

**MAGIC AS MORAL EDUCATION: J.K. ROWLING'S
REVIVAL OF READING AND ITS ROLE
IN ADOLESCENT PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**



by

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This dissertation is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree Magister Artium in the Faculty of the Humanities (Department of English) at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein.

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INTRODUCTION

Being literate is a privilege often taken for granted. The ability to read the morning newspaper or the subtitles of one's favourite soap opera is often viewed as trivial, or incidental, and yet South Africa's population is far from 100% literate. The youth's preoccupation with technology (cell phones and computers, for example) has marginalised healthier pastimes like reading. Fortunately, this trend appears to have begun to shift: our youth may be rediscovering previous generations' love of reading thanks to best-selling authors like J.K. Rowling, Terry Pratchett and Phillip Pullman. Consequently, the rationale for this study is to determine to what extent (if any) a specific author's contribution to literature is motivating young people to read again, and whether her texts can be deemed a viable aid to morally educating the youth. Thus, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter oeuvre* will be the main material under study, and will be explored in terms of both its potential as an aid to moral development, and the resultant lessons that can be taken from it, as well as its possible contribution to the re-establishment of a reading culture among the youth of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The question now arises whether a culture of reading has, in fact, been established among the above-mentioned group, and whether the suggested texts have played a part in doing so. If this assumption can be made, one would also have to consider what moral lessons, if any, are propagated by Rowling. On the one hand, this thesis will explore the responses of young people who have and have not been exposed to the series in terms of their interest in and affinity for reading, and to what extent Rowling's series has influenced them, if at all. As the focus of this study will be solely on Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, it will naturally not be quantifiable beyond these limitations. However, the results may still serve as a springboard

for future studies. On the other hand, the focus of the study also extends to areas of a more personal nature that deal with principles, such as young people's responses to themes like good versus evil, and their understanding of social and moral commentary. The opinion of certain critics, such as Maretha Maartens who has fervently denounced the texts for religious reasons, will also be considered in an attempt to verify whether young readers may be exposed to moral risks by the magical aspect of Rowling's work, or whether, in sharing Harry's experiences, they may form a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between good and evil and the complexities of life and human relations.

As a result of this study's dual nature, both the quantitative and qualitative research methods have been utilised. In order to explore the aesthetic and traditional literary aspects of the texts, as well as a variety of media texts, the qualitative method has been employed to examine and compare themes, and to delve into uncharted areas. This approach will also assist in analysing the moral aspects of the texts, and will attempt to prove that Rowling's work provides valuable insights and lessons that fall outside the parameters of religion. A questionnaire was designed to assist with the quantitative answering of the aforementioned questions. In an attempt to refine the document, a pilot study was conducted with a test group. Thereafter, the questionnaire was presented to a group of first-year English literature students at the University of the Free State. This allowed different types of readers (*i.e.* first- and second-language speakers of English) to participate in the study and helped to lend a degree of reliability to the data, as participants were considered to be fully capable of evaluating the adolescent life-stage experienced in the not-too-distant past. The questions attempted to assess the participants' supposed interest in reading both *Harry Potter* and other texts. The data obtained were then analysed in order to determine the accuracy of the hypothesis that texts like those under scrutiny do contribute to the re-establishment of a

reading culture among our youth, and may well assist with adolescent moral education and development.

From an academic point of view there is no doubt that literacy is a vital and invaluable asset that everyone should be privileged to possess. In conducting this research, I anticipate a contribution to the already existing body of data pertaining to the study of literacy and young people's affinity for reading. Furthermore, I hope to confer a greater sense of credibility, from a literary perspective, on Rowling's *oeuvre* and the relevant moral concerns it addresses. I believe that the lessons learned from the texts, as well as the companionship they lend to young people, who often feel alone and unappreciated, are not always acknowledged. Additionally, I believe that *Harry Potter* is the ideal material to prescribe for both first- and second-language speakers of English, especially at primary school level. Apart from the moral and thematic aspects that young readers will be privileged to encounter in the series, they will also be exposed to a body of work that contains an impressive range of words for vocabulary improvement, and a standard of English that will establish a reliable basis for any future studies in the language.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review chapter aims not only to present a sound contextual and theoretical background to the various areas that are explored during the course of this study, but also to provide insight into the researcher's unique understanding of the theories and definitions involved. In an attempt to lend a degree of structure to this part of the dissertation, terminology and theories are examined in a rational, progressive, and instructive manner.

