

THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF COLORS IN *HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS*

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Abstract

This study examines the symbolic meanings of colors in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* by J.K. Rowling, utilizing archetypal criticism and Carl Jung's theory of archetypal symbols. Through a qualitative analysis, the research explores how color functions as a tool for conveying deep thematic elements, enhancing the narrative, and reflecting the emotional and psychological states of the characters. Colors such as red, gold, green, black, white, and blue are shown to symbolize various abstract concepts, including friendship, bravery, immortality, power, love, and death. For instance, red and gold are associated with Gryffindor House values like courage and friendship, while green symbolizes both dark power and the protective love of Harry's mother. Black is linked to death and darkness, and white signifies purity and sacrifice. By investigating these symbolic associations, the study reveals how Rowling employs color as a narrative device to enrich the reader's understanding of the characters' journeys and the larger themes of good versus evil, sacrifice, and the pursuit of truth. This research highlights the significance of color symbolism as an integral part of the storytelling in the Harry Potter series, providing deeper insights into the novel's thematic layers and the psychological motivations of its characters.

Keywords: *colors; Harry Potter; symbolic meaning.*

1. Introduction

There are many symbols scattered through the globe. However, symbols are not just merely described as “red means stop” in a traffic light or “uniform makes you a student”. In fact, symbols can be anything around us as long as it represents something else. For example, basic shape can symbolize the characteristic of a person. Square usually symbolizes an organized, logical, and hardworking person who likes structure and rules; while circle symbolizes person, who has lots of sympathy and consideration for others (Commagreens, 2009). For instance, blue usually symbolizes person who is reliable, sensitive, and always makes an effort to think of others; while purple usually symbolizes artistic and unique person (Parikh, 2011). Symbols also has strong relation with literature (Kotler and Keller, 2017). Authors of literary works usually use specific symbols based on what they see, what they feel, and the information that they get in reality. Thus, readers can guess and think about the representation of the symbols

embedded in it. Similarly, there are many symbols reflected in Harry Potter by J. K. Rowling.

In J.K Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows", color symbolism plays a significant role in enhancing the narrative and deepening the themes of the story. The use of colors throughout the novel is not random but carefully chosen to convey specific meanings, emotions, and symbolism.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Archetypal Theory

Complements symbolism theory by identifying universal symbols and patterns recur across different cultures and literary works. Drawing from Carl Jung's concept of archetypes, this theory helps identify symbolic motifs in "Deathly Hallows" that resonate with readers on a subconscious level. By recognizing archetypal symbols such as the hero's journey or the battle between good and evil, scholars can explore the deeper layers of meaning embedded within the narrative (Jung, 1964).

2.1.1 Archetypal Criticism

Archetypal literary criticism is a type of analytical theory that interprets a text by focusing on recurring myths and archetypes (from the Greek *archē*, *beginning* and *typos*, *imprint*) in the narrative, symbols, images, and character types in literary works. As an acknowledged form of literary criticism, it dates back to 1934, when classical scholar Maud Bodkin published *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*. While Frazer's work deals with mythology and archetypes in material terms, the work of Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss-born founder of analytical psychology, is, in contrast, immaterial in its focus. Jung's work theorizes about myths and archetypes in relation to the unconscious, an inaccessible part of the mind. From a Jungian perspective, myths are "culturally elaborated representations of the contents of the deepest recess of the human psyche: the world of the archetypes."

2.1.2 Archetypal Symbol

Jungian archetype consists of mythological themes, projected outside, creating myths and symbols. De Coster (2010) argues that archetypes are visual symbols or energetic imprints that exist in our psyches. Jung believes that symbols are combined together with the archetypes and the collective unconscious and they are recognized as the language of the soul (Adamski, 2011). According to Chirila (2011), the archetypes become symbols, capable of entering into dialogue with the psyche and providing insight into the deeper representing behind their presence. Jung defines the symbols as a 'living thing' expressing 'something that cannot be characterized in any other or better way', but may yet arouse historical, philosophical, 'intellectual or aesthetic interest' (Bradshaw and Storm, 2013). According to Jung, the concept of collective unconsciousness is all the same everywhere in all individual, no matter if the people have different culture.

