

## **Symbols of The Deathly Hallows in J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows"**

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**Abstract.** This research aimed to describe what the Deathly Hallows symbolized in J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows". This was a qualitative content analysis with hermeneutic approach. The primary data was from the novel of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows. The results of this research were the Deathly Hallows symbolized the thirst of the greatest power which could make the owner immortal, but for Harry Potter they symbolized a test, which tested his mission to defeat Voldemort. The Hallows themselves consisted of three objects which were the Elder Wand, the Resurrection Stone, and the Invisibility Cloak. Each of the Hallows also symbolized different things. The Elder Wand symbolized a wizard's desire for power, the Resurrection Stone symbolized deep longing towards the loved one who had died, and the Invisibility Cloak symbolized protection.

**Keywords:** symbol; Harry Potter; the deathly hallows; hermeneutic approach

## **Symbols of The Deathly Hallows in J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows"**

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan simbol dan makna dari the Deathly Hallows (Relikui Kematian) dalam novel J.K. Rowling "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows". Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis isi kualitatif dengan pendekatan hermeneutik. Data utama adalah novel J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan Relikui Kematian menyimbolkan keinginan akan kekuatan yang bisa membuat pemilik Relikui ini menjadi makhluk abadi. Akan tetapi bagi Harry Potter, relikui ini menjadi sebuah ujian bagi misinya dalam mengalahkan Voldemort. Relikui Kematian terdiri dari tiga benda yaitu Tongkat Elder, Batu Kebangkitan, dan Jubah Gaib. Masing-masing benda menyimbolkan hal yang berbeda. Tongkat Elder merupakan simbol dari keinginan penyihir untuk memiliki kekuatan, Batu Kebangkitan merupakan simbol dari kerinduan yang mendalam terhadap orang yang dicintai yang telah tiada, dan Jubah Gaib adalah simbol dari perlindungan.

**Keywords:** simbol; Harry Potter; relikui kematian; pendekatan hermeneutik

## INTRODUCTION

Literature is human work in which authors express what they hear, see, or feel about the world through language. As the main media to express the idea, language plays important role in literary work. An author may use either literal or metaphorical language with some symbols in his or her work (Khan, 2017; Khumaira, Samad, & Silviyanti, 2019).

Symbols in literary work gave chance for reader to think deeply and enrich their emotion related to the story. They need to be thoughtful to understand or interpret a symbol because it indicates something that is still unknown, or ideas that cannot be precisely depicted (Chang, *et al.*, 2013). A watch, for example, is not merely an object which informs time. It may serve deeper meaning for a character in a story as the only memory of him with his beloved one.

Perrine defined symbol as something which means more than what it literally show in the story (Maisarah, 2013). A symbol is an object, a sign, or a word used to recognize each other and understand their meaning (Dillistone, 2002). It is not abstract as truth or love (Kennedy & Gioia, 1995).

Symbols appear in literary works in many forms. First, universal or archetypal symbol has universal meaning. It happens with repetitious pattern in many works, so it collectively and unconsciously recognized by people (Kirsznner & Mandell, 2009). In literature, character the Hero is known as character with a task to complete and he always defends justice. Second, conventional or traditional symbol's meaning, idea, or concept understood by a group people who share common cultural understanding. Patriotism for Americans is seen in the stars and stripes in American flag while Indonesians see patriotism in the red color of their national flag. Literary symbol could be both universal and conventional symbols. It gives additional

meaning in certain works (Kirsznner & Mandell, 2009). In a literary work, a symbol is usually found in the form of object, character, setting, and action (Kennedy & Gioia, 1995).

A symbol can be identified throughout the story. It can start to appear in the title and reappears in different parts of the story. It strongly related to the theme and it plays a significant role for the readers to find the value of the story. It should represent something different from its class or type. The meaning is not literal but is always controlled, established, and supported by the context which means its meaning is from inside of the story. (Kennedy & Gioia, 1995; Reuben, 2019; Kirsznner & Mandell, 2009).

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows was the last novel of the Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling, and it was rewarded as the fastest-selling fiction book in 24 hours (Suggit, 2018). This novel concluded Harry's journey to face and to defeat Voldemort, the villain in the story. It was not a smooth adventure as he lost many companions throughout the journey. In this seventh novel, the main focus of Harry, Ron, and Hermione pursuit was to thwart Voldemort's plan in dominating wizarding world by finding and destroying his Horcruxes. The information about Horcrux was previously explained in the sixth book, Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince. However, the existence of another artifact was informed in the last story of this series. It was the Deathly Hallows. The information of the Hallows was given to Harry and his friends together with Dumbledore's last will. With all the puzzles about the Hallows, Harry and his friends were struggling to finish the mission left to them.