1.1 DEVELOPMENTAL DYNAMICS

Identity development is one of the most important and complex components of adolescence (Ackerman, 1990; Bester, 1990; Burns, 1988; Fassaert, 1992), and although it neither starts nor ends during this life phase, it is one of the most salient facets of this stage in personal development (Louw, 2004:516). Erikson (1963; 1968:83) explains that “[t]he development of a personal identity seems to be an almost universal requirement of the adolescent stage”, and the central themes around which identity formation is clustered are identified as follows: “...establishing gender roles; relationships; marriage; religion; [...] a value system; autonomy from parents; social responsibility; and work roles” (Louw, 2004:516). Consequently, Erikson (1963; 1968:83) identifies two healthy and two unhealthy ways in which adolescents may proceed through the identity formation process. These are represented in Table 1 below (Louw, 2004:517).

Manner	Manifestation
<p>Healthy manner of identity formation</p>	<p>Possibility 1</p> <p>Certain adolescents progress through this stage of life with ease and find identity formation to be something that occurs quickly and transpires fairly easily.</p> <p>Possibility 2</p> <p>Entailing a process of questioning, exploring, and experimentation, Erikson believed this to be a healthy crisis in the adolescent’s life; one which would eventually bring about a stable and socially functional individual.</p>
<p>Unhealthy manner of identity formation</p>	<p>Possibility 1</p> <p>The adolescent develops a low self-esteem and lacks a clear sense of what their values are and even who they are.</p> <p>Possibility 2</p> <p>This type of negative identity development sees adolescents going through life unquestioningly and thus simply adopting their parent’s value system, without developing a value system of their own.</p>

Table 1: Healthy and unhealthy identity development

Through the above, one comes to realise the complexity and importance of identity development as a component of personal development, especially in young people. This gives rise to another crucial aspect of personal maturation, namely the cultivation of a narrative imagination.

Martha Nussbaum, in her text *Cultivating humanity: A Classical defence of reform in liberal education*, lays bare to her reader the complexities of cultivating humanity through world citizenship. Primarily she (Nussbaum, 1997:9) explains that

The sterner, more exigent version is the ideal of a citizen whose *primary* loyalty is to human beings the world over, and whose

national, local, and varied group loyalties are considered distinctly secondary.

However, Nussbaum (1997:9) pursues the implications of having a primary and secondary loyalty, and, in particular, a global loyalty to humanity in general. She explains that this stance does not force world citizenship on its members by demanding an abandonment of other priorities, but simply requires that, in relation to any other demands that people may adhere to, they be cognisant of human lives and the “...common human abilities and problems...” (Nussbaum, 1997:9) that bind them. She furthers her argument by identifying the three facilities¹ required to become such a world citizen in any modern society, the first of which is Socratic self-examination.

1.1.1. SOCRATIC SELF-EXAMINATION

Socrates believed that every individual should possess the ability to examine critically their beliefs and traditions, thus living what he termed “the examined life” (Nussbaum, 1997:9). Nussbaum (1997:9) refers to this as a life where no belief is accepted as trustworthy merely because it has been passed on by tradition or habit; in other words “...a life that questions all beliefs and accepts only those that survive reason’s demand for consistency and justification” (Nussbaum, 1997:9). Subsequently, and in order to acquire this ability, individuals should hone the aptitude to make rational judgments, determine the accuracy and reasonable dependability of what is read and said, and accept the probability that traditions may be challenged (Nussbaum, 1997:10). Naturally, this would not come easily – it would be very difficult to expect a devout follower of any religious denomination to question the doctrines of that faith as opposed to simply believing what is being taught. And yet, this is the exact reason why world citizenship is vital: to prevent individuals from becoming “mindless”

¹ The first two of these facilities will be discussed briefly as they do not relate directly to this study.

followers of a predetermined creed, and in order to establish a sound, rational foundation for any set of values and beliefs.