3. Research Method

The researcher uses archetypal criticism to conduct the study since the object of the analysis is still included in the archetypal analysis. Moreover, the researchers analyse the object of the study using Archetypal Symbols theory by Carl Jung. Thus, based on that theory, the researchers only focus on the colors that have symbols

presented in the novel and finding out how they represent archetypal symbols. In this study, the Symbolic Meanings of Colors in Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows (2007) are selected as the primary data. The research design, the presentation of data, the data collection as well as the analysis procedures are all in line with the concept of Creswell in qualitative research method (Creswell, 2012).

4. Discussion

In exploring *The Symbolic Meaning of Colors in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the researchers delve into how J.K Rowling uses color to convey deeper themes and motions, enriching the narrative and character acts. This section presents several key colors and their symbolic meanings, illustrating how they enhance the storyline.

Data 1:

Red and Gold Representing Friendship

“Three times a week they were allowed to write letters home, although they could only use the dictation quill. Harry, Ron, and Hermione, however, were not seen to write any letters, as they had no one to write to; the Weasleys were all at the Burrow, awaiting news, and the only person who might have been interested in Harry’s survival, if not his welfare, was dead.” (Rowling, 2007:6).

Red and gold are the colours of the Gryffindor House, where Harry Potter and his friends, Ron and Hermione, reside. These colours symbolize bravery, friendship, and heroism. They often represent the struggle against dark forces and the positive values fighting for truth. One example of this is when Harry, Ron, and Hermione continue to support each other in their struggle against dark forces, enduring tough times, and facing dangers together. Although there are no specific quotes linking friendship with the colours of red and gold, the presence of these colours always symbolizes Gryffindor House and the values they represent, including friendship, bravery, and solidarity (J.K. Rowling:2007).

Data 2:

Gold Representing Immortality and High Value

“I open at the close. He had barely finished saying it when the Snitch fluttered to life in his palm. It had happened. He could see its tiny golden wings fluttering as it struggled to escape his grip. Almost....like a heartbeat....and then he knew. The Snitch had to be passed to him by his Seeker’s hand. That was what was written inside the Snitch: I open at the close.” (Rowling, 2007:7).

The golden Snitch bequeathed to Harry by Dumbledore is not only valuable physically but also carries deep symbolic meaning. Gold represents high value and immortality, as this Snitch holds the secret of the Resurrection Stone, one of the Deathly Hallows, symbolizing eternal life.

Data 3:

Gold Representing Wealth

"The light from the passageways and torches was blindingly reflected off heaps of gold, silver, and precious gems piled in golden goblets; gold was as common as iron in the Muggle world."

(J.K. Rowling, 2007:26).

This quotation illustrates how gold in Gringotts symbolizes extraordinary wealth, with piles of gold so vast that it appears as common metal in the Muggle world.

Data 4:

Red and Gold Representing Heroism

"The sun was rising properly now; there was a warm golden glow over everything: The slashed-up canvas of the tent, the trees, the river. Harry looked out over the river and felt extraordinarily peaceful. The dawn, the countryside seemed to be held in a gentle golden embrace; the cold hard sense of the city had vanished." (Rowling, 2007: 19).

In "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," the theme of heroism and the values of Gryffindor, represented by the colours red and gold, are strongly portrayed, even though there are no direct quotes associating these colours with heroism. However, there are several moments where the main characters, especially Harry, Ron, and Hermione, demonstrate bravery and heroic actions. One typical example is when they courageously face danger to fight against dark forces and protect those they love. Although there are no specific quotes explicitly linking the colours of red and gold with heroism, the presence of these colours always reflects Gryffindor House and values such as bravery, honesty, and heroism.

Data 5:

Red Representing colors of Gryffindor and Slytherin Houses

"The Great Hall was decked out in the Slytherin colors of green and silver to celebrate Slytherin's winning the house cup for the seventh year in a row. A huge banner showing the Slytherin serpent covered the wall behind the High Table. The Gryffindor table was the noisiest of the four tables, but Harry, Ron, and Hermione were not celebrating." (Rowling, 2007: 31).

In the novel "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," the color of red is more dominantly associated with Gryffindor House. This color symbolizes bravery, strength, and spirit that are characteristics of Gryffindor members. Gryffindor House is represented by the colors red and gold.

Data 6:

Red Representing Blood

"His mother's voice echoed in his head: 'Use my blood, Harry.....Use my blood.'" (Rowling, 2007: 34).

