Bachelor’s Essay

*Harry Potter* and the Battle against Racism in EFL classrooms:

*A study of how racism is portrayed in *Harry Potter* and the *Chamber of Secrets* - novel and movie, with a CRT perspective in pedagogical settings.*

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**Semester:** Spring 2017  
**Subject:** English Literature  
**Level:** Bachelor’s  
**Course Code:** 2ENÄ2E
Abstract

This essay’s aim is to investigate how Rowling uses her novel *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* to criticize racism in her magical world and ours. A secondary aim concerns how Rowling’s critical stance creates ways to resist racism for readers in the EFL classroom. Therefore, a comparison from a Critical Race Theory (CRT) perspective is made with focus on certain sequence comparisons between the novel and the film. Teachers need to highlight problems like racism in classrooms and fantasy novels and movies are exceptional tools to raise awareness and teach critical thinking to students.

Keywords

Racism, critical race theory, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, upper secondary school students, reader response, defamiliarization, EFL.

Thanks

To everyone who has helped me during this trying time by proofreading, motivating and stood up to my never-ending whining!
1. Introduction

“Alohomora”! For wizards and Muggleborns who study at Hogwarts this is a spell which unlocks doors for the caster. This paper aims to work as that spell and unlock one of the most important themes in the *Harry Potter* universe, namely the theme of racism. The magic world of *Harry Potter* invites the reader to a school of witchcraft, wizardry and magical creatures in England. This magical world is home to purebloods, wizards who have wizard parents and Mudbloods, a Muggleborn, which is a person with non-magic parents who has magical powers, and lastly the often-forgotten group, Squibs, persons born into a wizarding family who possess no magical powers. This is something that is very shameful for the affected parties. It is almost on par with being a Muggle in the wizarding world.

*Harry Potter* is one of the most famous fantasy book series of all time. It is popular amongst all ages and has been targeted for a substantial amount of academic studies. Some aspects are white supremacy problems in relation to class and gender (Alkestrand 256-7) or the character Harry Potter and how he is a hero but with moral flaws and that means that he is a normal teenager but encounters extraordinary circumstances and reacts in a psychologically credible manner. (Damour 7). Furthermore, mythology is central in fantasy novels and in *Harry Potter* many creatures and spells have a foundation in Roman and Greek mythology (Hallet 1-3). Another aspect close to mythology is religion and according to Feldt, religion is imbedded in all spells and plots (101-2).

This paper, however, will show this magic world from a new vantage point. This new view includes a base in education to discuss how teachers can integrate their teaching with *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. The thesis which will be analyzed in this essay is how the sequence comparisons vary between J.K Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* novel and the Hollywood film and how teachers can use those differences to discuss racism in their classrooms. Because of how renowned the series is, it offers a particularly
useful basis for discussions of racism with students. Students should learn to be critical and open-minded when reading fantasy since it contains many important issues from reality.

The Syllabus for English highlights the importance of learning about different countries and cultures for students (Natl. Agency f. Ed. “Syllabus” 1). In this case, the second *Harry Potter* novel is a beneficial example of showing how societies are mirrored through a fantasy novel. We are currently experiencing wars, immigration and hostile environments so schools need to let students reflect on these issues so that segregation can be prevented in the future. This way, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* helps the teacher “de-teach” racism because of its contemporary fantasy setting which students can relate to. In this paper, I will argue that *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* is an excellent choice for these reflections because of the relevant parallels which can be drawn between the novel and our time.

This paper will present the battle against racism in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and analyze how it is portrayed differently in the novel and film version. A comparison between fantasy and reality will take place because of the many parallels between the two. I also explain how this comparison can be fruitfully adapted to the upper secondary EFL classroom. When comparing the two worlds, it is important to show how racism is presented in the novel and film versions and relate this comparison to how it can be experienced in the real world. The authors of fantasy literature are often influenced by current social situations in society. However, it is not commonly known among students that fantasy literature is, often consciously, affected by the contemporary reality of its author, which contextualizes the reading experience for students (Sturm-Trigonakis chapter three). Students can gain knowledge from this exotic fantasy world and apply or compare it to relevant racial problems today (Alkestrand 256-7).
The reason why I chose *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, released in 1998 and the Hollywood production launched in 2002, is because racism is a central theme in these works (Alkestrand 256-7). Comparing the novel and movie is vital because the portrayals of the scenes vary greatly between them. The differences can make students become aware that nothing is right or wrong with the different portrayals, but that the discussion can create dynamic interpretations of the sequence comparisons.

Lastly, the purpose of this essay is two-sided. First, I present a sequence comparison between specifically chosen parallel scenes from the two works. Second, the comparison will be adapted for classrooms and teachers. In the next section I will present the theoretical framework and theories which will provide the foundation for the analyses and define key terms and concepts mentioned.
2. Theory

This section will present the theoretical framework for the essay, as preparation for the analyses and comparisons from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. My contribution to the field is grounded in Critical Race Theory, which is henceforth referred to as CRT. Everything mentioned below will be tied to the new CRT perspective for the EFL classroom and used to explain the sequence comparisons in the analyses below.