Harry Potter series have been analyzed by many researchers, one of them is about the spiritual value Rowling put in it. Although this series told about magical world, but the spiritual value was clearly seen in her seven books. Rowling focused

the series on 'death' and how to not fear of death (Park, 2017). Also, although the theme of the series is categorized as 'dark', many children still constantly read the story until its last book (Suljic, 2013). Other analysis focused on the characters in the novel in terms of their educational value (Puspitawati, Emzir, & AKhadiah, 2017) or focused only on certain substantial character in the story such as Dumbledore (Aristo & Sijono, 2018) or the main villain, Lord Voldemort (Darmawan, 2017; Fitri, 2018).

Analysis on symbols in Harry Potter has also been conducted by some researchers whether on the characters or objects. Harry Potter as the main character symbolized hero which was similar to the tradition in myth or fantasy. He also symbolized on hope for triumph and meaning (Black, 2003). Rowling's allegory was seen her two characters, McGonagall and the owl, which were inspired by ancient Greek myth (Jensby, 2019). Another symbol analyzed was the wands of Harry Potter and Voldemort which revealed the personality of the two characters and the destined connection between them (Damayanti & Soelistyo, 2016).

Different from the researches above, this research focused to analyze symbols in the form of objects. This research aimed to find out what the Deathly Hallows which was the key objects in the last series of Harry Potter symbolized in J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows".

## METHOD

This research was a qualitative content analysis with hermeneutic approach. Hermeneutic approach is an approach to understand the deeper meaning of a text, including interpreting symbols (Vieira, 2017). This research aimed to analyze symbols of the Deathly Hallows in J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" novel. The primary data was "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows"

novel and the secondary data were any resources which supported the analysis. Perrine stated that the meaning of a symbol was supported and established by the context of the story (Maisarah, 2013), and in interpreting the symbols, based on Ricoeur's Theory of hermeneutic approach it started with uncovering, deciphering, and understanding (Itao, 2010).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Deathly Hallows was the name of three objects mentioned in a tale in the children's book given to Hermione – The Tale of Beedle the Bard. This book was in the wills inherited from Dumbledore and it was particularly given to her. The three objects cited in the story were the Elder Wand, the Resurrection Stone, and the Invisibility Cloak. They were gifts from Death to three brothers who could cross a river kept by the Death.

*"Those are the Deathly Hallows," said Xenophilius.*

*He picked up a quill from a packed table at his elbow, and pulled a torn piece of parchment from between more books.*

*"The Elder Wand," he said, and he drew a straight vertical line upon the parchment. "The Resurrection Stone," he said, and he added a circle on top of the line. "The Cloak of Invisibility," he finished, enclosing both line and circle in a triangle, to make the symbol that so intrigued Hermione. "Together," he said, "the Deathly Hallows." (Page 332)*

The researcher decided that the Deathly Hallows symbolized something else as they were mentioned repeatedly in the novel, even in the title of the novel (Kennedy & Gioia, 1995) and they were the crucial parts related to the plot of the story (Reuben, 2019). The Hallows were originally created by Peverell's family and the last descendent of the family was Harry Potter. The existence of the Hallows, then, distracted Harry from his main missions left by Dumbledore which were to find and to destroy Voldemort's Horcruxes.

### The Meaning of the Symbols of the Deathly Hallows in J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" novel

The Deathly Hallows was first mentioned in this series through a children's tale. Merely few wizards believed on their existence and considered them only as a myth. However, the others believed them as a powerful magical object which might make the possessor conquered death.

*"That is a children's tale, told to amuse rather than to instruct. Those of us who understand these matters, however, recognize that the ancient story refers to three objects, or Hallows, which, if united, will make the possessor master of Death."*

(Page 333)

This power tempted many wizards to hunt them, including young Dumbledore and his friend, Grindelwald.

*... "Yet I too sought a way to conquer death, Harry."*

*"Not the way he did," said Harry. After all his anger at Dumbledore, how odd it was to sit here, beneath the high, vaulted ceiling, and defend Dumbledore from himself. "Hallows, not Horcruxes."*

*"Hallows," murmured Dumbledore, "not Horcruxes. Precisely."*

(Page 571)

*"... "Grindelwald was looking for them too?" he asked.*

*Dumbledore closed his eyes for a moment and nodded."*

(Page 572)

From the quotations it was known that there were two ways to conquer death in Harry's world. They were Horcrux and Hallows. Voldemort decided to use Horcrux where he split his souls and put them in seven different media. When the media remained untouched, the wizard would never die (Rowling, 2015). Therefore, Voldemort gave the best of his protection to all his Horcruxes. In contrast, Dumbledore and his friend,

Grindelwald, agreed to conquer death by acquiring the Hallows.

