

UNVEILING TRAUMA IN YOUNG ADULT FICTION

A Comparative Analysis of Harry Potter, The Hunger Games, and The Book Thief

Dr. ZEGHOUDI Imane

“Unveiling Trauma in Young Adult Fiction” embarks on an insightful journey into the intricate nuances of how three seminal works—Harry Potter, The Hunger Games, and The Book Thief—tackle the theme of trauma. This comprehensive analysis delves into the multifaceted layers of each narrative, scrutinizing the characters’ responses, the underlying narrative structures, and the resonant themes that shape the portrayal of trauma. The book follows a structured and thorough examination, shedding light on the transformative power inherent in storytelling. Beyond merely entertaining, it provides valuable insights for educators and parents, equipping them with tools to navigate discussions on challenging themes with young readers. By uncovering the depth and complexity of trauma within these young adult works, the analysis goes further to underscore the profound impact of literature on emotional intelligence and resilience. In this way, “Unveiling Trauma in Young Adult Fiction” emerges not only as an essential guide but also as a bridge between scholarly exploration and the transformative potential of storytelling, ultimately enriching our understanding of the lasting influence of young adult literature on the lives of its readers.



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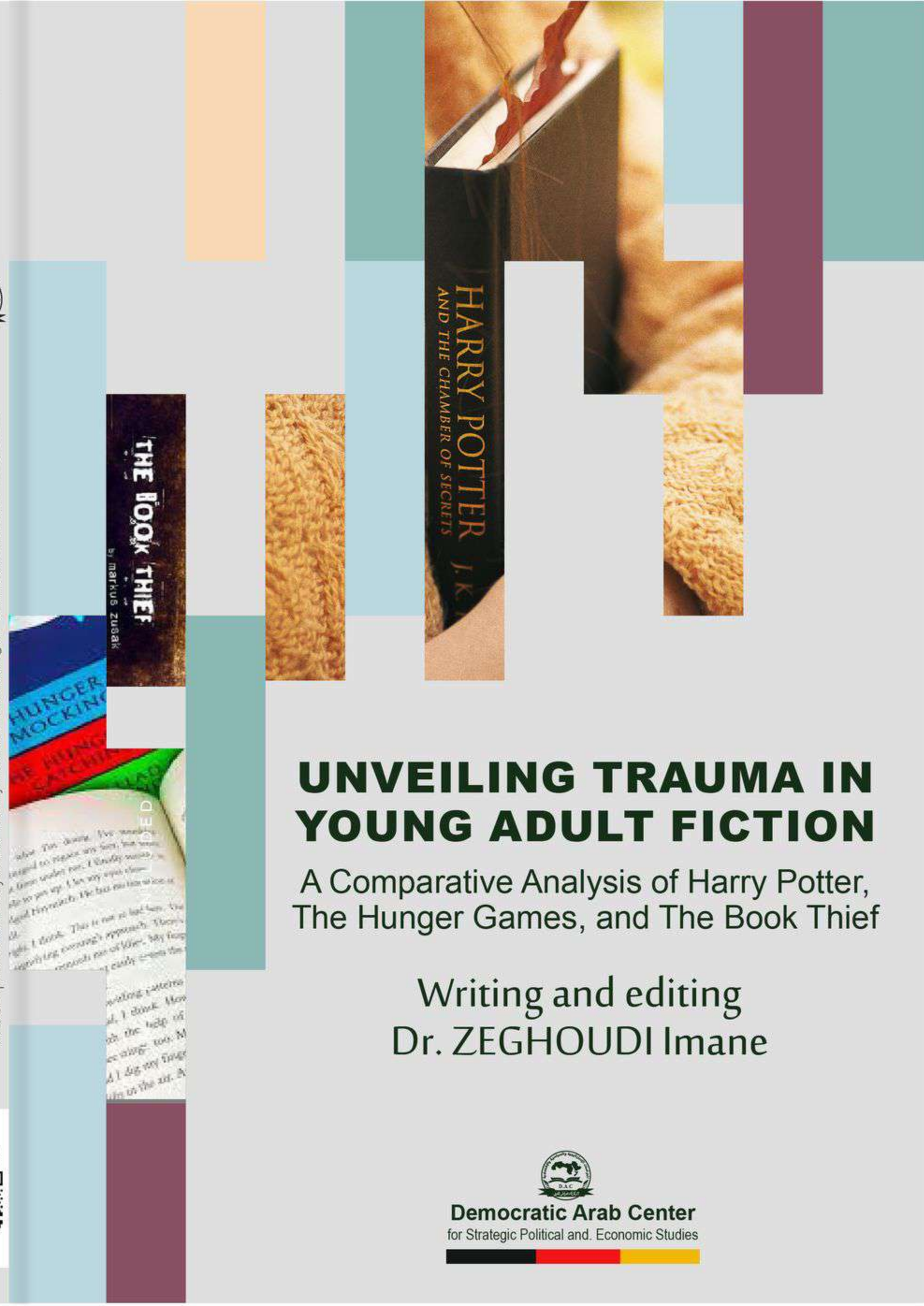


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Dedication

*To my dear parents, your unwavering love and guidance light my path, and
I am forever grateful for the foundation you've provided.*

*To my loving husband, my sweetheart, you are my anchor in life's storms,
and your love makes every day a cherished journey.*

*To my precious son, Mohamed Siradj Eddine, your laughter is the music that
fills our home with joy, making life's moments unforgettable.*

*To my two beautiful daughters, Amira and Djouri, your presence is a source
of grace and inspiration, bringing warmth and brightness to our family.*

*To my two brothers, Mahmoud and Abdallah, and two sisters, Bouchra and
Hiba, each of you is a lifelong companion, sharing laughter, tears, and
unbreakable bonds that time can never erase.*

*In the tapestry of my life, each of you holds a special place, and I am blessed
to have such an incredible family.*

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Introduction

Young Adult Fiction has emerged as a powerful genre that not only entertains but also addresses complex themes and challenges faced by adolescents. Among these themes, the portrayal of trauma holds a significant place, providing a lens through which young readers can explore the impact of adversity on characters they admire. This comparative analysis delves into three iconic works of Young Adult Fiction—Harry Potter by J.K. Rowling, The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins, and The Book Thief by Markus Zusak—to unravel the multifaceted ways in which trauma is unveiled within their narratives.

In recent years, the YA genre has evolved beyond conventional coming-of-age tales to incorporate elements that reflect the psychological and emotional struggles of young protagonists. Trauma, in particular, serves as a poignant and relevant theme, resonating with readers who navigate their own challenges during the formative years. The selected novels not only captivate audiences with fantastical worlds and gripping plots but also weave intricate narratives around characters who confront trauma in various forms, from personal loss to societal upheaval.

Harry Potter, as a literary and cultural phenomenon, introduces readers to the wizarding world and follows the titular character's journey through the aftermath of his parents' tragic death. The Hunger Games thrusts readers into a dystopian future where teenagers are forced to participate in a brutal televised competition, exploring the psychological toll of violence and survival. The Book Thief, set against the backdrop of Nazi Germany, illuminates the impact of war on a young girl and her community.



This comparative analysis seeks to explore the unique approaches each author takes in portraying trauma. By examining the characters' responses, the narrative structures employed, and the thematic underpinnings, we aim to uncover commonalities and distinctions in how these novels engage with the theme of trauma. Moreover, this study endeavors to shed light on the broader implications of using trauma as a narrative device in Young Adult Fiction, considering its potential to foster empathy, resilience, and self-reflection among adolescent readers.

As we navigate the intricate tapestry of these compelling stories, we will unravel the nuanced ways in which Harry Potter, The Hunger Games, and The Book Thief contribute to the exploration and understanding of trauma in the context of Young Adult Fiction. Through this comparative analysis, we embark on a journey to unveil the transformative power of storytelling in addressing and navigating the complexities of trauma in the lives of young protagonists and, by extension, the readers themselves.

“Unveiling Trauma in Young Adult Fiction: A Comparative Analysis of Harry Potter, The Hunger Games, and The Book Thief, ” is essential to give readers a clear understanding of what to expect and how the analysis will unfold.

The overarching purpose of this book is to conduct a thorough and thought-provoking examination of how young adult literature addresses the theme of trauma. Trauma, in the context of literature, refers to the portrayal of emotionally challenging and distressing events that impact characters and, by extension, young readers. The goal is to shed light on how these books provide readers with valuable insights into trauma, its emotional consequences, and the potential for healing and growth.



To achieve this purpose, the book follows a structured and comprehensive format. It begins with an introduction that highlights the importance of studying trauma in young adult literature. This introduction provides a solid foundation for understanding why this analysis is significant and how it can benefit both scholars and those interested in young adult literature.

The subsequent chapters are dedicated to in-depth examinations of three seminal young adult works: “Harry Potter” by J.K. Rowling, “The Hunger Games” by Suzanne Collins, and “The Book Thief” by Markus Zusak. Each of these chapters will delve into the specific traumas portrayed in these novels, emphasizing their unique characteristics and how they resonate with young readers.

Additionally, the book includes a comparative analysis chapter, which offers insights into the common themes and differences in the depiction of trauma in these works. This section highlights the diverse approaches authors employ when addressing trauma and how they influence young readers.

The concluding chapter summarizes the key findings, emphasizing the significance of understanding trauma in young adult literature and its impact on readers. It also provides recommendations for educators, parents, and young readers on how to approach these books and engage with their themes.

Overall, the purpose of this book is to uncover the depth and complexity of trauma in young adult literature, offering readers an opportunity to explore these themes from multiple perspectives. The structure of the book is designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the selected novels and to convey the lasting impact that literature can have on young readers in terms of emotional intelligence, empathy, and resilience.



Chapter One: Resilient Pages: Navigating Trauma in Young Literature

1- Brief Overview of the Concept of Trauma

Theoretical research has faced challenges when attempting to provide a precise meaning and definition of “trauma” due to the complex array of interpretations of trauma across different fields. The word “trauma” is rooted in the Greek term τραῦμα (traûma), which signifies “wound,” denoting damage and injury. This term encompasses highly distressing events that result in both physical and psychological harm. Interestingly, “trauma” initially existed as a word in the seventeenth century, primarily referring to physical injuries. It wasn’t until the late nineteenth century that medical professionals and psychologists began contemplating the psychological aspect of trauma.

The Oxford English Dictionary offers several definitions of trauma, such as “a wound or an external bodily injury,” or “a psychic injury, especially one caused by emotional shock, the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed,” or “the state or condition so caused” (quoted in Hwangbo 1). According to Leys, trauma is “originally conceived as the term for a surgical wound, modeled on the idea of a breach in the skin or the body’s protective envelope, resulting in a catastrophic global reaction in the entire organism” (quoted in Huong Giang 4).

Other scholars have taken different perspectives on the definition of trauma, emphasizing the traumatic event itself rather than the resulting trauma. For instance, Caruth (1991) argues that, “in classic medical terminology, ‘trauma’ refers not to the injury inflicted but to the blow that inflicted it, not to the state of mind that ensues but to the event that provoked it” (184). In simpler terms, trauma is the psychological or mental harm to the



mind's faculties caused by an overwhelming event, leading to disordered behavior. Caruth also points out that in 1980, the American Psychiatric Association included Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in its Clinical Practice Guideline to offer clinicians guidance on psychological treatments for individuals who have experienced trauma. Referencing some definitions of trauma by other critics, Caruth suggests that it represents “a catastrophic experience in which the response to the event is delayed and occurs through uncontrolled repetitive appearances of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (quoted in Lahrech 24). It's important to note that the return of the event is a mental recollection that appears to be recurring.

Furthermore, it is asserted that a traumatic experience or event can result in physical, emotional, or psychological harm to individuals or a group facing the same situation. To illustrate, physical trauma often involves bodily injuries, such as sexual assault, domestic violence, or natural disasters leading to fatalities or injuries. On the other hand, psychological or emotional trauma refers to those who endure physical abuse or assault, negatively impacting their emotional well-being.

The differentiation between physical and psychological traumas is essential as they affect each other in distinct ways. On one hand, physical trauma may trigger psychological trauma. For example, rape is primarily a traumatic experience that has both physical and psychological effects on the victim. Furthermore, physical trauma can give rise to additional physical traumas. For instance, sexual abuse, as a form of physical trauma, can lead to other physical traumas, such as unwanted pregnancy or even death. On the other hand, psychological trauma sometimes leads to physical trauma. For instance, emotional stress can result in physical symptoms like headaches, stomachaches, and chronic pain.



In the field of traumatology, Robert Scaer, a neurologist and prominent figure, elucidates the impact of trauma on the body and the brain. He states,

In the brain of the trauma victim, the synapses, neurons, and neurochemicals have been substantially and indefinitely altered by the effects of a unique life experience. Not surprisingly, the perceptual experience that constitutes the mind has been equally changed [...] Trauma thus represents a time-based corruption of learning. The brain in trauma has lost its ability to distinguish past from present, and as a result, it cannot adapt to the future. This confusion of time further immobilizes the trauma victim, who remains immobilized by a thwarted freeze discharge. Procedural memory is bombarded by environmental and internal cues that represent old, unresolved threat (qtd. in Duffy and Sperry 149).

Based on the aforementioned description, it is evident that the alteration of neurological processes can give rise to the development of physical and psychological symptoms, revealing the interconnectedness of physical and psychological traumas. However, Freud's perspective contends that trauma, functioning as a wound, inflicts damage on the mind rather than the body. An intriguing aspect he highlights is the uncontrollable repetition of catastrophic events in the life of the traumatized individual. To elucidate, Freud articulates that "the patient [...] is fixated to his trauma" (7).

Physical or psychological traumas can manifest either collectively or individually. Collective trauma occurs within a specific group or segment of the population that has undergone severe forms of traumatization, such as natural disasters, technological catastrophes, or experiences of social,

political, cultural, gender, ethnic, or religious persecution, resulting in enduring challenges. Collective trauma is also a quest for meaning; it often transforms into a collective memory and culminates in a system of significance that prompts the affected groups to contemplate their identity and sense of belonging, posing questions about who they are and where they belong (Robben and Suárez-Orozco 24).

Nonetheless, individual trauma stems from an event or circumstance experienced on a personal level, such as a life-threatening illness or sexual abuse. It is something that befalls an individual “who has undergone a potentially mortal aggression or has been a direct witness of a devastatingly traumatic event such as ethnic cleansing, political persecution, and torture, extermination of a ‘race,’ a nation, or a social group” (Mucci 8). Both forms of trauma are unavoidably detrimental and result in severe adverse consequences. Individual trauma can be likened to a strike against the individual's psyche, whereas collective trauma is akin to a blow against society. Kai Erikson provides further insight into this distinction:

By collective trauma, [...] I mean a blow to the basic tissue of social life that damages the bonds attaching people [...] and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with “trauma.” But it is a form of shock [...], a gradual realization that the community no longer exists in an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared. (qtd.in Mucci 208)

As noted earlier, collective trauma inflicts harm on both the victims and witnesses, impacting individuals as well as society and culture. Erikson highlights the idea that while individuals may undergo either individual or collective trauma, these traumatic experiences become shared when they arise from a common catastrophe. He further suggests that an individual grappling with personal trauma may face an identity crisis and encounter difficulties in recovery if the society to which they belong remains fragmented. In contrast, individual therapy can often be beneficial when carried out within a supportive environment.

2- Modern Trauma Theory

In recent times, there has been a growing focus on the theoretical examination of trauma by historians and researchers. Their interpretations have been heavily influenced by Freud's utilization of trauma-related terminology. However, these psychologists have predominantly been shaped by the confluence of interests within a post-structuralist movement that advocates for improving the status of minority groups through the lenses of feminism and postcolonialism.

Trauma, as an area of study, was initially explored by the French Neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, who sought to investigate the link between trauma and mental disorders. In the late 19th century, Charcot conducted studies on hysteria, a condition often associated with women. Hysteria symptoms encompass anxiety, paralysis, amnesia, melancholy, sensory impairment, and other manifestations.

Charcot held the belief that the manifestations of trauma had their origin in a woman's womb or uterus, and he initially recognized that these

symptoms of hysteria were primarily of a psychological nature rather than physiological.

Subsequently, Pierre Janet, Freud, and Breuer embraced Charcot's concepts. Pierre Janet, who had been a student of Charcot, delved into "dissociative phenomena and traumatic memories" (Ringel and Brandell 1). He contended that patients' intense emotions were reactions to their perceptions of the traumatic experiences they had endured. Freud and Breuer introduced a new term for traumatic dissociation, referring to it as "hypnoid hysteria" (167). This term involved the notion of "double consciousness," where thoughts became fragmented and separated from waking consciousness. Furthermore, they explored the connection between hypnoid hysteria and traumatic events and acknowledged that the primary cause of hysteria was psychological trauma. Freud posited that "a premature experience of sexual relations [...] resulting from sexual abuse committed by another person [...] is the specific cause [italics added] of hysteria [...] not merely an agent provocateur" (quoted in Ringel and Brandell 2). Additionally, they concurred that a state of consciousness known as dissociation emerged due to the "overwhelming reactions to traumatic experiences" (2).

Freud's investigations into hysteria and trauma stemming from sexual abuse gave rise to the contemporary trauma hypothesis. In the 19th century, Freud was esteemed as a trailblazer in psychological studies due to his numerous articles and related ideas about psychological disorders. To put it plainly, Caruth asserts that:

If Freud swings to writing to depict horrible experiences, writing, similar to therapy, is keen on the unpredictable connection

between knowing and not knowing. What's more, it is at the particular time when knowing and not knowing cross that the dialect of writing and the psychoanalytic hypothesis of horrible experience exactly meet (3).

Caruth underscores that her contribution also entailed the examination of literary works by various authors who explored characters' distressing experiences, drawing an evident connection to Freudian interpretation and analysis of traumatic events.

However, it's worth noting that Freud did not employ the contemporary term "trauma." Instead, he delved into the physiology of traumatic neurosis. Those afflicted by trauma exhibit "signs of subjective ailment," which Freud equated to a state of unpreparedness for the traumatic experience, akin to fright. Unlike fear and anxiety, which denote a level of readiness on the part of the individual, this sense of fright predominantly occurs in dreams and transports the individual back to the moment of trauma, leading to a separation between conscious and unconscious states. Freud observes that he is not aware that individuals suffering from traumatic neurosis are preoccupied with memories of their accident in their waking lives. In fact, they are more concerned with avoiding thoughts of it (7).

In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920), Freud posits that "traumatic neurosis" embodies a form of "repetition compulsion" or "compulsive repetition" of traumatic experiences, rendering the traumatic event recurrent in various ways, much like a conscious memory. Those experiencing traumatic neurosis lack control over the reappearance of these memories, which surface in the unconscious state, primarily in dreams. Consequently, unlike anxiety and fear, individuals cannot confront the fright associated with

trauma. In this scenario, “the conscious mind can only access the unresolved memory of the event, manifesting itself as an additional experience decoded by default as a series of symptoms” (Lahrech 28).

These symptoms have been organized into a structured framework by Drs. Ryan, Foderaro, and Bloom and are collectively referred to as the “9 A’s of trauma,” which encompass Attachment, Affect, Anger, Authority, Awareness, Addiction, Automatic repetition, Avoidance, and Alienation (Peacock and Lustig 100).

The severity of these symptoms tends to escalate when they are associated with certain behaviors, such as “addictive behavior, disturbances during the night, sleep deprivation, occurrences of dissociative states, and compulsive and repetitive actions. All of these contribute to a sense of isolation, estrangement from one’s surroundings, and an irrational fear of the future” (Lahrech 28).

In his 2004 article, “On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies,” Geoffrey Hartman elucidates Freud’s theoretical framework for understanding trauma.

The [(post)Freudian] theory holds that the knowledge of trauma, or the knowledge [...] from that source, is composed of two contradictory elements. One is the traumatic event, registered rather than experienced. It seems to have bypassed perception and consciousness, and falls directly into the psyche. The other is a kind of memory of the event, in the form of a perpetual troping [literally ‘turning,’ but Hartman also means ‘metaphorizing’] of it by the bypassed or severely split (dissociated) psyche. (Hartman 537)

After experiencing a traumatic event, the traumatized individual is unable to make sense of, assess, or mentally approach the event. Instead, the memory of the event is imprinted in the psyche as an additional experience, often manifesting as a series of symptoms. These symptoms include a compulsion to relive the experience and various other behavioral patterns.