Cultural studies works as the framework for this paper since cultural studies is a broad and well researched field. It can be applied to both the literary analysis and the classroom adaptation for this essay because of its social and contextual ties. Cultural studies is a theoretical framework that helps to highlight how racism is present in society. To concretize the discussion of racism, I will apply CRT to the sequence comparisons from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. It is important to show how the CRT perspective can be adapted to school and classroom contexts to create a more diverse and accepting environment. By understanding different kinds of racisms and discussing the sequence comparisons in relation to racial problems today, CRT can be applied to a classroom:

To that end, critical race theory (CRT) has been a transformative conceptual, methodological, and theoretical construct that has assisted researchers in problematizing race in education. (Howard and Navarro 253)

Critical race theory is the theory used for this essay because, as mentioned in the quote, CRT helps people to highlight segregation issues in education, literature and society. It focuses specifically on racism and how it can take form in society and literature. Using CRT and cultural studies provides the starting point for the analyses of Rowling’s way of portraying racism. The sequence comparisons in the analyses give specific and concise examples of how Rowling’s novel and the Hollywood movie can be used to show the tragic reality of racism, no matter if it is at Hogwarts, in non-magical London or in a Swedish school.
Defamiliarization is a term commonly used in relation to fantasy literature and it describes the creation of a known “normal” situation in a new environment (Alkestrand 256-7). The reader can find some things being just as they are in reality, as well as finding new things which make the situation new and defamiliarized. One example can be the Hogwarts Express, a normal train but a train that takes the young witches and wizards to their new world. Defamiliarization means taking things generally known and making them different with magic and new worlds (Alkestrand 256-7). In this context, defamiliarization is a presentation of a primary (our own) world and a parallel (the unknown) world in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and creating contrasts between them (Bruns 352). However, the reader can feel uncomfortable with the new magic content and the defamiliarization in the novel. The teacher must show the similarities to reality by means of a defamiliarization approach in the sequence comparisons. It is important to let students experience and speak about these ties with reality. Also, their experiences of the novel and the comparisons to their reality matter since their perception of the fantasy world can aid them in understanding issues like racism in their own world (Das 341).

Novels are shaped by the society and time when they are written, according to Sturm-Trigonakis et al. They argue that even if the genre says fiction, the author will be influenced by their own reality and some of the experiences the author has lived through probably show in the work of the novel, one way or another (Sturm-Trigonakis et al. chapter three). Hernández (168) connects to this and speaks of a paradigm shift in critical race theory, from being more focused on the individual to a more contextualized person who is influenced by their surroundings. These two scholars argue for the same conclusion, and Hernández continues to analyze why people make their choices depending on how their society is shaped and how literature can show this in its own way. One example is how people make different choices depending on where and how they live. Highlighting this fact to students and
discussing how they are contextualized people, can help increase interest in fantasy (Hernández 168-9).

To relate more specifically to schools, there is the problem of discrepancies between groups and how it still is a regular problem. This includes both teachers and students (Howard and Navarro 253-4). Immigration is continuously increasing, and schools need to work consciously with integration in order to prevent this from becoming a greater problem than it is. Talking about CRT with the help of Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets and discussing it in the classroom may be one way to make racism decrease. Analyzing the sequence comparisons and applying CRT to them can help the class see how racism can occur and the consequences of it (Howard & Navarro 253-4).

When looking at such a complex problem as racism in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, many different interpretations can surface. Racism and its consequences have many faces. The reader must take two things in consideration when entering and exiting the fictional world of this novel:

Bridging the gap between the fictional world and ordinary living requires a double response from readers: (1) exploring ways to enact in their own lives elements of what they love in the imagined world, and (2) anticipating and evaluating the consequences of such enactments so that they can choose between healthy and unhealthy ones. (Bruns 351)

With this quote, Bruns motivates readers to be critical both toward their own world and the fictional world since the fantasy world has clear relations with reality. Therefore, reader response is crucial to take into consideration when choosing this novel (Bruns 351). The students’ reading experiences vary to some extent from individual to individual, and they could interpret the meaning of the novel differently. That is why it is important to discuss the
many different perspectives of racism in the sequence comparisons in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* with CRT to create the multicultural and inclusive classroom the teacher should strive for (Capper 791-2).

Hallett writes about the significance of language choices in the novel in her chapter “Conjuring Harry Potter into the canon intro”. Regarding language, Rowling weaves literary devices together in the novel and this paper can apply CRT to the language of the sequence comparisons to create another dimension of awareness. Consciousness of the language can unravel the discovery of several clues to what is going to happen in the story, with the names of the characters for example. This paper focuses on upper secondary school and older students are targeted. Older students can therefore be introduced to the more advanced literary and visual literacy analyses. The students can try to investigate why Rowling uses these features. They can analyze if they were affected by the names of characters or spells. They can also discuss if they understood what the names meant before they knew about Rowling’s intentions, which is a form of discussing reader responses and interpretations (Hallet 1-3). The Syllabus supports the deeper reading of novels by saying that students should be able to apply their skills by the: “Understanding of spoken and written English, and also the ability to interpret content.” (Natl. Agency f. Ed. “Syllabus” 2). This can beneficially be interpreted as practising and developing reading skills to reach the goal of interpreting the racism in the sequence comparisons.

