphold boundaries and structure around the child. Not doing this can have detrimental effects on your child, in Dudley's case, it is his entitlement and behavior that is detrimentally affected by his parents' refusal to reprimand and correct bad behavior.

Dudley thought for a moment. [...] 'So I'll have thirty... thirty...'

'Thirty-nine, sweetums,' said Aunt Petunia.

'Oh.' Dudley sat down heavily and grabbed the nearest parcel. 'All right then.'

Uncle Vernon chuckled.

'Little tyke wants his money's worth, just like his father. Atta boy, Dudley!' He ruffled Dudley's hair. (HPPS: 22-23)

Then we see the tension de-escalate when Dudley gets things his way and gets more birthday presents this year than the previous year. As soon as he realizes this, he can immediately continue with his morning and start his breakfast. This is an interaction that aligns with the list of descriptions in Libby's essay regarding how the favorite child is likely to behave.

The other child, the favorite child, doing nothing in particular, receives abundant affirmation and privileges that appear undeserved. [...]

One child grows up feeling powerful, believing they can do or accomplish anything, [...]

A parent excessively praises one child while ignoring, criticizing, or saying little positive about other children. These parents have difficulty acknowledging one child's shortcomings (often the favorite)

This is part of the list Libby includes in her essay, and we see how these descriptions align with Dudley's behavior. The amount of entitlement he is exhibiting in this excerpt is staggering. There is no gratefulness only greed, and his entitlement is so prevalent that he genuinely believes that he is right to decide the circumstances he gains birthday presents. Then we see how Vernon praises Dudley's behavior and makes it out to be a clever and strategic move. Something that aligns with the last item referenced from Libby's list. Rather than correcting Dudley's behavior or creating clear boundaries with him, the Dursleys let him dictate the situation. In this scene, Dudley is the one in control and he knows how to get exactly what he wants from his parents. Considering how accommodating and enabling the Dursleys are towards Dudley we can understand how they ended up with such a spoiled and uncontrollable child. According to Libby, in cases where favoritism is this extreme, it is not uncommon for the favored child to become this way. This scene does not alone demonstrate the severe favoritism that the Dursleys display towards Dudley, however, it does show the lengths they are willing to go to for Dudley to have a fantastic birthday.

Based on what happened leading up to Harry's birthday a while later, we can, we can compare how they were treated and witness the blatant favoritism. To try and outrun the letters Harry was receiving from Hogwarts, the Dursleys, and Harry stayed in a shack out at sea. The living conditions in the shack were not great and on the night before his birthday, we see Harry having to sleep under horrible conditions.

Aunt Petunia found a few mouldy blankets in the second room and made up a bed for Dudley on the moth-eaten sofa. [...] Harry was left to find the softest bit of floor he could and curl up under the thinnest, most ragged blanket.

[...] Harry couldn't sleep. He shivered and turned over, trying to get comfortable, [...] The lighted dial of Dudley's watch, which was dangling over the edge of the sofa on his fat wrist, told Harry he'd be eleven in ten minutes' time. He lay and watched his birthday tick nearer, wondering if the Dursleys would remember at all, [...]. (HPPS48)

Not only do we see how differently Petunia treats Harry and Dudley here. In a rather uncomfortable situation, we see Petunia doing the utmost for Dudley to be as comfortable as possible. Harry on the other hand is left to fend for himself. This instance represents what Libby was describing in her essay about the favorite child gaining privileges without doing anything to deserve them. Their sleeping arrangements are horrible, both for Harry and Dudley. Nevertheless, we see Petunia go out of her way to accommodate Dudley and make

him as comfortable as possible under these scarce conditions. Harry is not given any assistance or any help to make him comfortable. Something that shows how Dudley does not need to do anything to gain privileges from his parents. Whereas Harry is consistently forgotten. The description of Harry's sleeping arrangements supports this idea, as the picture we get is that of Harry, comparable to a curled-up dog, on the floor trying to stay warm. This scene does not depict the plans the Dursleys had for the upcoming day, which we learn is Harry's birthday. What we do see, is Harry pondering about whether the Dursleys would even remember his birthday. An utterance like that indicates that they have forgotten his birthday before, and Harry carries around a fear of that repeating itself. Due to the upcoming events, the reader never learns whether the Dursleys had forgotten Harry's birthday, however, the scene above does demonstrate a significant difference in the way the Dursleys act regarding Harry's birthday compared to Dursley's.

Another significant aspect where we see the Dursleys differentiate between Harry and Dudley is where they are attending secondary school. Dudley has been enrolled at Smeltings, which is Uncle Vernon's old school. It is also a private school, and it is more prestigious to attend there than a public school. Harry on the other hand was supposed to attend Stonewall High, the local high school. Harry does not seem to mind that Dudley gets to go to a better school than him, he is only excited about the prospect of not attending the same school as Dudley for the first time. A prospect that gives Harry hope that he might be able to make new friends and get away from the bullying he was subjected to at school by Dudley and his gang. In addition, Harry Potter is set in the United Kingdom, which means that school uniforms are often mandatory in schools, Smeltings and Stonewall High included. These uniforms allowed for an additional thing where the Dursleys could favor Dudley over Harry.

This is a rather long excerpt from the text; however, it is structured in a way that nicely demonstrates how differently Harry and Dudley were treated regarding their school uniforms.

One day in July, Aunt Petunia took Dudley to London to buy his Smeltings uniform, [...]

That evening, Dudley paraded around the living-room for the family in his brand-new uniform. [...]

As he looked at Dudley in his new knickerbockers, Uncle Vernon said gruffly that it was the proudest moment of his life. Aunt Petunia burst into tears and said she

couldn't believe it was her Ickle Dudleykins, he looked so handsome and grown up. [...]

There was a horrible smell in the kitchen next morning when Harry went in for breakfast. It seemed to be coming from a large metal tub in the sink. [...] The tub was full of what looked like dirty rags swimming in grey water.

'What's this?' he asked Aunt Petunia. [...]

'Your new school uniform,' she said. [...]

[...] 'I'm dyeing some of Dudley's old things grey for you. It'll look just like everyone else's when I've finished.

Harry seriously doubted this, but thought it best not to argue. He sat down at the table and tried not to think about how he was going to look on his first day at Stonewall High – like he was wearing bits of old elephant skin, probably. (HPPS: 34-35)

First, we see how huge a deal the process is for Dudley, he gets to go into London and is bought a brand-new uniform, and then he gets to prance around the living room showing it off to his parents. In addition, it is a moment that brings up emotions for Vernon and Petunia by reminding them that their little boy is growing up. We see them reminisce and try to accept that their boy has reached an important moment in his development. This all demonstrates that Dudley going off to Smeltings and wearing his uniform for the first time is a massive milestone and he gets to enjoy the attention that brings. For Harry, it was very different. In his case, there is nothing special surrounding his uniform. Not only that, he is once again given used hand-me-downs from Dudley, but this time Aunt Petunia has taken the time to dye them into the right color. Most likely, it would have taken her less effort to buy Harry a new uniform, but she chooses the option that will only further embarrass Harry. Something like this will also emphasize how unimportant the Dursleys think it is that Harry is going off to secondary school.

This is a prime example of favoritism at work, which we also see based on how well it adheres to Libby's list from earlier. Here we are given a similar situation, where both boys are going off to secondary school. Regardless, we see the preferential treatment directed towards Dudley in every instance. Firstly, from the choice of school, where Dudley is sent to private school and Harry to public school. Dudley has never done anything special that would constitute him being better fitted to attend private school, we learn how bad he is doing in school. Despite this, Dudley is given these privileges because he is the favorite child. Then

we see Harry, who is not just the other child, as Libby refers to them as, he is actively targeted and abused as well.

I have said that Harry did not have any adults in his life that represented anything different than the Dursleys. One example is Aunt Marge, Vernon's sister, who also does her utmost to degrade Harry whenever she visits. In HPPA, she comes for a week-long visit and during this week, she shows us that it is not just Harry's immediate family that thinks low of him. We see this as soon as she arrives at Privet Drive with her dog Ripper:

‘Where’s my Dudders?’ roared Aunt Marge. ‘Where’s my neffy poo?’

[...] Aunt Marge thrust the suitcase into Harry’s stomach, knocking the wind out of him, seized Dudley in a tight one-armed hug and planted a large kiss on his cheek. (HPPA: 24)

This is the first time Marge sees Dudley on this visit. Based on this interaction, we learn that Marge cares for Dudley and that she participates in creating nicknames for him. There is genuine excitement to meet her nephew and as the reader, we learn that Marge is another character that adores Dudley. Simultaneously we see her completely disregard Harry and his existence. There is no evidence that she even registers Harry's presence until she throws her suitcase at him. Even then, it is not clear whether she had registered that Harry was there. In addition, she shows no care at all that she hurt Harry with her suitcase. The first verbal interaction between Harry and Marge does occur a bit later and only solidifies the idea of her not liking him.

Ripper began to growl again as Harry sat down. This directed Aunt Marge's attention to Harry for the first time.

‘So!’ she barked. ‘Still here, are you?’

‘Yes,’ said Harry.

‘Don’t you say “yes” in that ungrateful tone,’ Aunt Marge growled. ‘It’s damn good of Vernon and Petunia to keep you. Wouldn’t have done it myself. You’d have gone straight to an orphanage if you’d been dumped on *my* doorstep.’ (HPPA: 25)

We have seen throughout how differently Harry and Dudley have been treated by the Dursleys, here we see the same behavior from Aunt Marge. Marge is another adult in Harry's life who despises him for simply existing. The way Marge behaves proves that it is not just the Dursleys who favor Dudley over Harry in such an extreme way. Even though Libby's essay references favoritism from a parental figure, we see that Marge's treatment of the boys aligns with the criteria discussed in the essay. Marge's favoring of Dudley does not stem from any other place than her preferring Dudley over Harry. As we see with the Dursleys, Dudley's actions or attributes are irrelevant to them favoring him. Because they favor him so much, we instead see how spoiled and uncontrollable that makes him. According to Libby, however, it is common for the favored child to become spoiled and such: "Favorite children grow up with distorted, inflated views of themselves. They are vulnerable to feeling entitled and believing that rules don't apply to them.", which is the case regarding Dudley. In addition, Marge's attitude towards Harry also solidifies the idea that he has no familial person who shows him any love or care. Every family member he knows consistently shows favoritism towards Dudley, gladly rubbing it in Harry's face, while they actively despise him and want nothing to do with him.

## 5 Severus Snape

To address my thesis statement of how Snape demonstrates traits of someone who has experienced abuse, I want to focus on three main characteristics of Snape's character, these are all aspects that are central to his character and his motivations throughout the series. As I will be addressing all seven books in my thesis, I will at times jump a bit back and forth in the timeline when discussing the different scenes. Throughout the story, we learn that Snape is subjected to more than one kind of abuse. Even though we gain a limited amount of insight into Snape's childhood and home life, we are still able to learn that he is experiencing neglect, verbal abuse, and physical abuse from his parents. Philip Ney et. al. addresses the significance of being exposed to more than one type of abuse and the ramifications of being exposed to this specific trifecta.

In less than 5% of our subjects did any type of abuse or neglect occur singly. The worst combination of any three types of maltreatment indicates that physical neglect, physical abuse, and verbal abuse have the greatest impact on the child's perception of his present and future life. We also found that if neglect precedes abuse, the deleterious impact of abuse appears to be more extensive. (P:706)

Here we see that when abuse is prevalent, a vast majority of the participants would experience more than one type of abuse. They also go further and discuss how those three types of abuse have the most impact on the subjects as adults. This is something that Snape is a representation of, due to how he seems to be affected by the things he experienced. We know that abuse is a multifaceted concept that expresses itself in different ways. And there are traits and behaviors that one can expect from people who have experienced abuse. These are what I will be looking for as I move forward in my analysis of Snape. Ney tells us that Snape's experience aligns with the majority of abuse victims and that based on that it is likely that he will be affected by his abusive upbringing, also as an adult.