3-Trauma and Literature

The study of trauma spans various fields, including the sciences, humanities, law, psychology, history, and medicine. A consensus on the definition of trauma has not been reached. Roger Luckhurst likens trauma to a knot due to its connection with interdisciplinary research (1). Numerous inquiries have been raised to elucidate the relationship between trauma and literature. One such question is, why does the act of writing about trauma in literature hold significance? This query was addressed by Vickroy, who argues that “literary and imaginative approaches [to trauma] offer an essential complement to historical and psychological investigations” (quoted in Schönfelder 29).

The literature contains most of the studies that contribute to a deeper comprehension of trauma. Esteemed professors in comparative literature have developed theories related to trauma in literature, exemplified by figures like Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman. Felman commenced her exploration of trauma in 1992 through her work, “Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History,” co-authored with the psychoanalyst Dori Laub. Furthermore, she authored another book titled “The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century” in 2002, where she sought to emphasize the interplay between psychoanalysis and literature. Although Felman addressed various aspects of trauma, she, like Caruth,

acknowledged the delayed nature of trauma. Elissa Marder, a professor of French and comparative literature at Emory University, discusses this context in her essay, “Trauma and Literary Studies: Some ‘Enabling Questions.’”

Although there are considerable differences between the work of Caruth and Felman, both thinkers have radically altered the way we think about the trauma. They have done so by insisting upon [...] finding new ways to acknowledge the impact of events that can only be known belatedly and of listening to the power of experiences that can only be expressed indirectly (1-2).

In her book “Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History” from 1996, Caruth shifted her focus to literature and literary interpretations regarding the occurrence of traumatic events and the concept of belated experience, allowing for a deeper exploration of the phenomenon of trauma. She contends that literature “enables us to bear witness to events that cannot be completely known and opens our ears to experiences that might have otherwise remained unspoken and unheard” (quoted in Marder). Following her engagement with diverse philosophical, psychological, literary, and cinematic texts, Caruth confirmed that certain events may elude full comprehension but can hold meaning when shared and heard by others.

The inadvertent emergence of traumatic events in the present is expounded upon by Tasso in his 1581 romantic epic, “Gerusalemme Liberata.” This is illustrated through the character Tancred, who bears witness to the intrusion of a past traumatic experience into the present, guided by fate. After tragically taking the life of his beloved, he relives the act when he impales a tree, experiencing a moment in which he hears his beloved's voice upon observing his own wound.



After her burial, he makes his way into a strange magic forest which strikes the Crusaders' army with terror. He slashes with his sword at a tall tree; but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again (Caruth 2).

Sigmund Freud conducted an analysis of the psychoanalytic concept of transference, which is exemplified by Tancred as he relives his tragic mistake. Freud considered this moment an illustration of the unconscious repetition of trauma. He proposed that psychological trauma may be concealed but never truly disappear. Initially, Tancred does not recognize the connection between his suffering and Clorinda's death until he leaves the battlefield and enters the forest. In this unfamiliar environment, removed from the site of the traumatic event, he recollects the moment of fatally injuring Clorinda by thrusting his sword into a tree, which seems to communicate with him in the voice of his departed beloved. Although the voice does not actually belong to her, it symbolizes the repetition of a past trauma experienced by the individual. Caruth's interpretation of Freud's analysis suggests that the speaking wound does not represent Tancred's trauma but rather the trauma of another. In this context, Tancred shares the traumatic experience with his lost love.

It's important to note that trauma emerges from an interaction involving two or more individuals. The trauma experienced by Clorinda is intertwined with Tancred's own trauma. Even though it is suppressed, it binds those who have been traumatized. The distressing event may be relegated to the recesses of daily consciousness, but it resurfaces in each instance of traumatic recurrence. Caruth has highlighted the connection

between history and trauma theory, and she has also incorporated literature. She affirms that

If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing, and it is at this specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience and the language of literature meet (3)

Caruth emphasized the profound connection between literature and psychoanalysis, contending that literary texts and theories predominantly revolve around the traumatic event and the intricate dynamics of understanding (consciousness) and not understanding (unconsciousness) inherent in the language of trauma.

Following in the footsteps of Cathy Caruth and her exploration of the concept of “belatedness,” Shoshana Felman delved into the notion of testimony in her work “Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History” (1992). Viewing testimony as a crucial response to traumatic history, Felman and her co-author Laub regarded it as a means of bearing witness to the traumatic event through speech. Felman defines testimony as “the literary - or discursive - mode par excellence of our times, and our era can be accurately described as the age of testimony. ‘If the Greeks invented tragedy, the Romans the epistle, and the Renaissance the sonnet,’ [...] ‘our generation invented a new literature, that of testimony’” (5-6).

Drawing from the essays in her book, Felman and Laub put forth the assertion that a traumatic past possesses an enduring quality, persisting into

the present in a manner that transcends our conscious comprehension. Given our incapacity to overcome, mend, manage, or fully grasp our traumatic past, they argue that we “must listen to it and survive it by listening to its effects as they are transmitted to us through the voices of its witnesses and survivors” (quoted in Marder).

David Richard Carroll, an American author, suggests that “If most survivors are, by their own admission [...] inadequate, incompetent, unworthy narrators, they certainly find no adequate, competent, worthy listeners to hear what they have to say” (quoted in Rogers 75). In other words, Felman and Laub embarked on a journey to confront the aftermath of trauma by attentively listening to how artists and ordinary individuals responded to historical traumas, such as World War II and the Holocaust, through language. They maintain that

The major texts, films, and documents [...] were all written and produced after the historical trauma of the Second World War, a trauma we consider as the watershed of our times [...] not as an event encapsulated in the past, but as a history which is essentially not over, a history whose repercussions are not simply omnipresent (whether consciously or not) in all our cultural activities, but whose traumatic consequences are still evolving [...] in today’s political, historical, cultural and artistic scene (xiv).

Armed with a profound understanding cultivated through their work in literary theory, psychoanalysis, and literature, Felman and Laub were intrigued by the question of why trauma necessitates testimony and why testimony is the singular and viable response to trauma. Witnesses share their

traumatic experiences, and the listener, who bears witness to the narrative, becomes privy to the traumatic encounter. More specifically, Felman underscored that testimonial speech distinguishes itself from other forms of discourse. She contends that testimony places the speaker in a challenging position, and being a witness involves personal risks since one can only convey the truth. This truth can extend beyond personal experience to reach others through its revelation. “The witness,” as described by Levinas, “testifies to what has been said through him. Because the witness has said ‘here I am’ before the other.” [...] Testimony is directed towards others, and the witness, while situated in the solitude of their own perspective, becomes the conduit for an event, a reality, a perspective, or a dimension beyond themselves (quoted in Caruth 15). Felman offers a comprehensive delineation of the solitary stance assigned to the witness.

Since the testimony cannot be relayed, repeated, or reported by another without thereby losing its function as a testimony, the burden of the witness—in spite of his or her alignment with other witnesses—is a radically unique, noninterchangeable and solitary burden (3).

The weight borne by the witness is singular and cannot be substituted. The speaker speaks on their own behalf, and there is no replacement for them, making their perspective distinct and unassimilable by others. In this regard, testimony remains unalterable and one-of-a-kind.

4- Navigating Trauma: From Twain to Rowling, A Literary Exploration

Over the past decade, there has been a surge in the popularity of literature featuring children, captivating both young and adult readers. The Harry Potter series and more recently The Hunger Games trilogy have been



prominent examples. One central theme in both of these series revolves around the experiences of children coping with trauma, particularly the loss of their parents. However, the recent trend of spotlighting the struggles of traumatized children has intrigued authors for centuries. American literature, in particular, has demonstrated a keen sensitivity to depicting childhood trauma.

Ernest Hemingway is famously quoted as saying, “All modern literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn.” This endorsement acknowledges the voice and style that Twain introduced for American writers to follow. Beyond stylistic contributions, Twain’s narrative of childhood abuse and abandonment gives voice to the traumatized American child, establishing a tradition that influences subsequent works in the American literary canon.

Through “Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,” Twain employs a set of constructs that later contributions to this tradition manipulate to address evolving concerns regarding children. This tradition is not solely concerned with trauma itself but also delves into the child's psychological response to trauma, particularly exploring the role of imagination in coping with it. This tradition is evident in many other canonical texts in American literature, suggesting a continuum of influence that extends through the works of William Faulkner, Toni Morrison, and beyond.

The depiction of childhood trauma is interwoven throughout American literature. My examination commences with Southern American literature from the late 19th century, a period during which Twain laid the foundation for exploring the interplay between imagination and childhood trauma. This framework significantly shaped the trajectory of 20th-century works that, like

Twain's, utilized the traumatized child as a symbol for addressing national concerns.

Almost half a century after Twain pioneered an early representation of abused and neglected children, Faulkner introduced the character of Joe Christmas to shed light on the enduring repercussions of childhood trauma on adulthood.

5- Representing Trauma in Literature

Modern authors can demonstrate a keen awareness of the various forms in which trauma can appear in storytelling. They can also offer personal reflections on the recent or current horrors. One of the significant merits of literature is its capacity to present trauma in intricate ways. The repercussions of trauma can be depicted realistically, including scenarios where characters remain unaware of the precise origins of their challenges. Indeed, trauma can often be more comprehensible when presented within a fantastical context, especially in children's literature, whether through traditional fairy tales or contemporary bestsellers like Harry Potter, The Hunger Games, and The Book Thief. Fantasy is most appealing and effective when it appears grounded in the everyday world, and it is this blend that enables it to effectively address the experience of trauma. Creative authors possess the ability to reflect a reader's past and present anxieties, and novels dealing with trauma can be as valuable as memoirs and testimonies for exploring such experiences. Children's literature, as emphasized by Peter Hunt, has the potential to deeply influence its readers.

The experience of children's literature for its primary readership is (or can be, or should be) one of revelation, expansion and exploration – of pushing back limits (Hunt, 2003, xi).



Hunt proposes that children's literature wields significant influence (Hunt, 2003, 1) and should challenge limits.

5.1. Navigating Trauma in YA Literature

It lies in its profound influence on the emotional and intellectual development of young readers. Young adult literature, often abbreviated as YA literature, is a genre specifically tailored to the unique experiences and challenges faced by adolescents. Trauma, as a central theme in these books, holds tremendous importance for several reasons.

First and foremost, trauma is a universal human experience, and it can manifest in various forms, from personal losses to societal upheavals. Young adults, in their transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, are often grappling with complex emotions and trying to make sense of the world around them. By addressing trauma in YA literature, authors provide readers with a safe and constructive space to explore these challenging themes, helping them navigate their own emotions and experiences.

The trauma depicted in YA literature serves as a mirror to the real-world challenges faced by young people. Adolescents may encounter situations such as loss, abuse, bullying, discrimination, or violence, and literature allows them to see their experiences reflected in the stories they read. This reflection can be a source of validation, offering a comforting realization that they are not alone in their struggles.

Moreover, exploring trauma in young adult literature contributes to the development of emotional intelligence, empathy, and resilience in young readers. These stories teach readers to connect with the characters, to understand the emotional turmoil they experience, and to develop empathy



toward those facing trauma in their own lives. Through the characters' journeys, readers gain insights into how to cope with adversity, developing essential life skills such as resilience, problem-solving, and emotional self-awareness.

In essence, studying trauma in young adult literature is significant because it equips young readers with the emotional tools they need to navigate life's complexities. It encourages them to confront and discuss difficult topics, fosters empathy and understanding, and offers solace to those dealing with their own traumas. This genre plays a vital role in helping adolescents grow into empathetic, resilient, and emotionally intelligent individuals, making it an indispensable aspect of their literary journey.

The selected books, "Harry Potter" by J.K. Rowling, "The Hunger Games" by Suzanne Collins, and "The Book Thief" by Markus Zusak, stand as iconic examples of young adult literature that delve into the complexities of trauma in distinctive ways.

"Harry Potter" is a globally renowned series that has captured the hearts of readers of all ages. Authored by J.K. Rowling, this seven-book saga takes readers on a magical journey through the wizarding world. At its core, "Harry Potter" is a coming-of-age tale that portrays the young wizard, Harry, as he faces numerous traumatic events. These range from the loss of his parents at a very young age to the ever-present threat of the dark wizard, Lord Voldemort. Throughout the series, readers witness how Harry, along with his friends, Hermione and Ron, confronts these traumas, ultimately learning the values of courage, friendship, and resilience. The books offer a rich tapestry of themes, and trauma is intricately woven into the narrative as a central element for character development.

In contrast, “The Hunger Games” by Suzanne Collins thrusts readers into a dystopian world where a brutal annual competition, the Hunger Games, serves as a grim reminder of the Capitol’s oppressive control. This trilogy places its protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, in an unimaginably traumatic situation where she is forced to fight for her life. The trauma Katniss experiences within the Hunger Games arena is a central theme, demonstrating how a young person copes with extreme adversity, loss, and the ethical dilemmas of survival. The books address the psychological consequences of trauma, depicting how it can shape an individual's character and decisions.

“The Book Thief” by Markus Zusak, set against the backdrop of Nazi Germany during World War II, offers a unique exploration of trauma. The novel follows Liesel Meminger, a young girl living amidst the horrors of war, and Max Vandenburg, a Jewish refugee hiding in her family’s basement. Through their experiences, the novel delves into the trauma of loss, grief, and the power of storytelling as a coping mechanism. Zusak’s narrative provides a heart-wrenching portrayal of the trauma inflicted by historical events, focusing on the lives of ordinary individuals enduring extraordinary hardships.

These three books were selected for their profound exploration of trauma in the lives of young characters, reflecting the varied ways in which literature can address and interpret this significant theme. Each work provides a distinctive lens through which to view trauma, offering a rich tapestry of insights and emotional depth for readers.



Chapter Two: The Magical World of Harry Potter

1- An Overview of “Harry Potter” and J.K. Rowling’s Approach to Trauma

“Harry Potter” by J.K. Rowling is a literary phenomenon that transcends age and genre boundaries. This seven-book series has left an indelible mark on the world of literature, captivating readers with its magical world and timeless themes. At the heart of the series is a unique exploration of trauma, offering young readers a powerful narrative that addresses the emotional consequences of adversity.

J.K. Rowling’s approach to trauma in the “Harry Potter” series is multifaceted and deeply layered. The story begins with a traumatic event—the murder of Harry’s parents by the dark wizard Lord Voldemort when Harry was just an infant. This loss sets the stage for Harry’s journey through the wizarding world, marked by grief, abandonment, and a deep sense of isolation.

Throughout the series, Rowling weaves trauma into the fabric of the narrative. Harry faces various traumas, from his encounters with the Dementors, dark creatures that feed on happiness, to the constant threat of Voldemort’s return. His traumatic experiences are not limited to physical danger; they also include the emotional trauma of betrayal, loss of loved ones, and the ongoing battle against the dark forces.

What makes Rowling’s approach unique is her focus on character development in the face of trauma. Harry and his friends, particularly Hermione and Ron, must navigate these traumatic events and develop resilience, courage, and a sense of purpose. They learn to confront their fears and traumas head-on, transcending their personal tragedies.



Rowling's portrayal of trauma extends to other characters as well. For example, Severus Snape's complex character is marked by the traumatic experiences of his youth, which ultimately drive his actions throughout the series. The character of Sirius Black, Harry's godfather, also grapples with the trauma of wrongful imprisonment.

In "Harry Potter," trauma is not a singular event but a recurring theme that underscores the importance of empathy, compassion, and support in the face of adversity. Rowling's approach offers young readers valuable insights into how individuals can cope with trauma, develop resilience, and find strength in friendship and community. The series illustrates that trauma is a part of life's journey, but it can be overcome through love, courage, and the bonds of friendship.

2- Analyzing Trauma Portrayal in the Series: Harry, Hermione, Ron

The portrayal of trauma in the "Harry Potter" series by J.K. Rowling is both poignant and powerful, and it significantly impacts key characters like Harry, Hermione, and Ron. These young wizards experience a range of traumatic events throughout the series, and their responses to these traumas contribute to their character development.

Harry Potter, the central character of the series, is marked by early childhood trauma due to the loss of his parents at the hands of the dark wizard Lord Voldemort. This traumatic event shapes his identity and emotional journey. Harry's experiences with the Dementors, particularly in "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban," provide readers with a visceral representation of trauma. Dementors are magical creatures that feed on happiness, and their presence induces traumatic memories and feelings of despair. Harry's struggle with these emotions and his resilience in the face of

trauma serve as a powerful example for young readers. His ability to confront his fears and grapple with the emotional consequences of his past is a central theme of the series.

Hermione Granger, known for her intelligence and resourcefulness, also faces traumatic events throughout the series. Her experience in “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows,” when she wipes her parents’ memories to protect them, is particularly poignant. This decision highlights the sacrifices individuals make to protect their loved ones, as well as the trauma that can result from such choices. Hermione’s character reflects the complex ways in which trauma can shape individuals, leading to personal growth and emotional depth.

Ron Weasley, Harry’s loyal and humorous friend, is not exempt from the series’ trauma. His fear of spiders and the traumatic encounter with Aragog in the Forbidden Forest underscore the recurring theme of facing one’s fears. Ron’s character shows how trauma can manifest in the form of phobias, but it also emphasizes the importance of support from friends in overcoming such traumas.

The “Harry Potter” series explores trauma as a central element of the characters’ journeys. While the series includes fantastical elements, it remains grounded in the emotional realities of its characters. The characters’ responses to trauma—whether it’s Harry’s bravery, Hermione’s strength, or Ron’s vulnerability—resonate with young readers. This portrayal of trauma and its impact on the characters is a testament to the depth and emotional complexity of J.K. Rowling’s storytelling, providing young readers with valuable insights into how individuals can navigate their own traumas and emerge stronger and wiser.



3- Character Resilience and Coping Strategies: A Comprehensive Discussion

The “Harry Potter” series by J.K. Rowling not only portrays trauma but also provides a profound exploration of resilience and the coping mechanisms developed by its characters. Throughout the series, the characters, including Harry, Hermione, and Ron, display remarkable resilience in the face of adversity, demonstrating that even in a world of magic, it is their inner strength and coping strategies that truly define their characters.

Harry Potter’s resilience is a central theme of the series. His ability to confront the trauma of losing his parents, his encounters with the dark forces of the wizarding world, and his numerous near-death experiences showcases his unwavering determination. He often leans on his friendships with Hermione and Ron for support, illustrating the importance of social connections as a coping mechanism. The character of Harry teaches young readers that resilience doesn’t mean the absence of fear or trauma; it means finding the strength to carry on despite them.

Hermione Granger is a character marked by her intellectual resilience. Her resourcefulness, adaptability, and problem-solving skills make her a key figure in the series. Hermione’s extensive knowledge and love for learning are not only coping mechanisms but also sources of strength. Her determination to find solutions and her ability to remain calm under pressure serve as an inspiration to young readers. Her character emphasizes that resilience isn’t just about emotional strength; it also involves the use of intelligence and knowledge to overcome challenges.

Ron Weasley, while occasionally displaying self-doubt, exemplifies resilience through his loyalty and sense of humor. Ron's ability to find humor even in the darkest of times is a coping mechanism that not only provides comic relief but also a source of strength for his friends. His loyalty to Harry and Hermione is unwavering, and his willingness to face his fears showcases his growth as a resilient character.

The series underscores that resilience and coping mechanisms are not one-size-fits-all; they vary from character to character. It teaches young readers that resilience can take many forms, whether it's Harry's determination, Hermione's intelligence, or Ron's humor. Additionally, the series highlights the importance of seeking support from friends and allies during challenging times.

In "Harry Potter," resilience and coping mechanisms are portrayed as essential tools for navigating trauma and adversity. The characters' journeys serve as powerful lessons for young readers, emphasizing the importance of inner strength, friendship, and adaptability in the face of life's challenges. These traits make the characters relatable and their stories inspiring to readers of all ages.

