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# THE BROADSHEET



Pictured from left to right: Rosemary Morton, Victoria Lambert, Dr. Chandler, Cara Anesse, and Maggie Qualter.

## THIS ISSUE

THE LATEST EDITION OF AN OLD TRADITION: BULLET JOURNALS

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REVIEW OF *HARRY POTTER AND THE CURSED CHILD*

## THE RESONANCE OF MAGIC: HOW *HARRY POTTER* HAS SHAPED POPULAR CULTURE

By Jessica Brusio

This September, in the year 2016, I asked students and faculty at Merrimack College if they would be interested in dressing as characters from J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. The enthusiastic response I received was overwhelming and unexpected. Nearly ten years after the last book of the iconic series was released, I managed to find people whose interest in this work has yet to wane. For many, reading these books and watching the movie adaptations became activities that formed the foundation of their experience with literature. I was a different case. When I was a child, I was one of the very few that avoided this literary and cinematic phenomenon. My position changed last February when my friends convinced me to start reading *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. I have had the unique opportunity to read the entire series for the first time from the perspective of a senior college

An official publication of the Merrimack College English Department, The Broadsheet is published four times during the academic calendar year. Its mission is to celebrate the English Department's role in promoting the literary arts on campus, to acknowledge the accomplishments of faculty and students, to profile students and alumni, and to create a forum in which issues relevant to English studies can be discussed.

English major and I believe that these books have literary merit. They are well crafted, demonstrate a skilled use of symbolism and allusion, and exhibit consistent character development. Rowling's series became a part of our popular culture ten years ago, because they served for many children as their first experience with a narrative sequence. While many authors I remember from my childhood, such as Lois Lowry, Carl Haaisen, and Gail Carson Levine, wrote entertaining books, none wrote a series as beautifully constructed as Rowling's. Many stories aimed conventionally at a young audience lack depth and fail to engage adult themes. J. K. Rowling trusts her young readers with what would otherwise be considered strong content. Her characters experience death, moral gray-areas, and trauma. Because of this trust, readers experience complex emotions and connect to the characters in ways that other books simply do not elicit.

In the series, Harry Potter's character is challenged through his experiences with magic and the rise of Voldemort. Voldemort, whose name translates from French to mean "stealer of death," aspires to become immortal and is willing to torture and murder anyone to accomplish this goal. Harry Potter is "the chosen one," the only person to have ever survived a murder attempt by Voldemort. Harry discovers this over the course of the series alongside his friends Ron and Hermione. This results in some frightening and emotionally provocative situations. For example, Harry is subjected to torture by one his school's headmasters, faces life-or-death situations on multiple occasions, and witnesses the murder of several of his fellow students, friends, and his godfather. Many parents and educators have regarded these narrative elements as controversial, believing that this material is too strong, too advanced, and too frightening for children. However, I believe exposure to these aspects of human experience begins the process of cultivating in young people compassion, love, and above all, the belief that love can overcome hate.

Sheltering children from what is scary does not make the world any less dangerous. Exposing them to



Jessica Brusio as Luna Lovegood. Photo by Kelly O'Dea

difficult, real-world concepts through literature makes it easier to help children understand their emotions when something complicated, like death, occurs in their own lives. For example, in *Order of the Phoenix*, the fifth book in the *Potter* series, Harry's godfather, Sirius Black, is killed by his own cousin. This exposes readers to the death of Harry's only tie to family (he is an orphan), to murder, and to the betrayal by a family member. Additionally, Harry's relationship with his Potions professor, Severus Snape, places readers in an emotional grinder. Snape treats Harry seemingly unfairly from the first day he comes to school at Hogwarts. In the fifth book, Harry finds out that Snape is helping fight against Voldemort, which causes him to be skeptical



about Snape and his intentions based on the way Snape had treated him for four years. In the sixth book, the reader finds out that Snape is working for Voldemort and he ends up murdering Harry's mentor and friend, Dumbledore. The reader witnesses a different side of Snape again in the seventh book, when Snape turns out to be a double agent working to help Dumbledore defeat Voldemort, a fact that he reveals with his dying breath. This complexity of character demonstrates for readers that interpreting human behavior and human character can be a very challenging and tricky business. Many children's books resolve moral ambiguity in the form of good and bad characters. Rowling's books do not. These intricately woven plots and heart-wrenching moments are the first of their kind that many readers from my generation have experienced. The trust and respect that Rowling expresses toward her readers by exposing them to powerful emotions has made this series become a defining aspect of my generation's popular culture.

So how does all this account for the fascination with the *Potter* series that persists into the college years (in some cases well beyond) for so many individuals? I asked several members of the Merrimack community to comment on what the *Potter* experience has meant and still means to them.

### **When did you first read the series? How did you feel about it when you first read it?**

Late middle school-high school. I was amazed by the world building and the universe she created. It tied into our world but was unique in the different foods, sports, and clothing. I felt like I could immerse myself in the books. Harry was around the age I was when I read them, so I felt like I could relate because I was growing up alongside him. **Megan Bouchard, '17**

I first read the series when I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade. However, I did not finish it until my junior year of high school. As a child, I was definitely more aware of the movies rather than the books. Because I was older, the books had a different effect on me. After I was reading them, I realized that I probably will not have a reading experience like that ever again. These books are not just magical; they are well-written works of art. As a child, I felt that these characters [were real people] and Hogwarts a real place that I could get to. **Rosemary Morton, '17**

I started reading the series when *Order of the Phoenix* came out, around 2003. I was in grad school, and my classmates, all Ph. D. candidates, were excited about the new book. My wife had read them, and told me to. I was also working at a bookstore, and the

books already had a great reputation, with a lot of excitement about the next one. Once I did read them, I really enjoyed them. I thought they were a fresh take on fantasy novels, and I really liked Rowling's new vision for magic. I also really like the way Rowling took old figures from myth and legend, especially the monsters, and made them part of a new tale. **Dr. Chandler, English Department**

I started reading the series in kindergarten because I heard my mom reading it out loud to my...sister. I loved it immediately. The first few books were for children, so it snagged me in. I would go and buy the new books when they first came out and start reading them in the car. **Mick Lonati, '17**



Rosemary Morton. Photo by Kelly O'Dea

### Why is *Harry Potter* still important to you?

It taught me a lot about friendship. Harry has a hard time with his aunt and uncle and I related to that with my relationship with my parents. Harry had an escape with his friends and they always stuck with him. When Harry wants to find Horcruxes by himself, Ron and Hermione stick with him. Every character that comes into Harry's life he impacts in a way that he does not realize. That is important to think about as we grow older because we can do things that impact other people; we just don't know it sometimes. **Sue Ung, '17**

Whenever I reread a book or watch a movie, a sense of nostalgia comes over me. The series convinced me that magic was real. Maybe not the spells and magic from the stories, but this invisible connection that I had with people all over the world was the real magic for me. **Kelly O'Dea, '18**

Why wouldn't it be? It's not just a story for kids; it's one that everyone can identify with. It's about love and magic and friendship. We all need a bit more of those things in our lives. Plus I love having movie marathons; they're very binge worthy. **Rachel MacKelcan, '18**

### How has the series shaped you as a reader/writer or person?

The *Harry Potter* series changed my attitude towards young adult literature. Though I was never dismissive of it, *Harry Potter* somehow made reading YA books more acceptable, something I could openly admit to, rather than reading in isolation. I've also met a handful of students who say their reading confidence grew as they read longer books, which was great. **Dr. Chandler**

J.K. Rowling was really good with making things come together and that was the first time I experienced it as a reader. It was so original and innovative. I'm a big fiction reader, and this was my first fantasy series. It opened my mind to other books in that genre and it was really different compared to other things I had read before. **Megan Bouchard, '17**

It opened me up to a lot of inside jokes with my friends. As a reader it made me fall in love with the fantasy genre and I guess I could say the same for my writing. *Harry Potter* and J.K. Rowling inspired me to want to be a writer as well as to search for the hidden moments of magic in my life. **Rachel MacKelcan, '18**