Harry himself almost got tempted when he finally found out about the Hallows. He hesitated because at that time he still needed to find three more Horcruxes which he did not know where to find; while for the Hallows, he had already two of them in his possession, the Stone and the Cloak. He needed only the Elder Wand to obtain the greatest power to destroy Voldemort. He knew that Voldemort wanted to have it too, and he already knew where the wand was.

*"Harry hesitated. He knew what hung on his decision. There was hardly any time left; now was the moment to decide: Horcruxes or Hallows?"*

(Page 392)

These showed that the Deathly Hallows together symbolized the thirst of the greatest power which could make the owner immortal. For Harry himself, the Hallows symbolized as a test, whether he would turn out to be like Dumbledore and or any other wizards who wanted to master the Hallows for personal gain or he would focus on completing his missions which were finding and destroying Voldemort's Horcruxes.

The description below elaborates what the Hallows were and interpret what each of the Hallows symbolized.

#### 1. The Elder Wand

In the The Tale of Beedle the Bard, after successfully crossing the river kept by the Death, the Death allowed the three brothers to as for a gift each. The oldest brother requested a wand which could win him any duel. Therefore, the Death gave him the Elder Wand which was made from a branch of an elder tree. Elder tree itself was a rare material for a wand and very powerful (Rowling, 2015).

*"So the oldest brother, who was a combative man, asked for a wand more powerful than any in existence: a wand that must always win duels for its owner, a wand worthy of a wizard who had conquered Death! So Death crossed to an*

*elder tree on the banks of the river, fashioned a wand from a branch that hung there, and gave it to the oldest brother."*

(Page 331)

Voldemort knew about it, and he tracked down the location of the powerful wand from wizard to wizard.

*"The Dark Lord no longer seeks the Elder Wand only for your destruction, Mr. Potter. He is determined to possess it because he believes it will make him truly invulnerable."*

(Page 401)

The quotation above was from Ollivander, the wandmaker. He mentioned Voldemort with different name which was the Dark Lord. He told Harry that the reason Voldemort wanted to possess the wand was not to destroy Harry anymore, but to be the most powerful wizard.

Voldemort was not the only wizard who was tempted by the power of the wand. Another wizard named Grindelwald also had a chance to possess the wand and while seizing it, he became uncontainably powerful.

*"And Grindelwald used the Elder Wand to become powerful. And at the height of his power, when Dumbledore knew he was the only one who could stop him, he duelled Grindelwald and beat him, and he took the Elder Wand."*

(Page 404)

Seeing the reason of the wizards who wanted to have the wand, it can be concluded that the Elder Wand was the symbol of a wizard's desire for power. This was similar to the result of Damayanti and Soelistyo (2016) who stated in their research that a wand could reveal the owner's character.

Elder tree was sacred for Celts as it can protect them from Devil, and Druids used it as a place of judgment, but Christians labeled it as 'unlucky' for it was believed as the place where the traitor Judas Iscariot hanged himself (Knowles, 2008; Rowling, 2015; & Barton, 2019). It has similar story with Elder Wand in Harry Potter series as it

might give the owner an unbeatable power but it could also make the owner murdered as to seize the wand from its previous owner, murderer was most likely the best way.

*"Whether it needs to pass by murder, I do not know. Its history is bloody, but that may be simply due to the fact that it is such a desirable object, and arouses such passions in wizards..."*

(Page 402)

## 2. The Resurrection Stone

The Resurrection Stone was not the only and the first stone with magical power in Harry Potter series. In the first book, there was a sorcerer's stone which was sought by Voldemort to acquire (Rowling, 1998). This stone was different function from the Resurrection Stone as Sorcerer's Stone promised immortality.

The Resurrection Stone was the gift given to the second brother who requested a power to recall the dead. He asked because he had longed his dead girlfriend and he still wanted to be with her in the living world.

*"Meanwhile, the second brother journeyed to his own home, where he lived alone. Here he took out the stone that had the power to recall the dead, and turned it thrice in his hand. To his amazement and his delight, the figure of the girl he had once hoped to marry, before her untimely death, appeared at once before him."*

(Page 331)

However, the stone did not really bring back his girlfriend alive in her solid feature. As a result, the second brother was still suffering from the misery of missing her girlfriend and eventually died.

