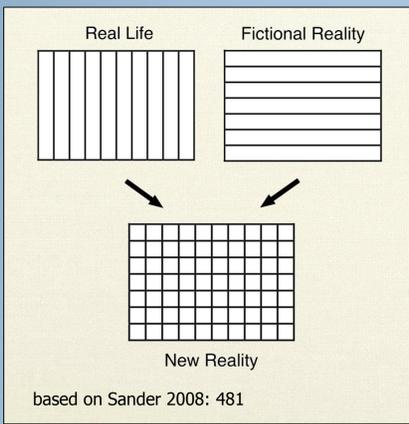


# The Greatest Magic of Harry Potter: Reducing Prejudice – And Where to Find It

## Escapism Builds a New Reality

When you get lost in a book and forget about your real life until you have finished reading the novel, personal change can occur. In case of the Harry Potter novels this change has the potential to encourage pro-social behaviour.



## Signs of Escapism:

- Discussing theories about your favourite characters
- Meeting on fan sites
- Sorting into the houses
- Writing fan fiction
- Re-enacting the story
- Playing Quidditch



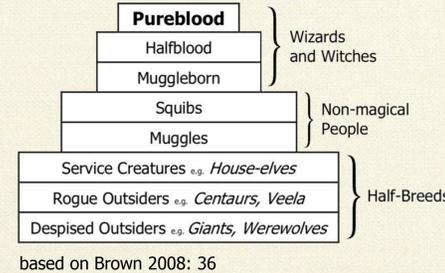
The author at the age of 10

## Effects of Fantasy Literature on Empathy

- For the brain, reading about social interactions is like experiencing them in real life. (Speer et al. 2009)
- The narrative structure of the novels communicates Harry's inner thoughts and feelings directly to the reader. (Fenske 2008)
- The emotions the reader feels in response to the story are real (e.g. crying when a character dies). (Djikic 2013)
- While reading, the reader takes part in Harry's experiences and adopts his point of view. (Mar et al. 2006)

## The Social Hierarchy in *Harry Potter*

Prejudice in the Wizarding World is based on a fictional issue of blood-status. The Hitler-like racist Lord Voldemort and his followers (the Purebloods) discriminate against all other groups and withdraw their rights.



The fictional hierarchy does not represent real life groups and is therefore conferrable to all kinds of stigmatised groups in real life. (Vezzali et al. 2015)

## Harry's Point of View on the Issues of Prejudice



Harry chooses his friends by their character traits and not by their social status.



In Dumbledore's Army, Harry and his friends fight for a world free of social inequalities and injustice.

## Reduction of Prejudice

- Along with Harry, the readers build up empathy, which is the ability to understand others' emotions. (Djikic 2013)
- They learn to respect that others have beliefs, desires and intentions that are different from one's own. (Kidd/Castano 2013)
- The readers' attitudes improve over time and in situations comparable to those in the novel. (Bal/Veltkamp 2013)

## Impact on the Reader

A European study shows that readers of all age groups who identify with Harry, improved their attitudes towards immigrants, refugees and members of the LGBT community. (Vezzali et al. 2015)

An American study shows that Harry Potter fans of the Millennial generation tend to reject deadly violence and torture and show greater acceptance of diversity. (Gierzynski 2013)



Quidditch Team from Macaulay Honors College NYC

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Mit besonderer Unterstützung durch den Förderverein des Gymnasiums Penzberg