I developed a love of reading from this series. It was one of the first larger book series that I actually finished because I have problems doing that. In my opinion, *Harry Potter* was one of the first well-written stories I have ever read, even though I probably was not aware of it. Reading this series changed me as a person because it introduced me to many friends that I probably would not have met without this series in it. Love is what I learned from it most of all and its ability to transcend lifetimes. I feel that the love embedded in Rowling's words keeps people coming back to read this series again and again. **Rosemary Morton, '17**



Rachel MacKelcan as a Dementor.  
\*Photo by Kelly O'Dea



Photo Credit: Kelly O'Dea

## The Latest Edition of an Old Tradition: Bullet Journals

By Bridget Kennedy

Journals and diaries are fantastic primary sources for providing insight into the lives of the people who wrote them, and they remain especially relevant when they were written by historical figures as a way of preserving their perspectives and influencing future readers. Informal personal reflections generally consist of first-person narratives recollecting the events of the day, dreams and aspirations, or observations and thoughts, and many contemporary writers have adapted this confessional mode to suit youth and teen fiction, such as *The Princess Diaries* series by Meg Cabot, *Harriet the Spy* by Louise Fitzhugh, or the *Amelia's Notebook* series by Marissa Moss. This style of writing allows the reader to develop a more intimate relationship with the life and person recorded on the page.

2016 has given this practice of “collecting” daily life a new purpose and format. Bullet Journals represent the latest craze in intimate journal/diary writing. This genre combines diary/day planning/to-do-listing with such traditional “Type-A” elements as color-coding, and strict organization with constructive doodles and symbols to make that looming to-do list look more appealing. They usually consist of physical, paper-and-colorful-pen notebooks for portability and personalization. Bullet Journals take the content of the original diary and simplify each entry into a labeled list easy to recall and record. Categories appear in an index at the front of the notebook and correspond with various lists inside the notebook, including tasks to accomplish, goals to pursue, or foods to consume, and every page is usually decorated by color or hand-drawn borders that reflect its owner’s personality. In a fast-paced world, Bullet Journals are the trendy and efficient hipster-turned-busy-soccer-mom entrance onto the writing scene. But does this quick and crafty adaptation threaten the integrity of the original medium, that is, of the diary?

Any writer can appreciate the feeling one experiences at the prospect of filling a new notebook or the beckoning of blank pages waiting for the frantic scrawl of a new idea. In *Harriet the Spy*, the protagonist records her observations as she notices what goes on around town, and the activity keeps her imagination active and her world in order. In *Dash and Lily's Book of Dares* by David Levithan and Rachel Cohn, a Moleskin notebook is passed across New York City as the only means of communication between two lonely teens just looking for companionship and adventure over Christmas Break.

Part of the appeal of a journal is that it documents an inner dialogue and reflects the cadences of individual speech; together with background detail, it builds a ‘mini-me’ with an authentic voice. The journals of Mary Shelley, for example, are historically relevant not only because her voice is from the past, but because literary scholars and fans alike can witness the inner workings of her mind and apply it to her work. Anne Frank’s diary, furthermore, maintains the voice of hope in the face of monstrous oppression during one of Western culture’s darkest moments. If Shelley or Frank had left mere lists of ideas and activities (essentially the Spark Notes of their lives), would those lists have resonated so far into the future or as powerfully as the narratives they have left us?

“Using a Bullet Journal as the only medium for recording experiences leaves us with the outline of our lives and not enough soul to keep our stories interesting.”

**A Traditional Journal ‘builds a ‘mini-me’ with an authentic voice.’**



Personally, I prefer to keep the daily routine separate from writing, because one area will usually distract from the other significantly. I organize my routine with a planner, calendars, to-do-lists color coded by urgency, and notes on my wrist. That is just to get through a busy week and I rarely save daily to-do lists. However, I have kept yearly goal lists from high school on, because that is a part of myself I want to preserve. I love looking back at the accomplishments I have made and those on the horizon. These goal-and-accomplishment lists often influence my writing more than a daily to-do list ever could.

My writing is much less traditionally organized. I have a few notebooks with ideas written and stream of consciousness pieces to sort through, and “splash pages” of ideas collecting and combining ideas until each one is ready to be a piece of a larger story. The splash pages are my favorite way to keep track of ideas and thoughts while writing. They are similar to Bullet Journals in that they consist of lists of ideas arranged by theme or subject, but the medium of a digital file makes the ideas easier to manipulate and sew into the patchwork of a larger narrative quilt. Each splash page is labelled according to the piece to which it corresponds, and I write best knowing that I have everything laid out as a constant stream of ideas.

While not everyone who keeps a diary is going to be famous, would looking back on a journal from a moment twenty years into the future still provide the same nostalgic connection for the individual? Admittedly, the organization principles of a Bullet Journal can make it super-easy to draft a new story idea and work ten times harder than the regular day planner can without recharging. And yes, it is quick, easy, concise, and cuts straight to the point: get stuff done and remember the main point of it. However, shouldn't the journey leading to the completion of a task be part of what is remembered? I will acknowledge that I do love the idea that the Bullet Journal is easy to organize and keep up with, especially for last minute story ideas. Having one location on which to keep every list will certainly cut down on the amount of sticky notes on flat surfaces, but overall using a Bullet Journal as the only medium for recording experiences leaves us with the outline of our lives and not enough soul to keep our stories interesting.

### Tips for Experimenting with a Bullet Journal

- ◆ Start with a blank page. A new composition book, journal, or spiral-bound notebook will work
- ◆ Make a key if you use symbols to keep track of tasks (using an X for a completed task is a popular option)
- ◆ Don't worry if writing isn't your forte; Bullet Journals are built around lists
- ◆ Use colored pencils or pens to brighten the pages or color-code categories

# Introduction to Anime: A Review of *Fullmetal Alchemist* (2003 Edition)

By Dakota Durbin

*"To obtain, something of equal value must be lost.*

*That is alchemy's first law of equivalent exchange."*

*Fullmetal Alchemist* was originally a manga first published in 2001 by writer and illustrator Hiromu Arakawa and ran up until 2010 when the series was completed. Over those 10 years, *Fullmetal Alchemist* became increasingly popular and gained critical acclaim from reviewers and fans alike. The premise of the show is that two young brothers, Edward and Alphonse, lose their mother because of illness and turn to the science of alchemy as a means for bringing her back to life. In their world, alchemy is very similar to magic. Alchemists, after all, have the ability to manipulate and alter the world around them, their techniques varying person to person, but regardless of individual difference taboos exist that proscribe certain behaviors. The art of bringing someone back to life (Human Transmutation), for example, is the most sacred of all the taboos. The brothers ignore the potential consequences to try and resurrect their mother and meet with catastrophic results. Alchemy functions on the basic principle of equivalent exchange, "to obtain, something of equal value must be lost." Principle and taboo in alchemy imply serious issues: for instance, what would be the equivalent exchange for trying to bring a person back to life, and what would that life be worth? The brothers are unprepared for the consequences; Edward's left leg and right arm are taken from him and his younger brother's entire body is lost. In order to save Alphonse's soul, Edward attaches it to a suit of armor. They fail at restoring life to their mother and their bodies become incomplete and disfigured. Edward receives prosthetic metal limbs called "automail" and Alphonse is left in a body that does not age or feel pain but also cannot eat or sleep or feel the touch of another person. In order to correct their wrongs, the boys embark on a journey for the fabled philosopher's stone, a mystical and powerful alchemical catalyst that could give them the power to restore themselves to their original forms. In the process, they face physical and emotional hardships that continue to shape their views and beliefs about the world and life.