Dreams and Flashbacks Following Harry's enrollment at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, his dreams assume a prominent role in the narrative, even blurring the lines with reality in subsequent novels. While Harry doesn't directly recollect the circumstances of his splitting or his arrival at the Dursleys' home, his dreams contain fragmented memories. Prior to his night of revelation, during his 'normal' life with the Dursleys, he dreams of his past, as noted when he thinks, "There had been a flying motorbike in it. He had a funny feeling he'd had the same dream before"

(Rowling, 1997, 19). Repetition is a significant aspect of trauma, and Harry exhibits elements that continue to haunt him. Both Harry and the Dursleys are unaware that Hagrid transported Harry to the Dursleys' immediately after his parents' tragic demise on an enchanted, flying motorbike belonging to his Godfather, Sirius Black. While it may be arguable whether a one-year-old Harry would genuinely remember the motorbike, the memory has somehow become lodged in his subconscious and resurfaces in his dreams. Anne Whitehead suggests that "Trauma emerges as that which, at the very moment of its reception, registers as a non-experience, causing conventional epistemologies to falter" (Whitehead, 2004, 5).

As Whitehead implies, traumatic experiences often manifest as something too overwhelming to grasp at the time. Harry's infancy offers Rowling a means to realistically represent this incomprehensible and elusive nature of trauma – an infant is unlikely to fully comprehend such an event, and any memories are likely to be fragmented and disordered. Nevertheless, the power and traumatic quality of these memories appear to transcend the expected; they may be supernatural memories beyond Harry's control, haunting him. A recurring feature of the night Harry's parents perished is the inexplicable green light, which remains seared into his memory.

‘Are you really Harry Potter?’ Ron blurted out.

Harry nodded.

‘Oh - well, I thought it might be one of Fred and George’s jokes,’ said Ron. ‘And have you really got - you know... ’

He pointed at Harry’s forehead.

Harry pulled back his fringe to show the lightning scar.

Ron stared.

‘So that’s where You-Know-Who-?’

‘Yes,’ said Harry, ‘but I can’t remember it.’

‘Nothing?’ said Ron eagerly.

‘Well - I remember a lot of green light, but nothing else.’

(Rowling, 1997, 74.)

This dialogue marks Harry’s introduction to his future best friend, Ron. It not only highlights Harry’s fame within the wizarding world but also underscores his status as a person of great intrigue. Harry has demonstrated his ability to recall events from his infancy, even if he did not fully grasp the nature or significance of these memories. The ‘green light’ refers to the color produced by the killing curse cast by Voldemort on Harry’s parents and Harry himself. This green light would be a dominant fixation in his memory, as it offered an easier distraction from the harsh reality of the moment. Rather than dwelling on Voldemort’s face or his mother’s death, the green light became a focal point for Harry. As he recalls the green light, it’s plausible that he could also remember other, more distressing details from that fateful night, but his mind is suppressing them.

Laurie Vickroy, in ‘Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction,’ explains that “Fundamental to a traumatic experience is that the past lingers unresolved, not remembered in a conventional sense, because it is not processed like nontraumatic information, either cognitively or emotionally” (Vickroy, 2002, 12). Vickroy’s description of traumatic experience is closely tied to traumatic memory and how it becomes fragmented and repressed. Traumatic memory cannot be stored or interpreted like nontraumatic

memory, as it resists ownership and comprehension. This may explain why Harry cannot recall a more complete image of the night his parents died. His mind refuses to reveal anything beyond fragments, which continue to haunt him. On his first night at Hogwarts, Harry experiences such a haunting and incomprehensible dream.

Harry was going to ask Ron if he'd had any of the treacle tart, but he fell asleep almost at once.

Perhaps Harry had eaten a bit too much, because he had a very strange dream. He was wearing Professor Quirrell's turban, which kept talking to him, telling him he must transfer to Slytherin at once, because it was his destiny. Harry told the turban he didn't want to be in Slytherin; [one of the four houses at Hogwarts, which is seen as the house for purebloods and potential evil. Voldemort was a Slytherin] it got heavier; he tried to pull it off but it tightened painfully- and there was Malfoy, laughing at him as he struggled with it -then Malfoy turned into the hook nosed teacher, Snape, whose laugh became high and cold - there was a burst of green light and Harry woke, sweating and shaking.

He rolled over and fell asleep again, and when he woke next day, he didn't remember the dream at all (Rowling, 1997, 97).

While this serves as an illustration of a recurring dream featuring the persistent green light, it carries concealed meanings, which, at this juncture in the narrative, are subtly concealed. The dream implies a connection between Harry and Voldemort, with Slytherin house symbolizing this link. Subconsciously, Harry is resolute in his efforts to sever any ties with

Voldemort. Trauma, a recurring but indefinable menace, is employed to build dramatic tension, as the reader possesses knowledge that eludes Harry, who forgets the dream upon awakening. However, significantly, the enigmatic memory does acquire significance once the key is provided. This may appear to contradict the idea of trauma as an incomprehensible event for the reader, but it continues to remain beyond Harry's comprehension.

Another reference to the green light occurs during the Christmas holidays of Harry's first year: "He started having nightmares. Over and over again he dreamed about his parents disappearing in a flash of green light while a high voice cackled with laughter" (Rowling, 1997, 158). Once more, this underscores the agony and vexation associated with this persistent and recurring image. The night of his splitting remains an enduring source of distress for him, though in an abstract and fragmented manner. Toward the conclusion of the first book, Harry faces Voldemort (who is not yet in human form but more of a spectral presence, though not deceased) and survives once more. In the beginning of the second book, 'Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets,' Harry's nightmares have evolved, now personified:

Harry had slipped through Voldemort's clutches for a second time, but it had been a narrow escape, and even now, weeks later, Harry kept waking in the night, drenched in cold sweat, wondering where Voldemort was now, remembering his livid face, his wide, mad eyes ... (Rowling, 1998, 12.)

Now Harry grapples with the haunting image of Voldemort's face, marking a new traumatic encounter. His initial dreams concerning the night his parents perished undergo a transformation in the third installment of the series, 'Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban,' due to the presence of

enigmatic beings known as Dementors. Dementors are entities that remain imperceptible to Muggles but are visible to witches and wizards. They drain all joy from an individual (with Dementors serving as a metaphor for depression) and can even extract a person's soul through a chilling act known as the 'Dementor's kiss.' Harry's first encounter with these unsettling beings occurs on the train journey to Hogwarts at the beginning of the school term. This encounter proves to be both horrifying and bewildering for him, as he not only relives the night his parents were killed but is also subconsciously aware of the experience:

An intense cold swept over them all. Harry felt his own breath catch in his chest. The cold went deeper than his skin. It was inside his chest, it was inside his very heart ... Harry's eyes rolled up into his head. He couldn't see. He was drowning in cold. There was a rushing in his ears as though of water. He was being dragged downwards, the roaring growing louder ... And then, from far away, he heard screaming, terrible, terrified, pleading screams. He wanted to help whoever it was, he tried to move his arms, but couldn't ... a thick white fog was swirling around him, inside him - (Rowling, 1999, 66).

This encounter continues to haunt Harry, resurfacing multiple times until he learns to cope with it. According to Cathy Caruth, "The flashback, it seems, provides a form of recall that survives at the cost of willed memory or of the very continuity of conscious thought" (Caruth, 1996c, 152). As Caruth suggests, Harry's flashback persists in his mind in a manner that he cannot consciously recollect or comprehend. He perceives the flashback as a genuine experience, evidenced by his post-flashback inquiries about the source of the

screams: ‘What happened, Where’s that - that thing? Who screamed?’ (Rowling, 1999, 66). Caruth further explains,

The history that a flashback tells - as psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and neurobiology equally suggest - is, therefore, a history that literally has no place, neither in the past, in which it was not fully experienced, nor in the present, in which its precise images and enactments are not fully understood. In its repeated imposition as both image and amnesia, the trauma thus seems to evoke the difficult truth of a history that it constituted by the very incomprehensibility of its occurrence (Caruth, 1996c, 153).

I find Caruth’s statement particularly relevant, especially when applied to Harry, considering his age at the time of his initial traumatic experience. At just one year old, he lacked the cognitive capacity to fully comprehend the event. Even now, at the age of 13, he struggles to grasp the full meaning of his Dementor-induced flashback, despite experiencing profound fear and anguish when it occurs. This mirrors his recurring dreams of the green light, which are both abstract and symbolic, serving as the most direct representation of his moment of splitting that his mind can conjure. Caruth seems to imply that traumatic history exists beyond its original time and place, and this holds true for Harry. His traumatic past has no place in his current life but refuses to remain confined to the past. When it is eventually explained to him that Dementors compel victims to relive their most traumatic memory, he comprehends the nature of his experience and seeks assistance to confront the distressing encounters they provoke.

The Patronus is a kind of positive force, a projection of the very things that the Dementor feeds upon - hope, happiness, the desire

to survive [...] which will work only if you are concentrating, with all your might, on a single, very happy memory (Rowling, 1999, 176).

The defensive spell against Dementors resembles a method for coping with trauma, especially depression. It bears a resemblance to techniques employed in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, which emphasizes focusing on the present and reprogramming one's thought patterns on a daily basis, replacing negative thoughts with positive ones (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, 2009). Harry masters this advanced form of magic, effectively addressing this specific aspect of his trauma. Nevertheless, despite his ability to work through this experience successfully, it continues to evoke a distressing resonance for him. As noted by Roni Natov in her essay 'Harry Potter and the Extraordinariness of the Ordinary,' the presence of Dementors perpetuates the ongoing guilt experienced by Harry:

What tortures Harry is his overwhelming guilt and sorrow at his mother's death. At the sight of these gray-hooded figures [Dementors], Harry hears his mother's desperate cries: "No, take me, kill me instead." Haunted by her pain and feeling guilty that she died to save him, Harry is drawn into intense ambivalence. Rowling explains that even though it was so painful for Harry to hear the "last moments" of his parents "inside his head," these were the only times that he'd heard their voices since he was very young (Natov, 2004, 134-5).

It's a poignant irony that something Harry yearns for deeply comes to him through the most distressing of circumstances. The only instances when he can hear his parents' voices, since their passing, involve traumatic

recollections, which further torment him. In ‘Philosopher’s Stone,’ Harry encounters the Mirror of Erised, revealing his deepest desire: his family gathered around him. This presents him with an unreal representation of the family he longs for.

Memory, as the series illustrates, is a subjective and flawed faculty, as exemplified by the use of a Pensieve. A Pensieve, a large stone basin, serves as a magical tool in the wizarding world. It stores memories that have been extracted from an individual’s mind, allowing others to view these memories. This tool offers insights that a person would be unable to freely convey, as translating a mental memory into a verbal explanation would inevitably yield a less faithful version.

That’s precisely why memories preserved in the Pensieve carry such significance: they represent the utmost accuracy attainable in human memory, even if an individual has tried to manipulate or distort the recollection they have contributed. By the fourth book, Voldemort’s power has grown, further intensifying the peculiar connection between him and Harry. As a result, Harry begins to experience dreams involving Voldemort’s memories. This underscores the importance of memory throughout the series. To counter Voldemort, memory becomes the linchpin for uncovering his triumphs and failures. The Pensieve assumes a critical role, as seen in ‘Harry Potter.’ It holds numerous memories from Dumbledore, directly relevant to Voldemort, as well as memories from others who possess crucial fragments of Voldemort’s past. Without these fragmented (and at times traumatic) memories, Harry would lack the vital information needed to attempt to overcome his adversary. I find it noteworthy that it's through fragmented memories, often tied to trauma, that the essential knowledge is conveyed, aiding in piecing together the events and providing order, meaning, and



significance, ultimately facilitating progress, much like the process of working through trauma: revisiting traumatic experiences, working through them, and establishing order, meaning, and significance to move forward.

3.1. Obsession

Upon Harry's realization of his true past, his awareness of his traumatic memory intensifies, and this awareness undergoes a slight reduction in distortion, particularly following his confrontation with Voldemort in the Philosopher's Stone. The abstract concepts haunting Harry, such as the green light, transform into the visage of Voldemort, as previously discussed. There is a profound shift in Harry's preoccupations, evolving into an overwhelming obsession with his adversary. It is noteworthy that Harry's obsession mirrors Voldemort's fixation on him. This mutual obsession can be understood as a manifestation of trauma, as outlined in Daniel M. Wegner's study titled "White Bears and Other Unwanted Thoughts."

Trauma appears to etch a deep psychological scar in the person. Like the rape victim, victims of all kinds often become obsessed with their traumas. The incest victim for instance, may find that disturbing and painful thoughts of the traumatic events can last a lifetime [...] It is not entirely clear why traumas have this effect. Why should people be so deeply moved by traumatic events? The development of a full-blown obsession might only take a minute (Wegner, 1994, 162-3).

Harry and Voldemort harbor an intense mutual obsession driven by both personal and broader motives, compelled by the imperative not to forget each other. Their shared destiny dictates that each must bring about the downfall of the other. According to Wegner, the development of an obsession

can occur swiftly, and even though Harry became consciously aware of Voldemort's existence only as his first year at Hogwarts approached, any mention of Voldemort and his past would likely have ignited an obsession fueled by Harry's existing trauma. When Hagrid first reveals details about Harry's parents, it triggers the emergence of new memories and associated pain:

Something very painful was going on in Harry's mind. As Hagrid's story came to a close, he saw again the blinding flash of green light, more clearly than he had ever remembered it before - and he remembered something else, for the first time in his life - a high, cold, cruel laugh (Rowling, 1997, 46).

Harry's burgeoning obsession with Voldemort undergoes rapid escalation once he enters Hogwarts School and acquires additional knowledge and information about the dark wizard. The continuous connection between Harry and Voldemort commences from the moment of the split, where a fragment of Voldemort's soul becomes embedded in Harry due to the failure of the killing curse. This implies a perpetual proximity between Voldemort and Harry, symbolizing a profoundly symbolic representation of traumatic obsession.

In the fourth novel, "Goblet of Fire," the narrative initiates with Harry's detailed dream involving Voldemort. The dream unfolds in connection to Voldemort's actions, encompassing a murder and the plotting of his return to full power. This dream sequence further underscores the intricate intertwining of Harry's consciousness with Voldemort's, reflecting the thematic nuances of traumatic obsession:

Harry lay flat on his back, breathing hard as though he had been running. He had been awoken from a vivid dream with his hands pressed over his face. The old scar on his forehead, which was shaped like a bolt of lightning, was burning beneath his fingers as though someone had just pressed a white-hot wire to his skin (Rowling, 2000, 20).

The aftermath of the dream and its implications serve as a reminder to the reader of the profound and not entirely understood connection between Harry and Voldemort. Voldemort assumes various roles in Harry's life, but at its core, he represents an obsession for Harry. The scar on Harry's forehead serves as a tangible link to Voldemort, encapsulating a piece of Voldemort's soul. Consequently, when Voldemort experiences any sensation, the scar induces pain in Harry, manifesting as a literal expression of psychological distress. Voldemort himself becomes a haunting presence, embodying the essence of trauma. Harry's freedom is contingent upon defeating Voldemort, working through this unrelenting connection and obsession.

Harry's fate has intricately defined his identity, and the potential erasure of his obsession and nemesis poses a challenge to the core of his being. However, beyond the desire to defeat Voldemort, Harry's fundamental aspirations revolve around companionship, family, and a sense of normalcy. Upon Voldemort's defeat, Harry envisions the ability to shape his identity according to the norms of a regular life, characterized by family bonds and a career dedicated to further protecting the wizarding world. This vision materializes as he secures a role within the Ministry of Magic and cultivates a content and fulfilling family life.



3.2. Life and Death

Transitioning to the theme of life and death in Harry Potter's narrative, the pivotal moment of splitting, marked by his parents' tragic demise, constitutes his initial and profound encounter with loss. Beyond losing his parents, Harry is bereft of his wizarding world and lifestyle, subjecting him to abuse as a child in a manner reminiscent of traditional fairy tales. Placed under the care of his only living relatives, the Dursleys, who include his mother's sister, Petunia, and her son Dudley, Harry endures a reality marked by mistreatment, neglect, and maltreatment. Similar to the archetypal fairy tales discussed earlier, where protagonists often faced neglect or abuse at the hands of stepparents, Harry's extended family inflicts hardship upon him. Examples include being compelled to sleep in a cupboard under the stairs, potential malnutrition due to insufficient food, and enduring continuous insults and bullying. This situation draws parallels to Elaine Ostry's observation in her essay, "Accepting Mudbloods: The Ambivalent Social Vision of J. K. Rowling's Fairy Tales" (Rowling, 1997):

Although Harry grows up a bit, he is essentially a static character like the fairy-tale hero. He tells Hermione and Ron that he will never join the enemy, and we believe him. The books rest on the image of Harry as inherently virtuous. The kind of neglect he encountered at the Dursleys would realistically create an antisocial boy desperate to curry

favor and win power for himself; instead when he magically received attention beyond his wildest dreams and Hogwarts, he instantly rejects this status (Ostry, 2003, 97).



While I concur with Ostry's assertion that Harry's challenging upbringing had the potential to shape him into a person with antisocial tendencies, I diverge in the view that he is a static character. Unlike a typical fairy tale hero, Harry exhibits notable courage and a distinct personality. Despite enduring a difficult upbringing, his experiences instilled resilience and strength in him, fostering a belief in a brighter future. Additionally, Harry is designed to mirror reality. Similar to a fairy tale protagonist, he serves as a representative of the reader, suggesting that his initial story might evoke recognition that transcends into real-life situations—abuse and neglect being prevalent in society. Drawing parallels to a fairy tale, Aunt Petunia assumes the role of the wicked stepmother,

She is shown to not only hate Harry and resent his presence in her family but to loathe him. She is of course jealous of Harry, as all evil stepmothers are traditionally represented, and goes to all ends to make sure he had a miserable life (Mayes-Elma, 2006, 99).

Another parallel to fairy tales is the significant role of food in the dynamics between wicked stepmothers and their victims. The portrayal often involves stepmothers either subjecting their unwanted stepchildren to starvation or presenting them with poisoned food. In this context, food serves as a metaphor for the absence of maternal love. Additionally, akin to the thematic treatment of sex, it frequently functions as an element intertwined with trauma, as noted by Ronald Granofsky in "The Trauma Novel":

Eating and sex are frequently portrayed in the trauma novel as the representatives of the drives to individual and collective survival respectively. Eating also occurs as a central motif in many trauma novels ... (Granofsky, 1995, 16.)



As these novels primarily center on the experiences of children, sex is not a prominent overarching theme, but the theme of eating is a recurring element. Harry's introduction to the wizarding world marks a significant shift in his life, and this transformation is vividly depicted through the contrasting portrayal of food. While the Dursleys enjoy an abundance of food, with Dudley being especially indulged and overfed as a spoiled and inconsiderate child, Harry's experience is starkly different, with limited access to food in their household.

The Dursleys bought Dudley and Piers large chocolate ice-creams at the entrance and then, because the smiling lady in the van had asked Harry what he wanted before they could hurry him away, they bought him a cheap lemon ice lolly (Rowling, 1997, 24).

At Hogwarts food is plentiful: 'feasts' are common:

Harry's mouth fell open. The dishes in front of him were now piled with food. He had never seen so many things he liked to eat on one table: roast beef, roast chicken, pork chops and lamb chops, Yorkshire pudding, peas, carrots, gravy, ketchup and, for some strange reason, mint humbugs (Rowling, 1997, 92).

This straightforward comparison illustrates how Hogwarts almost immediately feels more like a home to Harry than his ten years with the Dursleys ever did. Rowling meticulously details Harry's meals, particularly during Hogwarts feasts, emphasizing the significance of food, a common focus in many boarding school narratives (Smith, 2003, 81). In the context of Harry Potter's story, I contend that food holds particular importance due to the ongoing theme of survival permeating the narrative.