The characteristics I have identified for Snape are cruelty, love and loyalty, and anger. Within each of these characteristics, I will use at least one psychological concept in my analysis. Firstly, I will look at cruelty, here I will be addressing the blatant and unnecessary cruelty that Snape demonstrates throughout the series, especially towards his students. The psychological approach I will use when discussing cruelty is the long-term effects of bullying and how it is

not uncommon for victims of bullying to become bullies in turn. In a study done by Lee et. al., they discuss this by referencing the phenomenon of “bully victims” which is a subcategory that has been formed from studies that show that this subcategory of victims later becomes the aggressors themselves (p: 10314). This study will be the basis for my arguments regarding the characteristic cruelty.

Secondly, I will be exploring the characteristics of love and loyalty. These are two different elements, but due to the way they manifest within Snape, they are so interchangeable that I am going to treat them as one characteristic. Here I am going focus on how attachment styles are affected by abuse, and how this is prevalent through Snape. Lee and Hankin have done a study where they use insecure attachment, dysfunctional attitudes, and low self-esteem as a way of predicting possible depression and anxiety. This study also discusses how people with an insecure attachment style can behave in interpersonal relationships, which is going to be relevant when discussing Snape. I will also be using Unger and DeLucas’ study where the aim was to identify the insecure attachment styles within adults who experienced childhood physical abuse.

Lastly, there is anger. My main objective here is to identify scenes where this emotion takes charge. Anger is a broad term, and this is why I will limit it to those instances where we see Snape’s actions being fueled by his anger. To analyze this last part, I will look at how psychologists have researched how growing up in a household where you were exposed to a lot of anger can affect the way you handle and express anger as an adult. I will use an essay written by Sarah Epstein, a licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT), where she writes about how anger can take control over families and how growing up subjected to anger can have long-term consequences to analyze this topic.

We are first introduced to Snape in HPPS in chapter six. Harry has just arrived at Hogwarts and has been sorted into his house, Gryffindor. During the welcome feast, Harry looks up towards the High Table where the teachers and Headmaster are sitting, where he also sees Snape. This is when we get Harry’s first description of Snape, and it can also be thought to be the only relatively objective description of Snape that we get from Harry: “Professor Quirrell, in his absurd turban, was talking to a teacher with greasy black hair, a hooked nose and sallow skin.” (HPPS: 134). This description is solely made from perception, as Harry had not, at this time, had any other knowledge or experiences with Snape before that could have influenced



him. This does change quickly, due to Harry subsequently having his first experience with Snape which ends up leaving Harry with a negative impression:

It happened very suddenly. The hook-nosed teacher looked past Quirrell's turban straight into Harry's eyes- and a sharp hot pain shot across the scar on Harry's forehead. [...] The pain had gone as quickly as it had come. Harder to shake off was the feeling Harry had got from the teacher's look- a feeling that he didn't like Harry at all. (HPPS: 134-135)

Snape's introduction does not leave us with a good first impression of his character. This is based on both instances mentioned, first the unflattering description of him, then the way Harry experiences pain when making eye contact with Snape for the first time. Even this early on in their relationship, we see how the foundation of their dislike and enmity begins to form. The first interaction does not necessarily strongly indicate that there is going to be an extreme conflict between the two. Nevertheless, it does make it clear that Snape will be a character that Harry will have conflicts with. The fact that Snape is presented this way from the beginning is interesting. Because it fits into the perception Rowling is creating of Snape. Throughout the first book, we are made to believe that it is Snape who is working with Voldemort and trying to aid his return to power, something which makes Snape the red herring in HPPS. For this to be plausible, Snape's character had to be bad enough for us to believe that he could be doing all these bad things. With the introduction of Snape's character, we see this perception begin to form. At the end of HPPS, we do learn that Snape is in fact, not the villain and that it is Quirrell. This does not, however, remove the perception of Snape as a villainous character. We also do not see any attempt from Snape to reconcile this perception, especially as we see how his horrendous behavior toward the students continues. This red herring work is done so well that it is a rather huge plot twist at the end of the book when it is revealed that Professor Quirrell is the villain who is helping Voldemort, and not Snape.

Viewing Snape through Harry's perspective makes it difficult for the reader to gain a complete picture of his character. One can, for example, assume that there will be situations where Harry chooses to focus on the negative, rather than the whole picture. As the story progresses, we get to see more of Snape's childhood and his time at Hogwarts, however, these scenes are always viewed through Harry. There are instances where we see Harry struggle

with the information he has received about Snape. Most prominently, the scene where Harry sees Snape being bullied by his father and his friends. This is a difficult scene for Harry to process for several reasons, firstly, he must confront that there might be some truth in all the horrible things Snape has been saying about James. Snape has been consistent in never letting a moment to abuse James in front of Harry pass him by. Before Harry saw Snape's memory, however, he did not believe that there was any legitimacy to the things Snape was saying, and then this memory ended up proving some of the things Snape had been saying. Secondly, we got to see how this memory made Harry realize that his father, Sirius, and Lupin, were flawed. It is at this moment Harry is forced to see that these men that he admired, had flaws and that they had done bad things. This was the instance where Harry experiences that his idolization of his father shatters, and he must begin to accept that his father was human. Lastly, Harry is faced with the realization that there are similarities between himself and Snape. The torment and ridicule Snape endured from James and Sirius, was something Harry had experienced himself. It was difficult for him to accept that there were likenesses between himself and Snape, a man who was so cruel.

## **5.1 Cruelty**

Throughout the series, Snape's inherent cruelty towards the students at Hogwarts is a constant. Especially Harry, Hermione, Ron, and Neville are frequently on the receiving end of his cruelty. As I have mentioned before, we get an idea of what the relationship between Harry and Snape is going to be like from the beginning, due to Harry being the narrator, this also sets the tone and perspective we, as the reader, will see Snape through. After their first encounter, Harry feels that Snape does not like him at all. In the eighth chapter "The Potions Master" (HPPS) we see their first interaction, and Harry's belief is confirmed: "At the start-of-term banquet, Harry had got the idea that Professor Snape disliked him. By the end of the first Potions lesson, he knew he'd been wrong. Snape didn't dislike Harry – he hated him." (HPPS, P: 145). This citation acts as a foreshadowing of how the potions class went. We have not yet seen what happened during the class, all we are left with is that it was so horrible that Harry left the classroom knowing that his teacher does not just dislike him, he hates him. This leaves the reader with an ominous feeling about this scene, even before it has begun.

"'Ah, yes,' he said softly, 'Harry Potter. Our new- celebrity.'" (HPPS, P:146) This is the first thing Snape says to Harry. While taking the registry, he pauses by Harry's name and says this.

Before this lesson, we have seen that Harry has struggled with comprehending that he is famous in the wizarding world, especially considering why he is renowned. However, in this scene, we see that Snape weaponizes it and phrases it in a way that opens Harry up to receiving ridicule from the Slytherin kids. With this one line, we already know that Snape does not like Harry, nor does he care that he is famous. In general, fame is thought to be something great, something that people strive towards, but here we see Snape use it to embarrass an eleven-year-old boy.

In this scene, we also get lines where we learn more about Snape's devotion and knowledge about his subject. One example of such a line is "I can teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory, even stopper death – if you aren't as big a bunch of dunderheads as I usually have to teach." (HPPS, P:146). This quote is multifaceted, where we have two main elements. We have the part where he is describing what he can teach them, and then there is the part where he places all responsibility for their learning onto themselves. The first part of this quote is a way for Snape to show off and demonstrate his knowledge. In many ways, this is an example of grandstanding, which is something people do to make themselves seem important.

grandstanding is a use of moral talk that attempts to get others to make certain desired judgments about oneself, namely, that one is worthy of respect or admiration because one has some particular moral quality—for example, an impressive commitment to justice, a highly tuned moral sensibility, or unparalleled powers of empathy. To grandstand is to turn one's contribution to public discourse into a vanity project. (Tosi, P:199)

This definition talks about moral grandstanding, but it also works with other personality traits where someone can deem themselves better than others if they possess these traits. In Snape's case, it is not his morality, but rather his knowledge and wizarding prowess that allow for his grandstanding. This is something that we are going to see Snape do repeatedly throughout the story, which makes it prudent to define the term now. The line above is the first clear instance we see of this happening. As for the second part of the quote, we see Snape place all responsibility on his students. Meaning that from Snape's perspective, he is so clever that it cannot be his fault if his students fail. Rather, it is the student's fault for being stupid and not capable of understanding the art of potion-making.

As the scene progresses, we quickly get another instance where we see Snape grandstand, while also being able to create a situation where he tries to ridicule Harry. This is this interaction: "Potter!" said Snape suddenly. "What would I get if I added powdered root of

asphodel to an infusion of wormwood?’ Powdered root of what to an infusion of what? Harry glanced at Ron, who looked as stumped as he was, [...] ‘I don’t know, sir,’ said Harry.” (HPPS, P:146). This is an interaction where we see Snape weaponize his knowledge by directing these questions toward Harry, knowing that Harry has not learned enough to answer them. Snape is fully aware that this is Harry’s first week at Hogwarts, something which also means that it is his first week in the wizarding world. Rather than help him adjust and create an environment where Harry would want to learn, he takes the first chance he gets to demonstrate the things Harry does not know. In this instance, we even see Harry turn to Ron, who is a pureblood, he is born into the wizarding world, he grew up in it. In Harry’s mind, Ron should know everything about this world, but as we see here, Ron is just as confused and lost as Harry.

It is based on Snape’s reaction to Harry not knowing the answers to his questions, which allows us to truly understand the malice within this interaction, before we get the reaction, it does not feel as cruel as what it does afterward. “Snape’s lips curled into a sneer. ‘Tut, tut – fame clearly isn’t everything’” (HPPS, P:147), this is Snape’s reaction to Harry. In this interaction, we see that Snape takes pleasure in demonstrating to the class that Harry does not know these things. At the same time, we also see how he does not intend to have these questions answered, he did not ask them to get an answer, and the intention was simply to embarrass Harry. The reason we know this is because of Hermione. When Snape asks his questions, she raises her hand and shows eagerness to be chosen to answer these questions that she knows the answers to. Instead, he chooses to ignore her, in favor of ridiculing Harry. Then there is the last part of the quotation, where he yet again attacks the fact that Harry is famous. Based on the scene thus far, one of the things that we have learned is that Snape takes issue with Harry’s fame.

As the scene progresses, Snape continues to ridicule Harry. He does this by asking Harry another set of questions that Harry cannot answer. We then see Snape follow up with yet another degrading comment: “‘Thought you wouldn’t open a book before coming, eh, Potter?’” (HPPS, P:147). This is a line that holds different implications. First, we see that Snape is continuing with the bit where he is making Harry out to be stupid. He does this here by implying that this knowledge is so easily obtainable that if Harry had just bothered to open a book, he would have acquired the knowledge to answer these questions correctly. Then there is also an underlying implication where Snape is once again implying that Harry is full

of himself due to his fame. Snape has made it clear that Harry's fame is something that he wants to attack, and here we see how he is doing this by implying that Harry deems himself too important to do something as trivial as opening a book.

One important thing that we see for the first time in this scene, is the foundation for the relationship between Harry and Snape. We get to see how Harry refuses to show Snape that his words and actions bother him for the first time. It is done briefly and subtly with the line "Harry forced himself to keep looking straight into those cold eyes." (HPPS, P:147). Here we see how Harry forces himself not to react to Snape, and instead, we see how he maintains eye contact. This is an action that is indicative of who Harry is as a character and it is also an important element in the dynamic between Harry and Snape moving forward. This is further proved when Snape, for the third time, asks Harry a set of questions he cannot answer. Again, we see Hermione demonstrate an eagerness to answer, something she has repeatedly done but has been ignored. This third time was no different regarding Snape, Harry, on the other hand, seems to have had enough. For the second time, we see him oppose Snape " " I don't know,' said Harry quietly. 'I think Hermione does, though, why don't you try her?'" (HPPS, P:147), this is the first instance we see of Harry retorting back to Snape, and it is not something Snape handles gracefully. This is something he proves when he takes house points from Gryffindor because of Harry's "cheek" (HPPS148).