***Fullmetal Alchemist* hits on all the proper points and showcases beautifully just how much depth, personality, and heart can characterize an anime production.**

For those of you who are unfamiliar with some of the specialized terms involving these genres, a *manga* is a Japanese comic book usually illustrated and printed in black and white, except for the front and rear covers. The term *anime* refers to a Japanese animated TV series or movie that is often but not always adapted from a manga. Almost any manga that becomes popular winds up as an anime. In 2003, the *Fullmetal Alchemist* manga was adapted to an anime television series, which increased in popularity. Since then, the manga has been adapted into a series of Japanese light novels (equivalent in length to English novellas) as well as undergoing a reboot in the form of a new series titled *Fullmetal Alchemist Brotherhood* that didn't begin airing until 2009. The motivation behind the reboot was that the original anime series of 2003 diverged greatly from the manga's original story line, branching off and closing with an alternative dénouement. Perhaps the main reason behind this effort was that the manga had not progressed far enough to give the anime more source material, prompting Arakawa to collaborate with a team of writers to point the show in a new direction.

Anime will never progress faster than the manga, because the manga is the main source of the story and until the appropriate amount of chapters are published, the anime remains only a prospect. You can imagine that this would create a fair number of difficulties for producing anime, compelling writing teams to devise a way to work around the manga chapters release dates.



This explains why the strategy of conceiving “filler episodes” emerged. Filler episodes do not appear in the manga or follow the main storyline. These episodes will usually have no impact on the actual plot of the series, provoking most avid anime and manga fans to regard them as detestable “place holders.”

The episodes that follow the manga’s storyline are called “canon episodes.” Most long-running anime will have a fair mix of filler and canon episodes, because of the delay in chapter releases. However, it is important to note that the life of a manga artist is no easy task. Publishers expect most well received and popular artists to write and illustrate a new chapter each week for publication, which would be published much like American comics are in their small issues. A large collection of chapters, after they are initially published, are then collected into bound volumes, which make up the main source of manga. *Fullmetal Alchemist* had a total of 27 volumes which included 108 chapters, each chapter ranging anywhere from roughly 18 pages to 25. These illustrations and storylines require an exhausting of time to create and many manga artists lead very stressful lives, because publishers impose on them rigid deadlines. Manga and anime represent a huge market not only in Japan but all over the world, particularly in the U.S.

Now, readers might be wondering why I have chosen to write about *Fullmetal Alchemist* (2003) instead of the newer series, even though this original anime does not follow the manga storyline. First, I believe the show still captures the depth of Arakawa’s storytelling and develops her characters so beautifully that as a viewer of the show you are swept up in the emotions and events of her creations. My second reason is more personal: I grew up watching the original *Fullmetal Alchemist* series. It was my gateway into the world of anime and though it may sound silly to hear such praise for an animated narrative, *Fullmetal Alchemist* touched me in a profound way that not many other stories have. Anime takes on much heavier topics than traditional American cartoon shows, which their creators so often gear toward a younger audience. Most anime productions, however, aim at teenagers and young adults, and the content of the shows is often violent, dark, graphic, and includes vulgar language and humor. This is not to say, though, that features such as these become unnecessary or represent a crude indulgence. On the contrary, as with any art form, one recognizes proper and improper execution. *Fullmetal Alchemist* hits on all the proper points and showcases beautifully just how much depth, personality, and heart can characterize an anime production.

Drama, action, tragedy, humor, and pain—*Fullmetal Alchemist* encapsulates all these elements and more in a unique and interesting world populated by unique and interesting characters. As a viewer I was swept up by the personalities of Ed and Al, because Arakawa gave these brothers such human and relatable qualities. This show can put a smile on your face and within an episode fill your eyes with tears. I still remember watching this anime for the very first time and realizing that I had stumbled onto something truly special that I would love my whole life. *Fullmetal Alchemist* gave me a new perspective on the world because the span of its themes is so massive. It covers everything from the horrors of war and genocide, to the decisions that shape what is right and wrong, to the problem of estimating the value of a human life, and to the issues illuminating the substance of justice and oppression. The list of themes could go on for pages, so I would just sum it up by saying that this production is about the bedrock ambiguities of life. In its broadest sense the drama touches upon things that we can all relate to, while leaving plenty of room for the formation of more personal connections. *Fullmetal Alchemist* is a masterpiece, and I would urge anyone who is looking to see what anime is all about to begin with it. After years of applying pressure, I finally persuaded my mother to watch *Fullmetal* and she was blown away. I’ll be the first to admit that I am a biased reviewer because I have such a connection to this show, but when I’ve spoken with other anime enthusiasts there is a resounding agreement that one of the best anime out there is *Fullmetal Alchemist*.

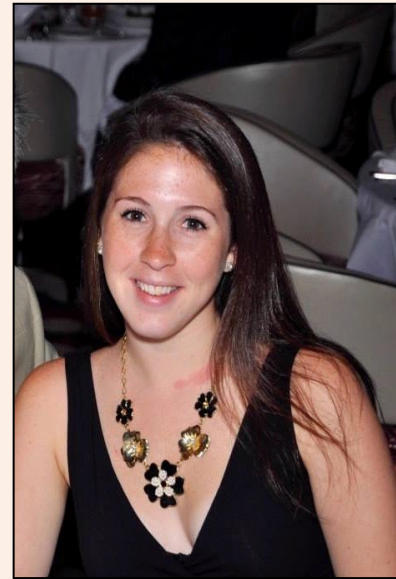
# Reading Merrimack's English Majors

By Kileigh Stranahan

In our last issue, Bridget Kennedy interviewed Sigma Tau Delta inductees to give readers of *The Broadsheet* a better feel for the culture in our English program and a greater sense of its majors. After reading her feature, I decided to follow up with some additional interviews to deepen this profile of our majors even more, illuminating further the contours of their private worlds. Readers will see what kinds of reading fuel their passions, beyond course assignments, that is, what they aspire to do once they've earned their English degrees, and what courses really captured their attention.



Ryann Gagnon (Class of 2019)



Brittany Shambo (Class of 2017)



Lea Hamel (Class of 2020)



Mackenzie Bell (Class of 2020)

## Why did you decide to become an English major?

**Ryann Gagnon:** I decided to become an English major because in high school I loved literature and found that I was pretty good at writing and analyzing.

**Brittany Shambo:** I struggled with choosing a major my Freshman year of college. I had come to Merrimack as an Athletic Training major, then switched second semester to Undeclared Business, but was still unsure of what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I had an amazing professor [Dr. Geraldine Branca] who encouraged me to pursue my passion for English. I love to read; I'm a pretty good writer, and an English degree can be used in so many ways!

**Lea Hamel:** I decided to become an English major because I have always loved the subject! Throughout all of my years of school, that is, the ones I remember (from fifth grade and on), English has always been my favorite. It just comes easily to me. Ever since I was a young child I have always used my free time to write stories and create with words. Also, I am an avid reader. Whenever there is an assignment for reading, I look forward to it, rather than solving chemical equations in chemistry or completing extensive numbers of problems for Pre-Calculus.

**Mackenzie Bell:** I chose to become an English major by reason of my profound love for literature and writing. During senior year of high school, my English teacher encouraged me to pursue a degree in English; she said she thought quite highly of my writing, which encouraged me to take the leap.

## What do you want to do with your English degree (teach or write, for example)? Do you plan to publish anything?

**Ryann:** I plan to become a high school English/lit teacher.

**Brittany:** I am a double major in English and Secondary Education. Right now I am working in a school system as a TA and next semester I will be student teaching. If teaching doesn't work out or if I want to change jobs; I'd love to try and get a job in publishing!

**Lea:** With my degree in English, I hope to teach students in middle school. Also, on the side I would love to be writing my own ideas and hopefully getting published someday. That's the dream! My ultimate career goal is to be a writer and a *New York Times* Best Seller; however, until that happens it is teaching for me, which still gives me joy!

**Mackenzie:** In terms of what I've decided to pursue post-graduation...to be frank, I haven't committed one way or the other on a particular position. However, I'm going to attend the English Career Night on October 26th to dig deeper into my future. With regard to my plans for publication, I have an extensive amount of poetry that I have been endeavoring to publish. I'm involved at the Writers House, so I have high hopes for my future as a poet.

