

Metaphorical Expressions in the "Harry Potter and Philosopher's Stone": An Analysis of Conceptual Metaphors and Their Literary Functions

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Abstract: Metaphor plays a crucial role in communication by enriching language, making it more expressive and impactful. It helps convey complex ideas in a way that is easier to understand and relate to, creating deeper connections between concepts. In literature and creative writing, metaphors enhance imagery and emotional depth, making texts more engaging and memorable. They also serve as a tool for shaping thought and perception, influencing how people interpret and interact with the world around them. In this article the first book in the Harry Potter series, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, is analysed according to the conceptual metaphors it contains. Drawing on the framework of Critical Metaphor Analysis, the research aims to uncover the deeper meanings behind these metaphors and to systematically identify their roles and functions within the novel.

Keywords: Metaphor, novel, Harry Potter, conceptual metaphor, symbol, affective meaning, abstract feelings, stylistic devices.

Introduction: Defining metaphor is not easy, and definitions vary according to theoretical perspectives. It is proposed a provisional definition of metaphor as "thinking, talking about, or experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another". Identifying metaphors is similarly difficult and theory-dependent. At the extremes, most people will probably agree about the identification of indisputably literal words on the one hand, and the identification of original and creative metaphors on the other. Between these extremes, even experts often disagree about whether a word or phrase is metaphorical. This reflects the fact that some people may understand a phrase as metaphorical while others do not. What is crucial when reading essays about metaphor, both for the beginner and for the seasoned expert, is to be clear about what is meant by the term, metaphor and how the examples discussed are identified and classified.

METHOD

The term metaphor is generally understood in various ways, often as a word that replaces something else or highlights a similarity between two things. It refers to the expression of one idea through another, often based on a hidden resemblance or comparison. For instance, the Oxford English Dictionary (abridged) defines metaphor as a form of transference and resemblance: "A figure of speech in which a name or descriptive term is applied to an object to which it is not literally applicable but which bears a resemblance to it." Aristotle, on the other hand, viewed metaphor as a form of implicit comparison or analogy. In his work *Poetics*, dedicated to the study of poetry, he was the first to discuss the concept of metaphor, defining it as a figurative expression used in poetic language. He also explained metaphor as "the use of a term that belongs to one concept to describe another, based on a resemblance between the two." Later thinkers such as Demetrius, Quintilian, and Cicero also provided similar definitions in their writings. Additionally, in his work

Rhetoric, Aristotle expanded on the topic, offering multiple interpretations of metaphor and outlining its key characteristics and functions.

Metaphor is a crucial tool of human thought, allowing people to create analogies and link ideas together. It is also one of the fundamental ways language is used; through metaphor, individuals can explain their ideas or express emotions and feelings in an indirect yet powerful way. By studying how metaphors are used, we can gain a deeper understanding of human emotions, attitudes, and concepts—not only on a personal level but also within a broader social context.

DISCUSSION

1	<i>“Little tyke”, - chortled Mr. Dursley as he left the house.(P.2)</i>	4	<i>Mrs. Dursley was thin and blonde and had nearly twice the usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on the neighbors.(P.1)</i>
2	<i>Then a pain like he'd never felt before pierced his head; it was as though his scar were on fire.(p.205)</i>	5	<i>When Mr. and Mrs. Dursley woke up on the dull, gray Tuesday our story starts, there was nothing about the cloudy sky outside to suggest that strange and mysterious things would soon be happening all over the country.(P.1)</i>
3	<i>It was as though an iron fist had clenched suddenly around Harry's heart.(p.207)</i>	6	<i>When Mr. and Mrs. Dursley woke up on the dull, gray Tuesday our story starts, there was nothing about the cloudy sky outside to suggest that strange and mysterious things would soon be happening all over the country. (P.1)</i>

1.“Little tyke”, - chortled Mr. Dursley as he left the house. (P.2)

This passage contains two key metaphorical elements: “Little tyke” – Typically used affectionately to refer to a mischievous or energetic child, in Mr. Dursley’s context, the phrase may also carry a tone of

Harry Potter is a seven-book fantasy series by J.K. Rowling that tells the story of a young wizard’s struggle against the dark forces led by Lord Voldemort, while he grows up and studies at a magical school with his friends. Beyond its narrative, Harry Potter offers more than just a captivating reading experience—it reflects deeper cultural and linguistic phenomena. Over time, scholarly interest in Harry Potter has grown, leading to a wide range of perspectives and interpretations both inside and outside the text. However, one area that remains largely unexplored is the use of conceptual metaphors in the series. Most academic studies tend to focus on the main character, overlooking a thorough and systematic analysis of metaphorical language.

indifference or dismissiveness. He’s likely referring to his son Dudley—spoiled and ill-mannered—yet Mr. Dursley sees his behavior as endearing rather than problematic. This subtly highlights the Dursleys’ excessive indulgence and their inability to recognize their child’s flaws.