Towards the end of this scene, we also see Neville become a victim of Snape's bullying. In Neville's case, it is very much related to his lack of proficiency in potions. This is the first interaction we see between Snape and Neville, and it tells us how this dynamic is going to be between them. Neville becomes one of the students who is regularly subjected to Snape's abuse, and this interaction shows us how it begins:

Neville had somehow managed to melt Seamus's cauldron into a twisted blob and their potion was seeping across the stone floor burning holes in people's shoes. [...]

'Idiot boy!' snarled Snape, [...] 'Take him up to the hospital wing,' Snape spat at Seamus. Then he rounded on Harry and Ron, who had been working next to Neville.

'You – Potter – why didn't you tell him not to add the quills? Thought he'd make you look good if he got it wrong, did you? That's another point you've lost for Gryffindor.'

This was so unfair that Harry opened his mouth to argue, but Ron kicked him behind the cauldron.

‘Don’t push it,’ he muttered. ‘I’ve heard Snape can turn very nasty.’” (HPPS148-149)

In addition to seeing Snape have his first interaction with Harry and Neville in this scene, we get a brief introduction to how the dynamics overall are going to be in potions class. Meaning that we get to see how the Gryffindors and Slytherins interact with each other, we get to see Snape’s preferential treatment towards the Slytherins, and we get to be introduced to the cruelty that we come to expect from Snape as the story progresses.

As I mentioned, this is the first scene where we meet Snape. It is also a scene where a lot of his character is established, and as the story progresses, it mainly builds upon what was established in this scene. At the same time, we get to see the first instance that makes *cruelty* one of his most prominent characteristics. His display of cruelty in this scene feels off-putting for several reasons. The most prominent one is the fact that these are children and that it feels disturbing for a teacher to treat his students in this way. Another thing that feels a bit off, is how immediately he starts berating Harry. We learn from Harry that this is the first time these two have spoken, and yet, Snape has an immediate dislike for him. As we learn later, this is due to Snape’s relationship with Harry’s father. These are all things that we learn as the story progresses and not from this scene. From this scene, we gain an understanding of who the character is and the dynamics surrounding him. In addition, we see him asserting himself and almost trying to lure his students in with all the things that he can teach them. Snape also affirms his desire to be perceived as highly intellectual when he specifies that if any of his students are incapable of success, that stems from their stupidity and has nothing to do with his abilities as a potion maker or teacher.

Snape is a victim of bullying, and as Choi and Park say, “It is well known that victims of bullying could become a bullying perpetrator later on” (2414). This tells us that this is something that happens regularly, victims of bullying can become bullies themselves. As we see in the scene above, there is no doubt that Snape has become a bully himself. Choi and Park’s study aims to determine why some victims turn bully while others do not. The main factor they have identified is self-esteem, and whether you end up going from victim to bully is dependent on your level of self-esteem, “Students with higher self-esteem were the most likely to engage in future bullying perpetration in response to bullying victimization, while the students with lower self-esteem were the least likely to engage in future bullying perpetration” (2414). Throughout the article, they argue that the reason this happens is that as

a victim of bullying, your power is taken away from you by those who bully you. They do this to tear you and your confidence down, so you become a complying victim. In their study, there is ample evidence that your self-esteem is negatively affected after being subjected to bullying. Yet they see a distinct difference in those who are left with a high self-esteem versus those who are left with a low self-esteem. Their argument as to why those who are left with high self-esteem have a higher chance of becoming bullies themselves is due to their desire to rebuild themselves and gain control and respect. This would not even occur to people with low self-esteem (2415).

Using what Choi and Park discovered through their study and applying the idea of self-esteem to Snape's character can help us understand the importance of demonstrating his intellect not just in the scene above, but continuously throughout the series. When this scene occurs, we have not gained much knowledge about Snape yet. It is prominently in HPOP that we start learning about Snape's childhood and school life. When we begin to learn more about Snape, we get to see how important his intellect is and how academia became an escape for him. His intellect was a way to escape the bullying and ridicule he was experiencing from James and his friends, and it became a method for him to plan ways to avenge himself on them as well. Based on this, we can conclude that Snape's intellectual prowess was closely connected with his self-esteem. This again allows us to see that in the scene above, based on his grandstanding, his flexing regarding how competent he is, and his refusal to allow any 'dunderhead' student to place any doubt upon his abilities, paints an image of himself as this highly clever and competent man is extremely important to him. Considering the way he acts as a teacher; we can also conclude that this image is more important to him than teaching.

Through his worst times, Snape's cleverness protected him from vanishing into despair after being bullied, while also giving him something where he was undoubtedly superior to others. Allowing him to protect his self-esteem and keep having a high regard for himself. This is further proved by the fact that even though Snape was subjected to horrendous bullying, he kept trying to fight back. Being persistent in the act of fighting back, is also something that strengthens the argument of Snape having maintained a high self-esteem, because, if that had not been the case, he would not have any reason to keep fighting as there would not be anything he would want to protect. There is also evidence that shows us that there is an egotistical drive in Snape's character. The presence of egotism is relevant according to Choi and Park who base their study upon this. In their study, Choi and Park reference a theory

called *threatened egotism theory*, which helps explain the connection between self-esteem and aggression. In other words, *threatened egotism theory* explains that “The link between self-regard and aggression is best captured by the theory of threatened egotism, which depicts aggression as a means of defending a highly favorable view of self against someone who seeks to undermine or discredit that view.” (Baumeister 26). Based on this information, we know that there is a correlation between egotism and high self-esteem and that they are both determiners of whether a victim of bullying becomes a bully. Snape is a character that displays both as an adult, allowing us to conclude that he, like Choi and Parks discovered in their study, is trying to assert his position and power in a way he was not able to do before. Specifically treating Harry horribly, because it is a way to avenge himself upon James.

This scene also shows us how Snape treats students who make a mistake. Something that we already know that Snape himself takes no accountability for, and places all the blame on the student who messed up. The way Snape treats Neville is indicative of how the relationship between the two is going to be throughout the series. We also see that the bullying worsens as the story progresses, and in HPPA, we learn that Snape is what Neville fears the most in the world. It is problematic that a student has had such horrendous experiences with one of his teachers that this teacher becomes his greatest fear. As we have seen, their interaction starts with Snape calling Neville an “idiot boy” (HPPS148) as soon as he makes a mistake. We come to learn throughout the series that Neville making mistakes is not a rarity. Nevertheless, Snape calling Neville an “idiot boy” is not a suitable way for a teacher to speak to a student, no matter the circumstance. This treatment of Neville aligns with the idea of a victim of bullying trying to regain his power. We know that Snape has a heightened view of himself, especially his knowledge. Neville on the other hand has neither of those things and is in many ways easy to victimize. Based on how we know Snape, Neville can be seen as his worst nightmare as a student. Neville is notoriously clumsy, and he struggles a lot academically. These are traits that Snape is not capable of accepting, nor would he ever be willing to accept those traits from someone who belongs in Gryffindor’s house. We can draw that conclusion based on Snape’s treatment of Hermione, as she is a character that inhabits all the traits Snape should want in a student, but due to her being a Gryffindor, he ridicules her for these traits. When that is how he treats a student who does the right things, one can see that Neville did not have a chance of being fairly treated.



One important thing to note is how Snape's popularity amongst the Slytherin students is affected by his treatment of Gryffindor students, especially Neville and Harry. Scholar Andrew P. Mills addresses how strong house loyalty can be "Being in a House at Hogwarts affects the way you treat people." (97), this is something we see consistently throughout. Snape, with a desire to elevate himself, bullies Gryffindor students in front of Slytherins and allows the Slytherins to participate in it he makes himself more popular amongst them. Throughout the series, we see time and again how Snape encourages and instigates Slytherin students to start bullying Gryffindor students, in addition to actively participating in it himself. Popularity is something that Snape never experienced in his youth, due to being a victim of bullying. Based on what we know about Snape's youth, he was low on the hierarchical ladder. Whereas James, Sirius, and Lupin, were high up on this ladder, something that we see Snape resent. Choi and Park address this as well by referencing the importance of the peer hierarchy: "It is well known that one of the useful ways to show off their power and status in a peer hierarchy is by bullying others who are weaker than themselves" (Choi, P:2415). When Snape is a teenager, we see him being a victim of this, whereas James and his friends exercise this power over Snape. As an adult, we see how Snape is now asserting this power over his students. This swap is something that Choi and Parks reference in their discussion:

This might be the reason they become bullies after the experiences of victimization. It actually works. By showing off their power and peer status in a hierarchy [...], they would solve the victimization problem autonomously. Accordingly, the positive self-view and the social status in the peer hierarchy would actually be restored and improved. (Choi, P:2420)

Snape feels as if he must break away from the role of the victim and does this by becoming the bully himself. However, it is important to note the disconnect with the use of the word *peer*, as Snape is a teacher and should not consider his students to be his peers. The definition of a peer from Oxford Languages tells us that it is "a person of the same age, status, or ability as another specified person." Making it clearer that Snape is not within the realm of being considered a peer of those whom he is bullying. However, one can argue that this falls under the scope of *regression* which is a very common defense mechanism for people who have experienced abuse and trauma to develop. Psychology Today defines regression as:

Regression is a defense mechanism in which people seem to return to an earlier developmental stage. This tends to occur around periods of stress—for example, an overwhelmed child may revert to bedwetting or thumb-sucking. Regression may arise from a desire to reduce anxiety and feel psychologically safe.

Regression can help us understand how Choi and Parks' thoughts about peer hierarchy are still relevant. In one way, Snape's treatment of Harry is not intended for Harry, but for James. Since James is dead, Harry becomes the natural recipient of Snape's resentment towards James. This means that a part of the cruelty that Snape subjects Harry to stems from the enmity that built inside Snape as a teenager. Allowing for transference to occur by using Harry, while also regressing to an angry teenager. In addition, it is easier for Snape to bully Harry because of the lack of equilibrium between the two, one being a teacher and the other being a student.

This is also transferable to how he treats Gryffindors and Slytherins so differently, although there are multiple layers to that. To Snape, the Slytherins represent him and by elevating them, he in turn elevates himself. Slytherin does not have the best reputation either, especially compared to Gryffindor. Something that makes Snape want to favor Slytherin over Gryffindor because no one else will.

Despite this, Snape still has cruelty traits that expand beyond his need to bully Harry. Throughout the series, there are several instances where we see Snape being unnecessarily cruel towards his students. It is not just Neville and Harry who have horrible encounters with Snape either. An example of this is in HPGF, where Draco and Harry fight outside Snape's classroom and they send spells flying at one another. One of these spells hits Hermione in the face and makes her front teeth grow an insane amount. When Snape appears outside his classroom, he is told about the fight, takes Draco's side, and punishes Harry. This is expected, however, what enforces the cruelty in this scene is his reaction to seeing Hermione's front teeth. He looks down at this fourteen-year-old girl and says "I see no difference" (HPGF253), commenting cruelly on her body and exploiting one of her insecurities. This is in my opinion, the moment throughout the series where Snape is the cruelest. No one, let alone a teacher, should ever make such comments about their students. Especially as it is well known that young girls are susceptible to body image issues. As I mentioned, this is only one example, which means that there are more scattered throughout all seven books where we see

Snape exercise unnecessary cruelty. In many of these scenes, we can also see that he gets enjoyment from bullying these children.

Snape will be an important character throughout the story, which we see the beginning of in his first scene. We are also given a foreshadowing of his contempt for Harry's father, James, through his treatment of Harry. With the knowledge that we gain further out in the story about the relationship between Snape and James and the way James used to brutally bully Snape, we can draw lines between Snape's treatment of Harry and James' treatment of Snape.

Snape's first scene is when Snape takes his hatred of James out on Harry for the first time.

We also see how Snape is taking some pleasure in being in a position where Harry cannot retort or fight back, considering that he was never able to stand up to James and his friends.

Now, by being a professor, he is ensuring that he can exert power over Harry in a way he was never capable of doing to James. Cruelty is a trait of Snape's that fits with the well-known idea within the psychology surrounding bullying that victims of bullying can often become bullies themselves (Choi & Parks: 2414). These scenes show us how Snape's behavior feels both unnecessary and unprovoked. While also giving a shock factor due to how disturbing it is to witness a teacher treat children like this.