“I never studied the Harlem Renaissance in High School; the course opened my eyes up to a whole time period and genre of literature! Some of the works we read in that class quickly became favorites of mine.”



### What English class has been your favorite so far in college and why?

**Ryann:** My favorite class so far has been Literature and Film because I love seeing the way books and stories come to life on screen.

**Brittany:** I've taken so many English classes at Merrimack that it's hard to pinpoint just one as my favorite! If I had to choose, I'd say it was probably the Literature of the Harlem Renaissance course I took last year. I never studied the Harlem Renaissance in High School; the course opened my eyes up to a whole time period and genre of literature! Some of the works we read in that class quickly became favorites of mine.

**Lea:** Regrettably, I am limited in how many English classes I have taken in college so far. Since I am a freshman and it is currently the first semester, I have only taken one English class. With that being said, I still am loving Introduction to Literary Studies with Professor Vatalaro! As of now, we are just finishing up *Frankenstein*. We've applied the psychoanalytic method, new historicism, and feminism to the book and I have honestly been loving it. Professor Vatalaro brings up such interesting perspectives and points that connect to the book and it makes the class that much more interesting. It especially keeps me engaged, considering it's an 8:00 am class, haha.

**Mackenzie:** Thus far, my favorite English class is Inequality and Justice in Life and Literature. The class is a Criminology and English crossover, so essentially the class examines a multitude of texts that are concerned with issues involving equality, and justice. I enjoy the challenge of reading these articles and excerpts with the intention of understanding our justice system, and social impediments in our society.

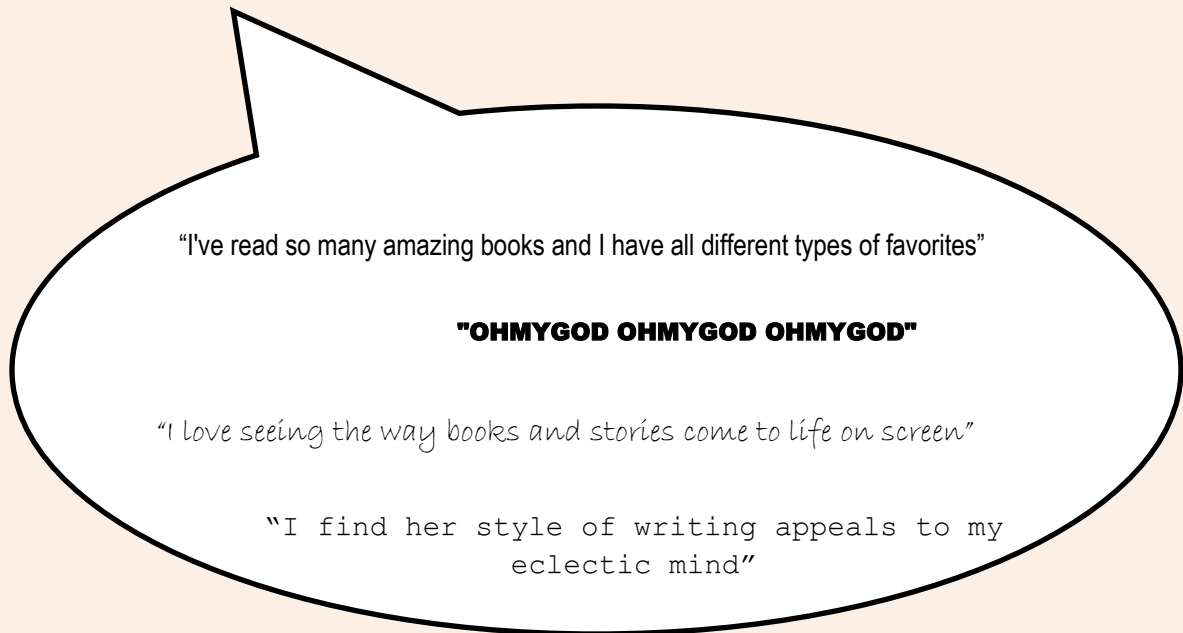
### What is your favorite book or who is your favorite author and why?

**Ryann:** My favorite book of all time is *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, because I think it sends a very powerful message about acceptance, kindness, and courage.

**Brittany:** This question is so hard—I've read so many amazing books and I have all different types of favorites. I'd have to say that my favorite author/ book would be J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, specifically book 7, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. I've re-read the *Harry Potter* series every summer for the past 10 years. It is a series to me that never gets old. Every time I read it, I fall in love with the characters and the adventure all over again. Rowling has an amazing capability to draw her readers in until the very last word of the book is read. It is such a captivating series and it touches the hearts of millions, maybe billions, of people around the world at all age levels. My favorite feel-good book is *North of Beautiful* by Justina Chen. I read this book in high school and fell in love with it! It is a very easy read, and one that reminds the reader of the importance of self-love and internal beauty.

**Lea:** My favorite book of all time is coincidentally by my favorite author of all time. *Leaving Time* by Jodi Picoult is without a doubt ingenious. Without giving away any details, this book has accomplished what I hope to be able to do as a writer some day: achieving a plot twist that leaves the reader incredulous. As one could put together, this happened to me when I reached the end of this novel. Admittedly, I annoyed myself by saying, "OHMYGOD OHMYGOD OHMYGOD" consecutively for countless minutes. It's just so good!! I highly recommend the novel to anyone who loves reading about day-to-day lives with an AMAZING plot twist. Wow, I might as well include a small summary of the book, huh? Okay, here it goes: Jenna Metcalf remains determined to find her mother, Alice, who studies elephants, after she tragically disappears. IT IS SO GOOD! Jodi Picoult is my favorite author because she writes in such a simple way, yet captivates her readers with interesting topics. Ever since *Leaving Time*, I have invested in six other books by her. I'm currently reading another novel by her, my seventh. :) Since I've completely read six novels by her, I can honestly say, no matter the topic, Jodi Picoult does not disappoint. Every book I've read is a page-turner and always keeps me guessing.

**Mackenzie:** My favorite book, without hesitation, is *Tuesdays with Morrie*, by Mitch Albom. This book taught me life's greatest lesson. That's all I will disclose, along with my enthusiastic recommendation. In terms of my favorite author, I have to choose Ellen Hopkins. As a poet myself, I find her style of writing appeals to my eclectic mind.

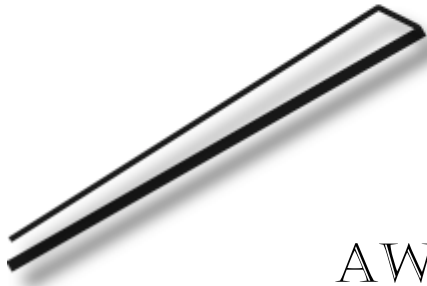


After conducting these interviews something really stuck out to me. Each of these students answered my questions completely and adequately. When I asked the questions regarding their favorite courses or why they chose to study English, I received varying but fairly banal responses. However, when asked about their favorite authors and books, every one of these students' answers just came to life on the page. Their eagerness and zeal become so apparent. You can perceive a noticeable shift in tone and their responses become much more animated and detailed. The enthusiasm they express for their favorite books makes me want to get a copy of each and read it myself. This got me thinking.

We may all enjoy different genres and writing styles, but English majors share an excitement for what they are reading. Personally, I love the classics, whether it be *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen or *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Something about reading—something that emerged who knows how long ago—something about recognizing the ways in which authors and characters grapple with difficult issues and challenges (most of which we continue to wrestle with today): I revel in the process. I have so much fun confronting gender norms and racial issues in literature written in the past that remain all too familiar. It's possible that someone reading my reflection might find herself thinking that this sounds like her *worst* nightmare. I think that's what makes this discipline so enjoyable, though. We are all reading and discussing completely different materials but we all talk about personal favorites with such ardor.