Racism is often created from prejudices toward someone or something, and Patterson presents an article by Joanna Lipinska in her anthology *Harry Potter’s World Wide Influence:* “The xenophobic world of wizards: Why are they afraid of the other?” (Patterson 117) which focuses on prejudices. The article discusses the racist members of the wizards’ society, who are afraid of Muggles. Usually it is the other way around, that Muggles are afraid of magic people. Analyzing this twist shows how both sides can be as bad as the other, even though
they have such different dispositions. There were persecutions of witches and sometimes wizards during the Dark Ages and that was why the entire wizarding society eventually went into hiding. By using magic the wizards live hidden among Muggles. The problem is that they still have the old superstitions from the Dark Ages and do not give Muggles any credit for developing. Thus, they show that they are not better than their “subordinate” neighbors, Muggles (Patterson 117-19). Discussing this case of racism in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets can show students how there is always another side to a story. One side must be the first to take the first step towards acceptance and peace after conflicts. Rowling shows us how to do this by openly criticizing the hierarchy among wizards and the racism toward Muggles and “lower ranked” wizards. (Patterson 117-18). This aspect is the foundation for the sequence comparisons and CRT focus in those scenarios. The two works (novel and film) portray wizard’s racist views in different ways.

Showing the racism with CRT in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets is beneficial since Harry Potter is one of the most sold book series in the world. It is effective to discuss this subject with students because so many people have at least heard the title name and can easily get involved with the novels and films. Also, the characters are in the same age and attend school just as the students who read the novel, which can inspire identification with the fictional characters. In her anthology Reading Harry Potter again: New critical essays Anatol presents an article by Lisa Damour “Harry the Teenager: Muggle Themes in a Magical Adolescence”. Damour presents the reasons why the characters are relatable and why they feel real for specifically a younger audience. It is important to bring up because this element of identification can have considerable effects on the reader. The emotions and feelings of the characters are described from a from the point of view of youngsters. The adults are an authority for them and society is difficult to understand and adapt to (Damour 1-4). Students need to read about people like themselves to learn about their own struggles and development.
This can help teachers choose appropriate literature and explain why certain characters behave in a certain way and to explain issues like racism in both worlds (Anatol 2) and in the sequence comparisons. Using the wizarding world in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* as an example is beneficial. The wizarding world can easily be integrated into the reader’s world because of identification and knowledge of the previously mentioned defamiliarization. The students have their own world as a parallel to the wizarding world before starting to read:

The real world, then, becomes somewhat illuminated by these characters who can span both worlds. For example, teachers at Hogwarts can be imaginative and compassionate; they are also flighty, vindictive, dim-witted, indulgent, lazy, frightened and frightening. Students are clever, kind, weak, cruel, snobbish. Lessons are inspiring and tedious—as in the best and worst of real schools” (317). – Roni Natov from “Harry Potter and the Extraordinariness of the Ordinary” (Johnson 75)

This quote shows an important relation to *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. It explains why the identification and defamiliarization are important for understanding the messages and how they make the series easy to feel connected to (Johnson 75). Identification makes the analyses and sequence comparisons of racism and CRT more effective because of the relation to the wizarding world. To further comment on this there is another quote from Johnson, where she shows that Professor McGonagall’s wisely chosen pedagogy is working as motivation for her students:

’You cannot pass an O.W.L.’, said Professor McGonagall grimly, ‘without serious application, practice and study. I see no reasons why everybody in this class should not achieve an O.W.L. in Transfiguration as long as they put in the work.’ Neville made a sad disbelieving noise. ‘Yes, you too Longbottom,’ said Professor
McGonagall. ‘There is nothing wrong with your work except lack of confidence.’

(Johnson 88)

Johnson presents how the fictional teacher characters have a clear pedagogy and try to make their students achieve their goals, just as teachers do in our world and this creates a defamiliarization in a known school situation but in the magical school Hogwarts (88). If a teacher can do that with the discussion of racism in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, the students can achieve the goals for their reading of the novel and movie sequences.

The parallels and relations to *Harry Potter* can create stronger relations to the novel and movie but can simultaneously be problematic and create a sort of racism, considering how the stereotypes are visualized, especially in the movie (Crysel et al. 174). People take opposing opinions very seriously and this can create competition or bullying depending on how there are disagreements between people. One problem which has grown is extremism. Society needs to cling to fiction and *Harry Potter* has certainly become one medium for that because of the strong marketing (Brown 468-70, 474-5). It is important to be aware of this when using the novel and as a teacher not to speak about one’s own preferences, because that can create a rift between teachers and students. Teachers should also not accept students’ prejudices, if it is either the houses the students prefer or if they disrespect their peer because of different opinions. Being open is the major focus because being the opposite would spoil the entire purpose of discussing CRT and the sequence comparisons in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.