1.1.2. WORLD CITIZENSHIP

The second of the three capacities required to become a humane citizen of the world is the ability to see oneself, not just as part of a "...local region or group..."² (Nussbaum, 1997:10), but as an extension of the rest of humankind through common concerns and experiences. Hence, it becomes necessary for the individual to think of himself/herself as a human being first, instead of moving the label to second or third place after, for example, nationality (*i.e.* South African), religion (*i.e.* Christian), or sexuality (*i.e.* homosexual). Nussbaum (1997:10) explains that everyone is bound by international concerns such as war, famine, and global warming, and that, as a species, one should refrain from forgetting about those who may live at the other end of the earth and one should also not assume that their lives are not much different from one's own. Thus, of vital importance is to understand how similar needs are met through methods that differ from what one may hold dear; this is an understanding which is gained only when differences in culture, gender, and the like are acknowledged and embraced.

1.1.3. NARRATIVE IMAGINATION

The notion of a narrative imagination³ completes Nussbaum's (1997) theory about cultivating humanity. The concept encapsulates the premise that one should be able to conceptualise "...what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions, [...] wishes and

² Thus, individuals should not define themselves in terms of the city, province, or country that they live in, nor should they describe their identities as extensions of their religious or cultural beliefs, whatever these may be.

³ The premise behind this concept plays a major role in this study and it will therefore be explored in more detail than the first two capacities.

desires that someone so placed might have” (Nussbaum, 1997:11). Thus, even though it is difficult to appreciate sincerely another person’s situation, one should attempt to imagine what that person is experiencing. For example, when in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* Harry Potter finds out that his parents did not die in an automobile accident and that they were murdered, Rowling’s (1997:44) reader is “coaxed” into understanding the boy’s emotional distress at learning the truth, despite differences in gender, culture, and even religion, thus supporting Nussbaum’s views (1997:17). Nussbaum (1997) also points out that no reader would be able to criticise a text from a purely objective point of view, and that one’s personal experiences and past actions would influence the way in which a character, and his/her situation, is understood and analysed. As a result, her (1997) exploration of narrative imagination can be seen as the ability to understand others’ actions and intentions within the context in which these are perceived, through the successful utilisation of one’s imagination. In order to possess a narrative imagination, however, a citizen of the world requires “...knowledge of history and social fact” (Nussbaum, 1997:85).

Over 2000 years ago Heraclitus pronounced that “[l]earning about many things does not produce understanding” (Nussbaum, 1997:85); something which still holds true in our modern day and age. Similarly, Nussbaum (1997:85) explains that

Marcus Aurelius insisted that to become world citizens we must not simply amass knowledge; we must also cultivate in ourselves a capacity for sympathetic imagination that will enable us to comprehend the motives and choices of people different from ourselves, seeing them not as forbiddingly alien and other, but as sharing many problem[s] and possibilities with us.

In other words, anyone can acquire masses of knowledge; committing lists of facts to memory and regurgitating them when necessary is something that most people are able to do. The challenge, from Nussbaum’s (1997) point of view, arises when one’s wealth of knowledge has to be paired with an emotional maturity that should allow a person to explore

another's situation with both factual, as well as emotional understanding. Again, J.K. Rowling's (1997) *Harry Potter oeuvre* serves as a good example, as the reader is required to comprehend, both from a factual and an emotionally mature point of view, the difficulties involved when Harry moves from the muggle-world⁴ to the world of magic. Hence, on the one hand one can comprehend how lost Harry will feel in terms of understanding the customs and values of his new world – something that others have been accumulating throughout their entire lives – in other words, a wealth of knowledge. On the other hand, one should be able to gain insight into the emotional complexities that he will have to endure as an eleven-year-old boy whose life has been a lie up to that point. Therefore, a comprehensive appreciation of the situation is gained, as opposed to a superficial understanding of circumstances involved. Accordingly, it is at this point that the question as to how one acquires the emotional maturity necessary to have a well developed and fully narrative imagination arises.