Harry who got the stone from one of the Dumbledore's wills, at the end used the stone in the Forbidden Forest.

*"And again Harry understood without having to think. It did not matter about bringing them back, for he was about to join them. He was not really fetching them: They were fetching him."*

*He closed his eyes and turned the stone over in his hand three times.”*

(Page 559-560)

On the quotation above Harry used the stone and brought all his loved but dead ones back to accompany him walking in the Forbidden Forest to sacrifice his life to Voldemort. He called his parents and two of his father's best friends whom one of them was his god-father.

There was another story related to this stone. The stone was once a Horcrux made by Voldemort. Dumbledore who figured out that it was also a Hallow was drowned by his longing to his sister, Ariana, whose death had given him a great remorse. He forgot that the Stone was still a Horcrux and touched it in the hope that he would see her again. As a result, an ultimate dark curse attacked him and endangered his life (Rowling, 2005).

Those descriptions above showed that the Resurrection stone brought back the dead ones although it did not really bring them back alive. They appeared as the symbol of deep longing towards the loved one who had died. However, regardless its power, the second brother and Harry proved that those who had deceased could never come back alive. The second brother who could not accept became more depressed and eventually took his own life, while Harry who could accept that fact was able to stay wise and even had a chance to express his apology once again to them.

*“I didn't want you to die,” Harry said.*

*These words came without his volition.*

*“Any of you. I'm sorry —”*

(Page 561)

### 3. The Invisibility Cloak

The Invisibility Cloak was the third Hallow given by the Death to the youngest of the three brothers. Different from two previous gifts, the Death reluctantly gave this gift to him as it prevented the Death to discover him for a very long time.

*“And then Death asked the third and youngest brother what he would like. The youngest brother was the humblest and also the wisest of the brothers, and he did not trust Death. So he asked for something that would enable him to go forth from that place without being followed by Death. And Death, most unwillingly, handed over his own Cloak of Invisibility.”*

(Page 331)

*“But though Death searched for the third brother for many years, he was never able to find him. It was only when he had attained a great age that the youngest brother finally took off the Cloak of Invisibility and gave it to his son. And then he greeted Death as an old friend, and went with him gladly, and, equals, they departed this life.”*

(Page 332)

In real life, the Invisibility Cloak really existed like other two Hallows and it had been in Harry's possession since his first year in Hogwarts. It was his father's legacy which was given to him in his first Christmas at Hogwarts (Rowling, 1998). Harry had been using it all year in Hogwarts, mostly for doing many forbidden activities as it could make him invisible from human sight. The Cloak was also very beneficial in many critical circumstances.

In this novel, Harry particularly used the Cloak the most frequently as he became the most wanted person by Voldemort and his followers. So he and his two best friends could move undetectably under the cloak in order that they would not be seen by anyone including Death Eaters.

*“Please, Harry, get that Cloak on!”*

*Harry threw the Invisibility Cloak around his shoulders and pulled it up over his head, vanishing from sight.*

(Page 136)

The dialogue above happened on Ron's brother's wedding. Harry, Ron, and Hermione had to run away from

the wedding because of the arrival of Death Eaters who desperately wanted to arrest Harry. Therefore, they used the Cloak to escape from their pursuit and to be able to arrive safely in a place far away from the wedding. The reason of the third brother requested the Invisibility Cloak and how Harry used it in his life journey indicated that the Cloak symbolized protection.

Deathly Hallows in the last novel of the Harry Potter series were not merely powerful magical objects like a wand, a stone, and a cloak. They symbolized different things and it depended on whom they belong to. This was supported by Ricoeur who stated that symbols convey and communicate a meaning, even a deeper one (Itao, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

This research analyzed the meaning of the symbol of the Deathly Hallows in J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" novel. The symbols analyzed were the literary symbol in the form of object. The results on the discussion found that the Deathly hallows symbolized the thirst of the greatest power which could make the owner immortal. Each of the Hallows itself symbolized different thing. The Elder Wand symbolized a wizard's desire for power, the Resurrection Stone symbolized deep longing towards the loved one who had died, and the Invisibility Cloak symbolized protection. As this research focused to analyze the symbols of the Deathly Hallows J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" novel, it was limited only to analyze symbol in the form of object. Therefore, further researcher can analyze different types of symbol in literary work, such as people, action, and setting.

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