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Dr. Warner

English 112B

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Unit of Study: Magic in Fantasy

"Hey Jordan, Harry Potter has been banned at your school so you can't take your books in to read any more." Even as a child I never understood the reasoning behind banning Harry Potter. The thought process that we would all become evil confused me back then and now some ten plus years later it just amuses me. Magic is not real. It is fictional and much like any other tool of fiction it is used to drive the story along. Whether it is featured in the forefront as a works central theme as it is in books such as *Harry Potter* and *The Dresden Files* or taking a more background role as it does in *Macbeth*, magic is not an evil force out to corrupt the readers minds, but a force with no will of its own and it is the user who gives said magic the light or dark properties that we would define as good or evil.

This unit will attempt to put to rest the fears of magic as a corrupting influence. By examining the behavior of the people who wield it in the works presented in the unit I will put forth the hypothesis that it is not magic that is evil but that the source of that evil is the being behind the magic. Magic is the tool by which the will is carried out. As with any other instrument it is the user who gives intent.

The centerpiece of this unit will be *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, a series of books that everyone should have at least heard of in these modern times. This is due to *Harry Potter* having so many examples of the different kinds of magic. Being solely dedicated to magic and magicians *Harry Potter* was the obvious choice. The reason for the specific choosing of the

fourth book is that it has a plethora of examples of magic being used on all sides of the good and evil spectrum. Further study will include a look at the many different users of magic in the provided source list.

Centerpiece work:

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire by J.K. Rowling

Extended list of works:

Storm Front by Jim Butcher

The Magician's Nephew by C.S. Lewis

Eragon by Christopher Paolini

The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien

Parts of *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare

Launching the Unit

This class will be centered around discussion and the student's opinions matter as such the first activity will be centered around getting the students used to discussion by letting them express what they already know. The first in class assignment will be a write up uses of magic in pop culture. Students will write both the magic itself and what media where it is located. A teacher led discussion will follow where I will give the example of magic in the tabletop game of Dungeons and Dragons. The students will then one by one list one (or more if they have more examples) and we will discuss each piece as a class. The students will begin to read *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*.

Also during this introduction period the students will be introduced to intention behind magic. This is so that while the students read they may begin to separate the **uses** of magic into the categories of good or law abiding and evil or law breaking.

Continuing the Unit

Throughout the unit the class will take on the main theme of magic as a tool rather than an force for either side of good versus evil. Every class period will start with writing about the use of magic in their readings and they will classify which side they believe that use lands on and they will give explanation as to why they believe this.

Lectures will include:

I. Corruption of People

- A. Power corrupts people
- B. Magic is a power
- C. Magic can corrupt people

II. Avada Kedavra Lecture

- A. The singular found use causes death on contact
- B. Does knowing how to cast it make people evil?
- C. Is it truly evil or has social law called it evil for it has set forth that murder is evil and the spell's one use is for killing.

III. C.S. Lewis Paradox

- A. The Bible states all magic is evil
- B. C. S. Lewis wrote many Christian books that have magic being used by both good and evil characters

IV. Magic as a Responsibility

- A. Magic is a big responsibility for the magically inclined characters
- B. Misuses of magic cause terrible incidents ranging from death to total annihilation
- C. Overuse can weaken or even kill the character using magic. Learn your limits.
- D. Eragon

Assignments will take the form of essays. Essay one will involve taking the magic out of a story. Basically it is a plot rewrite, where the students will replace magic with another form of power, perhaps science. These essays will serve to show students that magic can be interchangeable and serves as a plot point rather than a crux that the stories cannot live without.

The second assignment will be a short fiction piece where the students will incorporate magic into a short story they write. This essay may end up as extra credit.

The third assignment is a character analysis of one of the magicians in any of the stories the students have read. This essay will serve to uncover the reasons behind that specific characters use of magic, his intentions. This essay should let the students see that it is the

characters will that drives the magic rather than the magic having a will of its own and therefore having an alignment of its own.

Wrapping up the Unit

Each student will give a five to ten minute explanation on their (changed?) views of magic and its use in literature. Students will not be graded on viewpoint but their ability to back up their viewpoint using in class and possibly out of class sources.

Students will be given a list of further readings as well.

Readings include:

Chronicles of Narnia by C. S. Lewis

Conan the Barbarian by Robert E. Howard

Lord of the Rings by J. R. R. Tolkien

Game of Thrones by George R. R. Martin

Works Cited

- Butcher, Jim. *Storm Front*. New York: ROC, 2000. Print.
- Howard, Robert E. *Conan the Barbarian*. New York: Del Rey/Ballantine, 2011. Print.
- Lewis, C. S., and Pauline Baynes. *The Chronicles of Narnia*. New York: HarperEntertainment, 2005. Print.
- Lewis, C. S., and Pauline Baynes. *The Magician's Nephew*. New York: HarperCollins, 1994. Print.
- Martin, George R. R. *Game of Thrones*. London, UK: HarperCollins, 2011. Print.
- Paolini, Christopher. *Eragon*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003. Print.
- Rowling, J. K., and Mary GrandPré. *Harry Potter #4: Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. New York, NY: Scholastic, 2002. Print.
- Shakespeare, William, and A. R. Braunmuller. *Macbeth*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Print.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Hobbit, Or, There and Back Again*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996. Print.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986. Print.