## **5.2 Love and Loyalty**

In contrast to cruelty, love, and loyalty are characteristics that are revealed late in the series.

When it is revealed, we can draw connections and parallels to these characteristics throughout the series. In many, love and loyalty would be considered two different characteristics, this is not the case with Snape. The reason for this is that when it comes to Snape's character, these two are interconnected. Snape is not a character that shows his emotions easily and when he does, it is usually expressed through anger. Deavel and Deavel credit this to his talent at Occlumency "Snape's skill at Occlumency reveals both his strength and his weakness of character. The successful Occlumens empties personal emotion" (58). This is an important note regarding the emotions he expresses outward. His prowess at Occlumency is also the skill that keeps him alive whenever he works with Voldemort. When everything about Snape's intentions and motivations is revealed in HPDH, we learn more about the complexities of his emotions, including love and loyalty. I will be examining Snape's relationship with love and loyalty through the lens of attachment and how this concept plays a

role in the way Snape approaches both love and loyalty throughout his life, and whether he can sustain it.

Before beginning the analysis, it is important to differentiate between *love* and *obsession*. According to Oxford Languages, *love* can be defined as “an intense feeling of deep affection.” *Obsession* is defined as “an idea or thought that continually preoccupies or intrudes on a person's mind.” (Oxford Languages). they are rather like one another, however, there are some central differences that will be important in my analysis. The key difference here is the concept of the idea of someone. It is a known thing that people can become infatuated with the idea of a person and then create their own version of that person in their head. These ideas do not necessarily need to have anything to do with the person in question. This is what I will be referring to whenever I use the word obsession, as it is important to differentiate between your love for someone and your love for your idea of someone.

In chapter thirty-three, *The Prince's Tale*, in HPDH we learn about Snape's background and childhood. This happens after Snape is killed by Voldemort, and Snape gives Harry access to his memories just before he dies. Harry then takes these memories to Dumbledore's old office to place them in the pensive, a device used to rewatch memories. This sequence of memories consists of memories from Snape's childhood to adulthood. By using the pensive, Harry can enter Snape's memories and experience them from a third-person perspective.

Harry fell headlong into sunlight, and his feet found warm ground. When he straightened up, he saw that he was in a nearly deserted playground. [...] Two girls were swinging backwards and forwards, and a skinny boy was watching them from behind a clump of bushes. His black hair was overlong and his clothes were so mismatched that it looked deliberate (HPDH:541).

This is the beginning of the memory, as it is described by Harry. We see how everything began with a young boy watching and observing these young girls. He is watching from a distance, and he is hiding behind some bushes, trying to not be seen by these girls. Something that tells us that thus far, he wants to keep a distance between himself and these girls. The shabbiness of his appearance is also noteworthy, as it acts like an ominous sign regarding his home life.

Harry moved closer to the boy. Snape looked no more than nine or ten years old, sallow, small, stringy. There was undisguised greed in his thin face as he watched the younger of the two girls swinging higher and higher than her sister.

‘Lily, don’t do it!’ shrieked the elder of the two.

[...] Petunia stopped her swing by dragging the heels of her sandals on the ground, making a crunching, grinding sound, then leapt up, hands on hips. (HPDH: 541)

This part of the scene is very informative, allowing the readers to draw connections based on prior knowledge of the story. Here we learn the identities of these different children, realizing that it is Snape, Lily, Harry’s mother, and Petunia, Harry’s aunt. At this point, we have no prior knowledge that Lily and Snape knew each other beyond having gone to Hogwarts together. It is here that we are introduced to the fact that there is something more to the relationship between Snape and Lily. This is important as it creates the foundation of the drive and motivations that inspire the characteristics of love and loyalty within Snape as an adult.

Harry is now standing with the young Snape, who looks very disappointed because his introduction to Lily has gone wrong. The current scene dissolves and a new one forms immediately. In this scene we see Snape and Lily sitting cross-legged, facing each other on the ground:

‘...and the Ministry can punish you if you do magic outside school, you get letters.’

‘But I have don magic outside school!’

‘We’re alright. We haven’t got wands yet. They let you off when you’re a kid and you can’t help it. But once you’re eleven,’ he nodded importantly, ‘and they start training you, then you’ve got to go careful.’ (HPDH: 543-544).

Despite a rough introduction, now Lily and Snape are building a relationship and bonding over interest in the magical world. Here Snape is teaching Lily about the magical world and laws and restrictions within it. We are also shown that even as a child his knowledge makes him feel superior, also when he teaches Lily about the magical community. This is the same trait we see in him when he teaches and is grandstanding in his first lesson with Harry. It has not become as extreme, considering he is still a child. We see that Snape takes joy in

explaining the wizarding world to Lily. A world that she has no knowledge of and a world that she finds both interesting and intriguing. Because of her interest in what Snape is teaching her, we also see her becoming more interested in him. Something that would have made him even more eager to assist and teach her.

From certain descriptions regarding the way Snape is watching Lily, we see that his obsession with her is growing stronger: “His voice trailed away, she was not listening, but had stretched out on the leafy ground and was looking up at the canopy of leaves overhead. He watched her as greedily as he had watched her in the playground.” (HPDH: 544). Here we see Lily acting normally, and whatever feels comfortable to her. Snape, however, is described as watching her greedily. If we look at Oxford Languages’ definition of greed, we see that it is an: “intense and selfish desire for something, especially wealth, power, or food.” With this definition, we can conclude that Snape was led by selfish impulses regarding his relationship with Lily. We also see further proof of this later in their relationship, but this is where we see it displayed for the first time. This situation also proves that when it came to Lily, Snape had always had selfish intentions with her, also as children. We also see how Snape has begun to trust Lily with things regarding his home life. This is the only time throughout the series that we see Snape confide in anyone about how things are at home and with his father.

‘How are things at your house?’ Lily asked.

A little crease appeared between his eyes.

‘Fine,’ he said.

‘They’re not arguing anymore?’

‘Oh, yes, they’re arguing,’ said Snape. He picked up a fistful of leaves and began tearing them apart, apparently unaware of what he was doing. ‘But it won’t be that long and I’ll be gone.’

‘Doesn’t your dad like magic?’

‘He doesn’t like anything much,’ said Snape. (HPDH: 544-545).

Here we learn more about how Snape viewed his home situation. At this point, he is an eleven-year-old boy, who eagerly waits to leave home. Based on the way Lily began this interaction, this is something they have discussed before. This tells us that Lily and Snape have become close friends in a rather short time, and Snape trusts her enough to discuss deeply personal things with her. As this scene is the first time, we see Snape reference his father and how things were at home, it also shows us the first time Snape let his guard down

and talked about himself. Throughout the story, we do not see many instances of this, which makes this interaction unique. We also see how his attachment to Lily starts to go beyond what he is used to, especially, as an abused child.

Based on a thorough analysis of the child abuse and adult attachment style literature, it was hypothesized that physical abuse would be significantly associated with attachment avoidance [...]. (Unger & De Lucas 230).

This tells us that, based on Snape's experiences, he would typically avoid attachments. In this interaction with Lily, however, we see him start to attach emotionally to her. The relationship we see starting to form here is an essential part of understanding Snape's actions as he grows older and is faced with difficult choices. It is also his relationship with Lily that creates the foundation of his ability to feel love.

In this next scene, Snape and Lily are older and they are walking together in the castle courtyard. They are arguing, and through that, we get to see how their priorities and values are starting to create friction in their friendship. This is a longer excerpt; however, I chose to keep it connected due to the movement in their conversation. From the movement in their conversation, you can gain an understanding of the rising tension and the back and forth between them.

'... thought we were supposed to be friends?' Snape was saying. 'Best friends?'

'We are, Sev, but I don't like some of the people you're hanging around with! I'm sorry, but I detest Avery and Mulciber! What do you see in him, Sev? He's creepy! D'you know what he tried to do to Mary Macdonald the other day?' [...]

'That was nothing,' said Snape. 'It was a laugh, that's all -'

'It was Dark Magic, and if you think that's funny -'

'What about the stuff Potter and his mates get up to?' demanded Snape. [...]

'What's Potter got to do with anything?' said Lily. [...]

'I'm just trying to show you they're not as wonderful as everyone seems to think they are.' [...]

'I just don't want to see you made a fool of- he fancies you, James Potter fancies you!' The words seemed wrenched from him against his will. [...]

'I know James Potter's an arrogant toerag,' she said, cutting across Snape. 'I don't need you to tell me that. But Mulciber and Avery's idea of humor is just evil. [...]

Harry doubted that Snape had even heard her strictures on Mulciber and Avery. The moment she had insulted James Potter, his whole body had relaxed, and as they walked away there was a new spring in Snape's step... (HPDH549-551).

We see how Snape does not seem interested in the things that are troubling Lily regarding his friends. In this scene, Lily is clear about her opinions on the actions of Snape's friends. With her being so adamant, we also see how little it bothers Snape. He does not even seem to register the reason she is upset. Instead, we see him obsess over their friendship and how they are supposed to be best friends. The memory begins in the middle of Snape's sentence, and because of that, we do not know why he started to complain. Considering the content, however, we can assume that it relates to Lily being angry that Snape's friends had used Dark Magic toward one of their classmates. Throughout the scene, we see Lily continually trying to revert to the problematic actions of Snape's friends, however, he is actively dismissing both the severity of the action and her discomfort. Instead, he changes the subject to irrelevant topics, that bother him. Just like when he starts ranting about James Potter and his friends. Scholars Catherine Jack Deavel and David Paul Deavel argues that "Snape's love is not yet pure; he does not love Lily as what Aristotle calls a "second self." (59), and that whenever Snape becomes capable of doing this, he begins his redemption process. This is something I disagree with, even though Snape is a teenager, he should be able to hold more space for Lily, regardless of love. Snape's tangent is also irrelevant to what Lily is trying to communicate to him, but he seems unable to control himself to stop and listen to her. Then he tells Lily that James has feelings for her, which is a sore point for Snape, considering how he feels about her. This interaction aligns with what I mentioned previously regarding Baumeister's theory about threatened egotism. Where Lily's criticism threatens Snape's view of himself in the position of her best friend, which makes him defensive. Then we see how Snape seems unable to allow space for her here and is so intent on saying what he needs her to hear, regardless, of whether it was relevant to Lily's query. This interaction makes it look as if Snape felt that his friendship with Lily was being threatened, and rather than listening to her and assessing her needs, he lashed back with things that served his ego more.

Starting to verbally question your friendship because your friend disagrees with you is something that feels rather childish and toxic. Whereas Lily is trying to express herself calmly and clearly, Snape becomes defensive for the wrong reasons. Through this scene, we see that Lily's objective is to try and convince Snape that what his friends did is not okay. Snape



responds by ignoring her and tell her that it was not that bad then to begin discussing Potter and his friends instead. This is irrelevant to what Lily was discussing, something that she points out by asking Snape what Potter has to do with anything. Then the scene turns into Snape just tearing Potter down, rather than listening to Lily. This scene is also representative of how different Snape and Lily's emotional intelligence was at this point. Emotional intelligence is a skill that develops over time, but is very important when encountering other people and their emotions, as we see defined in Psychology Today:

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. Emotional intelligence is generally said to include a few skills: namely emotional awareness, or the ability to identify and name one's own emotions; the ability to harness those emotions and apply them to tasks like thinking and problem solving; and the ability to manage emotions, which includes both regulating one's own emotions when necessary and helping others to do the same.

Whether Snape's emotional intelligence ever evolved enough for him to be considered emotionally intelligent is hard to say because of how little we see of his emotional spectrum. What we can conclude, is that they are starting to grow apart, both because of their different values and because of their emotional maturity.

The next memory Harry sees is the brutal bullying incident, where James and Sirius ridicule Snape to the extreme. In this incident, Snape is hung upside down from a tree, so that his underwear is exposed, his mouth is washed out with soap and as the scene ends James says, "Who wants to see me take off Snively's pants?" (HPP:599). Lily witnessed everything and tried to help Snape. She told off James and Sirius for the things they were doing and told them to stop and leave Snape alone. Because of how ashamed Snape was, he did not react well to her help and ended up insulting her profoundly by calling her a *mudblood*.

