

The Last Chapter

Book Seven: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*

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There are many good things to say about the seventh Harry Potter book. It ties up many of the loose ends quite nicely. We find out about Snape; we see satisfying reconciliations between several characters. There are two weddings (one has happened between books six and seven), and a baby is born. There is uncertainty, knowledge is gained, friends are reunited, and Harry matures.

The trio of Harry, Ron, and Hermione had new mysteries to solve. What are the Deathly Hallows, and should they try to find them? Where are the last few Horcruxes?

Other things that were either treated very lightly, or not at all, leaving some of the mystery forever unsolved — unless author J.K. Rowling talks about this someday. Was Dumbledore's death a "suicide" of sorts? Whatever happened to Dolores Umbridge? Rita Skeeter? Why is Snape thought of as "brave"? What is Harry's or Ron's future job?

Why, when Harry finally faces Voldemort, do they both just fall down, neither appearing to be injured? If some curses are unforgivable and would send a person straight to Azkaban, how come so many do it, and don't get sent there?

Even with those unanswered questions, though, the main things that ought to have happened in the final book happened. Harry defeats Voldemort. Harry decides he must sacrifice himself so that the world will be rid of the evil Lord Voldemort, and prepares to face his own death. Once more, his mother's blood — and the love that he now feels for Ginny — save him from the killing curse. It only knocks him down, but doesn't kill him.

Harry wins. Dumbledore's Army wins. The Order of the Phoenix wins. The good guys win. Most of the bad guys are dead; those left are rounded up and imprisoned. A fairytale ending.

If we try to look at *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* as a Christian tale, I think it works well in many ways, if not perfectly. The things that do succeed work better than in most stories. Harry is imperfect, but grows in character throughout the series and ends up able to face his own death bravely, like a martyr, dying to save those left fighting for him.

Below are some moments in Book Seven that I thought were important. If you haven't yet read the book, you may want to wait to read this next part.

Life After Death: The Soul Lives On

Throughout the series, the idea of an afterlife is discussed among the characters. This idea is again discussed in *Deathly Hallows*.

Hermione hurried on, “Look, if I picked up a sword right now, Ron, and ran you through with it, I wouldn’t damage your soul at all.”

DH, p. 104

Importance of Parents

The importance of parents and adults in the Harry Potter world is one I’ve liked throughout the series. In many children’s books, parents and adults are caricatured or minimized; children must solve all their own problems and are weak if they seek help from an adult. This is not the case in the Potter books, a fact which I’ve always liked.

“Parents,” said Harry, “shouldn’t leave their kids...”

DH, p. 215

What’s especially great about this quote is that the child under discussion is only a few months old and still in the womb.

Christian Symbolism

Throughout the Harry Potter books are numerous Christian symbols. This book is no exception; in fact, the symbols seem even more obvious. The cross, the Resurrection Stone, the Sword of Gryffindor — often seen as a cross-shaped object — Harry and Ron’s “baptism” in the water leading to Ron saving Harry, and their recovery of the “cross.”

After burying the remains of Mad-Eye Moody, Harry “marked the spot by gouging a small cross in the bark with his wand.” Now, if they were true Wiccans, wouldn’t he have gouged a pentagram?

When Harry finally has the chance to face Voldemort (Tom Riddle) and possibly kill him, Harry pauses and offers Voldemort a chance, saying, “Show some remorse.”

“But before you try to kill me, I’d advise you to think about what you’ve done...

Think, and try for some remorse, Riddle...”

“It’s your one last chance,” said Harry, “it’s all you’ve got left...I’ve seen what you’ll be otherwise...Be a man...try...Try for some remorse...”

DH, p. 741

Giving a person a chance to redeem themselves, to begin to realize your own sins, by showing remorse, shows a Christian theme to the story.

On Christmas Eve, Harry and Hermione hear Christmas Carols being sung at a church, which has a graveyard — the place where Harry’s parents are buried. In the same graveyard, Dumbledore’s mother and his sister are buried, and the tombstone bears this epitaph: *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also* (Matthew 6:21 and Luke 12:34). And, on James and Lily Potter’s

tombstone, we see: *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death* (1 Corinthians 15:26).

The Resurrection Stone is curiously named. Where else but in Christian literature do you hear the word *resurrection*?

Harry is named a baby's godfather. Who else but Christians have godfathers?

Places Where I Cried

Harry visits his childhood home, now preserved as a memorial. The house still stands as a ruin, with a plaque in front of it telling what happened the night Harry's parents died. On the wooden plaque, surrounding the words of the inscription, is magical graffiti, words of encouragement for Harry: "Good Luck, Harry, wherever you are." "If you read this, Harry, we're behind you!" "Long Live Harry Potter." This bit of the book was so touching and encouraging that I actually misted up when I read it.

