

MIDDLE SCHOOL (6-8) EDITION

HARRY POTTER

as a

TOOL *for*
SOCIAL CHANGE



THE HARRY POTTER ALLIANCE

What can we learn from Harry Potter about leadership and justice?

Sometimes these kinds of discussions can be tough. It's important to make sure everyone feels heard, respected, and safe in your group. Here are some guidelines to follow:



1. Protect Your Team

Before you start, make sure everyone on your team feels safe and included. You never know what a particular issue may mean personally to someone or how a discussion may impact them. A great way to start is to set some guidelines as a group for what is and is not acceptable on your team.

2. Listen to Each Other

Every member of your team has a unique viewpoint and things to share. These issues are complicated, and different viewpoints are okay – take time to listen, let everyone speak, and challenge each other without devaluing each other's opinions or resorting to personal attacks.

3. Talk First

It's important to discuss issues before immediately taking action (are you reading, Harry?).

4. Don't Jump to Conclusions

Don't assume you know everything about an issue - seriously, how many times did this get Harry in trouble? - especially if there are people on your team who have personally experienced an issue or whose identity you are discussing.

5. Keep Learning

The most important thing you can do is to keep learning about everything discussed with your team! Take what you learn and continue to educate yourself on the issues through your teachers and local library.

Perfectly Normal



You may remember the very first lines of Harry Potter are: "Mr. and Mrs. Dursley of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say they were perfectly normal, thank you very much." **What does it mean to be normal...**

ACCORDING TO ME	ACCORDING TO MY COMMUNITY

There are many things in our world that might be considered *not* normal -- but **what in our world do you think is extra Dursley-like?**



Get together with your group and create a list of Dursley Things.

- ★ What about these things make them so *Dursley*?
- ★ What can you do to make the world *less* Dursley?



In *Deathly Hallows*, Dudley and Harry have a moment of friendship. Discuss with your group:

Why do you think Dudley was able to be a little less Dursley?

What can each of you do to help Dursleys in the world become more magical?

What can you do together as a group?

Understanding Justice



Sirius Black and Buckbeak actually have pretty similar stories. Consider:

- ★ Both of them are wrongly accused of a crime
- ★ Both of them are given an unfair trial (in Sirius's case, no trial at all)
- ★ Both of them are given a punishment they do not deserve
- ★ Both of their lives will be ended because of that punishment

When you read *Prisoner of Azkaban*, did you feel as bad for Sirius as you did for Buckbeak? Why or why not?

Why do you think we might feel differently about Sirius compared to Buckbeak?

As a group, think about what you assume about people in real world prison systems. Take some time to visit your local library and research:

- ★ how often are people wrongly imprisoned in our world?
- ★ what are the conditions in our prison system?
- ★ how are people able to transition back to our community when their sentence has been completed?

Think back to your list of Dursley-like things. Could you do anything to help the Sirius Blacks (and Buckbeaks) of the world?

Learning and Making Change



Harry, Ron, and Hermione all have things they have to learn and *unlearn* about the world based on their experiences.

Ron has lived in the magical world his whole life. Sometimes he doesn't notice things that may not be right because they have always been there -- for example, Ron never questions how house elves are treated. It takes someone with an outside perspective, like Hermione, to point these out to him. But Ron can also help Hermione with knowledge about the community.

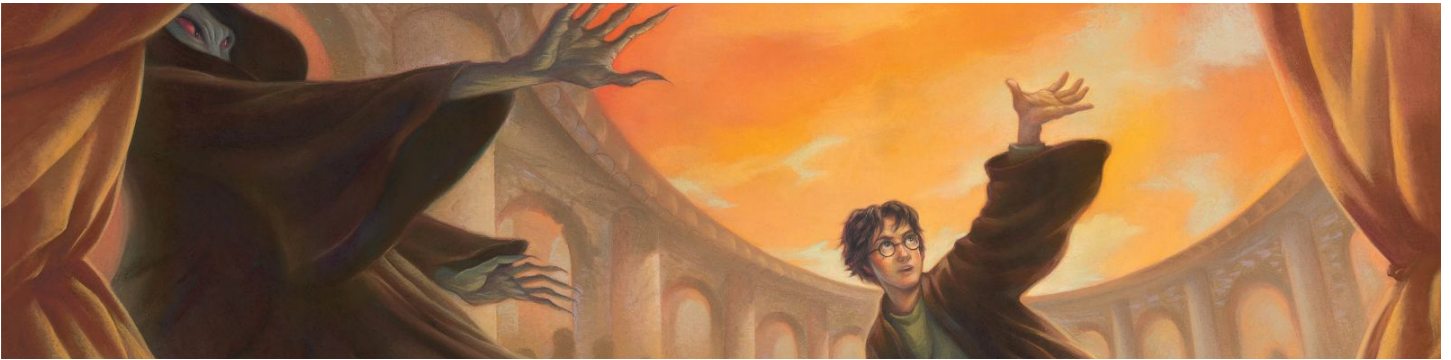
Harry is new to the magical world, but as a half-blood some of the things that are less magical about this community don't affect him directly, and so he is able to not think about it so much -- for example, even though he doesn't think there's anything wrong with being a muggle born, he doesn't have to think about the way they are treated as often as Hermione does.

Hermione is both new to the magical world and a muggle born, so she often notices unfair things sooner than Ron or Harry does *and* she has to think about them all the time because they directly impact her.

What inequalities in our world might you not notice because of your experiences? What things do you especially notice?

Hermione's first response to learning that house elves, who are bound by magic to their jobs without pay, prepare the food at Hogwarts is to protest by not eating. **Discuss as a group what her goal was, whether or not it was successful, and what she might have done differently to be more successful.**

Magical and Not-So-Magical



The longer Harry is in the magical world, the more he learns that it's not as magical for *everyone* as he would hope. There are many things that help reinforce injustice and inequality in the magical world, and they only get worse when Voldemort and his followers are in power. **Take a look at some of the things they used, and think about whether these things exist in our own world.**

MONUMENTS



The Fountain of Magical Brethren is supposed to represent harmony, but Dumbledore explains to Harry that it doesn't show the real relationships between wizards, witches, and other magical folk.

NEWS



When the Daily Prophet becomes influenced by the Ministry, it begins printing false information about Harry, muggle borns, and Voldemort and his followers.

BLOOD STATUS



Blood status has nothing to do with how much someone belongs in the magical world, but some people discriminate based on it -- worse, the Ministry sets up the Muggle Born Registration Commission to determine whether or not someone belongs in the magical world.

MONEY



Even though the Malfoy family worked for Voldemort they were able to influence the Ministry because of their money.

Sirius tells Harry: “Besides, the world isn’t split into good people and Death Eaters. We’ve all got both light and dark inside us. What matters is the part we choose to act on. That’s who we really are.”

Can you think of times when you have demonstrated containing both dark and light?

Discuss with your group: **what makes you a good person? Is it your actions, or something else?**

What motivates people to become Death Eaters? Is it possible that you might have become a Death Eater if you were raised differently or had different experiences?

What is evil? In your group, try to come up with a definition. Was that easy? Hard?



Why is it important to call Voldemort by his name? What do you think are the “Voldemort” of our world?

J.K. Rowling has said, “We do not need magic to change the world; we have all the power we need inside us already: We have the power to imagine better.”

**What can your group do to imagine better?
How will you become a Dumbledore’s Army for our world?**