The following scene is where Snape tries to reconcile with Lily after calling her a mudblood:

'I'm sorry.'

'I'm not interested.'

'I'm Sorry!'

'Save your breath.' (HPDH:551).

Throughout the series, it has been prefaced that mudblood is considered an unforgivable word. Here we see a childhood friendship break because of the use of this word. Even though Snape was tormented and humiliated by James, he knew how terrible it was to call Lily a mudblood. One interpretation of an act like that, especially after the tension that has started to arise in their friendship, is that it was self-destruction. We see Snape keep trying to apologize to Lily after he called her that, now also explaining himself:

‘I never meant to call you Mudblood, it just –’

‘Slipped out?’ [...] ‘It’s too late. I’ve made excuses for you for years. [...] You and your precious little Death Eater friends [...] You can’t wait to join You-Know-Who, can you?’ [...]

‘I can’t pretend anymore. You’ve chosen your way, I’ve chosen mine.’

‘No – listen, I didn’t mean–’

‘- to call me Mudblood? But you call everyone of my birth Mudblood, Severus. Why should I be any different?’ (HPDH: 551-552)

This shows us the catalyst moment where Snape and Lily are no longer friends. Thus far, all the memories we have seen from Snape have been focused on Lily and their relationship. In this scene, we see Snape lose Lily because of his affiliation with the Death Eaters and Voldemort. Based on what we have seen earlier, Snape had apprehensions about muggle-born witches and wizards. In the scene above, we get proof that he chooses to overlook this in favor of Lily, but no one else. In addition, we have seen Snape go against his nature as an avoidant attached person because of Lily. Him becoming so close to her and in many ways dependent on her goes against what one can expect from someone with an avoidant attachment pattern.

These types not only describe an individual’s behavioral patterns but also represent the organization of the expectations of others in response to comfort or reassurance seeking. [...] an avoidant attachment style do not exhibit distress upon separation and do not seek contact after the caregiver’s return. (Lee & Hankin 220)

At the same time, we also see that this is the time when Lily is starting to realize what kind of person Snape is. Something that could explain why he would self-destruct and call her a mudblood, as it would make things easier. Both since it would be on his terms, and he would not have to confront the prospect of his only secure person rejecting him. This interaction with Lily becomes the moment where he faces the consequences of becoming involved with Death Eaters. We even see Lily tell Snape about how they have chosen different sides, and that she cannot respect the cruelty that Snape's side displays nor the people that do. The fact that his ideologies and values made Lily cut ties with him is something that becomes important later in Snape's character development.

We next see him as an adult. In this scene, we see Snape with Dumbledore when Snape is at the height of his Death Eater career. It is the moment when Snape tells Dumbledore that Voldemort is hunting the Potters because of the prophecy he overheard.

‘Well, Severus? What message does Lord Voldemort have for me?’

‘No – no message – I’m here on my own account!’ [...]

‘I – I come with a warning – no, a request – please -’ [...]

‘What request could a Death Eater make of me?’ [...]

‘The – the prophecy... the prediction... Trelawney...’ [...] ‘he thinks it means Lily Evans!’ (HPDH552-553).

In this part of the scene between Snape and Dumbledore, we see Snape's panic. He has just realized that he has given Voldemort information that will result in Lily's death. Based on Dumbledore's reaction to meeting Snape, it does not seem like it is the first time Snape has been used as a messenger between Dumbledore and Voldemort. It is also clear that it is known that Snape is working for Voldemort and has become a part of his inner circle, the Death Eaters. Snape disclosed the part of the prophecy he overheard due to his loyalty to Voldemort, not knowing that it would put Lily's life in danger. Lily the first, and maybe the only person, Snape was able to be vulnerable with. This scene shows us that despite their friendship having ended years previously, Snape still cared a great deal for Lily. At this point, we do not know that he loves her, however, this scene is the first one where we see Snape's hardened exterior break, due to his fear of losing Lily. As an avoidant attached person, Snape

demonstrates the exception he made for Lily. Everything then comes down to Snape seeking Dumbledore's help to fix his mistake and save Lily's life.

Snape only overheard parts of the prophecy, as the loyal servant he was, he passed along what he heard to Voldemort. From the parts Snape had overheard, Voldemort believed the prophecy to be about Harry. To ensure that the prophecy was fulfilled, Voldemort set out to kill Harry, something that also put his parents' lives at risk.

'If she means so much to you,' said Dumbledore, 'surely Lord Voldemort will spare her? Could you not ask for mercy for the mother, in exchange for the son?'

'I have – I have asked him-'

'You disgust me,' said Dumbledore, and Harry had never heard so much contempt in his voice. Snape seemed to shrink a little. 'You do not care, then, about the deaths of her husband and child? They can die, as long as you have what you want?' [...]

'Hide them all, then,' he croaked. 'Keep her – them – safe. Please.' (HPDH553)

Once again, we see Snape incapable of looking beyond his own desires. Lily made a choice when sacrificing herself for Harry. She made that choice out of love and would most likely do the same thing all over again. Here my analysis contradicts Deavel & Deavel, who argue that "Snape's love for Lily pushes him beyond selfish desire and changes him fundamentally." (60). I do not believe that to be the case as we consistently see Snape act based on himself throughout the series, and this instance is nothing different. Nevertheless, we learn here that Snape had been bargaining with her life, by offering up Harry and James instead of her. This act proves how little Snape knew or cared about Lily and her feelings, despite claiming to love her. The bargaining Snape tries to do only proves how egotistical he is. Like Baumeister's theory on threatened egotism, which I have discussed previously, references. The prospect of Snape losing Lily threatened his desires regarding their relationship. A prospect that made him ignore whatever she would have wanted, as long as he had what he wanted. We see Dumbledore confront this about Snape here. Then we learn that Snape has already discussed this with Voldemort. Even though he did not say what Voldemort's response was, the fact that he is now asking Dumbledore for help tells us that Lily's life is

still at risk. After being told off by Dumbledore for being despicable, we see Snape relent and ask for all three to be protected. When all were safe, Lily would also be safe.

‘And what will you give me in return, Severus?’

‘In – in return?’ Snape gaped at Dumbledore, and Harry expected him to protest, but after a long moment he said, ‘Anything.’ (HPDH: 553).

In this last part of the scene, we see the alliance between Dumbledore and Snape begin, which also means that Snape was a double agent from this moment. Dumbledore has seen Snape’s desperation to keep Lily safe because he focuses on the bigger picture, he knows that having someone on the inside would become crucial in defeating Voldemort. Dumbledore asking Snape what he could do for him had nothing to do with Dumbledore not wanting to keep the Potters safe, but rather that he saw an opportunity. Directly after this scene, another scene follows, and Snape is in Dumbledore’s office:

Harry stood in Dumbledore’s office, and something was making a terrible sound, like a wounded animal. Snape was slumped over in a chair and Dumbledore was standing over him, looking grim. [...] Snape raised his face, and he looked like a man who had lived a hundred years of misery (HPDH553).

Expressing emotions in a way like this is uncharacteristic for Snape. This reaction is suitable regarding Lily, as she had a way of drawing forth uncharacteristic behavior in Snape. The next exchange in this scene is when we learn that Lily has been murdered. Here we learn that Dumbledore had tried to protect the Potters, but they had trusted the wrong person, which led to their deaths.

‘Her son lives. He has her eyes, precisely her eyes. You remember the shape and color of Lily Evans’s eyes, I am sure?’

‘DON’T!’ bellowed Snape. ‘Gone... Dead...’

‘Is this remorse, Severus?’

‘I wish... I wish I were dead...’ (HPDH: 554).

This exchange between Snape and Dumbledore shows us that Snape is capable of feelings such as remorse. We also see his martyrdom represented here. Snape was never a happy man,

but he had experienced moments of happiness, all of them, as far as we know, were with Lily. She was the person he could be vulnerable with and let his guard down around. Regardless of the egotism displayed in situations regarding Lily, we still see that Snape genuinely cares about her. Even though there might be indications that his love borders more towards an obsession due to how little regard and knowledge he seems to have for Lily's wants and needs. He knows that it was his information that inevitably led to her death, something that would be hard for him to process.

Snape's comments about wishing to be dead express a range of emotions that we have not seen from him yet. Therefore, the comment can feel a bit jarring and unexpected. Dumbledore makes it clear that if Snape's love for Lily was truly love, it would be obvious that he would need to help protect her son. We know that this is what Lily would have wanted, as she did everything she could to try and keep Harry safe and alive. Dumbledore planned and saw the bigger picture. In this case, the bigger picture was that when Voldemort returned, Harry would be in mortal peril and Dumbledore would need someone on the inside. Lily's death gave Dumbledore this, by Snape becoming motivated to vanquish the person who murdered Lily.

'Very well. Very well. But never – never tell, Dumbledore! This must be between us! Swear it! I cannot bear... especially Potter's son... I want your word!'

'My word, Severus, that I shall never reveal the best of you?' [...]

'If you insist...' (HPDH554).

This shows us the specific moment Snape agrees to work against Voldemort. No one knows how long it will be until Voldemort returns to power. All Snape knows for certain at this point is that he is going to help Dumbledore protect Harry in honor of Lily's sacrifice. We also see that Snape cannot look past Harry's connection to James, just the thought of James's son knowing about his love for Lily makes him extremely uncomfortable. Something that might stem from a fear of vulnerability, especially in front of someone who represents much of what Snape despised as a child. James tormented Snape and then married Snape's first and only love. Based on this, one can conclude that it would be hard for Snape to show any vulnerability in the presence of Harry, due to his father's actions.

After this scene, the memories become shorter and more rapid. They also consist of scenes that we have seen parts of or heard about earlier in the story. We see Dumbledore and Snape discuss the Dark Mark and that it is becoming clearer again in the Entrance Hall after the Yule Ball (HPGF), which becomes the beacon that proves Voldemort's return. Then we learn how Dumbledore's death came around. After Dumbledore's hand was cursed, we see that Dumbledore is barely conscious, and Snape is helping him. There is a bluntness in the way Snape is addressing Dumbledore here. There is no doubt that Dumbledore is a highly intellectual man, and Snape is therefore confounded about Dumbledore's reasoning for doing something so obviously stupid. Based on how Snape speaks to Dumbledore and how he cares for him, one gets a sense that Snape is concerned about Dumbledore. From the previous excerpt, we are left with a sense of worry from Snape, as we move further into the memory, we get proof of worry:

'It is a miracle you managed to return here!' Snape sounded furious, 'That ring carried a curse of extraordinary power, to contain it is all we can hope for; I have trapped the curse in one hand for the time being-' [...]

'You have done very well, Severus. How long do you think I have?'

[...] Snape hesitated, and then said, 'I cannot tell. Maybe a year. There is no halting such a spell forever. It will spread, eventually, it is the sort of curse that strengthens over time.' (HPDH556).

This scene shows us that Snape is angry with Dumbledore for placing himself in a position where he was hurt like this. During this exchange, we learn that Dumbledore is dying, and Snape tries his utmost to stop this from happening. Despite Snape's best efforts, Dumbledore would die within the year. While we see Snape be angry about the situation, we see Dumbledore embrace the fact and plan around his death. Nor did it seem to bother him that he was going to die:

Dumbledore smiled. The news that he had less than a year to live seemed a matter of little or no concern to him.

'I am fortunate, extremely fortunate, that I have you, Severus.'

‘If you had only summoned me a little earlier, I might have been able to do more, buy you more time!’ said Snape furiously. (HPDH556).