1.1.3.1 THE ARTS AND LITERATURE

Nussbaum (1997:85-86) explains that the arts are what world citizens require in order to ensure a well developed and objective narrative imagination and how the arts "...cultivate capacities of judgement and sensitivity that [...] should be expressed in the choices a citizen makes". While this holds true for most forms of art, literature and its capacity "...to represent the specific circumstances and problems of people of many different sorts..." (Nussbaum, 1997:86) is said to be essential due to the valuable role it plays in shaping a world citizen's narrative imagination. This idea has been around for millennia and one finds that Aristotle, in his text *The Poetics*, elucidates how literature is "...not something that has happened, but the kind of thing that might happen" (Nussbaum, 1997:86). Subsequently, it is

⁴ Coined by J.K. Rowling as a word that describes someone who cannot do magic, the word "muggle" will now also appear in the next edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and "...has been extended to describe anyone who is clumsy and unable to master a skill..." (Harry Potter casts his spell on Oxford dictionary, 2003:4).

through literature that one gains the necessary aptitude to comprehend and analyse the circumstances and experiences of people whose lives are very disparate from our own, even if we do not agree with the said circumstances or experiences.

In *Maurice*⁵, for example, E.M. Forster (2005) presents his reader with a character who lives in a time and place where homosexuality is condemned by society and is punishable by death. During the early 1900s a young man named Maurice Hall resides in London, England, and has everything a gentleman of his age could desire. He has gone to Cambridge and is now a part of the upward mobile group of businessmen who can spend their weekends at estates in the countryside if they desire to do so. However, Maurice finds himself increasingly attracted to members of his own sex, and one finds the dynamic of the novel rooted in this young man's struggle to come to terms with his sexuality in a society that labels such sexual preference taboo. Thus, Forster provides his reader with a glimpse of a world that they may never know or understand, and in doing so coerces his readers to put themselves in the shoes of someone who is experiencing emotions and turmoil they may never have been able to comprehend otherwise. Accordingly, Nussbaum (1997:88) asserts that “[n]arrative art has the power to make us see the lives of the different with more than a casual [...] interest...” which is brought about by the individual's “...involvement and sympathetic understanding...” of that situation, as well as one's “...anger at [...] society's refusals of visibility”. It is at this point that one may come to wonder when the development of the narrative imagination begins.

⁵ This is but one of the many texts to which Nussbaum's (1997) theory can be applied and was selected specifically to use as a case in point. Another example that comes to mind is *Beloved*, a novel by Toni Morrison, that tells the story of a woman who succeeds in murdering her youngest daughter in an attempt to protect her from the world of slavery she is destined to grow up in. Again the reader is forced to abandon what is deemed moral and acceptable in order to comprehend the desperation of a mother who commits such an atrocious deed. The latter understanding is only possible when a well-developed narrative imagination is present.

1.1.3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF STORIES

Developing an individual's narrative imagination begins at a young age and is a matter that has to be steered fervently to ensure that the said attribute can be of value later in life. When parents tell stories to their children they are unwittingly setting in motion the process of forming the child's narrative imagination. Nussbaum (1997:90) explains how the stories and nursery rhymes told to children provide offspring with the ability to comprehend that other people have complex inner thoughts and emotions and that they themselves are entitled to the same privacy. Subsequently, nursery rhymes and children's stories lay the foundation that will, in later life, allow an individual to make personal decisions with insight, while at the same time give that person the capacity to respect the desire of others to have similar thoughts and emotions kept to themselves. As a result, Nussbaum (1997:90) explains, the narrative imagination is shaped, leaving the individual free to have moral (see point 2 in this chapter) interactions within a society. From a young age the individual learns to harbour compassion, concern, and understanding for characters in stories, which contributes to his/her humanity. Thus, the individual will have the ability to be sympathetic to the needs of others, and will understand another's need for privacy and detachment, without judging that person unfairly. It is at this point that one should consider the utilisation of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series as a means of assisting with adolescent personal development, as mentioned in the title of this study.