Currently, I am in the middle of Stephen King's short story "Everything's Eventual." As someone who just said I love the classics, you're probably thinking I'm really contradicting myself here. But when someone within my major talks about a short story or a novel that they found really good, I find myself compelled to go out and see for myself. My favorite thing about this short story so far is the way it opens. King introduces his narrative by confessing to the reader that a clear image of a man pouring change into a sewer popped into his head one day and he knew he had to write about it. He said that writing this short story was so natural to him that it proved his theory that "stories are artifacts: not really made things which we create (and can take credit for), but preexisting objects which we dig up." I love the prospect that stories are already things that exist, but we might not have discovered them yet. It makes you think that as English majors (some of us are also writers), we are more like historians or paleontologists always looking for a new story to unearth.

'...WI-NG-ARD-IER-  
M LEVEROSSAAAA...'



AWW, NOT AGAIN.

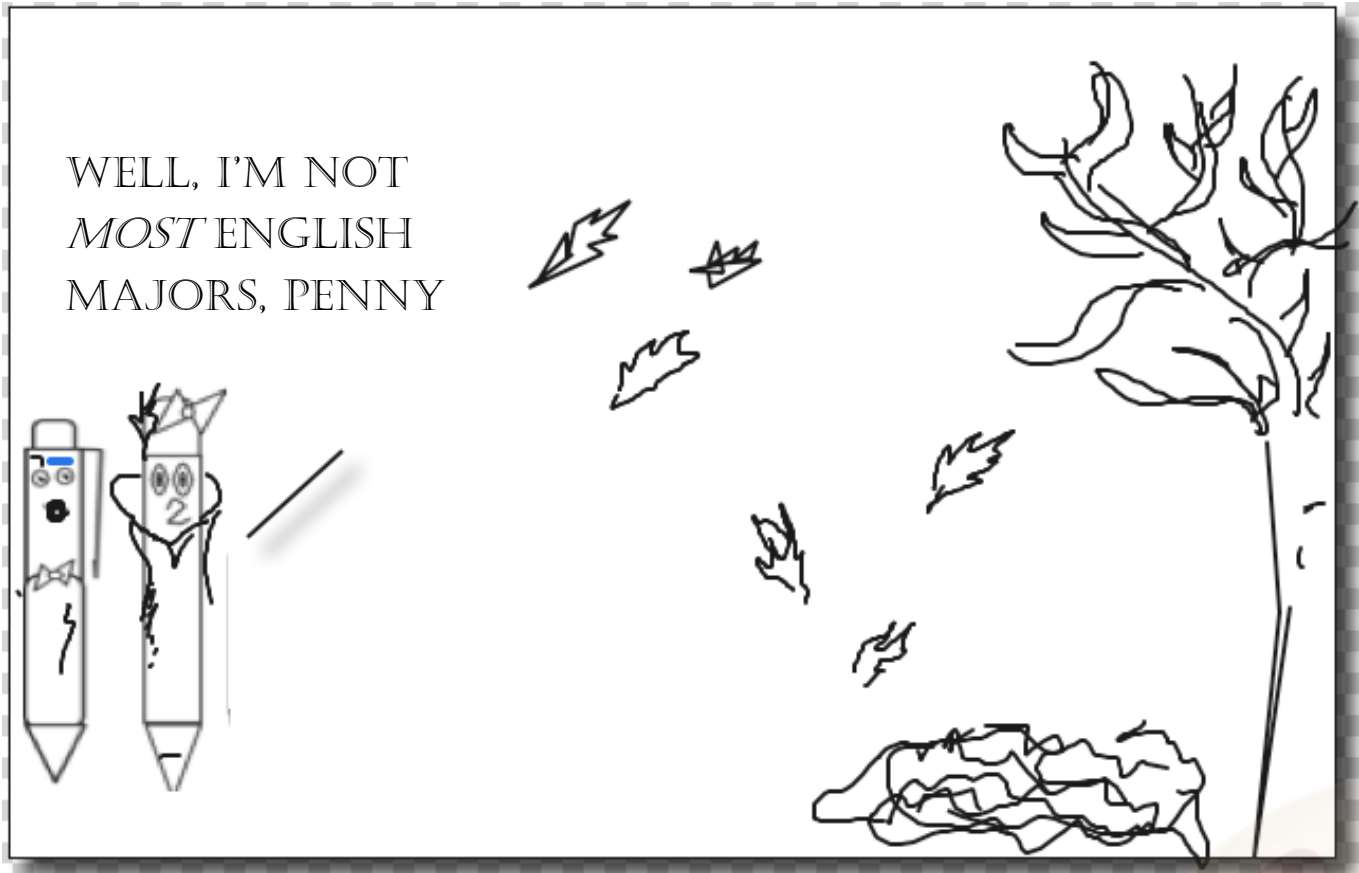
IT'S 'WINGADIEM LEVI-  
OSAH,' PENDLETON



IT'S NOT MY FAULT, PENNY. IT'S NOT LIKE *EVE-  
RYONE* SPEAKS WIZARD!

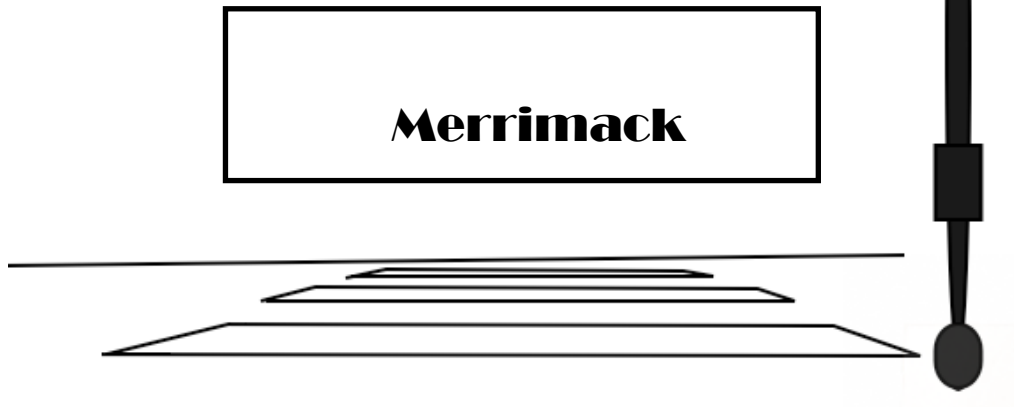


PENNY: NO, BUT MOST ENGLISH MAJORS KNOW THAT J. K. ROWLING USED LATIN IN HER BOOKS.