Here we see Snape be angry about the prospect of Dumbledore dying. In both the previous exchange and this one we see Snape be described as furious. Anger is the emotion that we have come to expect from Snape throughout the story. It is the only emotion we have seen Snape express in the series before we see into his memories. I will focus on Snape’s expression of anger later in my thesis, but here the question becomes, what emotion is Snape covering up with anger in this situation? In this instance, I believe that he fears what his path will look like without Dumbledore guiding him. These scenes show us that the relationship between Snape and Dumbledore has evolved from the time Snape asked for his help in saving Lily. At this point, we see Dumbledore inhabit a mentor role while also having become sort of a father figure in Snape’s life. It would have been difficult for Snape to allow Dumbledore to get so close, however, we also see how it has been Dumbledore who took the lead in their relationship. Snape has never had a fatherly figure display anything other than cruelty and abusive behavior, which could have been a reason for him joining Voldemort to begin with. Whereas Dumbledore has protected Snape on countless occasions and has shown Snape respect and dignity. Snape also knew there was much left that needed to be done before they could end Voldemort, and he now faced the possibility of having to do that without Dumbledore.

Then we learn that Dumbledore arranged for Snape to kill him so that Draco Malfoy would not have to do it. This revelation changes our perception of Snape. Many scenes have shown us how Dumbledore and Snape had worked together and how Snape had been taking orders from Dumbledore for many years. Despite this, something felt wrong with Snape’s murder of Dumbledore. This disconnect vanishes when we learn that Dumbledore insists and almost forces Snape to kill him.

‘Are you intending to let him kill you?’

‘Certainly not. You must kill me.’ [...]

‘Would you like me to do it now?’ asked Snape, his voice heavy with irony. ‘Or would you like a few moments to compose an epitaph?’

‘Oh, not quite yet,’ said Dumbledore, smiling. ‘I dare say the moment will present itself in due course. Given what has happened tonight,’ he indicated his withered hand, ‘we can be sure that it will happen within a year.’ (HPDH557-558).



When Snape is first introduced to the plan, he does not believe Dumbledore is serious. His response is filled with irony, which contrasts with Dumbledore's disposition. Dumbledore has known for decades that sacrifices had to be made to take Voldemort down and probably had an idea that he might not live to see his downfall. This scene is one example where he is trying to prepare Snape to take over certain parts of this mission, while also fulfilling the role he is already playing. Snape is confronted with killing his mentor and does not want to do it. Nevertheless, we see him succumb to Dumbledore's wishes which goes against his own. This is one of the only times we see Snape able to see beyond his own wants and needs and listen to someone else. He still lashes out like we have seen him do before, however, he still defies his own interests for Dumbledore. This is something his ego has not let him do before, even with Lily, his own desires were more powerful than the love and loyalty he had for her.

Dumbledore has to try and explain to Snape why he cannot have all the information regarding Harry and Voldemort, and that it has nothing to do with trust. He even specifies how much he trusts Snape to do the tasks he has been ordered to do, and how he would not entrust those tasks to anyone other than Snape. Despite this, Snape is still sulking, which leads him to start opposing orders. Like the order to kill Dumbledore, "'You refuse to tell me everything, yet you expect that small service of me!' snarled Snape, and real anger flared in his face now. 'You take a great deal for granted, Dumbledore! Perhaps I have changed my mind!'" (HPDH:559). Here we see Snape confront Dumbledore with the severity of the tasks he has given Snape. I believe it is important for Snape to stand up to Dumbledore in this way, specifically considering that he is meant to kill him. From the moment Dumbledore orders Snape to kill him, Snape never relishes that thought. Instead, he consistently seems apprehensive and reluctant to go through with it. We saw how much Lily's death affected Snape, especially as he held some blame. Now, Dumbledore is ordering him to kill the one other person he has been able to open up to and trust.

Then we get to the scene where Harry's destiny is revealed, and that Snape still carries that same love for Lily. It is a longer scene; however, it demonstrates the indignation and hurt Snape is experiencing throughout this interaction.

'Tell him that on the night Lord Voldemort tried to kill him [...] the Killing Curse rebounded upon Lord Voldemort [...] Part of Lord Voldemort lives inside Harry [...] And while that fragment of soul, unmissed by Voldemort, remains attached to, and protected by Harry, Lord Voldemort cannot die.' [...]

‘So the boy... the boy must die?’ asked Snape, quite calmly. [...] ‘I thought... all these years... that we were protecting him for her. For Lily.’

‘We have protected him because it has been essential to teach him, to raise him, to let him try his strength,’ said Dumbledore [...] ‘I know him, he will have arranged matters so that when he does set out to meet his death, it will truly, mean the end of Voldemort.’

[...] Snape looked horrified.

‘You have kept him alive so that he can die at the right moment?’ [...]

‘You have used me’

‘Meaning?’

‘I have spied for you, and lied for you, put myself in mortal danger for you. Everything was supposed to be to keep Lily Potter’s son safe. Now you tell me you have been raising him like a pig for slaughter-’

‘But this is touching, Severus,’ said Dumbledore seriously. ‘Have you grown to care for the boy, after all?’

‘For him?’ shouted Snape. ‘*Expecto patronum!*’

From the tip of his wand burst the silver doe [...] Dumbledore watched her fly away, and as her silvery glow faded he turned back to Snape, and his eyes were full of tears.

‘After all this time?’

‘Always,’ said Snape. (HPDH560-561).

Snape learns Dumbledore’s intention for Harry, and he is furious. It has already been well established in my thesis that Snape was not fond of Harry at all. Despite this, we see him have a visceral reaction to Dumbledore having raised Harry to die at the proper moment.

Dumbledore even tells us that Harry’s death is instrumental in being able to kill Voldemort, which had been the goal all along. We saw Snape’s recruitment to become Dumbledore’s spy, the only reason he changed sides was because of his love for Lily. Even though Snape never contributed to making Harry’s life at school fun, he never put him in harm’s way either. Something that shows his mission of keeping him safe for Lily. In this interaction, Snape learns that that was a lie. He had vowed his life to protect Harry from harm as a way to protect Lily’s memory and believed that Dumbledore knew how to do this best. To learn that Dumbledore never intended to keep Harry alive, must have felt like a painful betrayal. To have one of the few people you have ever trusted disappoint you in that way, would have been tough for someone with an avoidant attachment style like Snape. Through the abuse he

experienced as a child, he was conditioned to not rely on anyone for anything, especially emotional support (Lee & Hankin 220). Then we see that he makes an exception in two instances, Lily and Dumbledore, and they both end badly.

This revelation leaves Snape with a difficult choice to make, considering he is the one who must give Harry this information. Forcing Snape to decide between love and loyalty while navigating their interconnection and how he must choose between Lily or Dumbledore. His love for Lily made him become a spy and helped him keep Harry alive, to honor Lily's sacrifice. Now, he has learned that to kill Voldemort, he must go against Lily's wishes and allow Harry to be killed. This choice demonstrates his loyalty to Dumbledore over his love for Lily. On the other hand, he cannot let Harry know about any of this, taking a chance that he might be able to stay alive, choosing his love for Lily over his loyalty to Dumbledore. We also see how Snape's love for a person makes him loyal to them. He kept loving Lily for years after her death and was willing to sacrifice himself for her son because that was what she would have wanted. Demonstrating emotional growth from their conversation on the grounds, as he is now able to see beyond his own desires and personal agendas. We also see this directed towards Dumbledore, specifically when Snape learns that he is dying. No proof would indicate that Snape displayed emotional maturity towards anyone else. Telling us that most of the time, he adheres to the expectations of someone with an avoidant attachment style (Lee & Hankin 220), who has found comfort in being cruel towards his students.

One of the later memories we see is Snape finding a letter Lily wrote to Sirius shortly before her death.

Snape was kneeling in Sirius's old bedroom. Tears were dripping from the end of his hooked nose as he read the old letter from Lily. [...] Snape took the page bearing Lily's signature, and her love, and tucked it inside his robes. Then he ripped in two the photograph he was also holding, so that he kept the part from which Lily laughed, throwing the portion showing James and Harry back on the floor, under the chest of drawers... (HPDH562-563).

This is another scene that displays Snape's love for Lily. I also believe that this scene tells us how much he truly loved her and how little he truly cared for Harry. In the previous scene, the main source of discussion is whether one believes Snape redeems himself. Many people feel

that he must have cared for Harry because he sacrificed himself to keep him safe., this scene, however, tells a different story. Primarily, it functions as another proof that Snape loved Lily, but we also see the care he takes for the other parts of the photograph. He finds one of the only family photographs that exist of the Potters and chooses to destroy it. The only reason for this was so he could have a picture of Lily laughing, without her husband and son. After he has destroyed the picture, he discards the remaining piece, not bothering with it at all. Demonstrating that his love for Lily was strong enough to keep Harry alive, but his dislike for James prohibited him from ever caring for Harry. It is also an act that shows the egotism of his character, and that he becomes so consumed with his own desires.

Throughout this memory sequence, Snape falls in love with a young girl and becomes obsessed with her. This obsession becomes prevalent when he is incapable of letting go of her, years after they have stopped being friends. In addition, he does not really know her, he has created this idea of who Lily is, and it is this idea he is in love with. Usually, the attachment styles of children who have experienced abuse are negatively affected (Lee & Hankin 220). It is also common for abused children to develop an avoidant attachment style (Unger & De Lucas 230). This is something we see with Snape as well, however, throughout his life, he made exceptions for two people, who he let in. Snape is not an emotional or vulnerable man, however, every time we see him be vulnerable or emotional it relates to one of those two. As a child, Snape was able to open up to Lily, and she was the first person to accept him for who he was. He came from an abusive household, so he did not have someone who cared about him at home, and as far as we learn, Lily was his only friend before leaving for Hogwarts. It seems as if Lily becomes a way for him to prove that he is worthy of love and friendship.

At the beginning of this chapter, I stated that love and loyalty are interchangeable regarding Snape. We see that through the memory sequence, his deep love for Lily made him loyal to her, so loyal that he ended up sacrificing his life to help honor her life. Snape's Love for Lily is never reciprocated and after their friendship ends, she moves on and does not seem to dwell on Snape. Snape, however, is not capable of letting her go, Deavel & Deavel believe that “Although Lily doesn’t reciprocate Snape’s romantic love, Snape never stops loving her, and that love eventually leads, however circuitously, to his redemption.” (54). Regardless of whether you believe that Snape redeemed himself in the end, we do still see significant character development in him. During this process, we see how the relationship between

Snape and Dumbledore evolves into something deeper than previously, allowing Snape to become attached. Snape is in the end forced to choose which loved one he would honor at the end. We are never given any insight into how he made the choice, but we know that he ended up choosing Dumbledore. Trusting that Dumbledore knew what he was doing, rather than keeping Harry alive for Lily's sake. It is important to note that Snape never knew that Harry survived the Killing Curse.

### 5.3 Anger

Throughout the series, anger is the one emotion Snape seems comfortable displaying. Earlier in my thesis, I discussed how angry Snape can become. Despite this, we never see him described as an angry man. Instead, we see him described using words like cruel, evil, cold, and calculated. Anger is a primitive concept, and using these other descriptors of his character allows his anger to be portrayed as more elevated. In the story, we see instances where Snape can maintain his composure when angry, and then there are those instances where he completely loses it. There are also instances where we see him plot ways to avenge himself on people who wronged him, and these ways are unreasonably extreme and cruel. Based on Snape's actions and attitudes, we get the impression that he wants to be perceived as important and clever. Throughout the books, there are several times where we see Snape lose his composure and, in some instances, it has rather severe consequences for how he was perceived by societally important people.

In HPPA, Snape learns that Sirius Black has escaped again after having escaped from the prison Azkaban. We have already established that Snape and Sirius, who was James's best friend, had a complicated relationship. When he was the one who apprehended him, it was a moment that illicit many emotions in Snape. In addition, we also learned that this capture could have earned him an Order of Merlin, a medal of honor handed out by the Minister of Magic. Because of his reaction to Sirius's escape, however, we see him lose the possibility of receiving this honor, as we see in this interaction between Snape and the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge:

'He must have Disapparated, Severus, we should have left somebody in the room with him. when this gets out-'

'HE DIDN'T DISAPPARATE!' Snape roared [...] 'YOU CAN'T APPARATE OR DISAPPARATE INSIDE THIS CASTLE! THIS – HAS – SOMETHING – TO – DO – WITH – POTTER!' [...]

The door of the hospital wing burst open.

Fudge, Snape and Dumbledore came striding into the ward. Dumbledore alone looked calm. [...] Fudge appeared angry. But Snape was beside himself.