Because of its popularity, the *Harry Potter* phenomenon must be kept up-to-date. New ideas are created to keep up the interest even if the series of movies was completed in 2011. Another way of keeping it modern and relevant is sequels and prequels. One example of this is the film conversion of another of Rowling’s books; *Fantastic Beasts and Where to find them* (2009), which gives the entire series a new boom. The problem with doing this is that
the art of the text can disappear. The teacher therefore needs to use the novel and movie beyond the commercial hype by presenting the perspective of CRT and defamiliarization and by connecting that to the sequence comparisons. The article from Brown, “Marketing for Muggles: Harry Potter and the Retro Revolution”, is relevant because it discusses the controversy with marketing and hyping of popular phenomena today (Brown 466-7). There are valuable lessons for the students beyond the pure pleasure of reading and watching the series and escaping reality for a while. As mentioned above, the students can identify with the characters in the series since they are in a similar situation as the characters: growing up, going to school, experiencing their first love and so on. Having someone to connect to can enhance the interest in the novel and film. This can help the students express their thoughts and opinions through that character and experience the racist scenarios in the sequence comparisons from their point of view and reflect on it more actively (Wise 154-5).

When the reading is done and if the students like fantasy, some often feel disappointed in the real world when they have read the novels and wish that they could live in that reality (Bruns 352). The teacher can make that discussion productive if the students who like fantasy can give their opinion and the opposing students can argue for why the real world is better. Hopefully they can come to a compromise, a conclusion with many comparisons between the parallels and gain a new awareness of their realities and connections.

Alkestrand, a Swedish writer, has written an anthology about using specific fantasy novels in a school setting using *Harry Potter, Artemis Fowl* and *The Circle*. This is a clear example of how fantasy literature is becoming part of people’s everyday lives and the need for teaching it in a country’s native language has developed. She explains the wide variety of usages of these novels, from democracy to human rights and cultural diversity with a didactic defamiliarization framework. Schools should teach values to students (Natl Education
“Syllabus” 3) and it can be done with the suggestions put forth by Alkestrand (13). She quotes Langer’s work *Envisioning Literature* to begin her chapter about “Magical possibilities”:

Through literature, students learn to explore possibilities and consider options…

They gain connectedness and seek vision. They become the type of literate thinkers we need to shape discussions of tomorrow. (Langer 1 qtd. in Alkestrand 288)

Alkestrand wants to discuss how people need fictional worlds to give their own life meaning. Her argument is in line with liberal education, using literature to cultivate students into democratic human beings. Literature is the way to this enlightenment according to her. This can be beneficial to have in mind when using *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* comparisons for teaching values to students, since they have created a world of their own from the pages of the novel and the film (Alkestrand 289-90). Her discussion will form the foundation for the classroom adaptation presented in this essay and the specific CRT analysis that I offer below.

The sources mentioned above complement each other in some areas, concerning the positive aspects of using fantasy literature for identification. They use different methods of creating their studies and they focus on different aspects of the novels and phenomena. This paper’s somewhat different perspective with support from the Syllabus (Natl. Agency f. Ed. “Syllabus” 3) can benefit teachers, younger audiences as well as academic scholars because of the many usage areas that literature has. Teachers can use the material from this paper to develop their own teaching of literature by using CRT to expand the meaning of the fantasy genre in a new pedagogical setting involving comparisons between the novel and film sequences.
3. Analysis

The purpose of this analysis section is to make a more specialized and deeper plunge into five sequences selected from the novel and film versions of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, comparing them and highlighting how racism is portrayed in them. Therefore, I chose sections with clear messages and portrayals of racism in the scenarios. The sequences will be presented in chronological order. The ideas introduced in the theory section will be applied to this analysis. Section 3.1 is reserved for the contrastive analysis of the selected sequences. Section 3.2 presents a discussion of how the ideas and analyses can be adapted to an upper secondary classroom situation. These analyses strive to demonstrate how the use of both media in the classroom can enhance students’ understanding of racism in *Harry Potter* and in our society at large.

3.1 Analyzing *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* with CRT

The first selected sequence is extracted from chapter number four in the novel. The novel portrays Lucius Malfoy openly insulting Arthur Weasley, and Arthur attacks Lucius in rage in the novel:

’The company you keep, Weasley… and I thought your family could sink no lower-
‘ There was a thud of metal as Ginny’s cauldron went flying; Mr Weasley had thrown himself at Mr Malfoy, knocking him backwards into a bookshelf. Dozens of heavy spellbooks came thundering down on all their heads; there was a yell of ‘Get him, Dad!’ From Fred or George; Mrs Weasley was shrieking, ‘No Arthur, no!’; the crowd stampeded backwards, knocking more shelves over; ‘Gentlemen, please – please!’ cried the assistant and then, louder than all, ‘Break it up, there, gents, break it up –’ Hagrid was wading towards them through the sea of books. (Rowling 71-2)
The situation in the novel takes place in Diagon Alley, where Arthur Weasley starts a fight with Lucius Malfoy in the bookstore Flourish and Blotts because of Lucius being a racist oppressor (Rowling 71-2). A reaction like this one is actually justified, and Arthur stands up for his family and the Granger family (the company he keeps). When comparing to the movie sequence the observer can discover an obvious discrepancy. In the film, when the same comment is spoken, Arthur looks stunned but shrugs and leaves the bookstore in a relatively calm manner after being insulted in front of his family. Here, the viewer cannot see Arthur standing up for his beliefs and friends, which in could be interpreted as acceptance of Lucius Malfoy’s unacceptable behavior. This situation is problematic. Considering that a fistfight breaks out (in the novel) or that an adult openly insults another person and that the insulted person does not react at all (the movie), it is important to discuss why one must actively act against racism but possibly without creating more violence. Both scenarios are extreme in their own way, which makes it is important to show them both, compare and reflect on them. A better understanding of racism can develop when comparing chapter four and the corresponding film sequence. Furthermore, the reader can compare this comparison with a similar situation they have experienced themselves and see which scenario it was most similar with. So, this comparison is another presentation of how racism can be present in an everyday situation. As illustrated by this example, a simple comment can create an evident wall between the pure-bloods vs the Mudbloods and Muggles, which can be contextualized to a Caucasian and people of color and their comments toward one another (Crysel et al. 174).

