

Harry Potter: Real Worlds and Heroic Myths

Grade Levels:

Grades 4-12+

Subject Areas:

Language Arts

Reading

Children's Literature

Mythology

Geography

Social Studies

Physical Education and Training

Synopsis:

Proposes that the popularity of the Harry Potter stories is based on their solid foundation in classical traditions that are fundamental to Western literature. Compares Harry to Odysseus and King Arthur in their heroic battles against the forces of evil. Also retells the story of the Philosopher's Stone and its relationship to the magic and wizardry of Hogwart's. Bringing Harry's story into the real world, finds remarkable correspondences between Hogwart's School and the Gordonstoun School in Scotland. Also reveals the details of Rowling's childhood and environment that fueled the setting and characters of the Harry Potter stories.

Learning Objectives: Students will:

Understand that all stories are a part of a literary tradition.

Understand that mythology and folklore provide themes for contemporary literature.

Understand that authors are influenced by their environment and life experiences.

Distinguish between reality and fantasy in fictional worlds.

Vocabulary:

literature, mythology, hero's journey, quest, hero's challenge, hero's quest, fantasy, reality, vaults, suburban, cauldron, apothecary, herbalist, poltergeist, interact, ancient battlements, medieval, pitch (playing field), arch-enemy, draconian, spirited, alchemy, alchemist, Philosopher's Stone, Sorcerer's Stone, sorcerer, sorcery, lore, inspiration, forces of darkness, wizards, potion, jilted, dark arts, classical themes, constellations, holy grail, immortal life

Pre-Viewing Discussion:

How many of you have read the Harry Potter stories? Did you like them? Why or why not?

What kind of a school does Harry attend? Describe the school building. Are there buildings like that where you live? Are there real buildings like that anywhere in the world?

Is there any real basis for the train station and trains described in the J.K. Rowling's books?

Are the Harry Potter books totally fictional or are there some parts that are believable?

How would we classify the Harry Potter books? What type of literature are they?

Post-Viewing Discussion:

How did J.K. Rowling's childhood influence details of the Harry Potter stories?

How did her environment influence the stories?

What aspects of the Harry Potter stories indicate that J.K. Rowling is an avid reader?

How did stories of the Philosopher's Stone influence the Harry Potter stories? What other literary themes and characters influenced the Harry Potter stories?

Do you think that the Gordonstoun School was the basis for Hogwart's School? Why or why not?

Has this video production helped you understand the popularity of the Harry Potter stories? What insights has it provided?

Further Activities:

In an effort to separate fact from fiction, investigate the biography of Nicholas Flamel.

Discover if there was a real King Arthur or a real Odysseus.

Find out all you can about the Gordonstoun School, former students of the school, and their present occupations.

Discover other popular novels that have a strong basis in legends of the Holy Grail.

Compare the story of Alice in Wonderland to the story of Harry Potter. How are Alice and Harry similar? How are they different? Are the themes of Alice in Wonderland, similar or different from the themes of Harry Potter?

Related New Dimension Media Titles:

From an Eagle's Nest
Creative Reading and Writing with Roald Dahl (series)
Ancient Greece, Revised