“Chortled” – A blend of “chuckle” and “snort,” this word suggests smug, self-satisfied laughter. It reveals Mr. Dursley’s contentment with his simple, uneventful life. His choice of words also implies his complete obliviousness to the extraordinary events that are about to unfold. Together, these expressions paint Mr. Dursley as someone perfectly satisfied with his dull, predictable existence—unaware that his world is about to be turned upside down.

2. It must have been a trick of the light. (P.2)

The phrase “a trick of the light” carries more than just its literal meaning. It subtly suggests illusion and denial—the idea that what is seen isn’t real, but merely a deceptive play of light. In the context of the novel, Mr. Dursley uses this phrase to rationalize something unusual, likely connected to magic. It reflects his deep denial of the magical world and his need to explain away anything that doesn’t fit into his structured, ordinary life. On a deeper level, the phrase can be seen as foreshadowing. It hints at the coexistence of the magical and non-magical worlds, implying that magic is all around, yet invisible to those unaware of it—like the Muggles. It sets the stage for the unfolding of the magical realm, suggesting that things may not always be as they seem.

Symbolically, the phrase also evokes the contrast between light and darkness. Light often represents truth, awareness, and knowledge, while darkness symbolizes ignorance or illusion. Here, Mr. Dursley is metaphorically “in the dark”—either unaware of or unwilling to acknowledge the truth about magic, even when it’s right in front of him.

3. Then a pain like he'd never felt before pierced his head; it was as though his scar were on fire. (p.205)

In fact, the verb “pierce” refers to a sharp, stabbing pain and compares it to a physical injury caused by a weapon. This imagery helps convey the pain more vividly and intensely. The phrase “never felt before” emphasizes that the pain is unprecedented in its severity.

The following metaphor likens the pain to burning, which is typically associated with unbearable torment. In literature, fire often symbolizes suffering, destruction, or transformation, which adds deeper meaning to the experience of pain. Here, the intense physical pain—expressed through metaphor—allows the reader to clearly imagine the character’s suffering. Additionally, the sensation of burning might suggest an emotional or supernatural connection, indicating that the scar is linked to some mysterious or dangerous force.

4. It was as though an iron fist had clenched suddenly

around Harry's heart. (p.207)

Iron symbolizes strength, hardness, and ruthlessness—an overwhelming power that offers no relief. The fist represents authority, control, and aggression, signifying domination or restraint through force. Together, the image of an iron fist conveys a sense of oppression, suffocation, or an inescapable grip.

The act of squeezing or crushing emphasizes both physical and emotional pain, drawing attention to its intensity. The phrase around Harry’s heart directly connects the metaphor to emotion—suggesting overwhelming anxiety, fear, or sorrow. This metaphor heightens the emotional weight of the moment, allowing the reader to vividly and clearly feel Harry’s torment. It transforms abstract feelings—like fear, worry, and grief—into a concrete, physical image, deepening the impact of the scene.

5. Mrs. Dursley was thin and blonde and had nearly twice the usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on the neighbors. (P.1)

In this metaphor, Rowling likens Petunia Dursley to a crane—a bird that is graceful, yet also possesses a certain strength. Long-time readers of the series will recognize this imagery again later, as her story with Harry comes to a close: despite her strength and resolve, there remains a touch of elegance in her character. Her long neck is metaphorically tied to her personality. The act of craning toward the garden fences is not only physical—it symbolizes an excessive curiosity about other people’s lives. The fences represent social boundaries, and she is constantly trying to peer over them, prying into others’ affairs.

Overall, this metaphor humorously exaggerates Mrs. Dursley’s nosy nature, while also reinforcing themes of judgment, social conformity, and the Dursleys’ obsession with appearances.

6. When Mr. and Mrs. Dursley woke up on the dull, gray Tuesday our story starts, there was nothing about the cloudy sky outside to suggest that strange and mysterious things would soon be happening all over the country. (P.1)

The metaphor “dull, gray Tuesday” in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* serves several purposes. First, it conveys a sense of monotony and routine, highlighting the dull, uneventful life of the Dursleys. Tuesday, being an unremarkable day of the week, paired with words like “dull” and “gray,” emphasizes their ordinary and predictable world. It also sets up a contrast between the mundane and the magical, making the arrival of extraordinary events feel more dramatic. This simple phrase hints that magic lies just

beneath the surface of everyday life—even when everything seems normal. Additionally, it sets the mood and foreshadows what's to come. The gloomy weather creates a sense of uneasy calm, suggesting that change is near. It subtly signals that the Dursleys' orderly world is about to be disrupted by Harry's arrival.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of metaphors in the Harry Potter series reveals that they serve not only as artistic devices but also play a crucial role in plot development and in unveiling the inner emotional worlds of the characters. The analysis shows that metaphors do more than just draw readers into the narrative—they also imbue events with deeper meaning. Metaphors in the novel function not only as aesthetic tools but also as emotional guides, helping readers experience the magical world as something real and tangible. The findings of this study demonstrate that the metaphors in Harry Potter are rich in affective meaning, making the text more impactful and meaningful. Future analyses of this kind could be applied to other works of fantasy literature, offering deeper insight into how metaphors influence readers' thoughts and emotions.

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