The second sequence comparison focuses on the escalation of racism and how it affects the characters. Again, the reactions are very different in the novel versus the movie. In chapter seven, Draco Malfoy starts to use slurs towards Hermione and calls her a Mudblood, which means “dirty blood” (Rowling 123-4). When reading chapter seven of *the Chamber of Secrets* and the part when Malfoy calls Hermione a Mudblood, the reader quickly understands that
this is something unacceptable to say. The reactions of the surrounding characters are clearly enraged:

’No one asked your opinion, you filthy little Mudblood,’ he spat.

Harry knew at once that Malfoy had said something really bad because there was an instant uproar at his words. Flint had to dive in front of Malfoy to stop Fred and George jumping on him, Alicia shrieked ‘How dare you!’ and Ron plunged his hand into his robes, pulled out his wand, yelling ‘You’ll pay for that one, Malfoy!’

[...]. (Rowling 123-4)

On the other hand, the viewer cannot detect any loud voices or commotion in the film. Hermione becomes horrified by the comment and her face turns completely white. After that, Ron pulls out his wand and tries to curse Malfoy with his broken wand. Once again, the reactions are stronger in the novel. Here, CRT can present a clear parallel to what happens when a person calls their opponent a racist word, the consequences of it, and how a leader can be educated to handle these issues when they happen (Capper 792). One example in this sequence is the character of Draco Malfoy, an example of bad influence, who encourages his surroundings to use the slanderous kind of behavior he does, which invites others who want to use it freely. At some point in one’s life, a person has been called something slanderous and if it continues, it can haunt the person for the rest of their life. Especially if it has something to do with a personal trait that cannot be altered, as for example ethnicity (Howard and Navarro 253-4). Therefore, people should be able to discover criticism towards others and in general. This clear example of racism can be a discovery and help people realize that it is not something to simply brush off.

I now move on to sequence comparison number three. This comparison is used to discuss the subject of not accepting slanderous behavior and discrimination towards a group,
more specifically, highlighting the discrimination towards Squibs. The term Squib is introduced to the reader in the novel because Filch is one, according to a letter about a course called “Kwikspell”, which is a letter inviting Squibs to learn simple magic skills gradually (Rowling 139-40):

> “Feel out of step in the world of modern magic? Find yourself making excuses not to perform simple spells? Ever been taunted for your woeful wandwork? There is an answer! Kwikspell is an all-new, fail-safe, quick-result, easy-learn course. Hundreds of witches and wizards have been benefited from the Kwikspell method!”

(Rowling 139-40)

Squibs are the equivalence of Mudbloods for wizards, being born into a wizarding family but having no magical qualities. This phenomenon is not mentioned anywhere in the movie. This means a lost opportunity to position a group of characters in relation to the situations of other groups. In the movies, the idea of Squibs as a group is only introduced by portraying Filch as an evil and mean old janitor but with no explanation or substance regarding how and why he got to be like that. In the novel, the reader obtains the reason: He is an outcast because he is a Squib. These clear divisions into different groupings show the prejudices held by wizards and how far from equality their position is (Patterson 117). Seen from the perspective of history, the fact that Muggles were the unforgiving side of the conflict during the Dark Ages is true, but now wizards are holding tight on to their own so-called safety. They only somewhat tolerate mixed blood, and mostly have strong prejudices towards Muggles and Squibs. The wizarding community is still very uptight and not open to change even though the Muggles and Squibs have changed significantly (Patterson 117).

In sequence comparison number four the theme of different groupings continues and introduces another comparison between Squibs and house elves. While the Squibs are thus not mentioned in the film, the problem of inequalities for the elves is addressed both in the novel
and the film through Dobby the house elf. This means that the film portrays racism differently than the novel with other focus points, which is elves instead of Squibs. The novel puts more emphasis on groups where the film focuses on traits of certain individuals. This focus on individuals rather than groups results in simplified messages in the film. Being mean should not be tolerated, on screen or in reality. Harry treats the house elf Dobby “as an equal”, when no other wizard does, which we can relate to people treating each other with respect regardless of ethnicity: “‘Offend Dobby!’ choked the elf. Dobby has never been asked to sit down by a wizard – like an equal –’” (Rowling 19). With his kindness, Harry starts a movement for creatures below wizards’ standing, according to Anatol (159). Today, this is something young people need to understand, people must help each other in their struggles to move forward. Harry is a good example of someone not wanting to stand above others even if he is famous, and this shows when he helps Dobby to break free from his slavery (Rowling 363) and treats him like an equal (Anatol 159).