While matriculating and attending Hogwarts is generally viewed as positive for Harry, the transition is not without its complexities. As previously suggested in Chapter One, even positive changes can evoke turmoil in a child (Johnson, 1989, 14-5), especially since this move to the wizarding world and Hogwarts mirrors the relatable experience of transitioning from primary to secondary school. Additionally, there is room for further exploration of how Harry's upbringing has shaped him; having been a loner throughout his life, he has never experienced true friendship. However, at Hogwarts, he quickly and easily forms solid friendships with peers who share similar marginal or potentially unpopular backgrounds. Choosing friends like Ron, from a less affluent family, and Hermione, a Muggle-born bookworm, reflects Harry's preference for companions who, like him, could be considered outcasts. A typical child entering secondary school for the first time might experience a similar sense of being out of their depth. Harry worries about fitting in during the sorting hat ceremony, where new students are assigned to their houses, expressing the following anxiety:

A horrible thought struck Harry, as horrible thoughts always do when you're very nervous. What if he wasn't chosen at all? What if he just sat there with the hat over his eyes for ages, until Professor McGonagall jerked it off his head and said there had obviously been a mistake and he'd better get back on the train? (Rowling, 1997, 90.)

Harry's longing for a sense of belonging spans both his school and home life. When his godfather, Sirius Black, reenters his life, even if briefly, Harry starts to envision the possibility of a content family existence. Unfortunately, Sirius' life is abruptly terminated:

The second jet of light hit him squarely on the chest. [...] It seemed to take Sirius an age to fall: his body curved in a graceful arc as he sank backwards through the ragged veil hanging from the arch. Harry saw the look of mingled fear and surprise on his godfather's wasted, once handsome face as he fell through the ancient doorway and disappeared behind the veil, which fluttered for a moment as though in a high wind, and then fell back into place (Rowling, 2003, 710-1).

Apart from the trauma caused by Sirius' demise, there's an additional intriguing aspect to the circumstances of his death. The battleground is situated in the Ministry of Magic, specifically in the department of mysteries, where an old archway stands with a suspended veil. This hanging seems to serve as an entrance to death and the afterlife, symbolizing the colloquial expression "beyond the veil." Sirius's death goes beyond being a mere sudden event; it serves as a symbolic representation of death itself. Rowling attempts to depict the epitome of incomprehensible trauma. Sirius falls behind the veil, transitioning from being alive and present in the room to completely vanishing without a trace in the next moment. This portrayal appears to symbolize death in its general sense, which is often perplexing and irrational, as highlighted by John M. Violanti in "Traumatology of Grieving":

Sudden deaths are usually more difficult to grieve than deaths where there is some prior warning [...] A sudden death will generally leave [...] a sense of unreality about the loss. [...] Guilt feelings are also common among survivors of sudden deaths (Violanti, 1999, 81).

This is certainly true in Harry's case. Immediately after the death he is in disbelief:

‘Get him, save him, he’s only just gone through!’

‘-it’s too late, Harry.’

‘We can still reach him -’ Harry struggled hard and viciously, but Lupin would not let go ...

‘There’s nothing you can do, Harry ... nothing ... he’s gone.’

[...] ‘He hasn’t gone!’ Harry yelled.

[...] ‘HE - IS - NOT - DEAD!’ roared Harry (Rowling, 2003, 711-2).

Harry struggles to grasp the situation, unwilling to accept that Sirius has passed away suddenly and without proper acknowledgment. Additionally, he bears an overwhelming sense of guilt concerning Sirius’ demise:

‘I know how you’re feeling, Harry,’ said Dumbledore very quietly.

‘No, you don’t,’ said Harry, and his voice was suddenly loud and strong; white-hot anger leapt inside him; Dumbledore knew *nothing* about his feelings. [...]

‘It is *my* fault that Sirius died’, said Dumbledore clearly (Rowling, 2003, 725-7).

Feeling accountable for Sirius’ death, Harry grapples with guilt. Dumbledore, recognizing this burden, tries to shift the blame onto himself,

citing his decision to withhold information about the connection between Harry and Voldemort. Despite enduring more traumatic experiences, Harry must navigate through them, move forward, and reconstruct his life, knowing that he is destined to confront Voldemort. Yet, the losses continue to accumulate as Dumbledore also passes away, robbing Harry of another source of support and a father figure. This death poses a different kind of confusion for Harry, as Dumbledore had orchestrated it months in advance due to severe injuries. Knowing he was slowly dying, Dumbledore, anticipating Draco Malfoy's assigned task to kill him, entrusts Severus Snape with a mercy killing. This decision ensures that Dumbledore dies on his own terms and prevents Draco from becoming a murderer. Unaware of this arrangement, Harry must grapple with the complexities of Dumbledore's death:

‘Severus ... please ...’

Snape raised his wand and pointed it directly at Dumbledore. ‘Avada Kedavra!’ A jet of green light shot from the end of Snape's wand and hit Dumbledore squarely in the chest. Harry's scream of horror never left him; silent and unmoving, he was forced to watch as Dumbledore was blasted into the air: for a split second he seemed to hang suspended beneath the shining skull, and then he fell slowly backwards, like a great rag doll, over the battlements and out of sight (Rowling, 2003, 556).

Similarly to his response to Sirius's death, Harry initially experiences profound disbelief: “Harry felt as though he, too, were hurtling through space; it had not happened ... it could not have happened ... ” (Rowling, 2005, 557). However, this time, the presence of a lifeless body intensifies the

gravity of the situation. Much like the death of Harry's friend Cedric in "Goblet of Fire," there is now a tangible body to grieve over.

Harry expresses and exhibits symptoms and behaviour common for bereaved teenagers. His responses are often multifaceted and include shock, numbness, blame and guilt, sadness and rage. More specific to being a teenager, Harry is actively reluctant to discuss his grief, particularly following the deaths of Cedric and Sirius (Taub & Sevaty-Seib, 2009, 26).

Harry appears more inclined to suppress or avoid verbalizing the events that transpire, indicative of the impact of his trauma. These subsequent losses serve to intensify Harry's fixation and determination to defeat Voldemort. It's as if each traumatic event he witnesses or undergoes further propels his resolve to break free and put an end to his nemesis permanently. This could be construed as an endeavor to disrupt the cycle of trauma by confronting and surmounting its effects. However, it also implies that trauma can be a catalyzing force.

Another potential source of support for Harry could be the Weasleys, who represent his ideal family, and he spends considerable time with them. Their world offers a sense of safety compared to Harry's own. Eventually, the Weasleys become Harry's family, as he marries Ginny Weasley and establishes his own family with her, having three children. Ron Weasley, who becomes Harry's best friend on their first journey to Hogwarts, welcomes Harry into the Weasley family with open hearts and home. Ann Alston, in "The Family in English Children's Literature," observes that

The Weasleys represent the perfect family that the families in the

domestic texts of the late twentieth century fail to live up to. Mrs Weasley feeds eleven people wholesome British food at seven o'clock exactly, and even the sun shines on them (Alston, 2008, 123).

No matter how perfect the Weasleys may seem as an alternative family for Harry, this surrogate family also faces the looming threat of losing their father, Arthur Weasley, who undergoes a severe attack, and his recovery is both challenging and protracted. This situation deeply concerns the Weasley family, as well as Harry, serving as a stark reminder that nothing and no one is truly secure, particularly among the male wizarding population and notably father figures. The night of Arthur Weasley's assault proves to be troubling for Harry, extending beyond the distress of witnessing yet another father figure sustain injuries. Due to his connection with Voldemort, Harry is aware of the attack and is able to promptly alert the necessary individuals, ensuring Arthur is located swiftly and safely. However, Harry also harbors a sense of responsibility for the attack, perceiving it in a dream as if he were the one carrying out the deed.

But the man was stirring ... a silver Cloak fell from his legs as he jumped to his feet; and Harry saw his vibrant, blurred outline towering above him, saw a wand withdrawn from a belt ... he had no choice... he reared high from the floor and struck once, twice, three times, plunging his fangs deeply into the man's flesh, feeling his ribs splinter beneath his jaws, feeling the warm gush of blood... (Rowling, 2003, 409.)

Upon waking up, Harry immediately grasps the gravity of the situation and urgently informs Ron: “Your dad! He’s been bitten, it’s serious, there was blood everywhere...” (Rowling, 2003, 409). I interpret this as an expression of Harry’s guilt. With each attack by Voldemort, Harry may internalize blame similarly to the guilt he feels over his parents’ deaths. Voldemort could potentially be seen as a manifestation of Harry’s alter-ego, acting out a disturbed desire for revenge against father figures as a response to the original abandonment by his own father. In the absence of verbal communication of his feelings, grief, or traumatic memories, Harry’s dreams become a realm for exploring these emotions. John Granger suggests that, from a plot perspective, “the scene is more than confirmation of Dumbledore’s theory that Lord Voldemort has divided his soul” (Granger, 2008, 49). Harry’s dream serves as evidence of the link between Voldemort and himself, revealing Voldemort’s use of dark magic to create Horcruxes, thereby separating his soul into fragments and securing them in different locations for immortality (Rowling, 2005, 469). As Voldemort’s soul was shattered on the night of his initial attempt to kill Harry, Lily’s sacrificial force caused the killing curse to fail and a fragment of Voldemort’s soul to become encased within Harry, unintentionally making him a Horcrux (Rowling, 2007, 568). The symbolic form of his trauma takes shape in this embedded fragment—a relentless and indiscriminate element both foreign and intrinsic to him, forging an unyielding connection between Harry and Voldemort.

During the climactic battle between Harry and Voldemort at Hogwarts, a profound loss is suffered by both Harry and the Weasleys. Fred Weasley, one of Mr. and Mrs. Weasley’s seven children and twin brother to George Weasley, falls victim to one of Voldemort’s followers, known as Death

Eaters (Rowling, 2007, 512). This devastating loss impacts not only the Weasley family but also Harry, as Fred was akin to an older brother to him.

The literary symbol in the trauma novel facilitates a removal from unpleasant actuality by use of distance and selection. While human memory achieves distance temporally, the symbol in fiction achieves it spatially by imposing itself between the reader and the thing symbolized (Granofsky, 1995, 6).

I assert that this pattern is notably evident across the Harry Potter series, and it is especially relevant to the upcoming scenario. In the climactic confrontation between Harry and Voldemort, as Voldemort attempts to end Harry's life, Harry finds himself in a kind of transitional space. In this realm, the departed Dumbledore appears and presents Harry with a decision: to persist in the struggle for life or to journey into death. Harry opts to press on and continue the battle:

Voldemort had raised his wand. [...]

He saw the mouth move and a flash of green light, and everything was gone. [...] He lay face down, listening to the silence. He was perfectly alone. Nobody was watching. Nobody was there. He was not perfectly sure that he was there himself. [...]

He recoiled. He had spotted the thing that was making the noises.

It

had the form of a small, naked child, curled on the ground, its skin raw and rough, flayed-looking, and it lay shuddering under a seat where it had been left, unwanted, stuffed out of sight, struggling for breath. [...]

‘You cannot help.’

He spun around. Albus Dumbledore was walking towards him
[...]

‘But you’re dead,’ said Harry.

‘Oh, yes,’ said Dumbledore matter-of-factly.

‘Then ... I’m dead too?’

‘Ah,’ said Dumbledore, smiling still more broadly. ‘That is the question, isn’t it? On the whole, dear boy, I think not.’ [...]

‘I’ve got to go back, haven’t I?’

‘That is up to you.’

‘I’ve got a choice?’

‘Oh yes.’ Dumbledore smiled at him. ‘We are in King’s Cross, you

say? I think that if you decide not to go back, you would be able to ... let’s say ... board a train.’

‘And where would it take me?’

‘On,’ said Dumbledore simply. [...]

‘Tell me one last thing,’ said Harry. ‘Is this real? Or has this been happening inside my head?’

Dumbledore beamed at him, and his voice sounded loud and strong in Harry’s ears even though the bright mist was descending again,

obscuring his figure. ‘Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?’ (Rowling, 2007, 564-79.)

This threshold, an indeterminate space that Harry likens to King’s Cross Station in London, serves as a transitional zone between life and death. Dumbledore is present to provide explanations to Harry. The appearance of the small child represents the physical embodiment of the destroyed fragment of Voldemort’s soul, severing the connection between him and Harry. The depiction of Voldemort as a wounded child implies that beneath his acts of evil, he is fundamentally a neglected child. It also suggests that as each Horcrux is destroyed, Voldemort becomes vulnerable and powerless before death.

Dumbledore’s contemplation on whether the scene unfolds within Harry’s mind or not underscores the psychological significance, emphasizing that mental issues are as crucial as reality. Dumbledore assists Harry in deciding between confronting his trauma or succumbing to it. The scene symbolizes the mental struggle Harry undergoes in addressing his anxieties. Spatially separated from the two outcomes—life or death—Harry contemplates his decision in this neutral space.

Voldemort intentionally created six Horcruxes and accidentally made one. Each Horcrux had to be destroyed for Voldemort to be permanently killed. Voldemort symbolizes trauma, persistently haunting and fragmented. The final duel between Harry and Voldemort results in Voldemort’s demise not by Harry’s hand but through his own rebounding spell, suggesting that if trauma is confronted, it may ultimately self-destruct. Working through

trauma demands courage and strength, as does the subsequent rebuilding process.

The conclusion of the series depicts Harry choosing to rebuild rather than succumb to destruction. He establishes a family, embarks on a fulfilling career, and leads a normal, happy life. Rowling, in an interview, notes the challenges of rebuilding after trauma, emphasizing its greater difficulty compared to destruction. The Harry Potter series offers a profound exploration of trauma—from its inception to the process of working through it and ultimately rebuilding. The magical setting doesn't diminish the complexity of Harry's story, illustrating that even in a privileged environment, profound challenges can be encountered.



Chapter Three: Survival in The Hunger Games

1- Exploring Trauma in Suzanne Collins' "The Hunger Games"

“The Hunger Games” by Suzanne Collins is a groundbreaking young adult dystopian trilogy that has garnered immense acclaim for its riveting storyline, complex characters, and thought-provoking themes. At its core, the series offers a profound exploration of trauma in the most harrowing of circumstances.

Suzanne Collins introduces readers to a dystopian world where a tyrannical government, known as the Capitol, forces each of its twelve districts to select one male and one female tribute to participate in the annual Hunger Games. This brutal event pits these young tributes against each other in a televised fight to the death, serving as both entertainment for the Capitol and a grim reminder of its power. The series primarily follows the story of Katniss Everdeen, a resourceful and resilient young woman from District 12, who volunteers to participate in the Games in place of her younger sister, Prim.

Collins’ exploration of trauma in "The Hunger Games” is both unflinching and emotionally resonant. The trauma experienced by the characters, especially Katniss, serves as a central theme throughout the series. The trauma inflicted by the Games is stark and brutal, as young tributes must not only fight for their lives but also grapple with the psychological consequences of violence and death. Katniss, in particular, emerges as a character marked by her traumatic experiences, from her time in the arena to the loss of loved ones.



Collins expertly depicts the emotional fallout of trauma in the series. Katniss experiences symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including nightmares, flashbacks, and anxiety. Her character reflects the reality that trauma is not a one-time event but a deeply ingrained experience that can have lasting effects. The series also highlights the moral dilemmas Katniss faces as she navigates the trauma of the Games, including the need to kill other tributes to survive.

Suzanne Collins' exploration of trauma extends beyond the Games themselves. The series delves into the societal trauma experienced by the oppressed districts, depicting how the Capitol's tyranny affects the lives of its citizens. This collective trauma and the ensuing rebellion give depth to the narrative, showcasing the wide-ranging impact of trauma on individuals and society as a whole.

"The Hunger Games" is a striking example of how young adult literature can address and analyze trauma in the context of a dystopian world. Suzanne Collins' approach to trauma is unflinching and thought-provoking, making it a significant work that provides readers with a deeper understanding of how individuals cope with traumatic experiences and the consequences of oppression.

2- The Traumatic Conflict in Iraq

Creating a novel that delves into the complexities of war is a challenging endeavor, but for Suzanne Collins, her personal experiences significantly influenced her approach. With a father who served as a career officer in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War and a grandfather who experienced the horrors of World War I, coupled with her uncle's battle



injuries in World War II (Dominus, 2011), Collins drew from these familial connections to craft a narrative that encapsulates various aspects of war.

Collins's motivation goes beyond mere storytelling; she sees her work as an opportunity to educate adolescents about the inherent violence, challenges, and the suffering endured by both soldiers and civilians. According to Collins, imparting this knowledge is crucial because delaying awareness about the horrors of war may lead to unrealistic expectations (Dominus, 2011, para. 15). She emphasizes, "I don't write about adolescents. I write about war. For adolescents" (Dominus, 2011, para. 17).

The backdrop against which Collins introduced "The Hunger Games" trilogy is significant. Published between 2008 and 2010, these novels emerged during a period when the United States was actively engaged in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The prolonged conflict in Afghanistan, initiated in response to the 9/11 attacks, persisted until 2014, marking the longest war in U.S. history. Simultaneously, the war in Iraq unfolded with the U.S. invasion followed by an occupation phase, eventually leading to a complete withdrawal in 2011. The aftermath of these wars left many soldiers grappling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), particularly those who volunteered for duty and faced intense combat, a reality mirrored in the narrative Collins weaves.

Collins's inspiration for "The Hunger Games" struck as she toggled between war coverage and reality TV programs. The merging of scenes depicting real war in Iraq and a group of young people competing on another channel sparked the concept of Panem, a dystopian society where violence became a form of entertainment. The trilogy's creation coincided with a global recession, echoing the economic hardships seen both in Panem's



Districts and the real-world consequences of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, where poverty became widespread.

The extreme violence portrayed in the Hunger Games arena takes a toll on the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, leading her to experience symptoms akin to PTSD. The psychological sensitivity of a teenager subjected to such harrowing events mirrors the challenges faced by young volunteers in actual wars. The traumas faced by Katniss, from murder to constant threats in the Games, result in a genuine portrayal of PTSD symptoms, including flashbacks, memories, nightmares, feelings of guilt, and sudden emotional fluctuations.

In essence, Suzanne Collins skillfully weaves a narrative that not only explores the impact of war on individuals but also serves as a reflection of the socio-political and economic realities during the time of its creation. The intricate connection between the fictional world of Panem and the real-world consequences of war creates a powerful narrative that resonates with readers on multiple levels.

3- The Hunger Games Trilogy: An Overview

The Hunger Games unfolds in a world resembling our own, set in Panem—a nation constructed up on the ruins of what was once Northern America. Emerging after natural disasters devastated the region, Panem initially brought peace and prosperity to its inhabitants with the Capitol reigning supreme over thirteen districts. However, the onset of dark days witnessed a rebellion among the districts against the Capitol. The twelve districts were defeated, and the thirteenth district faced destruction and eradication.

In response to the rebellion, the Capitol, asserting its absolute authority, devised the Hunger Games as a punitive measure. These Games served as a grim reminder of the Capitol's dominance and aimed to prevent the recurrence of the dark days. The annual event involved selecting two tributes, a boy and a girl aged twelve to eighteen, from each district. The protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, a resident of District 12, takes center stage in the narrative, volunteering to replace her younger sister, Primrose, as a tribute.

3.1. 'The Hunger Games'

Throughout the trilogy—comprising *The Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire*, and *Mockingjay*—the story delves into Katniss's journey. In the initial installment, Katniss, a sixteen-year-old who lost her father in a mine explosion, engages in hunting with her friend Gale before the reaping day. This annual event, preceding each Hunger Games, involves selecting tributes for the deadly competition. The chosen boy and girl from each district must fight to the death, with only one victor emerging from the twelve participating districts. The Capitol, under the rule of President Snow, rewards the victor and their district with coveted prizes.

At the time of the reaping, Katniss faced her worst nightmare as her 12-year-old sister, Primrose, whom she had assured just hours ago would not be selected due to it being her first reaping, was tragically chosen as the female tribute for District Twelve. Overwhelmed by the love and responsibility she felt for her sister and mother after the loss of their father, Katniss made the courageous decision to volunteer in Primrose's place, stepping onto the stage to represent her district. The surprise continued when the male tribute, Peeta

Mellark, was selected, a young man who had once saved Katniss from starvation by sharing a piece of bread.