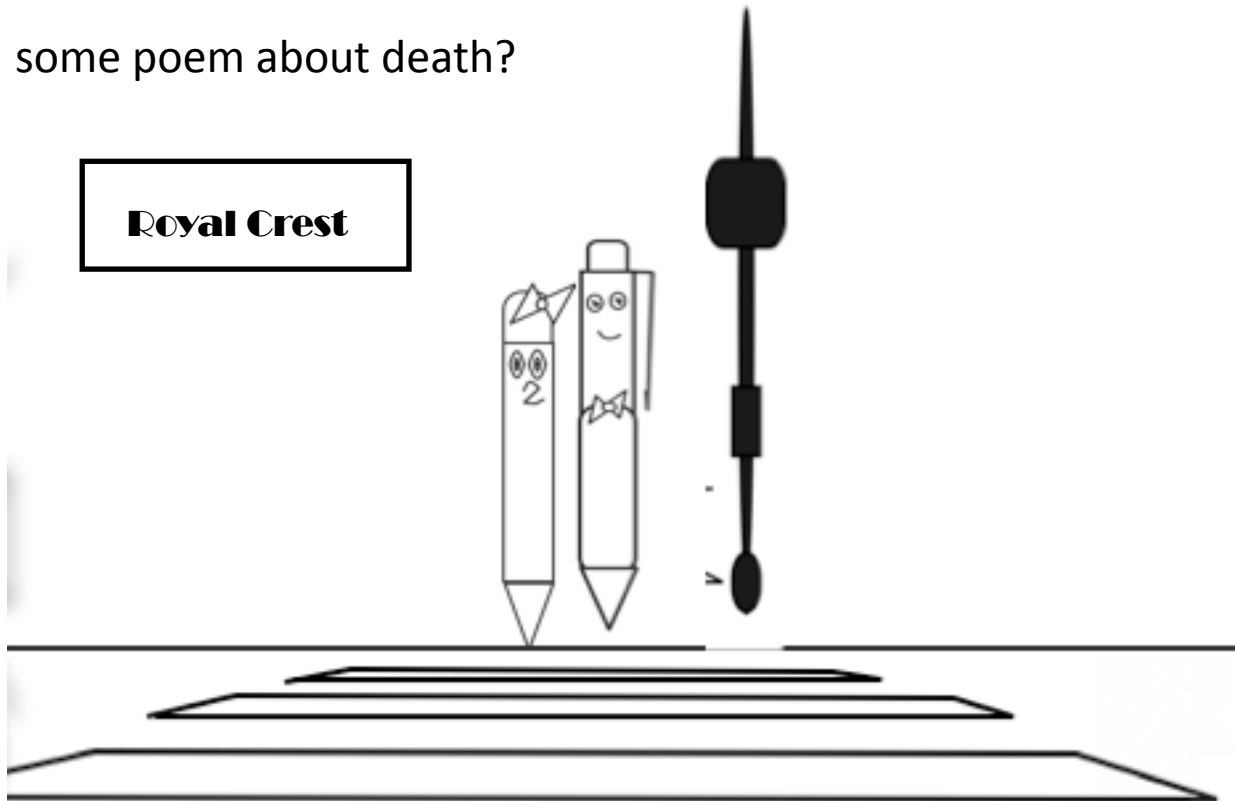


MAYBE *NOT*. BUT EVEN HARRY POT-  
TER HAD TO GO TO HOGWARTS BE-  
FORE HE COULD BECOME A GREAT  
WIZARD, PENDLETON.

Penny and Pendleton stand, waiting for the signal allowing them to enter the Merrimack Crosswalk at Rt. 114

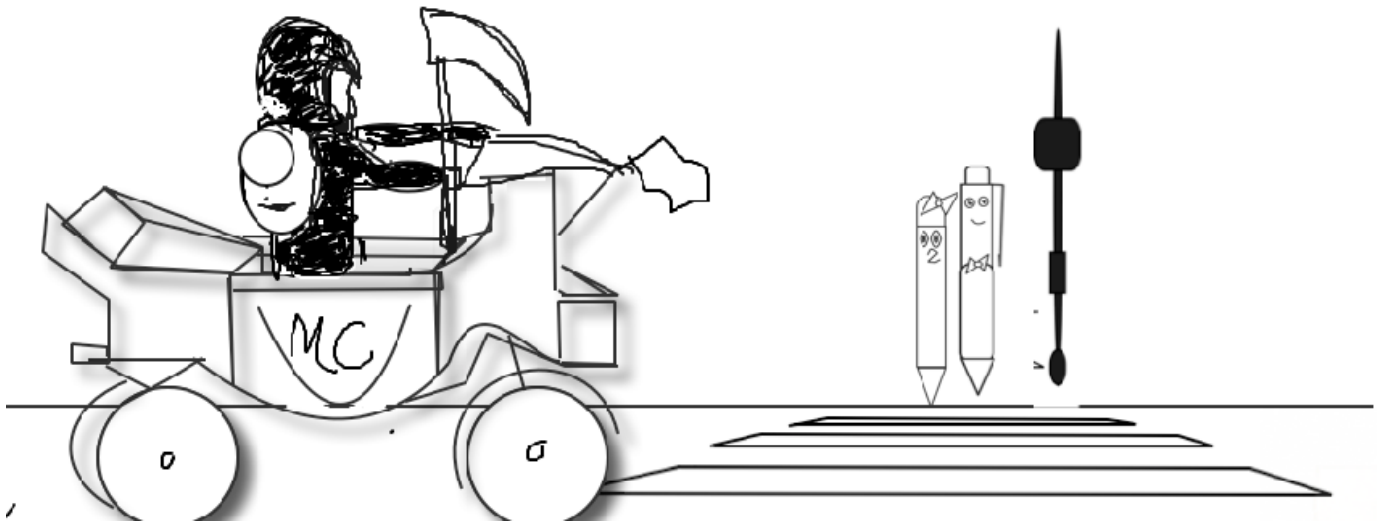


So Penny, what did we have to read for class again ... some poem about death?



Ugh... yes, Emily Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for death..."

## Pendleton: Do we wait for him to stop?




Penny: If you actually read the poem, you would know.

**English  
Career Night**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26  
7:00 PM  
MERRIMACK CLUB

Meet and network with recent alumni from the English department, all of whom took different paths after graduating from Merrimack College. Find out how the English major can put you to work!  
All students are welcome.

Brought to you by:  
THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

 **MERRIMACK COLLEGE**  
O'BRIEN CENTER FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

An annual English Department tradition, Career Night features short presentations by panelists who graduated from the Merrimack English program and have discovered great careers. Providing invaluable advice on how to prepare for life after graduation, these former majors will broaden your perspective concerning the kinds of jobs that are waiting for individuals that have earned English degrees. The event is open to the entire Merrimack community. Alumni are especially welcome. We'd love to connect with you again!



## Emma Duffy-Comparone Joins the Full-Time English Faculty

*The Broadsheet* Staff

The English Department welcomes the addition of Assistant Professor Emma Duffy-Comparone, who has been hired on a tenure-track appointment. She will be teaching courses in her primary field of specialization, Creative Writing, Fiction, in addition to the required institutional first-year writing requirement. She brings to the English program an impressive record of achievements.

Professor Duffy-Comparone earned the M.F.A in Creative Writing, Fiction in 2012 at Boston University, where she held a teaching fellowship, and the B.A. in English in 2010 from the University of New Hampshire, where she graduated the Chief Valedictorian of the University Class of 2010. She has been teaching Creative Writing and First-year Writing at a number of New England area institutions, including Tufts University, Boston College, Boston University, and The University of New Hampshire.

Professor Duffy-Comparone has published her stories in a number of periodicals, including *Ploughshares*, *New England Review*, *One Story*, *AGNI*, *The Sun*, *Mississippi Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, and *American Scholar*. Her first published story “The Zen Thing” was chosen to be the lead story in the anthology *The Pushcart Prize XXXIX: Best of Small Presses* in 2015, and this year she has won a second Pushcart Prize for her story, “The Devil’s Triangle,” which will appear in *The Pushcart Prize XLI*. In addition, she has been an Alan Collins Scholar at the Bread Loaf Writers’ Conference, a Tennessee Williams Scholar at the Sewanee Writers’ Conference, a fellow at the Yaddo Corporation and MacDowell Colony, and has received awards from the Elizabeth George Foundation and the Saint Botolph Club Foundation. In 2015 she served as guest co-editor of *The Pushcart Prize XL.h*



*The Broadsheet* plans to run a full-length article featuring Professor Duffy-Comparone in its next issue. She will be teaching the brand new multi-genre course Introduction to Creative Writing next semester.

## The Obsidian Age of Comics: a Reflection on the Darkening Tones of Superhero Culture

By Rachel MacKelcan

When I enrolled in the English program's new Superheroes and Mythology course, I was just about as excited as my mother was jealous. Coming from a family that religiously binge-watches superhero shows such as *Arrow*, *Daredevil*, *Flash*, and our favorite, *Gotham* (Goth-ham as my brother pronounces it), a family that thrives on recently released superhero movies such as *Dead pool*, *Captain America*, *Iron Man*, *Thor*, *The Avengers* and so many more, I thought I knew a few things about superheroes; I was wrong. For this issue of *The Broadsheet*, I initially planned on talking about how comics and superheroes have changed since the Golden Age, specifically how antiquated superhero ideals found in the original *Superman*, *Batman*, *Captain Marvel* and *Wonder Woman* comics have been turned dark by media and how most of the movies that we see today focus on violence as opposed to heroism. But after talking to the English Department's Dr. Chandler, the instructor who teaches the Superheroes course I am taking, I can confidently say that I have

**“Perhaps we are living in darker times, but the truth is, we have never been more enlightened.”**

yet again judged prematurely, because the evolution of the hero is not as simple as I first perceived it to be.