This quote refers to the moment when Harry remembers his mother's words, reminding him that her blood used in Harry's protection provides a powerful shield against Voldemort. Lily Potter's blood, given willingly to protect Harry, possesses a strength that surpasses ordinary magic because it is driven by limitless maternal love.

Data 7:

Green Representing Dark Power

"The green light flashed around the room and she dropped like a puppet with her strings cut." (Rowling, 2007:32).

The colour of green in this quote is a visualization of the Killing Curse, one of the most deadly Unforgivable Curses. It shows how dark magic is visually represented in the series.

Data 8:

Green Representing Love and Power

Love : *"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."*
(Rowling, 2007:35).

In this context, eternal love (such as Lily Potter's love for Harry) overcomes death. Green is often associated with Lily Potter, who has green eyes, and her love is Harry's ultimate protection.

Power : *"There is no good and evil, there is only power and those too weak to seek it."* (Rowling, 2007).

Voldemort, who is often associated with the color of green (in the form of the Killing Curse), sees power as something neutral, illustrating how power can be used for either good or evil.

Data 9:

Green Representing Horcrux

"The green eyes found the black, but after a second, something in the depths of the dark pair seemed too vanish, leaving them fixed, blank and empty." (Rowling, 2007:32).

This occurs when Harry witnesses Voldemort killing Snape. The Killing Curse is tied to the Horcruxes because the curses using Voldemort's split are intrinsically linked.

Although the color of green is not explicitly stated to represent Horcruxes, it is implied through the frequent associations of the Killing of Curse's green light with Voldemort's actions and his fragmented soul.

Data 10:

Black Representing Death

"Harry looked down at the black stone. It had cracked down the vertical line representing the Elder Wand, and across the circle that signified the Resurrection Stone. The triangle representing the Cloak of Invisibility remained intact. The stone in the ring lay in two pieces,

fragments of the letters still discernible: Peverell. Harry picked it up, and looked around at the great stone walls that had witnessed centuries of birth, life, and death.” (Rowling, 2007:24).

The black stone, which is the Resurrection Stone, symbolizes death. The black color of the stone reinforces the theme of death, especially because the Resurrection Stone has the ability to summon the shadows of those who have died.

“The black mist had spread across the clearing. Voldemort stood with his Death Eaters, waiting. The moment had come.” (Rowling, 2007:32).

Here, the black mist that envelops the place and Voldemort standing with his Death Eaters symbolize death and the impending darkness. The black color is used to create an atmosphere of fear and death.

Data 11:

Black Representing Darkness

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” (Rowling, 2007:16).

A great black serpent, glittering with droplets of rain, lay coiled on the gravestone, its eyes flickering, a long tongue issuing from its mouth. This quote, which describes Nagini, Voldemort’s snake, in a dark and foreboding manner, highlights the association of black with danger serpent symbolizing the darkness and menace that Harry and his friends face.

Data 12:

Black Representing Dark and Gloomy Atmosphere

“The crooked, cobbled streets were muffled and misted with falling snow. He could see dark shapes moving through the mist, see them groping their way toward him, and he raised his wand and muttered, ‘Muffliato!’ (Rowling, 2007:34).

This quote captures a scene filled with darkness and gloom, with the mist and dark shapes contributing to a foreboding atmosphere. The use of the word “dark” enhances the sense of unease and danger.

Data 13:

White Representing Harry’s Pure Intentions

“But he understood at last what Dumbledore had been trying to tell him. It was, he thought, the difference between being dragged into the arena to face a battle to the death and walking into the arena with your head held high.” (Rowling, 2007:34).

Harry is reflecting on the difference between being forced into a difficult and potentially deadly situation (like being dragged into an arena) and willingly facing it with courage and dignity (walking into the arena with his head held high).

Data 14:

White Representing Truth about the Deathly Hallows

“Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean it is not real.” (Rowling, 2007:34).

The quote emphasizes that the experiences and understandings we have, even if they occur in our minds, still have significant reality and impact. It is a reminder that our subjective reality has power and meaning, even if it is not physical or visible to others.

Data 15:

White Representing Purity and Holiness

“A wide, open space, bright and clean, a place full of soft, white light.” (Rowling, 2007:35).