Katniss grappled with conflicting emotions, knowing that she was now obligated to participate in a deadly competition where only one tribute could emerge victorious. Before their departure, Katniss bid farewell to her family, Gale, and Madge, the mayor's daughter who had gifted her a Mockingjay pin. During the train journey to the Capitol, Katniss and Peeta were astounded by the luxury and abundance of food they encountered. Their alcoholic mentor, Haymitch, the sole survivor from District 12, struggled to guide them.

Upon arriving in the Capitol, Katniss observed the peculiar fashion choices of the citizens, with the exception of Cinna, her stylist. At the ceremony, Cinna designed a stunning dress for Katniss, adorned with fake flames, earning her the title of the "girl who was on fire" (The Hunger Games 67). Following Haymitch's advice, Katniss and Peeta pretended to be in love to garner support, sponsors, and favor in the Games. However, tensions arose when Peeta requested separate training, leading Katniss to feel betrayed and hesitant about their friendship. This unease intensified when Peeta publicly declared his love for Katniss during an interview, portraying her as vulnerable and seemingly diminishing her chances of winning in the eyes of both fellow tributes and viewers.

Despite these challenges, Katniss showcased her exceptional skills during a training session, impressing the Game makers with her proficiency with a bow. This feat earned her a remarkable score of 11 out of 12, surpassing even the Career Tributes trained from wealthier districts. Katniss's journey into the Hunger Games arena was marked by a complex interplay of

emotions, alliances, and strategic decisions that set the stage for the intense and harrowing competition ahead (The Hunger Games 67).

As the 74th Hunger Games commences, Katniss and her fellow tributes are transported into the arena. The Cornucopia, a central structure containing an abundance of weapons and supplies, becomes a focal point for the initial confrontation. Following Haymitch's instructions, Katniss evades the chaos and heads toward the woods in search of water, utilizing her hunting skills for survival.

During the night, a nearby fire attracts the attention of the Career Tributes, leading to a deadly confrontation. Katniss continues to elude them, persistently seeking water, and eventually discovers a stream. However, her relative safety is short-lived as a fire wall and subsequent fireballs create a perilous situation. The arena's design forces tributes to converge, bringing Katniss face-to-face with the Careers forming an alliance, including the unexpected presence of Peeta. Seeking refuge in a tree, Katniss later enacts a plan involving tracker jackers, guided by Rue, the young tribute from District 11.

The carefully executed plan results in the deaths of two tributes and Katniss herself sustaining injuries. Despite these challenges, she manages to retrieve a bow and arrow from a deceased tribute. However, the dangerous Cato appears, and with Peeta's assistance, Katniss narrowly escapes. This collaboration prompts Katniss to question Peeta's true feelings toward her.

Over the next few days, Katniss falls into a deep sleep, cared for by Rue, with the two forming an alliance and communicating through Mockingjay whistles. Recognizing the vulnerability of the Career Tributes, Katniss devises a plan with Rue to destroy their supplies in The Cornucopia.



The ensuing chaos leads to Rue's tragic death, and in a poignant moment, Katniss honors her by covering her body with flowers.

As the Games progress, a new rule is announced, offering the possibility of both tributes from the same district being declared winners if they are the last two alive. Katniss locates the injured Peeta and tends to him in a cave, playing to the audience's sympathy. Another announcement promises backpacks for each tribute, and Katniss anticipates hers will contain medicine for Peeta.

Encountering Thresh, the male tribute from District 11, at The Cornucopia, Katniss is saved due to her compassionate treatment of Rue. The remaining tributes are reduced to Katniss, Peeta, and Cato. The Game makers force them to a lake, initiating an attack by wolf-like creatures. Cato's demise leaves Katniss and Peeta believing they have won, only for the rules to change, declaring that only one tribute can emerge victorious.

Faced with an impossible choice, Katniss proposes a joint act of defiance by consuming poisonous berries. The Gamemakers, fearing the potential fallout, declare both Katniss and Peeta as victors. Returning to the training center, Katniss learns from Haymitch that her actions are perceived as rebellious by the Capitol. To survive, she must convince Panem that her actions were driven by an infinite love for Peeta rather than rebellion.

Caught in a tumult of conflicting emotions between Peeta and Gale, Katniss grapples with her feelings. As they return to District 12, Katniss and Peeta, despite the complexities of their relationship, maintain a public display of unity, holding hands to convey a united front to the audience and cameras.

3.2. 'Catching Fire'

In "Catching Fire," the second installment of the trilogy, the narrative takes an unexpected turn as the Capitol introduces the "Quarter Quell Games," involving all previous victors, forcing Katniss Everdeen to return to the arena (Catching Fire 82). President Snow orchestrates this move to portray Katniss's actions in the previous Hunger Games as driven by love rather than rebellion.

Several months have passed since Katniss and Peeta won the 74th Hunger Games with their dramatic, suicidal strategy. Their lives have transformed, and they now reside in the Victors' Village with their mentor, Haymitch Abernathy. President Snow confronts Katniss at her home, threatening her loved ones, particularly Gale, unless she convinces Panem, during the Victory Tour, that her actions stem from a genuine fear of losing Peeta, not rebellion.

The Victory Tour takes Katniss and Peeta to District 11, where an elderly man's Mockingjay tune and the crowd's three-finger salute reveal growing unrest. Understanding the gravity of the situation, Katniss confides in Haymitch, who suggests she must marry Peeta to appease Snow. Despite acting as the perfect couple throughout the tour, Katniss knows it's not enough. She requests Peeta to propose in front of all Panem, a move that temporarily satisfies the Capitol.

Back in District 12, Katniss and Peeta celebrate the Harvest Festival. Concerned about the future and the symbolic power of her Mockingjay pin, Katniss learns about disturbances in District 8 and realizes the unintended consequences of her actions. Visiting Gale in the woods, she attempts to convince him to flee with her, but he refuses. Gale faces a brutal attack by the

Head Peacekeeper, Ramulus Thread, prompting Katniss, Peeta, and Haymitch to intervene.

District 12 descends into chaos, with the Hob destroyed, mines closed, and the populace on the brink of starvation. Before the annual reaping, Katniss encounters Bonnie and Twill, escapees from District 8, who reveal their intent to reach District 13. This revelation leaves Katniss perplexed, as she believed District 13 was destroyed by the Capitol 75 years ago. Bonnie presents a cracker with a Mockingjay engraved on it, adding another layer of mystery to the unfolding events (Catching Fire 86, 150, 141).

Twill provides Katniss with crucial information about District 13, explaining that images of the district appear in the Justice Building and suggest that people have moved underground due to its history of nuclear development (Collins, 2010, p. 146-147). This revelation sparks discussions between Katniss and Haymitch about the ongoing uprisings in Districts 3, 4, 7, 8, and 11. The anticipation builds as the 75th Hunger Games, a special Quarter Quell edition, is announced, stating that tributes will be reaped from the existing pool of victors (Collins, 2010, p. 172).

As the only female victor in District 12, Katniss is compelled to return to the arena. She and Haymitch agree to prioritize Peeta's survival. At the reaping, Peeta volunteers to replace Haymitch, and they head back to the Capitol. Katniss, adorned in a jumpsuit by her stylist Cinna, forms an alliance with Finnick, Peeta, and Mags during the training sessions. The interview with Caesar Flickerman takes a dramatic turn when Peeta claims he and Katniss are already married and expecting, creating hysteria among the audience (Collins, 2010, p. 171, 260).

Katniss is sent into the arena, where she recognizes Haymitch's golden bracelet, leading to an alliance with Finnick, Peeta, and Mags. They navigate challenges such as a poisonous fog, monkey attacks, and a tsunami. Wiress provides a crucial clue about the arena's design, likening it to a clock. The team faces attacks, resulting in Wiress's death and Beetee's plan to kill tributes from District 2 (Collins, 2010, p. 320).

During their journey, Katniss is disturbed by Jabberjays mimicking distressing sounds. Peeta, with a locket containing photos of Katniss's family, encourages her to persevere. Beetee devises a plan involving a wire connected to a tree, aiming to kill the remaining tributes from District 2. However, Johanna attacks Katniss, leading her to consider breaking the alliance. Remembering Haymitch's advice about the real enemy being the Capitol, she decides to stay loyal (Collins, 2010, p. 340, 351).

Executing Beetee's plan causes a massive blackout in the arena. President Snow discovers that Plutarch Heavensbee, the Head Gamemaker, has been collaborating with Haymitch and Finnick to break them out of the Games. The hovercraft takes Katniss to District 13, where she learns about the widespread revolt across the districts. Feeling betrayed by Haymitch's secrecy and knowing that Peeta has been captured by the Capitol, Katniss faces an uncertain future, as District 12 has been destroyed (Collins, 2010, p. 391).

3.3. 'Mockingjay'

The concluding book in Suzanne Collins' Trilogy, "Mockingjay," chronicles Katniss Everdeen's leadership in the rebellion against the Capitol and President Snow. Katniss evolves into the symbol of rebellion, known as "the Mockingjay," unifying all Districts (Collins, 2010, p. 13). The narrative



unfolds during the revolution led by rebels from various Panem Districts, who have repurposed District 13, previously believed destroyed, as their base against the Capitol. Katniss, haunted by guilt, navigates her former home, District 12, destroyed by the Capitol, shouldering responsibility for the uprising (Collins, 2010, p. 13).

After her pivotal role in destroying the arena during the Quarter Quell, Katniss resides in District 13, the revolution's epicenter, under President Coin's rule. Gale ensures the safety of Katniss's family, leading them to District 13's outskirts and, eventually, safety. Meanwhile, Peeta, Johanna, and Annie are captured by the Capitol. Katniss fears for Peeta's life but is relieved to see him alive during a televised interview. However, Peeta is portrayed as a traitor, creating tension within the rebellion (Collins, 2010, p. 21, 27).

In District 13, Katniss agrees to embody the Mockingjay, the rebellion's figurehead, after securing her family's safety and the rescue of Peeta, Johanna, and Annie. Sporting a uniform designed by the late Cinna, she records propaganda for the rebellion. Despite a scripted attempt, Katniss's authentic and unscripted appeal resonates better, and she delivers impassioned speeches against the Capitol. After an attack on District 8, Katniss's fiery speech intensifies the rebellion (Collins, 2010, p. 71, 100).

Katniss's speeches provoke responses from the Capitol, including an interview with Peeta, where he urges a ceasefire. Beetee manages to transmit a coded message through the broadcast, warning of an imminent attack. The citizens of District 13 take shelter, emerging after the bombing. Subsequent propaganda features Finnick revealing Capitol secrets. The rebellion organizes a mission to rescue Peeta and others, successfully bringing them

back to District 13, but Peeta is severely affected by Capitol-induced memory tampering, leading to hostility towards Katniss (Collins, 2010, p. 179).

Following her recovery, Katniss travels to District 2 with the objective of persuading its inhabitants to join the rebellion and dismantle “the Nut,” a massive mountain housing the Capitol’s weaponry and Peacekeeper training grounds (Collins, 2010, p. 192). Commander Lyme approves the plan, and as the assault unfolds, Katniss is shot during her attempt to inspire citizens. She awakens severely wounded in District 13, alongside Johanna, both recovering from injuries sustained in the Capitol. Peeta, still affected by venom, requests to see Katniss, but leaves abruptly after a brief visit. Finnick and Annie's televised wedding takes place in the interim.

Post-regrouping, rebels gear up for the final battle against the Capitol. Katniss discovers her role is not direct combat but to participate in a “special mission” as part of “Squad Four-Five-One” led by Boggs (Collins, 2010, p. 256). However, the mission unfolds as the “Star Squad,” meant for on-screen representation rather than active combat. En route, an accidental triggering of a Capitol-created obstacle claims a soldier's life, leading to a replacement, Peeta, who is still unstable. Suspecting Coin’s intentions, Katniss and Gale learn they are being used as on-screen figures rather than for direct action. The tension escalates when Katniss realizes Coin might want her dead. Boggs hints that Peeta’s mission is to eliminate Katniss, prompting her to confront Coin. Katniss’s treatment of Peeta shifts, reflecting her internal conflict.

As the squad approaches the Capitol, they film additional “propos.” Tragedy strikes when Boggs loses his legs to a pod-triggered explosion. Another pod traps the squad, unleashing a toxic black oil wave. In the chaos, Peeta attacks Katniss, resulting in Mitchell’s death. Seeking refuge, the squad

narrowly escapes the Capitol's retaliation. Before his death, Boggs passes the Holo, a device identifying pods, to Katniss. The televised death of Squad 451 raises suspicions, and Coin's true motives become clearer.

Continuing their journey, the group navigates underground tunnels, facing unexpected dangers. Above ground, the Capitol deploys mutts, leading to Finnick's death. Katniss deploys the Holo to counter the mutts and seeks refuge in Tigris's shop. The Capitol and rebels engage in intense warfare. Katniss, accompanied by Gale, focuses on reaching Snow's mansion. Gale is captured, and Katniss witnesses the Capitol using children as human shields, followed by a devastating bomb attack, resulting in Prim's death and Katniss's severe injuries.

In a Capitol hospital, Katniss learns of the rebel victory, with Coin assuming control. President Snow faces trial, and Commander Paylor offers Katniss a chance to confront him. However, Snow reveals that Coin orchestrated the bombing that killed Prim. Manipulated by Coin, Katniss hesitates in her quest for revenge. During the execution, Katniss alters her aim, resulting in Coin's death instead of Snow's. Chaos ensues, and Katniss is confined until Haymitch secures her release, claiming her actions were influenced by insanity (Collins, 2010, p. 372).

In an effort to rebuild their lives, Katniss' mother relocates to District 4 to contribute to the construction of a hospital, aiming to distance herself from the painful memories associated with District 12. Gale secures a job in District 2, while Annie becomes a mother after giving birth to Finnick's child. Cressida and Pollux embark on a journey across the Districts, creating films and documentaries. Commander Paylor assumes the role of President in Panem. Katniss, accompanied by Haymitch, returns to District 12, facing the



challenge of rebuilding her life. Eventually, Peeta also returns, and he and Katniss gradually reconnect in a world free from the specter of the Hunger Games.

In the epilogue, a mature Katniss reflects on her decision to remain with Peeta, valuing his loyalty over Gale's. Over the years, they start a family with a boy and a girl. Despite lingering memories and the haunting experiences of the Hunger Games, they move forward together, navigating the challenges of their past.

4- Katniss Everdeen's Trauma in the Hunger Games Arena

The depiction of trauma in the brutal Hunger Games arena, with a particular focus on the series' central character, Katniss Everdeen, is one of the most compelling and emotionally charged aspects of "The Hunger Games" trilogy by Suzanne Collins.

One of the series' most compelling elements is "characterization." As the narrative unfolds, readers witness Katniss Everdeen playing multiple roles: "the breadwinner in her household," the "haunting partner" of her childhood friend Gale, the "role model" for her sister, the "victor" of District Twelve, the "lover" of Peeta, the "sweetheart" of the Capitol, and the "symbol of rebellion." Katniss captivates Panem's heart by successfully managing these roles, all under the watchful eye of an audience. However, despite being perceived as the Mockingjay, a symbol of the silenced, readers gradually realize that Katniss is not what everyone perceives her to be. After enduring two arenas, participating in a rebellion, and facing numerous losses, Katniss emerges as "a badly burned girl with no wings. With no fire. And no sister" (Mockingjay 394).

Throughout the series, Katniss’s inability to articulate her trauma is evident, from reassuring her sister Primrose about the reaping in the first book (*Hunger Games 2*) to contemplating how to share her experiences with her children in *Mockingjay* (348): “The scream begins in my lower back and works its way up through my body only to jam in my throat. I am Avox mute, choking on my grief. Even if I could release the muscles in my neck, let the sound tear into space, would anyone notice it? ” (153). This speechlessness aligns with Caruth’s concept of trauma as “Unspeakable,” a “delayed experience” that resists easy access and coherent articulation (4).

Collins addresses this issue by having Katniss narrate the story in her adult self, giving her an actual voice to articulate her trauma. This narrative, despite disruptions, allows readers to understand the impact of the games, the rebellion, and loss on her teenage self. Scholars like Garriott, Jones, and Tyler highlight the enlightening aspect of Katniss’s unconventional narrative, providing valuable insights into storytelling and trauma narratives.

In *The Mockingjay*, Collins underscores the disparity between Katniss, who has experienced torture, and Capitol figures like Plutarch and Fulvia, who remain privileged: “knowing it and seeing it are two different things” (*Mockingjay* 69). Readers, unlike Katniss or Capitol citizens, gain both perspectives, fostering understanding and sympathy for those less fortunate.

Ann Childs, in her essay “The Privileged Reader as Capitol and Learning Sympathy through Narrative,” supports this idea, asserting that readers’ identification with Katniss isn’t disrupted by circumstantial differences. The safety of the textual space, constructed with paper and ink, encourages readers to accept the less privileged depicted within the text (9).

The fictional nature of Katniss alleviates readers' guilt, potentially fostering greater respect for real-life trauma survivors.

This sense of developing empathy and admiration unfolds gradually as we delve into Katniss's struggle. The young woman, commonly perceived throughout Panem as the "Girl on Fire" or "The Mockingjay," has undergone profoundly impactful experiences since her childhood, extending beyond the confines of the Games. Hailing from the poorest and smallest district in Panem, she shouldered the responsibility of providing for her family from the tender age of twelve, marking the beginning of her arduous journey. However, it was the two arenas that shattered her, exposing her to the loss of numerous cherished individuals and prompting a realization that she had never truly processed death, not even her father's. Although nightmares had commenced after her initial arena victory, Katniss's genuine trauma begins resurfacing following the second arena, during her rescue by District 13, where she is left alone with her thoughts.

Katniss's harrowing experiences within the arenas, including being burned by a fire wall, blistered by poisonous gas, haunted by human-faced monsters, struck by lightning, and stung by deadly mutations called 'tracker jackers,' overwhelm her mind and create a blur in her memory. The impact of traumatic events, as Caruth explains, is not immediate but rather 'belated,' manifesting later through repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena (90).

Despite being traumatized by these tragic events, Katniss's younger self remains unaware, relying on the symbolism of mutts to convey her trauma to readers. Mutations or mutts, genetically engineered monsters by the

Capitol, pose lethal threats in the arena. However, they also inflict damage on the tributes' mental state, as Katniss elucidates,

No mutt is good. All are meant to damage you. Some take your life, like the monkeys. Others your reason, like the tracker jackers. However, the true atrocities, the most frightening, incorporate a perverse psychological twist designed to terrify the victim. The sight of the wolf mutts with the dead tributes' eyes. The sound of the jabberjays replicating Prim's tortured screams. The smell of Snow's roses mixed with the victims' blood. Carried across the sewer. Cutting through even this foulness. Making my heart run wild, my skin turn to ice, my lungs unable to suck air. It's as if Snow's breathing right in my face, telling me it's time to die. (Mockingjay 350)

The readers are immersed in Katniss's anguish as she vividly describes how mutts embody her deepest fears. She goes on to reveal that mutts are not the sole haunting elements, stating, "Roses. Wolf. Mutts. Tributes. Frosteddolphins. Friends. Mockingjays. Stylists. Me. Everything screams in my dreams tonight" (Mockingjay 274). In essence, Katniss's nightmares transcend mutts; her post-traumatic memories resurface, infiltrating her mind through flashbacks and nightmares, ultimately isolating her from the world. Katniss attempts to articulate this unfortunate and agonizing state, expressing, "Trapped for days, years, centuries maybe. Dead, but not allowed to die. Alive, but as good as dead. So alone that anyone, anything, no matter how loathsome, would be welcome" (393). The more the mutts in her memories dominate, the more isolated she becomes. They relentlessly pursue her in every nightmare, with every loss, until her memories become elusive, blurring the line between reality and illusion.

Katniss's experience of flashbacks and nightmares aligns with common post-traumatic symptoms, described by Freud as "repetition compulsion" (qtd. in Chemengui 47). In simpler terms, when a painful event is not fully processed at the time of occurrence, it later manifests through intrusive flashbacks, nightmares, and repetitions (47). Chemengui also cites Caruth, explaining that trauma "is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (47).