Sharon Black (2003b:237-247) investigates the *Harry Potter* phenomenon from a psychological perspective, and makes use of theories by psychoanalysts Bruno Bettelheim and Joseph Campbell to investigate two case studies. In the first case she applies Bettelheim's (1976) explanation of *The uses of enchantment* to investigate ten-year-old Kallie's interest in Rowling's series and her willingness to re-read these books, rather than

any other children's book that she may have come across. Black (2003b:239-241) explains how *Harry Potter* and his world of magic and fantasy allow the young child to imagine different scenarios as circumstances in her own life change. Thus, while the adventures of little Luke in Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (1983) will not be read repeatedly, because the mystery is solved at the end of the book, Rowling creates a world for her readers to which they can return, hoping for a somewhat different adventure every time. Black (2003b:239-241) explains that "...when Harry encounters his greatest desire in the Mirror of Erised (Rowling, 1997) or his greatest fear in the Boggart (Rowling, 1999), the reader is invited to draw up [his or] her own desires and fears – and these are not neatly 'solved' in one session". Bettelheim (1976:62) comments that a child who reads a work of fantasy will be able to discern between the world of magic and make-believe and the reality in which he/she has to function from day to day – a reality that will be constantly changing.

In the second case, Black (2003b:241-245) applies Campbell's (1968) theory, branded *The rise of the hero*, in order to explore why college student Sandra is drawn to Harry's adventures. She explains how, from a young age, Sandra had been enchanted by heroes such as Wilbur in *Charlotte's Web*, the siblings in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and even Luke Skywalker in the *Star Wars* movies. Through her love for these characters she unwittingly experienced Campbell's (1968) psychoanalytic theory pertaining to the narrative. Later as a college student she had the opportunity to study this theory. Sandra's heroes, including Harry Potter, conform to a pattern where a "...personage [or animal with] exceptional gifts..." (Campbell, 1968:37) endures certain hardships while growing up, then realises his/her true heritage before going off to a place the skills and/or abilities are acquired to fulfil an intended vocation. Black (2003) explains how the fantasy world Rowling has created can serve important, albeit diverse, purposes during the formative years of young people, including the possible moral education of adolescents.

1.2 THE MAGIC OF *HARRY POTTER* AND MORALLY EDUCATING THE YOUTH

Moral development is an essential component of the process to reach maturity. Although it is initiated in early childhood, it progresses throughout adolescence, often continuing into adulthood (Louw, 2004:512-515). In terms of this process “...children learn principles that enable them to judge whether particular behaviour patterns are ‘right’ or ‘wrong’” (Louw, 2004:512), which eventually enables them to govern their behaviour and make decisions accordingly. A crucial contributor to our understanding of moral development is the work undertaken by Lawrence Kohlberg (1969; 1981; 1985). A close follower of Jean Piaget (1952; 1972; 1978), Kohlberg expands his predecessor’s theory of cognitive development with his own theory on moral development, basing most of his research on individuals’ reactions to “...hypothetical moral dilemmas” (Louw, 2004:512) such as in the following instance:

The wife of a man, Heinz, is dying. There is, however, a drug that can save her, but it is very expensive. The inventor of the drug is unwilling to sell it at a price that Heinz can afford. In desperation Heinz breaks into the inventor’s laboratory and steals the drug. Did Heinz behave correctly? (Louw, 2004:512).

Kohlberg’s focus is not on the *yes* or *no* response provided by an individual, but is directed more closely at the reasoning method behind the given response (Louw, 2004:512). Accordingly, his belief that moral reasoning is an ability that evolves “...systematically and continually...” (Louw, 2004:513) just like other aspects of cognitive development, brought about his proposal that three levels of moral reasoning exist, which in turn consist of two stages each. Table 2 below (Louw, 2004:513) visually represents Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, demonstrating the three levels with their corresponding stages, as well as the suggested ages at which they are usually manifested. Louw (2004:513) notes that the “...earlier stages are simplistic and concrete”, while “[t]he later stages rely on abstraction and

the application of general principles”, as is the case in Piaget’s theory of cognitive development.