The bright and white environment at King’s Cross can be seen as a representation of Purity and Holiness. Harry has performed the purest and most selfless act by sacrificing himself to save others, and the place he finds himself in after the sacrifice reflects this.

Data 16:

Blue Representing Depth and Mystery

“The ice cracked. Harry plunged into the freezing water. It was dark and blue, fathomless and icy. The cold was agony; it attacked him like fire. His brain itself seemed to be shivering, his eyes swam in his head, and he felt his wet robes dragging him back to the surface.”
(Rowling, 2007:19).

In this scene, the cold and blue water symbolizes the depth and mystery of the task Harry faces. The depth and mystery are also reflected in the fact that the Sword of Gryffindor only appears when it is most needed, revealing the secrets of very old and powerful magic.

“The bluebell flames they had used for warmth in the tent seemed to dance and flicker with more vigor, casting long, shifting, shadows on the walls. There was something oddly mesmerizing about them, a kind of hidden depth and ancient magic that seemed to whisper secrets as they burned.”– (Rowling, 2007:21).

In this scene, the blue flames from the bluebell fire symbolize depth and mystery, creating an atmosphere filled with ancient magic and hidden secrets. This illustrates how the color blue can evoke a sense of depth and mystery, as if it holds stories and secrets waiting to be revealed.

Data 17:

Blue Representing Truth and Order

“The sky was a clear, pale gray. The sun had risen just high enough to flood the garden in front of the cottage with a golden light, which was

broken by the dark shadows of bushes. A little stream ran through the garden, reflecting the cloudless blue sky overhead.”
(Rowling, 2007:20).

The blue sky can be seen as representing the clarity and truth that Harry and his friends are seeking. Xenophilius Lovegood, despite his eccentricity, is dedicated to uncovering the truth about the Deathly Hallows and the deeper order of the magical world. This scene subtly ties the clear blue sky to the pursuit of truth and the establishment of a larger order.

Data 18:

Blue Representing Peace and Harmony

“Above this was a clear, deep-blue sky. The late August sun was warm but not scorching, and a slight breeze ruffled the leaves of the trees. It was a perfect day for a wedding.” (Rowling, 2007:8).

The quote describes the atmosphere at Bill and Fleur’s wedding. The clear, deep-blue sky symbolize peace and harmony amidst the time of war and uncertainty. This moment gives Harry and his friends a break from the conflict they are facing and allows them to enjoy peace and happiness for a short while.

“Harry opened his eyes. He was lying on the bed in the bright blue room at Shell Cottage. The ocean’s murmur was louder than before, and from a half-open window came the smell of the sea, mixed with a faint floral fragrance.” (Rowling, 2007:8).

In this scene, the bright blue room at Shell Cottage provides Harry with a sense of calm and recovery after the trials he has faced, The blue color here symbolizes the peace and harmony that Harry finds in this sanctuary, far from the dangers that constantly threaten him.

Data 19:

The Color of Silver Representing Magical Power

“From the tip of his wand burst the silver doe. She landed on the office floor, bounded once across the office, and soared out of the window. Dumbledore watched her fly away, and as her silvery glow faded he turned back to Snape, and his eyes were full of tears.”
(Rowling, 2007:8).

Although this quote does not explicitly mention that the color silver symbolizes magical power, the description shows that Patronus as a strong and protective silver creature.

5. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the symbolic meaning of colors in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, illustrating how colors function not only as aesthetic elements but also as significant markers of identity, emotion, and narrative progression. Through a detailed analysis of color symbolism, it becomes evident that colors serve to reinforce

key themes within the text, such as the struggle between good and evil, personal growth, and the emotional journey of the characters. Just as expressive speech acts convey deep emotional states in literature, the strategic use of color in J.K. Rowling's work conveys layers of meaning, offering readers a deeper understanding of the characters' experiences and the novel's broader moral and philosophical messages. In particular, colors like red, green, and gold are consistently tied to concepts of courage, death, and power, while darker shades such as black and gray symbolize despair, danger, and the loss of innocence. These symbolic associations contribute to the rich tapestry of the narrative, providing a visual complement to the emotional and moral complexities explored throughout the novel. Ultimately, this study highlights the power of color as a subtle yet profound narrative tool in shaping both the plot and the reader's emotional engagement with the story.

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