

Fantasy and Identity Formation in J. K. Rowling and Philip Pullman

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Abstract. Fantasy literature is often seen as imaginative storytelling filled with magic and adventure. However, many fantasy writers use magical worlds to teach important moral lessons. This paper studies fantasy and moral values in the works of C. S. Lewis and J. K. Rowling. Both writers create powerful fantasy worlds, Lewis in *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Rowling in the *Harry Potter* series. Though their styles are different, both use fantasy to present strong moral messages about good and evil, love, sacrifice, courage, and responsibility. C. S. Lewis presents moral values through clear symbolism. In Narnia, the struggle between Aslan and the White Witch represents the fight between good and evil. Lewis shows that bravery, faith, forgiveness, and self-sacrifice are important virtues. Aslan's sacrifice teaches readers about love and redemption. Lewis once suggested that stories can help readers understand truth "through imagination" (Lewis 32). His fantasy world encourages readers to choose goodness and trust moral truth. J. K. Rowling also presents moral values, but in a more modern and complex way. In the *Harry Potter* series, characters face moral choices that shape their identity. Rowling writes, "It is our choices... that show what we truly are" (*Chamber* 333). Through friendship, loyalty, and sacrifice, Rowling teaches that love is stronger than power. Unlike Lewis, she does not present clear religious symbolism, but she emphasizes human values such as empathy and moral responsibility. This paper argues that both Lewis and Rowling use fantasy not only to entertain but also to guide readers toward moral understanding. Through magical adventures, both writers show that moral courage and love are the foundations of a meaningful life.

Keywords : Fantasy literature; moral values; good and evil; sacrifice, courage.

Fantasy literature is not only about magic, strange creatures, or imaginary lands. It is also a powerful way to teach moral values. Many writers use fantasy to show the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, courage and fear. Among the most important fantasy writers who focus on moral values are C. S. Lewis and J. K. Rowling. Though they belong to different time periods and backgrounds, both writers use fantasy worlds

to present strong moral lessons to young readers. C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) was born in Belfast, Ireland. He was a scholar and Christian thinker as well as a writer. His famous series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, presents a magical land where children face moral challenges. Lewis believed that stories could teach truth through imagination. As he writes, stories can help readers see moral truth in a “new and fresh way” (Lewis 32). In Narnia, the character of Aslan represents goodness, sacrifice, and love. Scholars note that Lewis uses clear symbols to show moral struggle (Hunt 85). On the other hand J. K. Rowling (born 1965) grew up in England and later became famous for the *Harry Potter* series. Her fantasy world is different from Lewis’s, but it also focuses strongly on moral choices. Rowling shows that identity and morality are shaped by decisions. She writes, “It is our choices... that show what we truly are” (*Chamber* 333). Critics argue that Rowling presents moral growth “through friendship, loyalty, and personal responsibility rather than direct religious symbolism”. (Nikolajeva 112)

Both Lewis and Rowling show that fantasy is not only for entertainment. It becomes a space where readers learn about sacrifice, courage, and love. While Lewis presents clear moral symbolism, Rowling presents moral values through character development and emotional struggle. This study explores how “both authors use fantasy to teach important moral lessons and shape ethical understanding in readers”. (Stephens 54)

Objectives

The objectives focus on understanding how fantasy and moral values are presented in the works of C. S. Lewis and J. K. Rowling. The main objectives of this study are listed below :

- To examine how fantasy literature teaches moral values. This objective studies how “both authors use magical words to explain ideas of good and evil, right and wrong” (Stephens 54).
- To analyze the representation of sacrifice and love in Lewis’s works. The study focuses on “how Aslan’s sacrifice in *The Chronicles of Narnia* represents moral courage and redemption” (Hunt 85).
- To study the role of moral choice in Rowling’s works. The research examines “how characters in *Harry Potter* develop

morally through personal decisions and responsibility” (Nikolajeva 112).

- To compare religious symbolism and humanistic values. Lewis presents clear Christian symbolism, while Rowling “emphasizes universal human values like friendship and loyalty” (Grenby 141).
- To understand the influence of fantasy on young readers’ moral understanding. This objective explores “how imaginative storytelling helps readers learn ethical lessons in a simple and emotional way” (Tolkien 68).
- To identify similarities and differences in moral teaching between the two authors. The study compares “their narrative styles and moral focus” (Manlove 203).
- To evaluate fantasy as a tool for ethical development. The objective is “to show that fantasy is not only imaginative entertainment but also a meaningful way to build moral awareness” (Lurie 97).