To understand where we are now, we first have to remember where we came from. The “Golden Age” of Comics (circa 1930's-1950's) was a period of incredible growth for the comics industry. This period commenced with the introduction of characters like Superman, a hero with Herculean strength that crash-landed onto our planet from space and literally defined the superhero archetype, despite being what many today would classify as an illegal alien. Other notables include: Bruce Wayne, a.k.a. Batman, whose parents were murdered in cold blood before his very eyes, preparing him to become Gotham City's greatest hero, and

Wonder Woman, a powerful female in a time when gender roles were evolving and allowing women to play a much larger role in war efforts.

The “Golden Age” of comics drew readers from all age groups and gender identifications, allowing everyone to believe in heroes of all forms and find hope in a world where many nations were facing wartime ravages. At the height of World War II comics provided an enthusiastic escape for people in America, Europe and around the globe. Comics were printed in pocket-sized packages, so that our soldiers could still read about their favorite characters no matter where the war took them. The comic medium, subjected to controversial code changes in 1948, 1954, and 1971 intended to censor out what some believed to be less wholesome messages, has since evolved into a thriving industry. The same could easily be argued for the characters who inhabit the worlds it created. But when one looks at its characters, immortalized within their generic worlds, we nevertheless notice that they have changed. The 1950's version of Superman, for example, had a firm moral center, fought for justice, and adhered to the strict regulations of the comic book code; he was wholesome and good above all, the epitome of a hero. Once we leap forward fifty years we notice, however, that we encounter Superman, now the “Man of Steel,” who is a little more edgy. Once we move to 2016 we see the same figure in the film *Superman vs. Batman*, which goes beyond edgy and introduces a controversy regarding whether Superman is a hero or an alien threat. The current version reflects the world we live in.

Today we find ourselves subjected to escalating crime rates, poverty, rape, and even “fire alarms on social media.” Our world hosts a threat and danger around every street corner and the streets are here, not overseas. Creators of superheroes have had to face the challenge of keeping them relevant—a task as arduous as fighting a world full of “bad guys.” I find it eye-opening to watch our heroes face their foes on home soil and fight in our backyards. In *The Avengers*, Captain America, Black Widow, Iron Man, Hawk Eye, and Thor travel to New York City to fight an alien threat. In the film *Iron Man 3*, Iron Man, who is still dealing with the post-traumatic stress of the battle in New York (featured in *The Avengers* film), grapples with a terrorist called “The Mandarin,” who is really just a front man for a company that rivals Stark Industries and wishes to exact revenge on Tony Stark (Iron Man). Stories like these bring issues closer to home, reminding us that there may be no place in this world impermeable to those who wish to do us harm.

And while they also remind us that average people can become heroes, some of us might not have earned our way into the privileged tax bracket that would enable us to build a super suit like Iron Man. Americans are obsessed with advancing technology, fixated on crime, violence, and sex and some might even go so far as to argue that our era has no *true* heroes. This is not to say that our soldiers are not heroes or that I fail to recognize the heroism often demonstrated by firemen, police officers, and good Samaritans. My point is that the heroes that existed in the Golden Age were very different from the heroes we see on our television and movie screens both today and in the past few decades. Some might contend that the obvious descent into darkness seen in movies such as *Batman: The Dark Knight Rises*, *Superman vs. Batman*, *Watchmen* and even the more recent installments of the *Star Wars* saga might reflect our own sense that somehow our historical moment is darker and bleaker than the 20th century. So while readers and viewers might simply assume that producers make these films to satiate our need for action and violence, perhaps comics in print and on film reveal the pervading anguish of a society that is waiting for a true hero to emerge, or maybe they just illustrate that though we are not perfect, each of us can aspire to be great.

Dr. Chandler recently alerted me to this possibility; he suggested that no matter how hard we look we will likely not find a true, “perfect” hero in our society. We will, however, find one that is more real and self aware than we see in the Golden Age of comics. He reminded me that a call for heroes characterized the Golden Age, both to the women on the home front, and to men fighting in Europe. But now, it’s much easier to focus on villains than it is to identify the heroes we have on our side. And dramas such as *Arrow*, *Gotham*, and *Daredevil* feature some of the best examples in which villains seem to have free rein until our courageous and well intentioned heroes, like Batman, Arrow, and Daredevil, decide that they need to take justice into their own hands. Batman is driven by his need to find his parents’ killer but consistently succumbs to self-recrimination because he couldn’t save them when he was just a boy. Arrow seeks to eliminate all those who have failed Star City, but he is compromised by PTSD, which began when he found himself trapped on the island where he was forced to survive after the terrible death of his father. And Daredevil/Matt Murdock, seeks to find justice for the people of Hell’s Kitchen, but he is hampered by physical blindness. Each hero we have seen in the past few years on television has had more disadvantages mentally and physically than previously; they are dark, flawed, and sometimes insecure, and tend to behave more like anti-heroes than true heroes. This characteristic doesn’t mean, however, that they aren’t effective; they have merely evolved to fit our model of an achievable icon.

Marvel heroes have undergone the same species of transformation. Destiny earmarks Thor for greatness, but in the first movie he proves to be nothing more than an arrogant heir to the throne. Iron Man suffers from PTSD after the Battle of New York, but prior to that life-changing event he was a narcissist. Despite his anger issues, moreover, the Hulk manages to hold down a job for a while, and Captain America, America’s star-spangled golden boy, becomes a walking anachronism. We have a hard time faulting the heroes I just mentioned for their shortcomings; their struggles to overcome them are all too familiar to us. And while Marvel has done a marvelous job of integrating issues like these into its work, its creations sometimes encourage us to step back and evaluate the vulnerability of this new generation of heroes. We continue to invest ourselves in heroes, but unlike the ones we witnessed in the 1950’s these heroes are darker, more complex. They have emerged in what I like to call The Obsidian Age, an age characterized by darkness, violence, moral ambiguity, and imperfection, but an age that shines nonetheless. Though these new heroes are more human, more real, they don’t always provide us with a moral beacon to follow through the hard times that lay ahead.

Perhaps we are living in darker times. But the truth is, we have never been more enlightened. Today we are more able to be ourselves than we have ever been—more willing to accept imperfection and differences than we might have been before. And it’s no surprise that our heroes have finally been able to do the same. Today’s heroes are no longer shining beacons of a moral code, seeking justice and punishing those who have caused so much pain. They are no longer superhuman or even alien; they are mortal men and women who have been willing to face extraordinary challenges. What I initially characterized as a “darker” modern day hero is perhaps better characterized as a more mature iteration of a conventional role model. Perhaps comics and their adaptations are beginning to close a gap that used to be very wide. It was never the heroes that darkened; it was we. Perhaps there is hope our “super”-heroes will save us after all.

# “Perfection is beyond the reach of humankind, beyond the reach of magic”: Review of *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*

By Rosemary Morton

*Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*

Author: Jack Thorne

Publisher: Arthur A. Levine Books

Date of Publication: 2016



*Harry Potter* was one of my favorite book series growing up. It not only made me love reading, but it completely changed me as a person. As I got older, I appreciated this series more for its complexity and its unique characters. This series also created a bonding experience between my older brother and me that continues today. My brother was the one who introduced me to Rowling and to be “just like him” I was determined to read her work. My mother decided, however, that the content would be too scary for my very fearful personality. I ultimately ended up loving the series and when the script for Jack Thorne’s dramatic adaptation was announced, I was overjoyed. What crazed book lover and theater nerd would not like to see their two loves combined? However, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* turned out not to be quite what everyone expected, though I enjoyed it very much.