‘OUT WITH IT,POTTER!’ he bellowed. ‘WHAT DID YOU DO?’

‘Professor Snape!’ shrieked Madam Pomfrey. ‘Control yourself!’

‘See here, Snape, be reasonable,’ said Fudge. ‘This door’s been locked, we just saw-’

‘THEY HELPED HIM ESCAPE, I KNOW IT!’ Snape howled, pointing at Harry and Hermione. His face was twisted, spit was flying from his mouth.

‘Calm down, man!’ Fudge barked. ‘You’re talking nonsense!’

‘YOU DON’T KNOW POTTER!’ shrieked Snape. ‘HE DID IT, I KNOW HE DID IT-’ (HPPA445-446).

This scene shows us how Snape could take his anger out on his students, especially Harry, Ron, and Hermione. Not only that, but we also see Snape lose all his composure. We know that Snape wanted to see Sirius behind bars again and was even happy about the prospect of Sirius having his soul sucked out by the Dementors. There has been ample evidence throughout the first three books that Snape and Harry did not have a trusting relationship, and Harry has been known to do many things that he was not supposed to do. These are all elements that when accumulated, make Snape lose himself and explode into an angry fit. Throughout the scene, we see Fudge, who holds the highest bureaucratic position within the magical world, try to de-escalate the situation. To some extent, Snape responds to what Fudge is saying, rather than going off on a tangent. This does not mean that he can control himself in any way. Snape is so overcome by anger in this scene, that regardless of what Fudge had said, he would not have been able to stop himself. This inability to control his emotions makes this scene interesting regarding the expression of anger. It represents the idea of uncontrollable anger, which is rather primitive. Children are not expected to be able to self-regulate their emotions, whereas adults do. This is referred to as *emotional regulation*, which the APA Dictionary of Psychology explains as

the ability of an individual to modulate an emotion or set of emotions. Explicit emotion regulation requires conscious monitoring, using techniques such as learning to construe situations differently in order to manage them better, changing the target of an emotion (e.g., anger) in a way likely to produce a more positive outcome, and

recognizing how different behaviors can be used in the service of a given emotional state.

Children have not yet been able to learn how to regulate, whereas adults have, especially in cases like Snape's, who usually is calm and collected. In this scene, however, Snape experiences such an overwhelming wave of anger that his reaction becomes more like that of a child than an adult.

As the scene continues Snape leaves the scene, and we see how the other adults react to witnessing a grown man throw a tantrum:

'That will do, Severus,' said Dumbledore quietly. Think about what you are saying. This door has been locked since I left the ward ten minutes ago. [...]

Snape stood there, seething, staring from Fudge, who looked thoroughly shocked at his behaviour, to Dumbledore, whose eyes were twinkling behind his glasses. Snape whirled about, robes swishing behind him, and stormed out of the ward.

'Fellow seems quite unbalanced,' said Fudge, staring after him. 'I'd watch out for him, if I were you, Dumbledore.'

'Oh, he's not unbalanced,' said Dumbledore quietly. 'He's just suffered a severe disappointment.' (HPPA446).

The reaction to witnessing a grown man throw such a fit directed toward children made Snape go from a man deserving of an honorary medal to someone unbalanced. We also see that Dumbledore makes Snape calm down and directs him toward the logical explanation. Dumbledore's ability to calm Snape in this scene also demonstrates how there is some substance in the relationship between Snape and Dumbledore. Losing control like that can feel embarrassing, especially in a situation like Snape. He was in the presence of three students, whom he wanted to intimidate, his Headmaster, and the Minister of Magic, whom he wanted to impress. Through this fit, however, he was neither impressive nor intimidating. It is also significant that Dumbledore tells Fudge that Snape is not unbalanced for responding in such a way, but rather disappointed. Snape is experiencing an intense sense of disappointment here, first by realizing that Sirius Black had escaped and that he would not be subjected to the Dementor's kiss. Knowing that Snape is a cruel man, it is not a surprise that he would relish the thought of his former bully being left in a state considered worse than death. Not only does this not happen, but he escapes, which allows him to be free from any

consequences. In addition, Dumbledore recognizes that it was his disappointment that led to Snape acting like that, something that makes Snape seem less unstable in a way. Because it is relatable to have strong reactions to extreme disappointments, and in Snape's case that was extreme uncontrollable anger.

In addition to these explosive situations, we also see instances fueled by brooding anger, one example is the *sectumsempra* spell. In HPHP we see Harry find a potions book that belonged to a previous student, someone who referred to themselves as *The Half-Blood Prince*.

Throughout this potion's textbook, the previous owner had written in the margins, made notes and changes in many of the potion recipes and there were some spells in there that Harry reckoned *the Prince* had made himself. One of these spells is *sectumsempra*, which is a spell that causes catastrophic damage to the person it is being cast upon by creating deep gashes in their flesh. In the books we see this spell used twice, first in HPHP, when Harry, without knowing what the spell did, cast it upon Malfoy, who almost died. Lastly, we see Snape cast it in HPDH when they are moving Harry from Privet Drive, resulting in Snape cutting off George Weasley's ear. It is at the end of HPHP that it is revealed that it is Snape who is the Half-Blood Prince, up until that point, it had been a mystery.

When Harry first finds the spell written in the margins of the potions book, it is accompanied by the words "For Enemies" (HHP: 372). When this scene occurs, we know nothing about what the spell does or how horrible it is, all we know is that the Prince has helped Harry become good at potions and Harry has started to trust him. When Harry then reads this incantation followed by "For Enemies" (HHP: 372) he feels no trepidation, only excitement for what other cool thing the Prince had come up with. Then Harry ends up using the spell on Draco and almost kills him. This incident forces Harry to become more critical of the Prince and ultimately leads to him getting rid of the book. Nevertheless, what is interesting regarding the representation of Snape's anger here, is the use of the phrase "For Enemies" (HHP: 372). Snape used this book when he was sixteen, which we know was a period when he was experiencing much bullying. Creating a spell like *sectumsempra* to use on your enemies, who also is sixteen years old, speaks to how much anger and cruelty you carry around with you.

*Sectumsempra* is a spell that was created to kill or at the very least severely injure someone. When you are only sixteen, creating that kind of spell with that intention is telling. Firstly, this shows us how cruelty has always been prevalent within Snape. We saw instances of it as



a child, as an adult, and here we see that it was the same when he was a teenager. Secondly, it speaks to how intellectual Snape is. Earlier in my thesis, I discussed how important Snape's intellect was to him. Being capable of creating something like creating the sectumsempra spell is rather complex. We never learn how one creates spells within the Harry Potter world, we only see that people are impressed by wizards and witches who can do so. This means that at sixteen years old, Snape could do things that were considered difficult by many. Lastly, is the amount of anger and dislike you must carry with you to want to inflict that suffering on others. Based on what we know about Snape during this period, his enemies were James Potter, Sirius Black, Remus Lupin, and Peter Pettigrew. Specifically, James and Sirius, as they were the leaders of their gang and two of the most liked in the school at the time. These boys were bullying and tormenting Snape, making his life miserable. As far as we know, these are the only enemies that Snape has as a sixteen-year-old boy, which tells us that they are his intended targets for the spell.

Understandably, Snape did not like them, and we have seen that he made efforts to push back when they were tormenting him, however, a spell like sectumsempra is rather extreme. In many ways, these two things are disproportionate to one another, bullying versus potential murder. Intending to use a spell that can cause such catastrophic damage to other children demonstrates poor emotional intelligence, but it also says a lot about how you value other people and their lives. Whenever James and his gang were tormenting Snape, they were not kind and they found inventive ways to humiliate him. Nevertheless, they never did any lasting physical harm to him, their actions, though cruel, were intended for entertainment. Not for Snape's entertainment, but for their own and other bystanders. It would be natural for Snape to want some kind of revenge on them or to find a way to humiliate them back, but instead, he created something that has the power to kill them. This displays such a deep-rooted anger and the intent with something like this is evil. We see how he allows for anger and a desire for revenge to enthrall him. It is not uncommon for children exposed to anger at home to struggle with anger issues themselves (NHS). Nevertheless, the sectumsempra curse does exceed the normal expectation of expression of anger and revenge.

Snape's emotional default is anger, and we have also seen tendencies to more sinister behavior. First, is hinted at by Lily when she confronts Snape about Snape's friends' actions, and later proven by the fact that he was a Death Eater. The fact that Snape joined the Death Eaters tells us much about how he perceives other people. We never learn much about what

Snape did as a Death Eater. However, based on all the horrible things that we know other Death Eaters participated in; we can assume that Snape did some horrible things as well. In contrast to many of his Death Eater friends, however, Snape never seemed to revel in the misery they created as much as the others. He could thoroughly enjoy watching someone he actively disliked experiencing bad things, but he was not as eager when it came to the more random acts of violence. In many ways, Snape becomes a cautionary tale for a lonely, egotistic, and angry man who never could place others' needs before his own.

Sirius Black is a character that sparks a lot of anger within Snape, which we see plenty of in HPPA. In the scene where Harry, Ron, Hermione, Sirius, Lupin, and Scabbers all are in the Shrieking Shack we see how much hatred and anger Sirius invokes in Snape. Before Snape entered the shack, Lupin and Sirius were working on convincing the others that Sirius was innocent. Harry, Ron, and Hermione begin to believe this when Snape enters the room and goes for Sirius:

‘Vengeance is very sweet,’ Snape breathed at Black. ‘How I hoped I would be the one to catch you...’ [...]

What little colour there was in Black’s face left it.

‘You – you’ve got to hear me out,’ he croaked. [...]

But there was a mad glint in Snape’s eye that Harry had never seen before. He seemed beyond reason. (HPPA: 382).

Here we see Snape set on the idea of revenge. We do not know what it is he wants revenge for, but most likely it is one of two things or even a combination of both. First, could be that he wants revenge on Sirius for having bullied him while in school, and as we have established earlier, Snape deemed death and torture as suitable punishments for bullying him. Lastly, could be that he blamed Sirius for Lily’s death and wanted to avenge her death. This last one is the most uncertain because logic dictates that Snape, one of Voldemort’s Death Eaters, should have known that Sirius never was a Death Eater and that it had been Peter Pettigrew who sold Lily and James to Voldemort. Meaning that it would not make sense for Snape to believe for all these years that it was Sirius who told, as he should have known that Pettigrew was the traitor. This makes me believe that the main reason Snape wants Sirius to be captured and have his soul sucked out is to punish him for the bullying.

This is further proven by the next discourse when Harry blocks Snape from leaving with Sirius:

‘YOU’RE PATHETIC!’ Harry yelled. ‘JUST BECAUSE THEY MADE A FOOL OF YOU AT SCHOOL YOU WON’T EVEN LISTEN-’

‘SILENCE! I WILL NOT BE SPOKEN TO LIKE THAT!’ Snape shrieked, looking madder than ever. ‘Like father, like son, Potter! I just saved your neck, you should be thanking me on bended knee! You would have been well served if he’d killed you! You’d have died like your father, too arrogant to believe you might be mistaken in Black – now get out of the way, or I will *make* you. (HPPA: 383).

From this interaction, Harry confronts Snape with the idea that Snape’s anger stems from the bullying. Something worth noting, however, is that Harry has no other knowledge about Snape than this, and has no idea that Snape had a friendship with his mother. This does not necessarily weaken the conclusion that Snape's determination is connected to revenge. The reason for this is the way Snape starts talking to Harry. In HPPA Harry and his friends are thirteen years old, and it is rather daunting to see a grown man speak to children like this. In addition to speaking badly about James, we also see Snape come with some outrageous comments to Harry. Snape telling Harry that it would have served him right to have been killed because he chose to trust Sirius is extremely inappropriate for an adult to say to a child, let alone a teacher. This scene from Snape is outrageous and inappropriate, however, it is a good representation of how Snape could lash out at others in situations where he lost control over his temper. While also demonstrating how Harry, especially, could be treated even more harshly than others because of Snape and James’s history.