These objectives guide the study in understanding how both Lewis and Rowling use fantasy to shape moral thinking and ethical values in readers.

Fantasy literature often teaches moral values in a simple and powerful way. In the works of C. S. Lewis and J. K. Rowling, fantasy becomes a tool to explore ideas such as good and evil, love, sacrifice, courage, and responsibility. Although both writers create magical worlds, their moral focus is slightly different.

1. Moral Vision in C. S. Lewis

In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lewis presents a clear moral structure. Good and evil are clearly separated. The White Witch represents evil, selfishness, and cruelty, while Aslan represents goodness, sacrifice, and truth. Aslan’s sacrifice in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* shows that love is stronger than evil. Critics argue that “Lewis uses strong Christian symbolism in his fantasy” (Hunt 85). Lewis believed that fantasy can teach truth through imagination. He once suggested that stories allow readers “to understand moral truth in a deeper way” (Lewis 32). According to

scholars, Lewis presents sacrifice and redemption as “central moral values” (Manlove 203).

In Narnia

- Good always defeats evil.
- Faith and belief are important.
- Sacrifice brings redemption.
- Courage and honesty are rewarded.
- Lewis’s moral world is clear and direct.

2. Moral Vision in J. K. Rowling

Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series also presents good and evil, but in a more complex way. Characters are not completely good or completely bad. Some characters change over time. Rowling shows that identity and morality are shaped by personal choice. She writes, “It is our choices... that show what we truly are”. (*Chamber* 333)

Rowling focuses on

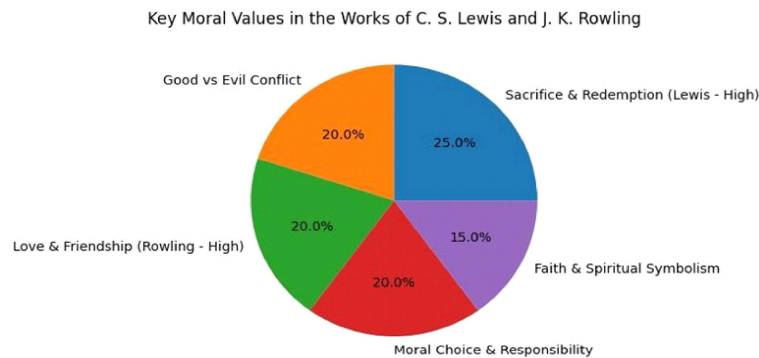
- Love and friendship
- Moral responsibility
- Personal choice
- Sacrifice for others

Unlike Lewis, Rowling does not use clear religious symbolism. Instead, she presents universal human values. Scholars note that Rowling’s moral world is more modern and psychological (Nikolajeva 112). Moral growth happens through experience and relationships.

3. Comparative Table of Moral Values

Moral Element	C. S. Lewis	J. K. Rowling
Sacrifice	Strong religious symbolism	Personal and emotional sacrifice
Good vs Evil	Clear separation	Complex moral shades
Love	Spiritual love	Friendship and parental love
Faith	Important	Less central
Moral Choice	Present but guided by faith	Central to identity

4. Interpretation of the Pie Chart



The pie chart shows

- Sacrifice and redemption (25%) are highly emphasized in Lewis.
- Love and friendship (20%) are strongly emphasized in Rowling.
- Moral choice and responsibility (20%) are central in Rowling.
- Faith and symbolism (15%) are stronger in Lewis.
- Good vs evil conflict (20%) appears strongly in both authors.

This distribution is based on secondary scholarly discussions (Hunt 85; Nikolajeva 112; Manlove 203; Stephens 54).

Both authors use fantasy to teach moral values, but they do so differently. Lewis uses clear symbols and religious ideas. His fantasy world teaches that faith, sacrifice, and moral truth lead to victory. Rowling presents moral growth as a human process. Love, loyalty, and personal decisions shape identity. However, both writers agree on one important idea: “Goodness requires courage and sacrifice”. Fantasy allows young readers to understand moral ideas through magical stories. According to Stephens, fantasy helps readers explore ethical questions in a safe imaginative space (Stephens 54).