Katniss grapples with unprocessed memories that refuse containment. As she describes, "I want to go back to sleep, but I'm restless. Images from yesterday begin to flood into the present...the faces of the wounded who no longer exist. I imagine death from all sides...Things I saw, in person or on the tape. Things I caused with a pull of my bowstring. Things I will never be able to erase from my memory" (Mockingjay 125). Her memory becomes inaccessible, a recurring theme in *The Mockingjay*.

To underscore this point, Collins introduces a brainwashing technique in the narrative, employing venom produced by tracker jackers to alter memories and make them terrifying and difficult to recall. This mirrors what traumatic events can do to a normal memory. Beetee Latier, the victor of District 3, elucidates the 'hijacking' technique, comparing it to a dose of tracker jacker venom that infuses memories with fear and doubt, rendering them nearly impossible to comprehend or articulate.

It is only when Katniss's adult-self describes the effects of tracker jacker venom—"Terror. Hallucinations. Nightmarish visions of losing those I love. Because the venom targets the part of the brain that houses fear"(202)

— that readers grasp the intensity of the experience. Tracker jacker venom and traumatic events both target normal memory, making comprehension and retelling challenging for the traumatized individual. The fusion of fear with memory renders articulation difficult, especially for those unfamiliar with the experience.

In this context, Caruth contends that a trauma narrative should be disruptively meaningful and stylistically unconventional, aligning with the nature of the phenomenon itself (qtd. in Chemengui 46). Simply stated, the focus of a trauma narrative lies in disruption, aiming to immerse readers in the same state of confusion and frustration experienced by the traumatized individual who struggles to access their memories and articulate their emotions.

Katniss becomes a vessel through which readers witness the psychological and emotional toll of the Games. Katniss's character development is deeply intertwined with her traumatic experiences within the arena. Her struggles with the trauma of the Games are palpable, especially in the moments when she must confront violence, death, and the moral complexities of her actions. Readers are offered a raw and unvarnished portrayal of how trauma can affect an individual's psyche.

As the series unfolds, after the 74th Hunger Games, Katniss experiences symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as nightmares, flashbacks, and anxiety. These symptoms are a reflection of the enduring impact of the trauma she endures within the Hunger Games arena. The intensity and quantity of Katniss' symptoms escalate. The portrayal of her emotional turmoil is a stark reminder that trauma is not something that can be easily overcome or brushed aside; it leaves a lasting imprint on an

individual's mental and emotional well-being. As an illustration, her once sporadic nightmares now occur nightly, and their contents become more diverse:

The old standby, the one of my father being blown to bits in the mines, is rare. Instead I relive versions of what happened in the arena. My worthless attempt to save Rue. Peeta bleeding to death. Glimmer's bloated body disintegrating in my hands. Cato's horrific end with the muttations. Those are the most frequent visitors (Collins, *Catching Fire* 54).

What makes Katniss's character and her experience of trauma particularly resonant is her resilience. Despite the immense psychological and emotional burdens she carries, Katniss demonstrates strength and adaptability, finding ways to navigate the trauma and make sense of her experiences. Her emotional depth and complexity make her character one of the most memorable in young adult literature.

Suzanne Collins' exploration of trauma in the *Hunger Games* arena serves as a powerful reminder of the emotional consequences of violence and the complex ways in which individuals cope with the trauma they endure. Katniss Everdeen's character is a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the resilience that can be found even in the most challenging and traumatic of circumstances.

To summarize, Katniss's personal trauma is portrayed in the narrative of her adult-self, struggling to recount her experiences. Additionally, the symbols associated with her trauma distort her awareness, making it challenging to access memories without torment. Moreover, repetitive flashbacks and nightmares hinder her progress and serve as constant



reminders of past events. By presenting Katniss as both a young protagonist and an adult narrator, *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay* effectively introduces readers to the elements of trauma while providing an authentic representation of a trauma survivor's narrative.

5- The Psychological Landscape of Trauma and Survival in 'The Hunger Games'

In "The Hunger Games" by Suzanne Collins, the examination of the psychological effects of trauma and the development of survival strategies is a central theme that runs throughout the series. The brutal and harrowing nature of the Hunger Games arena forces characters to confront their deepest fears, wrestle with ethical dilemmas, and develop strategies to endure and overcome trauma.

One of the most striking psychological effects of trauma in the series is the onset of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among the characters. The symptoms of PTSD vividly illustrate the enduring psychological toll that trauma takes on individuals, emphasizing that the trauma doesn't end when the physical danger does.

The development of survival strategies in the Hunger Games arena is another key element in the series. Tributes like Katniss and Peeta must devise tactics to navigate the hostile environment and outsmart their opponents. These strategies extend beyond mere physical survival and encompass emotional and psychological survival as well. Characters often rely on their intelligence, adaptability, and alliances with others to stay alive. These strategies are a testament to the characters' resilience and their ability to confront the psychological challenges posed by the traumatic circumstances of the Games.

Furthermore, the series explores the ethical dilemmas that emerge as a result of the survival strategies employed by the characters. Katniss, in particular, faces numerous moral quandaries as she navigates the Games. She must grapple with the need to kill other tributes to survive while also trying to maintain her sense of humanity and compassion. These ethical dilemmas add a layer of complexity to the characters' experiences and highlight the psychological consequences of having to make life-and-death decisions.

The psychological effects of trauma and the development of survival strategies in "The Hunger Games" are integral to the characters' growth and the narrative's emotional depth. The series portrays how individuals respond to traumatic situations and the lengths they are willing to go to in order to survive. It underscores that survival isn't just about physical strength but also the ability to cope with the emotional and psychological scars left by traumatic events. This exploration of trauma and survival makes "The Hunger Games" a compelling and thought-provoking young adult series.

6- Sorrow's Depths: Loss and Grief in Katniss's Journey through 'The Hunger Games' Trilogy

6.1. Katniss's Loss of Her Father

The echoes of loss resound with profound resonance throughout Suzanne Collins' "The Hunger Games" trilogy, and at its heart lies the gut-wrenching experience of Katniss Everdeen as she grapples with the untimely death of her father. The narrative is framed against the desolate backdrop of District 12, where the harsh reality of life is underscored by the tragedy of her father's demise in a mining accident. This transformative event acts as a crucible, shaping not only Katniss's character but also dictating the trajectory of her tumultuous journey.



The aftermath of her father's death thrusts Katniss into an unforeseen role as the primary provider for her family. The weight of ensuring their survival in the face of poverty becomes a formidable burden on her young shoulders. The loss not only immerses Katniss into the unforgiving realities of life in District 12 but also becomes the catalyst for her engagement in illegal hunting and trading. These precarious activities, undertaken to stave off the specter of starvation, weave an intricate web between personal grief and societal challenges, offering a nuanced portrayal of the interplay between individual sorrow and the unforgiving socio-political landscape of the Hunger Games world.

The intimate connection between Katniss's personal grief and the broader socio-political canvas is a poignant exploration, depicting how her journey becomes a living embodiment of the intricate interplay between individual sorrow and the unforgiving socio-political landscape of the Hunger Games world.

6.2. Rue's Traumatic Death

As the narrative unfolds, another layer of sorrow is interwoven into Katniss's fabric of experience through the heart-wrenching demise of Rue during the 74th Hunger Games. Rue, a fellow tribute from District 11, evolves from a mere ally to a steadfast companion, sharing the weight of the challenges within the arena. The Capitol's orchestrated termination of Rue leaves an indelible mark on Katniss, amplifying the emotional toll she bears.

Rue's death serves as a watershed moment, stirring Katniss's growing defiance against the Capitol. The loss intensifies Katniss's animosity towards the oppressive regime, becoming a catalyzing force for her determination to rebel against the Capitol's cruelty. The emotional resonance of Rue's death

reverberates through Katniss's subsequent actions, including the symbolic tribute with flowers and the iconic three-finger salute, transforming personal grief into a powerful symbol of resistance.

6.3. Transformation and Rebellion

These instances of loss and grief become transformative elements in Katniss's evolution, transcending individual tragedy to shape the very essence of her character. The grief over her father's death and Rue's traumatic demise becomes a potent motivator, propelling Katniss into a role as a symbol of rebellion and resistance against the Capitol's tyranny. Her journey unfolds as a profound testament to the resilience that can emerge from the crucible of loss, as she transforms personal sorrow into a catalyzing force for change on a broader scale.

In essence, the complex tapestry of loss and grief in "The Hunger Games" trilogy extends beyond individual tragedy. It is intricately interwoven with the socio-political fabric of the narrative, revealing the profound impact of personal sorrows on the larger struggle against oppression. Katniss's journey becomes a microcosm of the emotional and psychological toll inflicted by the Capitol on its citizens, making these themes not just integral but fundamental to the rich, multifaceted storytelling of the trilogy. As the narrative unfolds, the deep roots of sorrow reach into every facet of Katniss's existence, portraying a nuanced exploration of loss that transcends the boundaries of personal and collective grief.

7- Exploration of Survivor's Guilt as a Pervasive and Complex Theme in Suzanne Collins' "The Hunger Games" Trilogy

7.1. Navigating the Profound and Intricate Threads of Survivor's Guilt in a World Imbued with Trauma and Brutality

Survivor's guilt, a motif that weaves itself intricately throughout Suzanne Collins' "The Hunger Games" trilogy, serves as a thematic undercurrent that delves into the very fabric of human emotion and resilience. Characters, including the indomitable Katniss Everdeen, grapple with the profound consequences of surviving in a world saturated with trauma, loss, and the unrelenting brutality of the Hunger Games. The very essence of the Games, an arena where children are pitted against each other until only one stands alive, inherently sets the stage for the haunting specter of survivor's guilt.

As the narrative unfolds, the survivors of the Hunger Games find themselves navigating a tumultuous landscape fraught with emotional turmoil. The guilt of outliving their fellow tributes becomes an ever-present companion, a heavy burden that weighs on their souls. The Capitol, orchestrating the Games as a form of psychological warfare, leaves the victors burdened not only with physical scars but with the insidious weight of their survival. This recurring theme introduces layers of complexity to the characters' psyches, offering a nuanced portrayal of the moral and ethical toll exacted by the Capitol's oppressive regime.

The interplay between individual guilt and the collective trauma of surviving in the arena creates a rich tapestry of emotions, allowing readers to witness the characters' struggle to reconcile their survival with the suffering of those who did not make it. Survivor's guilt becomes a lens through which

the characters grapple not only with their personal anguish but also with the broader implications of a society that revels in the spectacle of their pain.

In this intricate exploration of survivor's guilt, Suzanne Collins skillfully examines the resilience of the human spirit amid the relentless onslaught of despair. The recurring theme not only shapes the characters' identities but also serves as a mirror reflecting the psychological toll exacted by the Capitol's oppressive regime on those who emerge from the crucible of the Hunger Games. Through the lens of survivor's guilt, the trilogy invites readers to ponder the ethical complexities of survival in a dystopian world, where victory is marred by the indelible stain of loss and the haunting echoes of what transpired within the arena linger long after the cheers of the Capitol have faded.

7.2. Katniss's Internal Struggle and the Profound Emotional Burden of Survivor's Guilt

Katniss Everdeen, the linchpin character and victor of the 74th Hunger Games, becomes a poignant embodiment of survivor's guilt. The palpable emotional burden she carries resonates throughout the trilogy. While externally, she transforms into a symbol of hope and resistance, internally, she grapples with the profound guilt of having outlived others, including the cherished Rue and her fellow tributes.

The manifestations of Katniss's survivor's guilt are myriad, influencing her decisions and relationships in profound ways. The trauma of the Games lingers, haunting her with vivid flashbacks and nightmares that force her to relive the horrors she witnessed. The weight of her survival emerges as a compelling driving force behind her actions, contributing significantly to her unyielding defiance against the Capitol.



Moreover, Katniss's relationships, notably with Peeta Mellark and Gale Hawthorne, bear the indelible imprint of her survivor's guilt. Struggling with the notion of allowing herself happiness or a semblance of normalcy, she grapples with feelings of unworthiness for the life she now leads after the Games. This internal conflict adds layers of complexity to her character, portraying a realistic and raw depiction of the psychological toll exacted by trauma and survival.

In this nuanced exploration, Suzanne Collins utilizes Katniss's internal struggles with survivor's guilt as a narrative conduit to delve into the profound psychological consequences of existence in a dystopian world marred by violence and oppression. This thematic underpinning adds a profound depth to the narrative, emphasizing the intricate emotional toll on characters who are forced to confront their own survival amidst the pervasive suffering of others.

8- Surviving the Games: Victors and Trauma

The concluding installment in the series, *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay*, diverges from its predecessors as its focal point shifts from the struggle for survival in the arena to how victors navigate the aftermath of the Games while still entangled in the throes of war. The narrative commences with the rescue of Katniss Everdeen, along with her allies Finnick Odair, victor from district 4, and Beetee Latier, victor from district 3, from the second arena. Facilitated by the rebels, they find refuge in the safety of district 13, where the initial events transpire. Subsequently, other victors, including Peeta Mellark, Katniss's companion from district 12, Johanna Mason, victor from district 7, and Annie Cresta, Finnick's beloved from

district 4 – all formerly held hostage by the Capitol – join them. Together, they illuminate an additional facet of trauma.

Initially, Katniss wrestles with the idea of aligning with the victors for the Quarter Quell, expressing her reservations: “How are we going to kill these people, Peeta?” (Mockingjay 265). Having survived the first arena, Katniss recognizes that victors are not heartless killers but rather victims, akin to herself. Consequently, she grapples with the moral dilemma of easily contemplating their deaths:

I spend time with almost everybody headed for the arena... the morphlings, who...paint me into a field of yellow flowers...Finnick, who gives me an hour of trident lessons in exchange for an hour of archery instruction. And the more I come to know these people, the worse it is. Because, on the whole, I don't hate them. And some I like. And a lot of them are so damaged that my natural instinct would be to protect them. (Mockingjay 263)

Katniss identified with the victors, viewing it as a luxury she couldn't afford at that moment, stating, “I don't want them as allies...It'll make it so much harder than last time” (265). Recalling the loss of Rue, a friend she couldn't save in the first arena, and Peeta, whom she would sacrifice her life to protect in the second, Katniss understood the stakes were too high for her to forge more friendships, especially when she felt incapable of saving them.

Before their rescue by the rebels or capture by the Capitol, the victors confronted their worst nightmares in the arena. Facing poisonous gases, bloody rains, and cannibal monkeys, Katniss, Peeta, Finnick, Johanna, and Beetee witnessed the futile loss of their loved ones' lives. Katniss almost lost

Peeta to electrocution (Catching Fire 313), Finnick was compelled to lose Mags, his mentor, to poisonous gas (337), and Peeta observed a tribute he barely knew sacrifice her life to save his (345). Johanna mourned her partner from district 7 in a rainstorm of blood (358), and Beetee witnessed his wife, Wiress, succumb to a knife wound after an encounter with the Career tributes (373).

Reflecting on their losses as they found temporary safety on the beach, Katniss silently observed her companions and contemplated the situation: “I look at the others’ sober faces. Now Finnick, Johanna, and Beetee have all lost their district partners. I cross to Peeta and wrap my arms around him, and for a while we all stay silent” (375). Recognizing what truly breaks a victor, Katniss became more resolute in protecting Peeta, not only for his survival but also to prevent the Capitol from breaking her.

Once rescued from the arena and secure in district 13, Katniss experiences a moment of hysteria upon learning about the rebellion and Peeta’s abduction:

Technically, I am unarmed. But no one should ever underestimate the harm that fingernails can do, especially if the target is unprepared. I lunge across the table and rake mine down Haymitch’s face causing blood to flow and damage to one eye.....Other hands help Finnick [drag me out] and I’m back on my table, my body restrained, my wrists tied down, so I slam my head in fury again and again against the table. A needle pokes my arm and my head hurts so badly I stop fighting and simply wail in a horrible, dying-animal way, until my voice gives out. (Catching Fire 434- 435)

Katniss, exhausted, helpless, and predominantly angry at Haymitch and Finnick—individuals she had placed her trust in—expresses her frustration at not being informed about the rebellion, leading to her hysterical reaction to the news of another uprising against the Capitol.

However, Katniss swiftly moves past her anger and extends forgiveness to Finnick. She explains, “I had to forgive Finnick for his role in the conspiracy ... he, at least, has some idea of what I’m going through” (*Mockingjay* 14). Both of them had endured the torment of Jabberjays, mutt birds inflicting pain from their loved ones in the arena (*Catching Fire* 386), and shared moments of crying and screaming in the hospital of District 13. Katniss’s forgiveness towards Finnick aligns with the theme of her isolation and her yearning for understanding.

Furthermore, Katniss’s decision to forgive Finnick is motivated by another realization: “And it takes too much energy to stay angry with someone who cries so much” (*Mockingjay* 14). By acknowledging that others, like Finnick, are also in pain, Katniss realizes the possibility for compassion among fellow victims. This prediction proves accurate as the one who relates to her the most is not Gale, her childhood friend, but Finnick, her fellow victor who witnessed the same horrors. Together, Katniss and Finnick regain some of their sanity by sharing concerns for Peeta and Annie, eventually convincing them to join the rebellion to save them.

Seeking Finnick’s counsel becomes a recurring theme for Katniss regarding her theories on the Capitol torturing them. She confides in Finnick about Snow’s plan to break her, realizing that this strategy is not new to him; it’s what broke him (*Mockingjay* 173). This realization helps Katniss see that

their connection goes beyond the arena experience—it is rooted in shared trauma, thoughts, and the fear of losing their loved ones.

In choosing to confide in Finnick rather than Gale after losing Peeta, Katniss emphasizes the complexity of trauma, separating it from romantic relationships and linking it to a collective experience. Despite Gale being her longtime friend and the absence of Peeta, his romantic rival, Katniss doesn't trust him the most because Gale didn't participate in the games. She observes how their changed circumstances are altering their relationship: "There's no District 12 to escape from now, no Peacekeepers to trick, no hungry mouths to feed. The Capitol took away all of that, and I'm on the verge of losing Gale as well. The glue of mutual need that bonded us so tightly together for all those years is melting away" (143). This realization prompts Katniss to recognize the loss of understanding that once bound them together, encouraging readers to focus on the solidarity among victors as a means of avoiding alienation.

In his article "Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning," Gilad Hirschberger defines collective trauma as:

The psychological reactions to a traumatic event that affect an entire society; it does not merely reflect a historical fact or the recollection of a terrible event that happened to a group of people. It suggests that the tragedy is represented in the collective memory of the group, and like all forms of memory, it comprises not only a reproduction of the events, but also an ongoing reconstruction of the trauma in an attempt to make sense of it. (1)

In essence, individuals who undergo the same traumatic experience are likely to share a common purpose in deriving meaning from their trauma,

forming a community based on their shared traumatic memories and mutual understanding. In *The Mockingjay*, the remaining survivors from the arena—Katniss, Finnick, Johanna, Annie, and Peeta—gradually develop a sense of community through various shared experiences.

For instance, Finnick and Annie decide to get married, and all the victors actively participate in the wedding preparations (253). Johanna and Katniss become training partners, sharing a living space and preparing for battle together (265). Katniss and Finnick offer each other encouragement upon learning they are headed to a third arena in the Capitol (281). Peeta seeks support from Katniss and Finnick to recover his hijacked memory (305). Eventually, all the victors gather at one table in District 13 (268). These communal habits developed by the victors represent what Hirschberger terms “culturally-derived traditions” (2). It signifies that their alliance in the arena played a crucial role in their survival, compelling them to seek each other’s company to embed their trauma into a symbolic system of meaning.

Katniss, as the protagonist, opts for silence, believing that “No one will fully understand” (*Mockingjay* 17). She chooses hunting in the woods, either alone or in silent companionship with Gale, as a temporary coping mechanism to alleviate her pain. Similarly, other victors adopt various coping mechanisms to escape the relentless pain. Finnick, when asked how he endures the pain, confesses, “I don’t, Katniss! Obviously, I don’t. I drag myself out of nightmares each morning and find there’s no relief in waking” (*Mockingjay* 175). He advises against succumbing to despair, stating, “Better not to give in to it. It takes ten times as long to put yourself back together as it does to fall apart” (175), aligning with Freud’s concept of “repetition compulsions” tormenting trauma survivors who cannot access their memories (qtd. in Chemengui 47). Despite being unable to provide a solution, Finnick

offers Katniss his coping mechanism, suggesting distraction as a means of relief and even sharing his own coping tool—his rope.