The play focuses on what happened after the final *Harry Potter* novel. Following the journey of Harry’s middle son, Albus (Al), *Cursed Child* attempts to address the question concerning what the lives of the Golden Trio (Harry, Ron, and Hermione) were like after the defeat of Voldemort. It begins where the last story ended, on platform 9 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, where Albus worries about being placed into Slytherin House, considered the House where bad children and eventually evil wizards wind up.



Oddly enough, Albus is assigned to this House and he and his new friend Scorpius, Draco Malfoy's son, attempt to rectify one of Harry's mistakes. While this plot line is unfolding, in a parallel line Harry faces the possibility that he might not be able to connect with his second son. In a way, Harry is going through a mid-life crisis, as he desperately tries to mend his past and resolve disagreements with his offspring.

The characters immediately caught my attention. I loved each and every one of them. This script generates the nostalgia that fulfills so many fans of *Harry Potter*. You reconnect with old friends and gradually meet new ones. The new characters do not distract you; rather, they seem to have been there right along. For example, one new character that instantly wins over the reader is Scorpius Malfoy. In a way, he differs markedly from Draco. Ostensibly a nerd, Scorpius is often bullied and ignored by everyone at school except for his friend Albus. As Albus fondly points out, "How to distract Scorpius from difficult emotional issues? Take him to a library" (Thorne 81). He emerges in the narrative as being brave, intelligent, funny, and caring, unlike his father who was one of the main antagonists in the book series. Scorpius and Albus share a tight friendship that is just as strong as Harry's and Ron's. Noticing this friendship, another character points out, "That's the thing, isn't it? About friendships. You don't know what he needs. You only know he needs it. Find him, Scorpius. You two—you belong together" (Thorne 134). Readers of the *Harry Potter* novels definitely notice a resonance between these two characters and Ron and Harry. Despite their fights, Ron's bond with Harry and their friendship is as firm as the one between Albus and Scorpius. This commonality predisposes the reader to embrace the two main characters on their journey.

I also liked the portrayal of Scorpius Malfoy's father, Draco. A villain, the Draco that appears in Rowling's *Harry Potter* universe finds redemption in this story. Turmoil besieges this character over the course of this narrative, as he is overcome with grief by the death of his beloved wife from an illness he believed he caused. "Astoria didn't want a baby for the Malfoy name, for pureblood or glory, but for us," he says (Thorne 261). Draco's wife, Astoria, sacrificed her own life for the survival of her child and in some ways guilt burdens Draco as a result of this incident. As readers of the series are aware, Draco is a pureblood wizard; therefore, tradition dictates that he spawn an heir that will continue the pure-blood heritage.

Not only does he have to be a father to his son; he has to live amidst rumors that the child might not be his. These rumors fuel Draco's anger, which is also amplified by Albus's friendship with Scorpius. Draco is faced with the fact that he may never be able to overcome his past and he is constantly reminded through Harry and Albus that his family sided with Voldemort. Draco desperately tries to make things right for the children. He becomes a loving father to his son, a complete turnaround from the vengeful child that Harry once knew.

One of the sweetest parts of this play occurs near the end when Draco, in a funny way, expresses tenderness toward his son. Thorne writes, “We can hug too if you like... *Scorpius looks at his dad, unsure for a moment. And then they sort of half-hug in a very awkward way. Draco smiles*” (Thorne 274). This behavior might seem strange for Draco but to me and other readers he is forever redeemed. Draco wants to be the father to Scorpius that his own father never was to him.

Relationships such as the one that finds expression in the bond between Draco and Scorpius are extremely critical to this story. In the series, J. K. Rowling is best known for creating characters that serve as role models for the countless children who grew to love them as though they were real people. Therefore, it is interesting to note that these relationships translate into Thorne’s adaptation in new and exciting ways. Take the relationship between Harry and Dumbledore as an example. As Rowling’s readers know, Dumbledore died during the sixth novel; however his spirit lives on. (As a point of information, portraits of past headmasters of Hogwarts have the ability to come to life and correspond with the living.)

In this scene Harry challenges Dumbledore with difficult questions, especially calling on him to account for his decision to send a thirteen-year-old child into danger. It is important to note that Dumbledore made Harry fight Voldemort not once but six times. *Six times*. Harry also wants to know why he was forced to live with his abusive uncle and aunt. He says, “Years—years I spent there alone, without knowing what I was, or why I was there, without knowing anybody cared!” (Thorne 257). This moment ends with Dumbledore weeping over the child, whom he realizes he abandoned and “left for the wolves.” “I was blind. That is what love does. I couldn’t see that you needed to hear that this closed-up, tricky, dangerous old man...loved you” (Thorne 258). As a reader, I could not help myself from bursting into tears. Dumbledore regretted that he had to leave Harry alone and when he does finally enter the wizarding world Harry had to save it from destroying itself. As many fans have acknowledged, Harry should have died in the final book and this scene from Thorne’s adaptation exposes Dumbledore’s anguish over the likelihood that he caused all the problems with the Dark Lord (Voldemort).

It is important to mention the relationship between Harry and Albus. Harry does have two other children, but this relationship represents one of the main focal points in the script. For some reason, I found this relationship clicked with me. Of course it was dramatic and a little overdone (“I just wish you weren’t my dad.’ ‘Well, there are times I wish you weren’t my son’”), but I found their problems realistic (Thorne 41). Communication and approval issues plague them, as they struggle to understand each other. Approval of a parent serves as a prominent motif in the script. Children want their parents’ love and acceptance and when communication breaks down hosts of issues arise. Albus’ main goal in the play involves not just saving a life; it involves finding the acceptance of the one who loves him the most.

Despite some of the negative assessments of Thorne’s achievement I have heard, I generally really loved this work. However, some of the complaints seem warranted. Many argue that the script is hard to follow and some remark that they do not like reading scripts. The cover of the book, moreover, touts the work as “a new play by Jack Thorne.” Technically, the original iteration of the text was performed at the London West End.

What I discovered while reading this play-script is the power of reading it out loud. Reading it aloud enhanced my experience and it made me love it even more. Rowling's world seemed vaster and it greatly reminded me of the novels. Additionally, the script format concretized the characters—making it appear as though they and their struggles were being performed in front of my eyes. I reminded myself that playwrights intend scripts to be read out loud, as the actors do that during rehearsal.

To say that this dramatic narrative is hard to read at times is an understatement; this is not the *Harry Potter* the reader has left behind in the final novel. Harry is a changed man, which makes some readers reluctant to embrace Thorne's development of his character. No longer an 18-year-old, Harry has become an overworked man in his career at the Ministry of Magic, and problems with his family-life trouble him. Most of these problems, as I mentioned before, have to do with Albus. Facing challenges at school, Albus feels that he is separated from the family and even suspects that Harry does not love him. For many readers, this turmoil is extremely hard to undergo, because Harry was seen in the novels as a brave and caring person. However, I believe that his age difference and the trying issues involving his son become crucial elements in Thorne's story. I found myself embracing this more mature version of his character, because it just makes sense; it makes him more human and all humans are subject to the mysteries of mortality.

*Harry: (Albus Dumbledore and Severus Snape) "were great men, with huge flaws, and you know what—those flaws almost made them greater" (Thorne 308).*





# The Broadsheet Production Staff



**Kileigh Stranahan**  
*Favorite Movie: Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*  
*Favorite Character: Hermione Granger*

**Bridget Kennedy**  
*Favorite Book: Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*  
*Favorite Character: Luna Lovegood*



**Jessica Brusio**  
*Favorite Book: Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*  
*Favorite Character: Severus Snape*

**Rachel MacKelcan:**  
*Favorite Book: Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*  
*Favorite Character: Hermione Granger*



**Dakota Durbin:**  
*Favorite Book: Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*  
*Favorite Characters: Albus Dumbledore and Rubeus Hagrid*

**Rosemary Morton:**  
*Favorite Book: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*  
*Favorite Characters: Hermione and Severus Snape*



**Faculty Editor:** Professor Paul Vatalaro