The last and fifth sequence focuses more on the criticized strive toward “pureness” in the wizard society. Harry meets Tom Riddle, the mysterious stranger throughout the plot. Tom Riddle reveals his alias and that he is the heir of Salazar Slytherin and so the heir of the Chamber of Secrets:

TOM MARVOLO RIDDLE Then he waved the wand once, and the letters of his name re-arranged themselves: I AM LORD VOLDEMORT ‘You see?’ he whispered. ‘It was a name I was already using at Hogwarts, to my most intimate friends only, of course. You think I was going to use my filthy Muggle father’s name for ever? I, in whose veins runs the blood of Salazar Slytherin himself, through my mother’s side? I, keep the name foul, common Muggle, who abandoned me even before I was born, just because he found out his wife was a witch? No, Harry. I fashioned myself a new name, a name I knew wizards
everywhere would one day fear to speak, when I had become the greatest sorcerer
in the world!’ (Rowling 337)

This sequence is the only one of the mentioned parts of the novel and film that does not differ
greatly between each other, other than that the person seeing the movie clearly sees the
stereotypes of the houses instead of interpreting them through the words used in the novel.
The greed and power consumes Voldemort even as he is a memory and it shows by his typical
Slytherin behavior (Crysel et al. 174). Rowling and her critique towards racism is visible
because of the conscious choices of properties of the houses and how many stereotypes are
exposed by her by general behavior and expressions in both the novel and the film, but this is
more visible in the film. As shown by previous sequence comparisons, Slytherins have a
focus on power and can be quite determined to get it, while Gryffindors stand up for the
greater good and defend their friends. Memory and nostalgia are the focus points for
Voldemort and his horcrux; he lingers on while the rest of the world tries to make him a
memory: “The smile had gone from Riddle’s face, to be replaced by a very ugly look.
‘Dumbledore’s been driven out of this castle by the mere memory of me!’ he hissed.”
(Rowling 337-8). The problem of pride before the fall is evident with Voldemort. Even the
memory of Voldemort “dies” from his own Slytherin-like greed, pride and Harry’s
Gryffindor-like courage (Crysel et al. 175).

The contrastive analysis presented in section 3.1 has revealed that central themes of the
storyline, such as the struggle between good and evil as represented by the houses of
Gryffindor and Slytherin, are present in equal degree in both the novel and the film. However,
more subtle facets related to racism, which are introduced by means of for instance the
behavior or traits of minor characters in the novel, are not represented in the film. In section
3.2 I elaborate on how these comparisons can foster a discussion of racism in the upper
secondary EFL classroom.
3.2 How to make this magic make sense in the classroom

“Finite Incantatem”! This is another spell which unravels and reveals the truth if something has been hidden or tampered with, by using magic. That is exactly what I want to do in this section of this paper. The purpose is not to remove the magic, but to reveal how the magic can develop into so much more when using the novel and movie sequence comparisons from the previous analysis in a constructive and well planned manner in pedagogical settings. The examples and discussions below have strong foundations in the Swedish Syllabus for English 6 and support from the CRT framework to enhance the racism education. This section will discuss the possibilities and challenges associated with using *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* in the classroom. In addition to this, I will concretize the discussion with some of my own teaching ideas which I have constructed and considered during the writing of this essay.

The idea for this paper is to use both the novel and film versions of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* with the sequence comparisons from previous analysis section. The focus is the English 6 course, because of its clear focus on literature, other texts and media (Natl. Agency of Ed. “Syllabus” 7). Another reason for choosing English 6 is that I as a teacher have gotten to know my students after an entire course before this one and they me. Finally, I have begun to introduce them to some literary terms such as defamiliarization and identification, for example. Knowing how these literary tools can be used will help them understand Rowling’s modeling of racism in the sequence comparisons analyzed above. The comparisons provide favorable grounds for discussions in the EFL classroom with clear ties to CRT and students’ realities. I argue that the comparisons presented above can help the reader if they have difficulties to understand Rowling’s messages and critique. Problems to relate to the comparisons between the sequences can indicate general difficulties in understanding racism. Clear examples like the comparisons between the novel and film sequences are helpful tools
in order to concretize the classroom discussion of racism (Crysel et al. 174-5): In order for such a discussion to make sense, it is crucial that students can relate the fantasy story to their own world. An example of how to connect clearly to our own world comes from Das and is derived from 13-year-old Leonard’s account of why he actually can connect with the magical world of *Harry Potter*:

Ignoring the fact that there are indeed flying cars, flying broomsticks and invisible railway platforms in the text, Leonard reminds me that it is precisely because the train to Hogwarts school is a “real” one, with real steam, real tracks and real guards, that he finds it credible, and hence, enjoyable. (Das 347)

In the citation above, Das has interviewed a boy who explains why fantasy works as a reality anchor but still simultaneously being magical to an agreeable degree, with help from the Hogwarts Express once more (defamiliarization). Some of the factors are symbols of something magical but simultaneously keeping some things ordinary and real. In this case, the train to Hogwarts which is a normal train, not flying, not magical but a train that takes the students to the magical school. A symbol of something fantastic and magical but still a real-life invention that everyone is familiar with (Das 347-8). There must be a balance of defamiliarization in fantasy to make the reader engaged and not lost in the plot and new world.