Another touching moment is at Dobby's funeral. Dobby had died to save Harry and his friends' lives. Harry spends time manually shoveling out a simple grave, thinking that every drop of sweat and every blister is a "gift to the elf who had saved their lives." Luna's simple eulogy is sweet and to the point, even suggesting an afterlife: "I hope you're happy now."

The Politician's Personally-Opposed-to-but-Privately-Pro-Life View

Harry, Ron, and Hermione visit Luna's father, Xenophilius Lovegood, who runs a magazine which had been supportive of Harry Potter in the past, telling its readers to help Harry if they could. However, when Harry asks directly for help, Mr. Lovegood says that helping him would be dangerous.

"Aren't you the one who keeps telling everyone it's their first duty to help Harry?" said Ron. "In that magazine of yours?"

Xenophilius glanced behind him at the concealed printing press, still banging and clattering beneath the tablecloth.

"Er — yes, I have expressed that view. However —"

"That's for everyone else to do, not you personally?" said Ron.

DH, p. 402

Chestertonian Moment

"He (Dumbledore) knew what he was doing when he gave me the Deluminator, didn't he? He — well," Ron's ears turned bright red and he became engrossed in a tuft of grass at his feet, which he prodded with his toe, "he must've known I'd run out on you."

"No," Harry corrected him. "He must've known you'd always want to come back."

DH, p. 391

Harry's Temptation

“Save Yourself”

Aberforth Dumbledore, Albus's brother, tells Harry that there's time to escape, to save himself and his friends. Harry is not going to give in to this, though.

“Because,” said Harry before Hermione could answer, “sometimes you've *got* to think about more than your own safety! Sometimes you've *got* to think about the greater good!”

DH, p. 568

If Only One Person Stands Up for What's Right, There Still is Hope

Neville stands up in class for what is right and gets punished.

“The thing is, it helps when people stand up to them, it gives everyone hope. I used to notice that when you did it, Harry.”

DH, p. 574

Reconciliations

This book is full of reconciliations and forgiveness. There are dark and dangerous events going on; yet, on the side of good, the characters fight amongst each other, then turn, realize that they need to stand strong and fight as one, and reconcile.

Control of the Mind

During several of the books, we realize that there is an unnatural open connection between Harry and Voldemort's minds. This fact causes Harry to become curious as to what Voldemort is doing. When Voldemort finds out Harry knows in the fifth book, *Order of the Phoenix*, Voldemort uses that knowledge to bring Harry into a dangerous situation that ultimately results in Harry's godfather's death.

Harry has never learned to close his mind to this connection. In book seven, we see that once more, Harry is seeing what Voldemort sees. Hermione warns Harry to close his mind, to work at it. At first, Harry just gives in, saying he's just never been able to do it. Later on in the story, he works hard at it and finally does succeed at closing his mind to the evil Lord Voldemort. This mastery of the will over his circumstances shows Harry's growth of character.

Friendships

In many ways, the friendship between Harry, Ron, and Hermione is the strongest in book seven. They must rely more upon each other in this book, as they are so often alone together. They work together, not perfectly, but they do collaborate in trying to figure out how to eventually defeat Voldemort. When they argue and separate, they become weaker and lose track of their goal; when they reconcile with each other, they become stronger.

Age Suggestion for *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*

Now that I've finished reading the seventh book, I feel even stronger about reserving these books for mature mid- to older teens. In particular, the seventh book contains a lot of intense fighting scenes, many, many deaths, and some intense imagery; several adults have already told me that they've been fearful of having bad dreams from reading this book.

And, once again, I recommend reading *Deathly Hallows* **with** your mature mid- to older teens. Stop along the way and discuss the actions and reactions of the characters. Be sure whenever a character is acting wrongly, to tell your children how you would have expected them to behave. Use the characters' examples to teach your children better ways to behave in times of trouble, when they may have to make difficult choices quickly.

One thing I particularly did not like was Rowling's use of the "replacement swear word" "effing". However, I was pleased to discover that neither of my sheltered, home-schooled children (ages twelve and fifteen) knew what this meant.

In particular, some scenes I would particularly want to discuss with my children are: the last scene between Molly Weasley and Bellatrix; the whole King's Cross chapter; the Godric's Hollow chapter; the discussion between the three friends about the soul; Hallows vs. Horcruxes; the Malfoy family and how they might be redeemed; the Elder Wand; and Dumbledore's death. This kind of thoughtful discussion will benefit both you and your children, as well as enriching the overall reading experience.