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Themes in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*

Harry Potter has been one of the most explosive literary happenings in my lifetime. Each book was greeted with long lines of eager fans waiting for its release and each book was quickly made into a block-buster movie hit. One thing that makes these books so great is how author J.K. Rowling reaches the hearts of her young readers with inspiring examples of characters who sacrifice so much for others. This theme of selflessness is exemplified especially in the characters of Severus Snape, Harry Potter, and Albus Dumbledore.

The first notable character who shows an extreme amount of self-sacrifice is Professor Severus Snape. It is revealed in the last book of the series how much he suffered in his lifetime and how he overcame and set aside his own desires to protect wizards and those in the wizarding world (especially Harry) from the evils of Voldemort. Under the direction of Dumbledore, Snape acts as a double-agent, an extremely dangerous thing to do when dealing with the most evil wizard ever known. Snape outlines the sacrifices he has made when talking with Dumbledore: “I have spied for you and lied for you, put myself in mortal danger for you. Everything was supposed to keep Lily Potter's son safe” (300). Snape ultimately dies while fighting to protect those he knows are good. The most inspiring part of his sacrifice is that it is mostly done in secret and amidst much hatred and criticism from even those he is trying to protect.

The second major character who displays immense selflessness is Harry Potter himself. Although his selflessness is something that he learns throughout the course of the series, he still ultimately puts himself second. Harry makes significant sacrifices for the good even as an infant when his parents are killed by Voldemort. For most of his young life he is tormented—he is unable to rest, his thoughts are invaded by Voldemort, his schooling is disrupted, and he suffers much physical and emotional pain while fighting against the Dark Lord. Others die for him in the struggle and Harry constantly wrestles with the temptation to give up. In the end, Harry finally accepts that “he was not supposed to survive. His job was to walk calmly into Death's welcoming arms. Along the way, he was to dispose of Voldemort's remaining links to life, so that when at last he flung himself across Voldemort's path, and did not raise a wand to defend himself, the end would be clean…Neither would live, neither would survive” (p. 401). Harry ultimately grows into a willingness to give up all his hopes and dreams to rid the world of the evil found in The Dark Lord.

The final major character who makes the ultimate sacrifice is Albus Dumbledore. He shows immense self-restraint in the face of criticism from the Ministry, the wizarding press, the student body, and ultimately Voldemort himself. In order to keep Severus Snape an effective spy, Dumbledore orders Severus to kill him so that the cause of good may fight on. He sacrifices his own life and his position as Headmaster at Hogwarts to fight the good fight.

In conclusion, the *Harry Potter* series is so inspiriting because of the three main characters, Severus Snape, Harry Potter, and Albus Dumbledore who exhibit incredible sacrifice in the face of immense danger. These books are a cultural phenomenon and can teach young readers valuable lessons. If you haven’t read them, make it a goal of yours and you will not be disappointed.