By accepting Finnick's rope and mutually engaging in coping mechanisms, Katniss and Finnick establish an unspoken pact to help fellow victors, especially the hijacked Peeta and morphling-addict Johanna, survive their trauma. This pact gradually expands, welcoming more victors into a supportive community at the dining table in District 13 (Mockingjay 269).

Johanna Mason, however, chooses self-destructive mechanisms like morphling-dependency and revenge to articulate her trauma, deviating from the safer coping mechanisms adopted by Katniss and Finnick. Despite advising Katniss to move on, Johanna seems resigned to her fate, expressing, "Maybe they were onto something in Six" (Mockingjay 245), alluding to the two addict victors from District 6. This statement unveils Johanna's fear of being sober enough to remember her traumatic experiences.

Haymitch Abernathy, Katniss's mentor, maintains his alcoholic behavior throughout the series. While there are moments hinting at his recovery or bonding with other victors, such as when he is forced into sobriety in District 13 (170) or when he reveals the reason behind his drinking—the Capitol's murder of his family and lover (186)—it becomes evident that Haymitch's motivation for joining the rebellion and maintaining sobriety is primarily focused on keeping Katniss and Peeta alive. Once this objective is achieved, he loses his reason to stay sober and endure the pain of his memories.

Collective trauma, as a concept, is complex and challenging to comprehend. However, by introducing a simplified version of this concept in her series, Collins underscores the importance of solidarity and understanding

in the recovery process. The victors find solace in each other's struggles, thoughts, and shared horrors, reducing their isolation and making them more open to the idea of therapy. These lessons can be considered by readers when dealing with trauma survivors in real life.

In conclusion, *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay* can be analyzed through a trauma theory, as it incorporates essential elements of representation. Collins addresses various notions and symptoms related to trauma, including violence, death, loss, war, and memory, in a unique yet accessible way that allows readers to understand and empathize with the characters. Moreover, the narrative is presented through the lens of a trauma survivor, featuring a disrupted style and personal terms. The majority of victors being trauma survivors highlights the concept of collective trauma, where survivors not only grapple with their individual scars but also work towards the recovery and healing of the entire community. The theme of 'Inaccessible Memory' is introduced through Peeta and Katniss's characters, illustrating the survivor's struggle to articulate an experience that was not fully witnessed or processed.

Chapter Four: The Haunting Truth in The Book Thief

1- Exploring Trauma in World War II: Markus Zusak's Perspective in "The Book Thief"

“The Book Thief” by Markus Zusak is a poignant and profoundly moving young adult novel that presents a unique perspective on trauma during World War II. Set in Nazi Germany, the book tells the story of Liesel Meminger, a young girl living in a small town, and her experiences during a time of profound trauma and upheaval.

Zusak’s portrayal of trauma in “The Book Thief” is multifaceted and deeply affecting. The novel introduces readers to a world marked by the trauma of war, where lives are disrupted, families are torn apart, and innocent people are persecuted. Liesel herself faces traumatic experiences, including the loss of her brother and the absence of her mother. Her foster parents, Hans and Rosa Hubermann, grapple with the trauma of their son’s absence from the war front.

What sets “The Book Thief” apart is its portrayal of trauma through the lens of the power of words and storytelling. Liesel’s fascination with books and her desire to learn to read provide a coping mechanism for her and the other characters. Hans teaches Liesel to read and write, and they share a profound bond through their love of literature. The act of reading, writing, and sharing stories becomes a way to confront and cope with the trauma of their surroundings.

Zusak also explores trauma on a societal level, illustrating the impact of war and Nazi ideology on everyday people. Liesel’s friendship with Max Vandenburg, a Jewish refugee hiding in her family’s basement, highlights the

deep trauma experienced by those targeted by Nazi persecution. Max's emotional and physical trauma serves as a stark reminder of the horrors of the time.

The novel's unique narrator, Death, adds an additional layer to the portrayal of trauma. Death's perspective emphasizes the ubiquity of death and suffering during World War II, making it an ever-present backdrop to the characters' lives.

Markus Zusak's portrayal of trauma in "The Book Thief" is a testament to the resilience and humanity of individuals during times of extreme hardship. It emphasizes the importance of storytelling and the written word as tools for coping with trauma, as well as a means of preserving memory and bearing witness to the past. The book offers a powerful and emotionally resonant portrayal of how individuals and communities navigate trauma during one of the darkest chapters in history.

2- Examining Traumatic Experiences: An Analysis of Liesel, Max, and Other Characters

“..... if her mother loved her, why leave her on someone else's doorstep? Why? Why? Why? The fact that she knew the answer — if only at the most basic level — seemed beside the point. Her mother was constantly sick and there was never any money to fix her. Liesel knew that. But that didn't mean she had to accept it. No matter how many times she was told that she was loved, there was no recognition that the proof was in the abandonment. Nothing changed the fact

that she was a lost, skinny child in another foreign place, with more foreign people. Alone.” (Zusak 32)

“The Book Thief” by Markus Zusak presents a rich tapestry of traumas experienced by its characters, each contributing to the emotional depth and complexity of the novel. Liesel, Max, and several other characters in the story grapple with traumas that resonate on both personal and societal levels. The primary setting of the novel is Molching, a small German town situated on the outskirts of Munich. Remarkably, Molching lacks military bases, munition factories, or armament plants. Liesel arrives in January 1939, a mere three months before the German invasion of Poland and the commencement of the Second World War. As the war unfolds, its challenges escalate, impacting Molching as the Nazis and their regulations progressively influence the town.

Under the totalitarian rule marked by violence and severe repression, especially targeting Jews and Communists, the lives of the villagers undergo significant changes. This includes the destruction of Jewish businesses, the marking of yellow stars on doors and windows, the introduction of ration cards, outbreaks of diseases, malnutrition, and deportations to camps. Ironically, the setting of Liesel’s foster family is on Himmel Street, where “Himmel” translates to Heaven in German.

Throughout the narrative, Liesel consistently perceives Hitler as her primary adversary. However, in reality, her most significant battle lies in the internal struggle of understanding and accepting Death. The challenges posed by the totalitarian regime and the wartime hardships set the stage for Liesel’s personal journey, which transcends the external conflicts of the era.

Liesel Meminger, the novel's central character, experiences a series of traumas that shape her young life. Her earliest trauma is the loss of her brother on a train journey to Molching, where she is separated from her mother. This initial separation from her family and the trauma of losing her only sibling have a lasting impact on Liesel's emotional landscape. The description above shows Liesel's internal struggles when her mother left her with a foster family. Despite understanding it was for her well-being, she felt deeply wounded, exacerbated by the tragic death of her brother on the way to the new family. This poignant episode exposes the vulnerability of children and the dire conditions people faced during wartime.

In fact, Zusak enriches Liesel's character with greater depth by depicting various manifestations of trauma through her experiences. The initial encounter Liesel has with Death occurs when her brother Werner passes away during the train journey to Molching, where they were headed to live with their foster parents. Despite the presence of their mother, it is Liesel alone who perceives this pivotal moment: "With one eye open, one still in a dream, the book thief—also known as Liesel Meminger—could see without question that her young brother, Werner, was now sideways and dead. His blue eyes stared at the floor. Seeing nothing" (Zusak 28). Deeply affected by the incident, Liesel later discovers herself incapable of coping with her brother's demise. According to Judith Herman, "witnessing the death of a family member is one of the events most likely to leave the survivor with an intractable, long-lasting traumatic syndrome" (54). To Liesel, there was just "the imprisoned stiffness of movement, and the staggered onslaught of thoughts" (Zusak 29), which clearly points to her failure fully understand what is happening.



Additionally, Liesel's trauma intensifies as she feels obligated to accompany her mother, who carries Werner's lifeless body to bury him in the snow, creating a pitiable makeshift grave in an unnamed location. To compound the distress, Liesel is unaware that her biological mother is on the brink of abandoning her, adding further complexity to her already profound trauma. At this point, Hitler has consolidated sufficient power to enforce a Nazi socio-political agenda in Germany. As a result, Liesel's father faces persecution and imprisonment for his Communist beliefs, while her mother grapples with the constant struggle of providing for her children as a single parent. In fact, as the narrator points out, "everything about her was undernourished. Wirelike shins. Coat hanger arms. She did not produce it easily, but when it came, she had a starving smile" (Zusak 38).

The portrayal underscores the enduring presence of poverty, material scarcity, and anxiety in Liesel and her family's lives. In a final attempt to provide her children with a more comfortable and secure future, Mrs. Meminger decides to place both Liesel and Werner for adoption. This decision aims to shield them from a fate similar to that of their father, who faces persecution from the Nazi authorities. However, the plan takes a tragic turn as Werner passes away, leaving Liesel to navigate life having lost both her brother and mother. This marks the initial entry into a series of traumatic experiences that will significantly shape Liesel's existence.

3- Signs of Trauma in Liesel's Behaviour

Upon reaching Himmel Street and being embraced by Hans and Rosa Hubermann, her foster parents, Liesel embarks on a journey of acclimatization to the physical and emotional security they offer. In the course of a particularly distressing day, marked by the death of her younger

brother and her mother's perceived "abandonment," Liesel undergoes the rupture of significant relationships that had hitherto anchored her inner world. Suddenly, she finds herself isolated and adrift in an unfamiliar place among strangers, far removed from the reassuring warmth of her mother's embrace: "When Liesel arrived in Molching, she had at least some inkling that she was being saved, but that was no comfort. If her mother loved her, why leave her on someone else's doorstep? Why? Why? Why?" (Zusak 38).

As a consequence, Liesel undergoes a profound loss of identity. Herman posits that the development of one's personality is contingent on the establishment of secure and enduring connections with nurturing individuals (52). However, when these connections are jeopardized or severed, as in Liesel's case, the foundational sense of self for the traumatized individual is profoundly disrupted. Liesel's perception of her mother's betrayal contributes to her construction of a protective barrier against the external world. This defensive mechanism can be associated with Freud's concept of a "stimulus barrier" (29). It's essential to note, however, that these protective shields differ significantly. Freud's stimulus barrier is affirmative in safeguarding the individual mind from external threats and potential traumatic disorders. In contrast, Liesel's self-imposed shield is a consequence of the traumas she has endured, complicating the healing process. Her isolation impedes the formation of new connections with others and restricts her openness to the world. This self-imposed isolation proves to be a hindrance to her recovery, as evidenced by her evolving journey later on.

The death of her brother and maternal abandonment inflicted a double blow, leading to long-lasting post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). "Trauma," etymologically meaning a wound or defeat, was initially associated with physical injuries. However, psychology has revealed its

connection to abnormal behaviors stemming from unpleasant experiences. Liesel's physical trauma included constant starvation, visible in her emaciated appearance (Zusak 24).

Yet, compared to her mental trauma, starvation seemed more tolerable. Witnessing her brother's death haunted her with PTSD, resulting in nightly nightmares, screams, and sweats. Certainly, the passing of her brother stands out as one of the most jolting occurrences impacting Liesel: his demise and the swift burial amid the snow will linger in her thoughts, particularly during the nighttime when "she would wake up swimming in her bed, screaming, and drowning in the flood of sheets" (Zusak 43). The nightmare that recurs is always the same: "As usual, her nightly nightmare interrupted her sleep and she was woken by Hans Hubermann. His hand held the sweaty fabric of her pyjama top. 'The train?' He whispered. Liesel confirmed. 'The train'" (Zusak 89-90). In reality, as she recalls her brother's death, Liesel envisions herself tirelessly excavating Werner from the snow, even to the point of her fingers bleeding. This vividly illustrates her reluctance to acknowledge his demise, aligning with her actions following the burial, where she adamantly refused to depart from the gravesite.

Ultimately, it's noteworthy to highlight that what will eventually become a source of solace and strength for Liesel initially serves as a cause of distress, further complicating her traumatic symptoms. Although books eventually become her salvation, illiteracy proves to be a haunting presence in Liesel's childhood. At a certain juncture in the narrative, Liesel is required to undergo reading tests at school for her academic advancement. However, even though she successfully moves up to her appropriate grade level, "she still read with great difficulty. Sentences were strewn everywhere. Words fooled her" (Zusak 78). Reading in front of her peers induces a state of



anxiety for Liesel: “a string of nerves tightened in Liesel’s ribs. It started in her stomach but had worked its way up. Soon it would be around her neck, thick as a rope” (Zusak 79).

This anxiety later evolves into intense anger, expressed when Ludwig Schmeikl insults and mocks her in front of classmates during a break. In response, Liesel retaliates by giving Ludwig Schmeikl “the hiding of a lifetime” (Zusak 82) as a means to assert herself and demonstrate that her challenges with reading do not render her entirely weak or “stupid” (Zusak 83). As a result, Liesel must then procure various tools and sources of healing to pave the way for her journey towards trauma recovery.

PTSD, a mental disorder, cannot be simply cured with medicine; traumatic memories unconsciously invade, breaking one’s mental stability. Liesel’s recurring nightmares stemmed not from fear of a dead boy but from the anguish of being unable to protect her beloved brother, reflecting survivor guilt, another PTSD symptom.

Reading Liesel’s story evokes profound emotions as Zusak employs trauma narratives to tap into collective war memories, fostering empathy (Zhang 24). Trauma narratives recount traumatic events, offering perspectives from those causing trauma, suffering from it, involved, bystanders, and their descendants. By narrating Liesel's life, Zusak vividly illustrates how ordinary civilians, especially children, were sacrificed by politics and war, even in a seemingly powerful country.

Additionally, Liesel must cope with the trauma of witnessing the horrors of World War II in Nazi Germany, from air raids to the suffering of the Jewish population. Her relationship with her foster parents, Hans and

Rosa Hubermann, provides both solace and moments of trauma as she navigates the complexities of family life during the war.

Max Vandenburg, the Jewish refugee hidden by the Hubermanns, carries his own profound traumas. His existence in hiding is a response to the Nazi regime's persecution of Jews, and his traumatic experiences extend beyond physical danger. The emotional and psychological trauma he endures due to his forced isolation and the constant fear of discovery is palpable. The novel illustrates how the traumas experienced by Max and Liesel forge a deep and lasting connection between them, grounded in shared trauma and the power of storytelling.

The other characters in the novel also bear their own traumas. Hans Hubermann carries the trauma of World War I, which has left him with emotional scars and a sense of guilt for not having done more to prevent the first war's devastation. Rosa Hubermann, though outwardly brash, has her own traumatic experiences and a profound sense of loss. Additionally, Liesel's best friend, Rudy Steiner, is marked by his own family's experiences of trauma, including the death of his brother.

Markus Zusak's portrayal of these traumas is a reminder of the multi-faceted nature of trauma during a time of war and upheaval. The characters' traumas are deeply intertwined with their growth, relationships, and their ways of coping and finding solace. The novel underscores that trauma is a shared human experience, one that connects individuals across diverse backgrounds and circumstances.

4- Security And Empowerment: Critical Components in Overcoming Trauma

American psychiatrist Judith Herman emphasizes that the process of healing for a traumatized individual hinges on the initial establishment of a sense of safety, concurrent with a sense of empowerment (156). In Liesel's recovery journey, pivotal elements include the significant relationships she forms on Himmel Street. As previously mentioned, the loss of her brother and her mother's abandonment lead to a complete fragmentation of Liesel's identity. Therefore, the initial phase in trauma recovery involves the reconstruction of these fractured relationships. In alignment with Herman's perspective, in "renewed connections with other people, the survivor re-creates psychological faculties that were damaged or deformed by the traumatic experience" (156). Liesel's process of grappling with trauma becomes increasingly apparent through the robust connections she forges with various characters in the narrative, particularly with her father Hans Hubermann and the German Jew Max Vandenburg.

The Hubermanns are the initial source of a secure and dependable environment for Liesel. The portrayal of Liesel's arrival at Himmel Street implies that an immediate connection will be established with Hans as "fifteen minutes passed till they were able to coax her from the car. It was the tall man who did it" (Zusak 35). Hans' gentle demeanor serves as a refuge for Liesel. In reality, it is Hans who effectively soothes Liesel during her nightmares, offering the safety and comfort she earnestly seeks: "he came in every night and sat with her (...). Trust was accumulated quickly, due primarily to the brute strength of the man's gentleness, his thereness" (Zusak, p. 43). Furthermore, Hans assumes a pivotal role in empowering Liesel, actively assisting her with words that contribute to her process of recovery.

The challenges Liesel encountered earlier in life had adversely affected her educational advancement, leading to her illiteracy. Nightly, following incidents of bed-wetting, Hans steps in to provide support, “the midnight class began (...). Hans Hubermann merely repeated his previous clean-up heroics and got down to the task of reading, sketching and reciting” (Zusak 73).

These reading classes become vital for Liesel since Hans teaches her how to read and write properly: first, she learns the letters in the alphabet, and then, the words in a book. To Liesel, reading becomes a symbol of her ability to control her inner world and a way of claiming her identity. This is inextricably connected with her compulsive need to steal books, which comes as a result of her inability to come to terms with the death of her brother. The first book Liesel steals, just after Werner’s burial, is *The Gravedigger’s Handbook*, ‘a twelve-step guide to gravedigging success’ (Zusak 36), which will be not only the first of several book thefts but also the first book she reads, the one Hans uses to teach her.

To gain a deeper insight into Liesel’s recovery journey, it is crucial to examine two significant phases in the experience of trauma: “acting out” and “working through.” Drawing from Freudian psychoanalysis, Dominick LaCapra elucidates that “acting out” is associated with repetition and compulsion. It delineates the stage in which the traumatized individual compulsively relives the traumatic events, remaining entangled in the traumatic past. Conversely, the term “working through” entails the assimilation and integration of traumatic memories, enabling the subject to establish a distinction between the traumatic past and the present. Thus, overcoming trauma necessitates a progression from the “acting out” phase to the “working through” phase. Considering all these factors, the



forementioned narrative initially corresponds to the “acting out” of Liesel's trauma. In her case, the “acting out” process manifests through nightmares and other symptoms, primarily involving the compulsive repetition of her brother’s death—a traumatic phase aligning with LaCapra’s description, “tenses implode, and it is as if one were back there in the past reliving the traumatic scene” (21).

This underscores the dual role played by *The Gravedigger’s Handbook*: on one hand, this somber book is linked to Werner’s death and burial, thereby recalling the original traumatic event; on the other hand, Liesel enhances her language skills through reading the book (improving her literacy), which aids her in confronting and surmounting her trauma. Metaphorically, the book serves as a vehicle for Liesel to revisit the site of her trauma—her brother’s grave—while also equipping her with the tools necessary to overcome it. In her dream, where she attempted to excavate her deceased brother from the snow, what she unearths is not only the remnants of her brother but also the silences and agony of trauma, which she transforms into narrative memories.

Similar to Liesel, the introduction of the German Jew Max Vandenburg in the narrative reveals a profound experience of loss: Max is compelled to leave his family behind, seeking survival by finding refuge from the escalating anti-Semitism in his country. In Moses’ words, “German Jews were a highly integrated minority before National Socialism, with a hybridized subculture, retaining elements of both Jewishness and Germanness, that was very much their own” (104). However, it is in the wake of the rise of National Socialism that the situation for German Jews became particularly perilous, to the extent that harboring a Jew was punishable by death. In the First World War, Max’s father saved Hans Hubermann’s life. In a sense, Max feels a moral obligation to reciprocate by seeking refuge with

Hans. The parallels between Liesel and Max become evident from the moment Max arrives at Himmel Street 33: “they both arrived in a state of agitation on Himmel Street. They both nightmared” (Zusak 209).

Crucially, both Liesel and Max are tormented by the loss of their families. Moreover, Max grapples with persistent guilt, not just for leaving his mother behind but also for endangering the Hubermanns by hiding in their basement. Nevertheless, a significant aspect of Max’s guilt stems from his desire to continue living, and each character finds in the other the strength to persevere despite overwhelming challenges. The profound pain and suffering shared by Max and Liesel serves as a powerful bond between them.