The core content regarding making students democratic citizens can be observed in the Curriculum for English. The democratic values are especially important and relevant to present for this classroom adaptation because of how the class will discuss values and the battle and prevention against racism with the sequence comparisons:

No one in school should be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnic affiliation, religion or other system, transgender identity or its
expression, sexual orientation, age or functional impairment, or to other forms of degrading. All tendencies to discrimination or degrading treatment should be actively combated. Xenophobia and intolerance must be confronted with knowledge, open discussion and active measures.


When discussing the racism perspectives in the sequence comparisons which have been highlighted in this essay, thinking about the core content mentioned above is essential because a teacher must always connect their teaching content to the Curriculum and Syllabus successfully. An advantageous starting point can be the comparisons of how the racism can escalate, like it does in the novel and film comparisons, and then comparing to reality and the escalating racism in society. Then the aspects in the literary and visual analysis can be adapted to the core content paragraphs in the Syllabus with a didactic focus. Another example of escalating factors of racism is symbolized by the legend of the Chamber of Secrets (Rowling 114). Legends and tales can easily get their own life. Connecting tales to our reality as Brown’s “Marketing for Muggles” article presents shows how the legend is constantly fed with more and more material. Finally, it becomes something new and maybe it is not the same as intended from the beginning (Brown 463-6). Rumors can develop like this in a school and on the internet which is why the discussion about the rumor about the Chamber of Secrets is beneficial in the EFL classroom. In this context, it can be beneficial to discuss the first sequence comparisons in relation to the Chamber of Secrets, letting students discuss which scenario in the comparisons of the two they prefer and why, to highlight how a person can or should react when difficult things like this happen (Alkestrand 256-7).

It is significant for both adults and teenagers to discuss literature and movies (this is also called visual literacy). It can teach the majority about the contents and meaning of Harry Potter, in this case racism, with dialogic learning and the different reader responses which
will inevitably surface. While connecting to the trying times of adolescence and criticizing exclusion, both the teacher and students learn new things about themselves to be able to treat others better and avoid prejudices and rumors toward one another (Anatol 1-2). Teachers need to be up to date themselves on the subject they choose to present to their students and be sure to allow for different perspectives and from that create productive and fair discussions with a clear inclusive focus (Natl. Agency of Ed. “Syllabus” 7). Anatol’s first chapter displays how Rowling shows great understanding of adolescence and does not diminish it even though she can see it from an adult perspective today (Anatol 3). Being able to reflect on different angles of the novel, even if it does not appeal to oneself anymore, is important because many youngsters feel alone and have troubles finding their own rhythm in life, like the characters. If I as a teacher can highlight this theme of adolescence and help students relate to this and let the students read the novel and make them discuss if they can relate or not (identification), this can inspire another sense of interest in novels. The discussion about feeling left out can be connected to the racism in every sequence comparison above because of the obvious segregation between “bloods”. In the comparison between sequence one in the film and the novel, we have two different reactions from an adult when he is being subjected to racism, and in the second sequence comparison there are two different reactions from friends (teenagers) when a degrading comment is thrown at Hermione. Discussing why and how these reactions are “good or bad” and if they differ because of age is a way of building a bridge between the teacher and the students and how students want teachers (and adults) or themselves to act (Anatol 3).

First, it is necessary to show the general perspective of an issue (racism) and take a specific path later for identification, which in this case is adolescence and the struggle to fit in in an adult world. Contextualizing this toward racism based on the sequence comparisons can show how different experiences and perspectives can bring up or diminish racism, when for
example meeting someone from another culture (Alkestrand 283). However, not everyone can relate or agree with the discussions about racism and CRT in the classroom. That problem can make the subject irrelevant or unteachable to students. If racism is not properly discussed and criticized, teachers have failed their mission of creating democratic citizens. Schools are supposed to teach students to become democratic citizens, so the teacher must be prepared for both positive and negative scenarios in the classroom and be able to direct the subject to the non-acceptance of racism but still let every student speak. That is another reason for having comparisons between the different sequences of racism and the people being involved, to hopefully include all the students in the subject at one point.