MAGIC

Fantasy's Staple Controversy

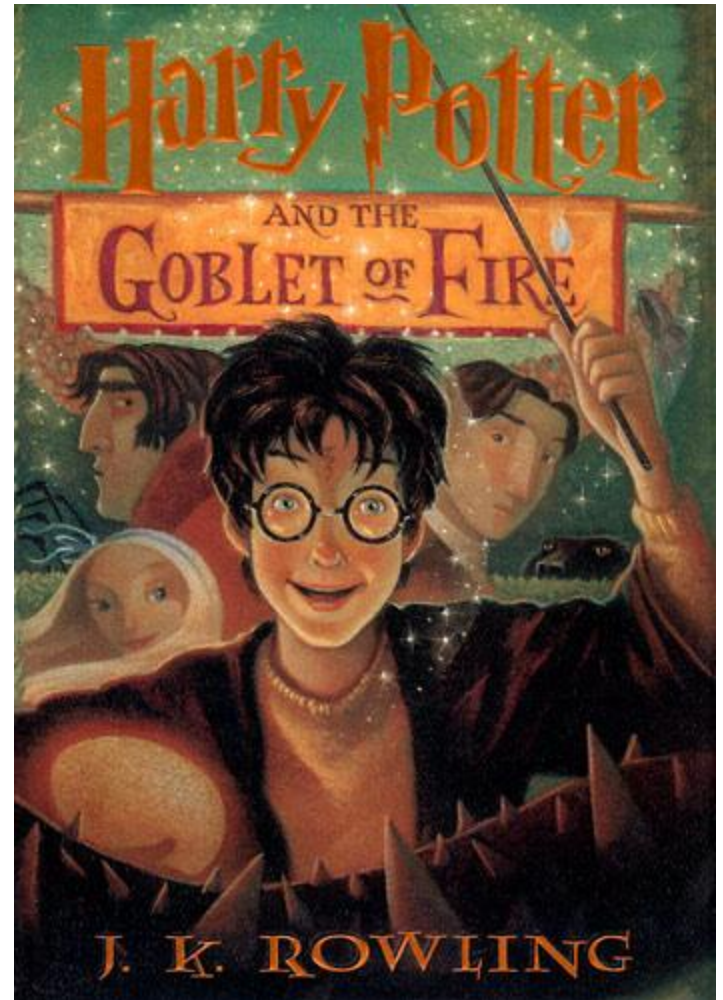
LAUNCH

- Have students write up where they have seen magic used in stories or other parts of pop culture (e.g. T.V., movies, ect)
- Discussion of written examples.



LAUNCH TEXT

- *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*
- Harry's fourth year, covers many uses of magic by both good and evil characters.



UNIT EXTENSION



ERAGON

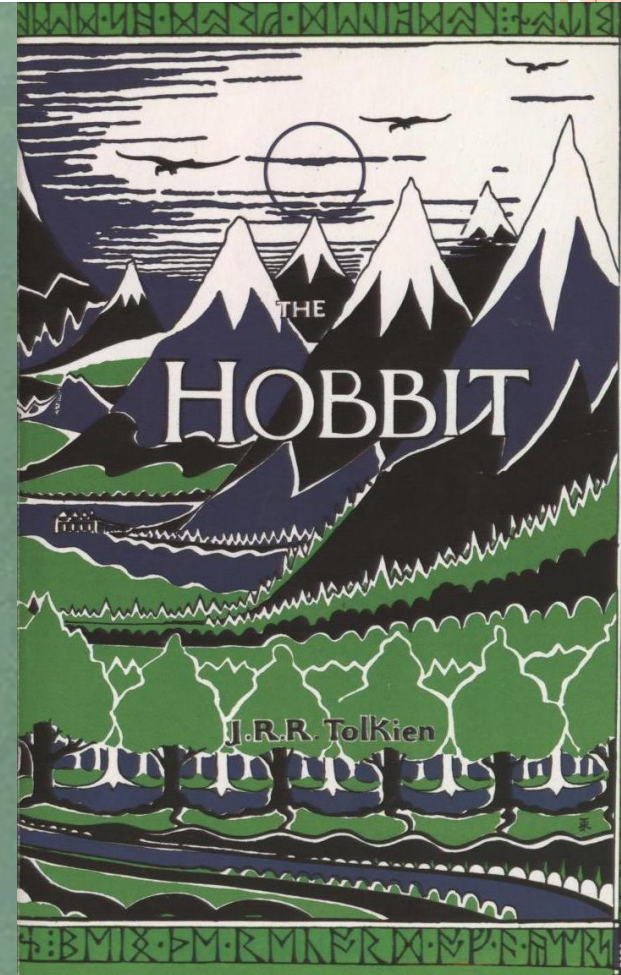
Christopher Paolini

THE MAGICIAN'S
NEPHEW



A Story for Children by

C. S. LEWIS



http://www.coverwhiz.com/content/Eragon_novel.jpg
[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/d/df/TheMagiciansNephew\(1stEd\).jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/d/df/TheMagiciansNephew(1stEd).jpg)
<http://momentumbooks.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/The-Hobbit-book-cover-2.jpg>

MAGIC AS A CORRUPTING INFLUENCE

- Magic grants power.
- There are individuals who would abuse power to gain status.
- Absolute power corrupts absolutely.



UNFORGIVABLE DEBATE

- Three “Unforgivable Curses”
- Is the Avada Kedavra curse inherently evil or has the only known use for it cause it to be labeled as such?



C.S. LEWIS PARADOX

- Christian morals
- Interspersed uses of magic
- Discussion: The balancing act of magic versus Biblical refutation of all magic.



ASSIGNMENTS

- Magic without magic: Rewrite parts of a story so that they have no magic.
- Fictional piece: Write a short story featuring magic.
- Character Analysis piece: Analyze the motives of one of the magic using characters.