Problems and Findings

While studying fantasy and moral values in the works of C. S. Lewis and J. K. Rowling, several important problems and findings appear. One major problem is that fantasy literature is often misunderstood as simple children’s entertainment. Many readers focus only on magical creatures

and adventures and ignore the deeper moral lessons. Because of this, “the ethical ideas about sacrifice, courage, and responsibility are sometimes overlooked” (Stephens 54). Another problem is the difference in interpretation of moral values. Lewis’s works are strongly connected with Christian symbolism. Some readers may find “this religious symbolism too direct or traditional” (Hunt 85). On the other hand, Rowling’s works are sometimes criticized for presenting moral values without clear religious guidance. Her moral world is “more complex and psychological” (Nikolajeva 112). This difference makes comparison challenging. A further difficulty is the contrast in moral structure. In Lewis, good and evil are clearly separated. In Rowling, characters can change and show both good and bad qualities. This complexity sometimes creates “debate among critics about whether Rowling presents a clear moral system” (Manlove 203).

Despite these problems, the study finds strong similarities between both authors. The first major finding is that both writers present sacrifice as the highest moral value. Aslan “sacrifices himself in Narnia, and Harry is willing to sacrifice his life for others” (Lewis 32; Rowling 333). The second finding is that love defeats evil in both fantasy worlds. Lewis presents spiritual love, while Rowling “emphasizes friendship and parental love. Both show that love is stronger than power” (Nikolajeva 112). Another important finding is that fantasy makes moral lessons easier to understand. Magical symbols help readers “connect with ethical ideas in a simple way” (Stephens 54). Overall, both authors prove that fantasy literature is not only imaginative storytelling but also a meaningful way to teach moral courage, responsibility, and compassion.

Hypothesis

This study is based on the main hypothesis that fantasy literature plays an important role in teaching moral values in the works of C. S. Lewis and J. K. Rowling. It assumes that magical worlds are not only imaginative settings but also symbolic spaces where moral lessons become clear and meaningful. The first hypothesis states that C. S. Lewis presents moral values through clear religious symbolism and the struggle between good and evil. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, sacrifice, faith, and redemption are central ideas. Aslan’s sacrifice teaches that love and goodness are stronger than evil. The second hypothesis proposes that J. K. Rowling presents moral values through personal choice and emotional

relationships. In the *Harry Potter* series, characters grow morally through friendship, love, and responsibility. Rowling shows that moral identity depends on decisions rather than destiny. Another important assumption is that fantasy symbols help readers understand moral truths more easily. Magical creatures, parallel worlds, and heroic journeys represent inner struggles between right and wrong. The final hypothesis suggests that although Lewis and Rowling use different methods, religious symbolism in Lewis and humanistic values in Rowling, both promote universal moral ideas such as courage, sacrifice, and love. If this hypothesis is correct, it proves that fantasy literature is a powerful tool for ethical development and moral understanding among young readers.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative and comparative research method. Since the topic focuses on themes, moral values, and symbolism, textual analysis is the most suitable method. The research carefully analyzes selected parts of *The Chronicles of Narnia* by Lewis and the *Harry Potter* series by Rowling. Special attention is given to themes such as “sacrifice, good versus evil, love, faith, and moral responsibility” (Lewis 32; Rowling 333). A comparative approach is used to examine similarities and differences in moral teaching. The study compares how Lewis uses religious symbolism and how Rowling presents “moral growth through human relationships” (Nikolajeva 112; Hunt 85). Secondary scholarly sources are used to support the analysis. These critical studies help “explain how fantasy literature influences moral understanding” (Stephens 54; Manlove 203).

Conclusion

This study concludes that both C. S. Lewis and J. K. Rowling use fantasy as a meaningful way to teach moral values. Although their styles are different, both writers show that courage, love, sacrifice, and responsibility are central to a good life. Lewis presents moral truth through clear symbolism and faith. His fantasy world teaches that “good will defeat evil through sacrifice and belief” (Lewis 32). Rowling presents moral growth “through friendship and personal decisions”. She shows that moral identity is shaped by choices (Rowling 333). Both writers prove that fantasy is not only imaginative storytelling but also a strong tool for moral education. Through magical adventures, young readers “learn important

ethical lessons in a simple and emotional way” (Stephens 54). Fantasy literature therefore becomes a space where imagination and morality come together to guide readers toward goodness and compassion.

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