Alkestrand has many interesting perspectives on fantasy literature with a didactic focus. I can adapt them to my teaching and try to compare the novel and movie sequences and show the students how susceptible we are to media, its effect on its audiences and how it varies between the novel and the movie. Alkestrand also has clear theories about teaching values; she wants to use fantasy literature to teach students to become democratic citizens and I want to focus on her chapter about cultural diversity. As this paper has argued, the chapter about cultural diversity is in line with the idea that the students must be critical toward their own behavior and values with the help of the defamiliarization in fantasy novels (Alkestrand 239). Critical thinking is something teachers want to strive for because they want to prepare their students for reality when they finish school. The versatile abilities with *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* means; “Finite Incantatem” for prejudices in the sequence comparisons. Through the possibility to relate and compare the problems of the fantasy world to our students’ world, the student’s minds can be opened and their capacity for critical thinking can be trained. This especially applies to the capacity to adopt a critical perspective in relation to visual media. Such a discussion can foster an open attitude regarding cultural diversity in school (290).
According to Alkestrand, literature and visual literacy is an effective tool to make students feel and experience things they have not encountered before (285-6). One thing which has been the focus of the entire paper and can be new for the classroom is the comparison between movie and novel. Connecting the sequence comparisons to how students’ own lives can be affected by their surroundings and how they can become democratic citizens by these reflections is the next step. Racism is still present today and a teacher can anchor this discussion based on CRT in the sequence comparisons to make the students see how our society’s norms do not always address the serious problems that we face every day. Squibs and elves can be an example because of the fact that one of the groups is included in the movie and the other one is not even mentioned. Shedding light on this issue can highlight the problem of implicit racism. A concrete classroom activity could be to present the different sequence comparisons from the movie and novel before starting the reading and watching and see if the students can figure out which scene belongs to either the novel or the movie. After that, they can make their own scenarios of racism from their own experiences, to play for the class. If a teacher has the opportunity to teach CRT to their students, this activity can become a very effective and interesting start of the theme (Capper 791-2).

CRT in the classroom can sound intimidating because of its complex theoretical nature but as this section has aimed to show it does not have to be presented in a complicated and unreachable manner. Discussing racism can be constructive and effective if the teacher anchors literature and defamiliarization in the sequence comparisons to make them feel more relatable for the students and to show important messages and contemporary relations to society (Alkestrand 283). Personally, I prefer novels and movies over text books in classrooms. Therefore, I will be using the sequence comparisons in many different ways to try to contextualize relevant topics to educate my students and to learn new things. School is not
only about teaching students. Teachers who can learn new things from their students are good teachers. By using literature, in this case *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, the teacher can learn many things from hearing of the students’ reader responses and reflections on the sequence comparisons and adapt further teaching to that, by having role-plays based on the comparisons or draw parallels from one of the comparisons in the magical world to a similar situation with people in the class, for example (Howard and Navarro 253-4).
4. Conclusion

When someone with a wand wants to collect a thing out of reach, they use the spell “Accio”! Hopefully, this is what this essay has given its readers, the help to be able to reach something not reachable before: A spell to acquire some new knowledge about the CRT perspective on the five sequence comparisons from the novel and movie *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. With a click on the computer this paper has flown into the reader’s hand. The aim of this essay was to examine how J.K Rowling has characterized and criticized racism in her second novel by a close analysis of selected chapters and movie sequences, comparing them and applying CRT. In addition, I have discussed how the contrastive analysis can be adapted to an upper secondary EFL classroom setting. The literary and visual comparison analyses show how important it is to analyze films and the corresponding novels simultaneously to achieve maximum understanding. The purpose of the classroom adaptation was to argue for why fantasy literature (in this case *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*) works effectively to make students democratic citizens by enhancing their critical skills with CRT when reading novels and watching films. Both students and teachers can be enlightened about literature and film with the help of the sequence comparisons in this paper. When teaching such a versatile subject as English, the fantastic and magic qualities of *Harry Potter* can be endless for a dedicated and CRT aware teacher. On the other hand, a teacher must, in addition to having knowledge of literary tools and CRT, have insight into their students’ experiences and remember their own struggles during their adolescence to be able to reach the students and teach literature effectively. If a teacher cannot listen, understand their students and adapt the teaching to those factors, it does not matter what kind of novel or film they use, the result will be mediocre.

*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* offers endless opportunities to discover new perspectives; in our academic world this is called future research. An example of this could be
to focus on the pureblood Malfoy family during the sequence comparisons, to get to know the other side of the wizarding world better. Sometimes the perspective of the oppressor in the novel can give the reader understanding of their lives and why they do the things they do. Furthermore, there are many other things to look at, such as other wizarding schools which are presented during the series, or other wizarding cultures in the novels. It is rather easy for a person living in Sweden to relate to an English setting. To learn about other cultures is an aim in the Syllabus, and the ties to the real world gives the students that perspective, in moderation.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone who took the time to read this work through to the end, that is more than enough magic for me. I want to reach out to people with an interest in using fantasy literature to make the world a better place, being teacher, student or Harry Potter fan. The fantasy genre can sound far fetched to many people, but with the right tools, it can provide inspiration and strategies to help us cope in everyday life. Fantasy literature provides an escape from the reader’s reality, but as mentioned before, it affects the reader in different fashions and the reading process can become even more fantastic if readers can see the relations between their own world and the parallel one. Then they can create their own interpretation and try to behave to others as they want to be treated, in accordance with the golden rule. The Harry Potter phenomenon will exist in people’s hearts for a long time to come. My contribution is another drop into the sea of analyses which will constantly increase as time passes. As a teacher, there are many ways to apply Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets to the EFL classroom. My personal goal will be to teach it in different varieties to make the world a more magic place, always.
Works Cited


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