In essence, Max becomes a kindred spirit, someone with whom Liesel strongly identifies. As their connection deepens, Liesel develops the capacity to make moral judgments by cultivating empathy for Max, enabling her to comprehend the suffering of those around her. Additionally, Max imparts to Liesel the gift of words: for her twelfth birthday, he presents her with a book he authored, “The Standover Man,” and for Christmas 1942, he leaves a sketchbook titled “The Word Shaker” as a gift for Liesel.

The latter work delves into the narrative of Nazism presented from a playful perspective, encompassing “many thoughts, sketches, and dreams related to Stuttgart and Germany and the Führer. Recollections of Max’s family were also there” (Zusak 437). “The Word Shaker” serves as an illustration of both the camaraderie between Liesel and Max and the tale of how Hitler ascended to global dominance through the manipulation of words. Consequently, this narrative functions as a splendid representation of the dual nature of language: words possess the potential for both good and evil. On one hand, Hitler employed hateful words to manipulate minds and construct

“a nation of farmed thoughts” (Zusak 438), a forest teeming with propaganda. On the other hand, a girl, deemed the finest word shaker, shed a tear of friendship for her persecuted friend—a tear that dried, transformed into a seed, and eventually grew into an impenetrable tree. This tree comes to symbolize a new hope for Germany and the capacity of words, if wielded effectively, to be immensely potent against malevolence.

To craft these intertwined narratives, Max utilizes pages from Adolph Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* as a canvas. Ironically, *Mein Kampf* serves as Max’s safeguard, allowing him to conceal a piece of paper containing “one name, one address: Hans Hubermann, Himmel Strasse 33, Molching” (Zusak 197). However, Max, despite having *Mein Kampf* as his sole possession, finds it inconceivable to present such propaganda to Liesel as a birthday gift, likening it to “the lamb handing a knife to the butcher” (Zusak 224). Consequently, he opts to extract several pages from *Mein Kampf*, covering them with white paint, and repurposes them as blank canvases for his stories and drawings. It can be deduced, therefore, that the book written by the Führer himself—a propagandist work justifying the manipulation of democracy to achieve his objectives—also serves, in this narrative, as the means to save the life of the German Jew Max Vandenburg. The Nazi ideology is thus subverted through the book as an object, not only facilitating Max’s escape but also by overlaying another narrative onto Hitler’s words, whose contents and effects starkly oppose Nazi thought.

5- Literature and Writing: Two Potent Drivers of Liesel’s Healing Journey

5.1. Seeking Refuge and Comfort through Books

In the story, words, narratives, and language are symbolically turned into a form of refuge that many characters, particularly Liesel, seek for



comfort, significance, and an avenue of escape. Liesel is depicted as growing increasingly passionate about books to the extent that she becomes captivated by texts to the point of engaging in theft. As anticipated from the book's title, the narrator identifies Liesel as “the book thief” (Zusak 28)

Individuals who have undergone traumatic experiences, particularly those associated with war, can find support in medical practices that equip them with fundamental tools to redirect their lives. From a psychological perspective, Professor Abate notes that “during the 1920s, clinical psychologists experimented with a new method: bibliotherapy” (57). This innovative therapy employs literature for healing, grounded in the belief “that reading could affect an individual’s attitude and behavior and is thus an important influence in shaping, molding, and altering values” (Lenkowsky 123, qtd. in Abate 57).

In alignment with this, the narrator reveals that books hold emotional significance for Liesel and also possess a therapeutic impact. Consequently, she associates her initial book, *The Gravedigger’s Handbook*, with “1. The last time she saw her brother [and] 2. The last time she saw her mother” (Zusak 45). However, the nightly sessions with Hans, in reality, offer her the moral fortitude to “confront the loss of her parents, combat memories about the horrible hardships she has suffered since the Nazis took power, and process the trauma of her brother’s death” (Abate 58).

The narrative consistently highlights the therapeutic function of the books pilfered by Liesel, which also carry symbolic significance. On the occasion of the Führer’s birthday, Liesel appropriates *The Shoulder Shrug*, a book consigned to a bonfire due to its perceived intellectual corruption, featuring a Jewish protagonist portrayed in a positive light. The Nazi practice

of burning books aimed to “cleanse” what Goebbels referred to as “Jewish rubbish and filth” from German culture (Johannsen 12). Hence, by stealing this particular book, Liesel can be interpreted as a direct challenge to Hitler’s ideology, which sought to restrict access to what they deemed “un-German” books, as if the ideas within them were contagious.

It should be noted that Liesel’s burgeoning love for books gradually transforms her from a powerless, innocent girl into an empowered and mature adolescent. Initially, the novel portrays her as a child incapable of reading in the presence of others, a source of overwhelming anxiety for her. However, her transformation becomes evident the night Molching faces air raids, compelling some residents, including Liesel and her family, to seek refuge in the Fiedler family’s basement. As asserted by Erikson, this can be termed as “the gathering of the wounded” (qtd. in Buráková 9), signifying the communalization of trauma: new bonds form within the community during these air raids as everyone shares the losses and lives of others. Naturally, the basement occupants are gripped by fear and nervousness, creating an atmosphere filled with terror due to the imminent threat of death.

Aware of the pervasive fear, Liesel decides to open *The Whistler* and commence reading aloud to “shut out the din of the basement” (Zusak 377). Her reading and its impact align with Malchiodi and Ginns-Gruenberg’s observation, emphasizing that “reading can also involve calming rituals and self-soothing experiences” (169, qtd. in Abate 59). Consistent with this, Liesel not only soothes herself but also provides comfort to the frightened children and adults around her in a moment when “everybody waited for the ground to shake” (Zusak 378). This assertion reinforces the idea of the therapeutic potential of books and underscores that words, when wielded

skillfully, can be both immensely powerful and life-enhancing. Conversely, in the hands of a tyrant, they hold the potential to wreak havoc on humanity.

5.2. The Therapeutic Potential of Writing

The life-saving potency of language can be associated with the notion that narrating trauma is a crucial stride toward healing. Towards the conclusion of the novel, there is an invitation for the reader to contemplate the idea that the immense challenges faced by Germany, coupled with a profound yearning for healing, have sparked creative approaches to process these war-related experiences. As highlighted by Abate, “the creation of original works of printed, visual, and material art can be a powerful means of processing, enduring, and even transcending trauma” (60). Traumatic memories, marked by their uncontrollable, intrusive, and recurrent nature, manifest as flashbacks to the events themselves for the traumatized individual, making it challenging to rationally integrate them into their psyche. In the words of Malchiodi (2008), “being able to communicate what has happened (...) allows for emotions, events, and memories to be witnessed by others and is the powerful step in addressing the needs of any trauma survivor” (xvi). This scenario is exemplified by Liesel Meminger and the unique connection she forms with literature.

Liesel’s love for books is evident from the start of the narrative, leading her to engage in book theft. However, her significant connection with Ilsa Hermann, the mayor's wife, plays a crucial role in nurturing Liesel’s literary interest and providing her access to books. Rosa Hubermann earns money by doing the mayor's laundry, and Liesel is the one tasked with delivering it. One day, Frau Hermann invites Liesel into her library, an experience that becomes “one of the most beautiful things Liesel Meminger had ever seen”

(Zusak 139). This fascination prompts Liesel to incorporate a daily routine of visiting Frau Hermann's house to spend time in the library, savoring the essence of words.

Even when Frau Hermann can no longer afford Rosa's services due to the country's precarious situation, Liesel continues this practice. The words she reads in that library bring her to the realization that these same words fuel Nazi rhetoric in a different manner. An epiphanic moment occurs when she envisions "the Führer, shouting his words and passing them around" (Zusak 509). This revelation prompts Liesel to tear pages from a volume, as if trying to eliminate the power of those words. She questions the existence of words, contemplating that "without them, the Führer was nothing" (Zusak 510). Despite her love-hate relationship with the library, Liesel decides to punish herself by vowing never to return to a place "full of words" (Zusak 511).

Three days later, Frau Hermann visits Liesel's house and presents her with an invaluable gift – a small black book containing lined paper, allowing Liesel to write her own story. This story, titled "The Book Thief, a small story by Liesel Meminger" (Zusak 514), symbolizes the pinnacle of Liesel's recovery process.

Liesel initiates a nightly ritual by descending into the basement to inscribe her thoughts on untouched paper, a practice with deeper significance as Ilsa Hermann provided her "a reason to remind her that words had also brought her to life" (Zusak 513). This routine ultimately transforms Liesel into the sole survivor when Molching is bombed, leaving her amidst a ravaged village replete with casualties and wreckage. As Death recounts, when rescuers extricated Liesel from the debris, "she was still clutching the

book. She was holding desperately on to the words that had saved her life” (Zusak 489).

Drawing from Dori Laub’s insights about Holocaust survivors, it is asserted that trauma victims not only need to survive to share their stories but also require narrating their experiences to ensure survival (78). This concept extends to encompass all trauma victims, indicating that recounting one's story is integral to the recovery process, granting the traumatized individual control over the impacts of trauma. Thus, the commencement of the “working through” phase is marked by the ability to transform traumatic memories into a narrative. In Liesel’s case, she assimilates the loss of her most cherished, acknowledging the inevitability of death, and learns to integrate her traumatic past into her new life instead of attempting to erase it. This transformative process is significantly facilitated by the evaluative power of writing, enabling Liesel to rewrite her traumatic events in a narrative that portrays her as a survivor rather than a victim. The debt Liesel owes to words is presciently recognized by Death, who asserts that “when she came to write her story, she would wonder exactly when the books and the words started not just to mean something, but everything” (Zusak 37), underscoring the pivotal role literature would assume in Liesel’s life.

Intriguingly, many years later, when Death journeys to Sydney to retrieve Liesel’s soul, he reunites her with the black book that had been discarded onto a garbage truck on the day Molching was bombed. Despite the slight fading of the text, Liesel was able to decipher her own words, with “the fingers of her soul touching the story that was written so long ago in her Himmel Street basement” (Zusak 537). This poignant moment occurs at the novel’s conclusion, accompanied by a note from the narrator: “I am haunted by humans” (Zusak 538). Death candidly expresses his bewilderment,



acknowledging that, despite being seemingly traumatized by human cruelty, a sentiment that complicates his duties, his role allows him to witness both the grandeur and decline, the ugliness and beauty of humanity. In contemplating the splendor and flaws of humans, Death is filled with wonder at the dual nature that makes them both admirable and appalling.



Chapter Five: Comparative Analysis

1- Examining Divergent Approaches to Trauma in ‘Harry Potter,’ ‘The Hunger Games,’ and ‘The Book Thief’

“Harry Potter,” “The Hunger Games,” and “The Book Thief” are three iconic young adult novels that tackle the theme of trauma, each with a distinctive approach and perspective. Comparing and contrasting these approaches provides a comprehensive insight into the portrayal of trauma in young adult literature.

“Harry Potter” by J.K. Rowling approaches trauma through the lens of a magical world where the protagonist, Harry, confronts both personal and societal trauma. The series places a strong emphasis on resilience and personal growth. Harry’s journey, marked by the loss of his parents and numerous life-threatening encounters, showcases the power of friendship, courage, and love in overcoming trauma. The fantastical elements, such as Dementors and Horcruxes, symbolize the emotional and psychological consequences of trauma. The series emphasizes the importance of empathy and compassion as essential coping mechanisms.

In contrast, “The Hunger Games” by Suzanne Collins takes a dystopian approach to trauma. The trauma here is stark and brutal, reflecting a totalitarian regime that forces children to participate in a deadly competition. The characters, especially Katniss, are marked by the traumatic nature of the Games. Trauma in “The Hunger Games” is depicted as inescapable, a product of a society characterized by violence, surveillance, and oppression. The series highlights the moral dilemmas and the psychological consequences of trauma, underlining the theme of survival at any cost.

“The Book Thief” by Markus Zusak approaches trauma during World War II with a unique perspective. The novel portrays a young girl, Liesel, who finds solace in storytelling and books amid the trauma of the war. The trauma in this novel is deeply emotional, involving loss, grief, and the impact of war on ordinary people. Liesel’s journey of coping with trauma through storytelling underscores the transformative power of words and the importance of bearing witness to the past. The novel emphasizes the resilience of the human spirit in the face of profound trauma.

While these novels differ in setting, tone, and the nature of trauma, they share common themes. All three books emphasize the importance of resilience and personal growth in the face of trauma. They highlight the enduring impact of traumatic experiences on characters and their emotional development. Additionally, they portray trauma as a universal human experience, transcending the boundaries of time, place, and genre.

In summary, “Harry Potter, ” “The Hunger Games,” and “The Book Thief” approach trauma with distinct perspectives, reflecting the unique characteristics of their respective narratives. However, they all contribute to the overarching conversation in young adult literature about the nature of trauma, its emotional consequences, and the coping mechanisms individuals employ to navigate it. These novels, while diverse in their approach, collectively underscore the profound impact that trauma can have on individuals and the enduring strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

2- Comparing Trauma Themes in These Works

In examining “Harry Potter,” “The Hunger Games,” and “The Book Thief, ” it becomes evident that while all three works address the theme of

trauma, they do so with distinct perspectives and narrative styles, resulting in common themes as well as notable differences.

A common theme across these works is the portrayal of trauma as a pervasive and inescapable element of the characters' lives. In "Harry Potter," trauma is rooted in the loss of family, the constant threat of dark forces, and the emotional toll of battles and betrayals. Similarly, "The Hunger Games" presents trauma as an integral part of life within the brutal Games, marked by violence, moral dilemmas, and the psychological consequences of survival. "The Book Thief" explores trauma within the context of World War II, depicting the emotional hardships and losses experienced by its characters.

Another shared theme is the importance of resilience and the development of coping mechanisms in the face of trauma. In "Harry Potter," characters like Harry, Hermione, and Ron display remarkable resilience, overcoming their traumas through friendship, courage, and love. In "The Hunger Games," Katniss and other tributes use intelligence, adaptability, and alliances as survival strategies in the arena. "The Book Thief" portrays the transformative power of storytelling and the written word as a means of coping with trauma, highlighting the strength of the human spirit.

Despite these common themes, there are significant differences in how trauma is addressed in each work. "Harry Potter" employs a magical and fantastical setting to explore trauma, providing a sense of escapism for readers while addressing universal emotional struggles. In contrast, "The Hunger Games" is a dystopian series, which presents trauma as a harsh and relentless reality, emphasizing the moral dilemmas and physical dangers of its characters' world. "The Book Thief" delves into the emotional

complexities of trauma during World War II, using a unique narrator and an emphasis on the power of storytelling to convey its message.

Moreover, the way each work portrays the consequences of trauma differs. “Harry Potter” focuses on personal growth and resilience in the face of trauma, emphasizing the importance of empathy and compassion. “The Hunger Games” places a spotlight on moral dilemmas and the emotional turmoil experienced by its characters, reflecting the brutality of its dystopian setting. “The Book Thief” leans into the emotional and psychological aspects of trauma, showcasing the impact of grief, loss, and the healing power of storytelling.

In summary, while common themes of trauma and resilience are present in “Harry Potter,” “The Hunger Games,” and “The Book Thief,” each work approaches the theme differently, depending on its unique narrative style and setting. These differences result in a nuanced exploration of trauma, enriching the landscape of young adult literature and providing readers with diverse perspectives on how individuals cope with and overcome life's most challenging experiences.

3- Impact of Each Series on Young Readers

The impact of “Harry Potter,” “The Hunger Games,” and “The Book Thief” on young readers has been profound and far-reaching, as these series have transcended the boundaries of young adult literature to become cultural phenomena in their own right.

“Harry Potter” by J.K. Rowling has left an indelible mark on a generation of young readers. The series not only captivated readers with its magical world but also instilled essential life lessons. Through the lens of

trauma, it taught young readers about the importance of empathy, resilience, and the strength of friendship. Harry, Hermione, and Ron became role models, showcasing the power of courage in the face of adversity. The series sparked a love of reading and inspired an entire community of fans who grew up with the characters. “Harry Potter” became a gateway to exploring complex themes, including trauma, in literature, and it encouraged young readers to engage with stories that tackle real-world issues in a fantastical context.

“The Hunger Games” by Suzanne Collins has challenged young readers to confront the harsh realities of a dystopian world and the traumatic experiences of its characters. The impact of the series lies in its capacity to spark discussions about ethics, social justice, and the consequences of oppressive regimes. Katniss Everdeen’s resilience and moral dilemmas resonated with young readers, encouraging critical thinking about the moral complexities of survival. The series prompted conversations about the power of individual agency and the role of young people in effecting change. “The Hunger Games” raised awareness of social and political issues, making it a catalyst for discussions about trauma, survival, and social responsibility.

“The Book Thief” by Markus Zusak, set against the backdrop of World War II, offers young readers a unique perspective on trauma and the healing power of words. The impact of the novel is rooted in its ability to convey complex emotions and the enduring strength of the human spirit. Liesel’s journey as the “Book Thief” encourages young readers to explore the transformative nature of storytelling and how words can be used to cope with and bear witness to trauma. The novel has sparked discussions about historical events, tolerance, and the importance of memory. It has inspired

young readers to engage with literature as a means of understanding and processing complex emotions and historical traumas.

In summary, “Harry Potter,” “The Hunger Games,” and “The Book Thief” have all had a profound impact on young readers. These series have ignited imaginations, fostered a love of reading, and encouraged critical thinking about important themes, including trauma. They have provided young readers with a rich tapestry of characters and experiences, and in doing so, they have played a pivotal role in shaping the literary and social consciousness of a generation. These books have empowered young readers to grapple with the challenges of the real world while offering them a space to find solace, inspiration, and the strength to overcome their own traumas.



Conclusion

The analysis of trauma in “Harry Potter,” “The Hunger Games,” and “The Book Thief” yields several key findings and insights that underscore the importance of literature in helping young readers understand and cope with complex emotions and experiences.

First and foremost, these series reveal the universality of trauma, showing that young readers from various backgrounds can connect with characters who experience grief, loss, and adversity. In “Harry Potter,” the characters’ responses to trauma—such as Harry’s resilience and Hermione’s intelligence—offer young readers relatable role models who demonstrate that they, too, can overcome challenges. “The Hunger Games” presents characters grappling with moral dilemmas in a dystopian setting, demonstrating that young people can confront complex ethical issues and make choices based on their values. “The Book Thief” portrays trauma through the lens of empathy, love, and storytelling, emphasizing the power of words to heal and bear witness to history.

The analysis also highlights the role of literature as a powerful tool for emotional exploration and catharsis. Each series uses storytelling and character development to navigate trauma, offering young readers a safe space to process their own emotions. Literature allows young readers to vicariously experience the characters’ journeys, helping them develop empathy and emotional intelligence. The themes of resilience, coping mechanisms, and the healing power of storytelling in these books provide valuable insights into how literature can serve as a vehicle for understanding and navigating trauma.



Educators, parents, and young readers can draw important recommendations from these insights. First, it's crucial to encourage young readers to explore literature that addresses complex themes like trauma. These series demonstrate that literature can be a gateway to exploring emotions, understanding the world, and building empathy. Parents and educators can engage in discussions with young readers about the characters' experiences, fostering critical thinking and emotional awareness.

Moreover, educators can incorporate these novels into the curriculum, using them as a foundation for discussions about trauma, resilience, and social issues. Parents can create a supportive reading environment at home, where young readers can safely engage with challenging themes and share their thoughts and feelings. Encouraging young readers to express their emotions and reflections on what they read is essential to helping them cope with complex experiences.

In conclusion, the analysis of trauma in "Harry Potter," "The Hunger Games," and "The Book Thief" reveals the profound impact of literature on young readers' understanding of and coping with complex emotions and experiences. These series emphasize the power of storytelling to navigate trauma, and they offer valuable lessons for educators, parents, and young readers on how to use literature as a tool for emotional growth, empathy development, and critical thinking. By embracing these recommendations, adults can empower young readers to engage with literature as a means of personal growth and healing.

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