

Queer Media Analysis
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

As a child, the only series of books I cared about was Harry Potter. From the moment my mom placed the first book into my hands and I stared at the brightly colored cover, I knew I would fall in love with it. As a nerdy 10-year-old who always felt weird, out of place, and awkward, learning that there was a secret world in which other kids like me were powerful and badass helped me feel more comfortable in my skin. Despite the author JK Rowlings hateful and unfortunate turn towards transphobia, misogyny, and homophobia, I still believe that Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone is a great novel to be read through a queer lens as it has major themes of self-discovery, chosen family, and belonging. Even the main enemy in Harry Potter, Voldemort, or "he who shall not be named" can be analyzed as a stand-in for right-wing beliefs or homophobia. Through Harry's origin story at Hogwarts, we can find a metaphor for not only the coming out experience but also for the journey of a queer person throughout their life, from realizing who they are and admitting it to themselves, to fully embracing their identity and celebrating it with their community.

In "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," eleven-year-old Harry Potter discovers he is a wizard on his birthday when Hagrid, the Keeper of Keys and Grounds at Hogwarts, arrives to bring him to the magical school. Orphaned as a baby and forced to live in a closet under the stairs by his cruel non-wizard Aunt Petunia Dursley and Uncle Vernon Dursley who strongly oppose his admission to Hogwarts and try their best to prevent him from going. Harry learns he survived an attack by the dark wizard Voldemort, who killed his parents but mysteriously vanished after

trying to kill him. At Hogwarts, Harry makes friends with Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, and he quickly finds himself navigating the challenges of wizarding life. He learns about Quidditch, a popular sport, and discovers his talent as a Seeker. However, Harry also uncovers the mystery surrounding the Sorcerer's Stone, a magical object that grants immortality. As the school year progresses, Harry, Ron, and Hermione realize someone is trying to steal the Stone. They face numerous magical obstacles and challenges, showcasing their bravery and teamwork. In the climactic confrontation, Harry comes face-to-face with Professor Quirrell, who is controlled by Voldemort. Ultimately, Harry's love and bravery protect him, preventing Voldemort from obtaining the Stone. The story concludes with Harry returning to the Dursleys for the summer, now aware of his true identity and the world of magic awaiting him. The novel sets the stage for Harry's journey in the wizarding world, filled with friendship, adventure, and the ongoing battle against dark forces.

The first thing that struck me when I began to think about Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone through a queer lens was that he literally lived in a closet under the stairs. As an orphan, Harry feels out of place with his Aunt and Uncle and is mistreated by them his whole life. Forced to live in a closet, he always feels out of place and often has things he doesn't understand happen to him. When Hagrid arrives and tells him who he really is, it's as though his life all of a sudden makes sense. The moment of realization that he isn't the only person out there like him, that other people see the world the same way he does, and that he has a place where he will fit in parallels a moment of queer discovery. A queer person might discover that they are not alone through books or movies, online, through sex education, or from simply seeing another queer person in public. Whatever the case, the moment where one realizes that all of the complicated feelings they have been having, the ones that make them feel alone and different from everyone

else, are a shared experience is a moment that almost all queer people experience. The metaphor of coming out of the closet is clear at the beginning of this book, and the fact that Harry discovers this about himself on his eleventh birthday, an age at which many kids start going through puberty and discovering their sexualities more clearly, also lends itself to this queer analysis. Self-discovery of one's queer identity can often be a pivotal moment in a queer person's life, and in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, Harry's self-discovery of his identity as a wizard not only sets up the rest of the books and the rest of Harry's story but allows him to understand his place in the world apart from his repressive upbringing.

Another theme that is prevalent in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* is one of chosen family and belonging. When Harry gets to Hogwarts he meets his two best friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. He also gets sorted into his house, Gryffindor, where Professor McGonagall states "will be something like your family within Hogwarts." Harry quickly becomes close with the members of his house and with Ron's extended family. He finds comfort in his friends and experiences true familial love for the first time. This understanding of family outside of the traditional nuclear family model is another thing that queer people can relate to in this novel. Harry's biological family doesn't accept him as being a wizard and tries to prevent him from understanding who he is, but the family he meets at Hogwarts knows who he is and loves him for it. Their shared experience as wizards and witches bonds them together, and he becomes much closer to them than any member of his biological family as they support him through the novel and even in his battle against Voldemort. Many queer people find a chosen family through the queer community, bonding closely with friends and forming support systems outside of the norms of society to support and uplift each other against the struggles the world throws at queer people.

In conclusion, "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" can be read through a queer lens as a parallel to early queer life, due to its themes of self-discovery and chosen family. Harry's journey from the confines of his closet under the stairs to the expansive world of Hogwarts mirrors the experience of coming out and finding one's place among those who understand and accept you. The friendships he forms with Ron and Hermione highlight the importance of supportive relationships that transcend traditional family structures, reflecting how queer individuals often seek and create their own families. The novel not only captures the essence of growing up as a queer person but also serves as a powerful metaphor for the struggle and celebration of identity. Despite the damaging beliefs of the author, the enduring magic of Harry's story lies in its ability to inspire courage and connection, encouraging readers to embrace their true selves and find solace in their communities.