On the other hand, Snape is a teacher who works with children and due to that, we also see instances of justifiable anger from Snape. these are those instances where he reacts appropriately and does not lose control as we have seen previously. The most prevalent example of this is in HPHP when Harry uses sectumsempra on Draco Malfoy and ends up almost killing him. In this scene, Harry walks in on Draco crying in a bathroom and a fight breaks out between them. After a little back and forth, Draco tries to cast the Cruciatus Curse, one of the unforgivable curses that causes excruciating pain, on Harry. Harry was able to avoid being hit and responded by using sectumsempra, which ended up hitting Draco:

Blood spouted from Malfoy's face and chest as though he had been slashed with an invisible sword. He staggered backwards and collapsed on the waterlogged floor with a great splash, his wand falling from his limp right hand. [...]

The door banged open behind Harry and he looked up, terrified: Snape had burst into the room, his face livid. [...]

When Snape had performed his counter-curse for the third time, he half lifted Malfoy into a standing position.

'You need the hospital wing. [...]

He supported Malfoy across the bathroom, turning at the door to say in a voice of cold fury, 'And you, Potter ... you wait here for me.' (HPP: 435).

When you work at a school where children can use magic, you expect accidents to happen. Still, the types of accidents that almost lead to a student's death are something that has to be taken seriously. Because the story is seen from Harry's perspective, we know that he did not know what the spell did only that it was meant for enemies. We also know how horrible Harry feels about what he did, and that he never wanted to do something so extreme to anyone. Snape enters this bathroom and sees one of his students lying bleeding on the floor, with another student standing over him, it is within reason that Snape would be furious in a situation like this. As the scene continues, Snape does make some off-hand comments towards Harry when he is scolding him. Even though these comments were unnecessary, we still see Snape handle the situation well. Harry is given detentions for the rest of the school year on days that prohibit him from playing Quidditch, the sport Harry plays and is team captain for in this book. Later on, we see that Snape's way of handling the situation also is acceptable for other teachers, like Professor McGonagall. She calls Harry into her office later just to tell him how disgusted she is with his actions and to tell him that she wholeheartedly agrees with Snape's punishment (HPP: 440).

It is interesting that in cases where we see Snape display justifiable anger or anger on other's behalf, he is way more calm and more collected than he is when things are personal. In the first situations I discussed, everything is personal. Snape has a personal stake in Sirius escaping, he has a personal stake regarding the bullying, and he has a personal stake in being the person to apprehend Sirius. When Draco almost dies in the bathroom, Snape saves him

and sends him off to the hospital wing fairly quickly. There never is any personal stake in that situation for Snape, and then he can make sound and logical decisions. This helps demonstrate how Snape does not show emotions, especially on other people's behalf. It does not seem as if he can regulate his emotions well either, which allows for these explosions whenever is confronted with something that invokes emotions in him. Throughout the series, we never see him healthily express his emotions, the closest we come is when he is with Lily. Snape is an angry man and allows it to dictate how he responds in many situations. As we have seen, he is prone to lose control when his anger takes over. This can be both situational waves of anger that arise or it can be brooding anger that he carries around with him. Snape grew up in a household exposed to much anger from a care giver. According to Sarah Epstein LMFT, this can cause long lasting issues.

But as we see, a home like this can leave lasting scars. In the short term, the home becomes a place of chronic stress. In the long term, the anger's implications echo down the generations, creating lasting issues for all those who endured it.

The degree of anger expressed from Snape, however, does not align with what is deemed more normal or acceptable amounts of anger. Snape can be vicious and cruel, regardless of the situation, and then some instances he implodes. Whether these are solely related to the exposure from his dad, or if there are other factors involved is difficult to say, due to the limited amount of material there is to work with.

## 6 Conclusion

Harry Potter is a coming-of-age story, aimed at children and young adults. The series' main objective is to tell the gripping tale of Harry Potter, and his journey from an abused child to becoming the savior of the wizarding world. The story consists of several complex characters that contribute to the narrative in different ways. The story consists of seven books, all of which represent one school year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. In addition to the complex characters involved, we also see several profound themes throughout the books, one of which is child abuse. Child abuse is as we have seen a common occurrence, and many children fall victim to it. This is one reason it is important to have it be a theme in literature aimed towards young people, as it can help them feel seen and acknowledged.

Harry Potter and Severus Snape are two characters that represent two different arenas in the novels, Harry the protagonist and Snape the antagonist. Using characters that are so different allows for a broader exploration of the story and the abuse suffered by both characters. Through these two characters, we are also given two vastly different outcomes for an abused child. Severus Snape is thought by many scholars to be one of the most complex characters in the Harry Potter saga. This is due to his ambiguity as a character and the discussions of whether he ends up being a good character. Nevertheless, he is a controversial character, and we are introduced to these ambiguous traits towards the end of the saga, after having had more than six books to form an opinion about the character. Nevertheless, it is important to include controversial characters in important discussions. Viewing Snape from the perspective of an abused child is something rather new in the discussion surrounding the Harry Potter series. Throughout the story, the abuse Harry is subjected to is the most prevalent, due to the story being from his perspective. Snape's experience is not prevalent at all and requires the reader to be a bit more vigilant while reading. Based on what we learn from the instances we get to witness what Snape experienced, Snape was experiencing a cruel trifecta of abuse. Regardless, of whether you believe that Snape redeemed himself towards the end or not, no one should be subjected to abuse.

The portrayal of Harry Potter as a victim of neglect serves as a representation of the pervasive and enduring effects of parental abandonment and societal indifference. The Dursleys were his parental figures growing up, and they were supposed to care for him. Instead, we see that

his formative years are marred by the realities of neglect. Most notably he is forced to use the cupboard under the stairs as a bedroom and being confined to it for longer periods. Harry is experiencing neglect in various ways, and by using Ogle et al.'s study about types of neglect, I have been able to ascertain that what Harry is experiencing is different types of neglect that vary in severity. This severity grading is something Ogle et al. discuss to triage experiences of neglect. This also includes the experience of having the restriction of food used as a punishment. Ogle et al. mention restricting access to food as an example of neglect. In this thesis, however, it was given its own section due to how frequently it was used towards Harry. Throughout the books, it was expected to see Harry be subjected to situations where his access to food was restricted by the Dursleys. Even in cases where punishment could have been prudent, denying a child access to food is never acceptable. It is an abusive act that tells you how callous his guardians truly are.

Amidst having to navigate how to process the neglect he is experiencing; he is forced to witness the extreme favoring of Dudley. As Ellen Libby references in her essay, favoritism within a family is normal and is not necessarily abusive. In some cases, however, the favoring is done in such a brutal and cruel way that it does become abusive. To navigate the difference, Libby created a list with different factors, and from that list, we see that the degree of favoritism within the Dursley household is abusive towards Harry. In addition to the list of factors, Libby discussed how being the unfavored child could affect your development. Examples are low self-esteem and little faith in your own abilities. These are both prevalent in Harry and it is not until he leaves for Hogwarts and escapes the Dursleys that he begins to shed these bad habits.

Harry's experiences are thoroughly covered throughout the saga considering that it is written from his perspective. The abusive situations we see Harry in, especially with the Dursleys, are undoubtedly abusive. This is why I have no interest in discussing whether his experiences are abusive because there is no question about it. Rather I wanted to focus on how different types of abuse are represented in the Harry Potter series, where Harry is the most obvious character to start with. The way Rowling wrote about Harry's abuse was done in such an extensive way that it has a shock factor. Thinking about some of the things we see Harry experience is simply just insane. Not being allowed your own room and being forced to sleep in a cupboard under the stairs instead, having bars installed at your windows to prevent you from escaping,

and the list goes on. These are clearly abusive instances, but they are pushed to the extreme. This is part of what I mentioned about the limitations surrounding a realistic analysis of a fantastical literary work. Harry also represents good in the story, as he is set up to be the great hero conquering evil and oppression. Because of this, the narrative around his abuse becomes more of the evil Dursleys against the good Harry. We also see how everything turns out fantastic in Harry's case. He escapes his abusers and goes away and finds a new home where he can prosper, and he finds a new family that loves and appreciates him. Harry is representative of what a happy ending can look like for someone. This is not necessarily the case for everyone, not everyone is as lucky as Harry was, which is why it is important to have other characters with different paths represented as well.

Severus Snape is one example of a character that represents a different path than Harry. Snape is a character whose upbringing was marked by adversity and rejection, specifically by his parents. From what we learn about Snape and his upbringing, we see evidence that he suffers verbal abuse, physical abuse, and neglect. We now know, due to Ney et al.'s study, that this is the most detrimental combination of abuse. Because of the perspective of the story, we gain limited insight into specifics regarding Snape's abuse. This is why we see more representation of characteristics he could have developed as a consequence of the abuse. The evidence I have gathered indicates that Snape inhabits traits of someone who has been abused, however, certain traits seem to represent more of who he is as a person. Based on Choi and Parks' study, we can see that it is common for bully victims to turn bullies themselves, which we see regarding cruelty. There also seem to be more complexities surrounding Snape's cruelty, as it is difficult to say how much pleasure he genuinely finds in being cruel towards his student. Love and loyalty are characteristics that are more innate than the others, especially considering how few people were allowed to see the vulnerable sides of him. What we see demonstrated, however, is how difficult it was for Snape to become personally involved with people. We also see consistently throughout the story how independent he is, and we never see him rely on anyone until we see his memory sequence. Anger is the trait of those I have discussed that is the hardest to figure out whether it stems from the abuse. As Epstein mentions in her essay, growing up exposed to anger can have a negative impact on your development, and some might end up struggling with anger issues themselves. What makes it difficult to say for certain is the enjoyment he seems to take in expressing unproportionate



anger towards people who have hurt him in any way. This can be a more complex characteristic developed due to the abuse, or it can be a personality trait.

These are also two characters that have been viewed and treated very differently by the public, especially regarding abuse. I have chosen Reddit as a platform to assess the peer review on these characters because it is a place where people have access to post their opinions regardless of background. This is also something to be cautious about, however, I will only be using it to assess what people who are interested in discussing abuse in Harry Potter have to say. What first strikes me, is that no one is perceiving Snape as a victim of abuse, but only as the perpetrator. Harry is mainly being discussed and there is little criticism from the abuse perspective.

The Redditor that created the thread “Can we all acknowledge how messed up it is that Harry's abuse got played off as a positive?” focuses on Dumbledore’s role as a passive bystander to Harry’s abuse. Where they write:

Despite all that *monumental* abuse, Dumbledore views it as a positive, since he's "learned to be humble". **NO YOU FUCKING IDIOT.** He didn't learn to be humble, he learned that he was worthless and didn't deserve love or attention, so he shakes off any kind of praise.

This thread draws attention to how no adult intervened to help Harry. We learn that Dumbledore knew how Harry was being abused and did nothing to stop it or help him. This is a point that is often referred to in the Harry Potter fanbase. It is thought to be cruel and unfair of Dumbledore to allow Harry to be abused when he knew what was happening. Something that relates to what I mentioned about Harry having no one who offered him a different perspective than the Dursleys, many are annoyed that Dumbledore chose to abstain from being that voice.

Another Redditor has written a long post in the thread “The description of child abuse in Harry Potter and Fantasy as a genre” where she thoroughly discusses the theme of abuse in Harry Potter, here they have included a part about why they care “I do care, because I was abused by my mother and not helped, because of the entire "constant belittleling, talking down and general verbal abuse" is not child abuse. The child is not being beaten. So

everything is fine.” This is one person’s experience and they have been able to find representation in the Harry Potter books due to how they address abuse.

The exploration of child abuse within the Harry Potter saga through the characters of Harry Potter and Severus Snape allows for an exploration of the complexities and ramifications of such trauma. These characters give different insights into an experience that too many children endure, which allows a variety of people to recognize and relate to their experiences. As literary archetypes, Harry and Snape are conduits for broader discussions surrounding abuse, especially within the Fantasy genre. Due to the scarce amount of literature written about abuse in Harry Potter, it becomes especially prudent. Harry Potter has become a global phenomenon, which places it in a position to invite readers to confront uncomfortable truths and engage in meaningful dialogue about the impact of abuse and neglect.

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