Level	Stage	Example of moral reasoning
I Pre-conventional (5 – 9 years)	Stage 1 Obedience and punishment orientation	Rules are obeyed to avoid punishment. “Heinz shouldn’t steal the drug. He will be jailed.”
	Stage 2 Naïve egotism and instrumental Orientation	Rules are obeyed in order to be rewarded. “Heinz should steal the drug. His wife will reward him later.”
II Conventional (Most adolescents and adults)	Stage 3 Good boy/good girl orientation	Rules are obeyed to be accepted and to avoid rejection. “If Heinz steals the drug everybody will think he is a criminal.”
	Stage 4 Law and order orientation	Rules are accepted because they are necessary for maintaining law and order. “Heinz should steal the drug. It is his duty towards his wife”, or “Heinz should not steal the drug because stealing is against the law”.
III Post-conventional (Only a small percentage of adults reach this level)	Stage 5 Social contract orientation	There is a more flexible understanding of rules: people obey rules because they are necessary for law and order, but rules can also change when better alternatives are available. “Heinz should steal the drug because life is more precious than possessions.”
	Stage 6 Universal-ethical principles orientation	The person acts according to self-chosen principles based on universal values. “Heinz should steal the drug because life should be respected and preserved. Heinz would never be able to forgive himself if he did not act according to his conscience.”

Table 2: Kohlberg's theory of moral development

Research across the culture barrier confirms that all individuals undergo this process of moral development, progressing successively through the various stages of moral growth (Louw, 2004:515). The rate at which this transpires, however, “...is determined by the social context” (Snarey, 1985), with individuals residing in “...complex urban cultures...” (Louw,

2004:515) and who are from a higher socio-economic stratum achieving the advanced levels of moral reasoning earlier than those who grow up in less complex rural cultures and who are from the lower socio-economic echelons (Louw, 2004:515). Kohlberg ascribes this to the fact that more privileged individuals would have been exposed to better and more diverse opportunities, thus allowing them a better chance of developing their moral reasoning. He is, however, criticised for neglecting, among other things (Gilligan, 1982; Walker, 1984:677-691), to acknowledge cultural differences in his theory.

Louw (2004:515) mentions the existence of communal cultures, as found in China and various African countries, where the reaction to a moral predicament is based on holistic “...rather than individualistic values”. As a result, people from these cultures often “...appear to function on conventional and pre-conventional levels” (Maqsd & Rouhani, 1990:829-830), as their means of reasoning is far removed from the individualistic approach to reasoning adopted by Western cultures. Lanza-Kaduce and Klug (1986:243-259) note that moral reasoning is often influenced by external factors which may result in discrepancies between an individual’s thoughts and beliefs about a matter, and his/her actions. For example, a large number of adolescents would start smoking as a result of peer pressure, despite the fact that they are against the idea of smoking. Mwamwenda (1992:499-502) ascribes this negation of one’s moral judgement to three powerful influences, namely:

- a desire to conform to the normative attitudes of the peer group;
- a desire to be obedient to authority; and
- a need to identify with a group ideology (Louw, 2004:515).

Nevertheless, and as a means of preventing the above-mentioned, Louw (2004:515-516) mentions three factors that contribute to the augmentation of behaviour that is moral and

responsible when it comes to adolescent personal development. First, it is important that adolescents are taught to impede immediate self-gratification in order to enjoy a more rewarding outcome later on. Funder and Block (1989:1041-1050) note how individuals who develop this ability are socially more responsible, boast a better academic performance, and have a higher productivity rate than those who do not. In Rowling's series, Hermione Granger conforms well to this description, as she often exhibits the ability to assess situations with maturity, social awareness, and insight, while at the same time being academically advanced and distinctly more productive than her two friends. The second factor is based on the principle that "[a]dolescents will imitate parents and other adult role models whom they respect..." (Louw, 2004:516), rendering it vital that adults present adolescents with examples of moral and acceptable behaviour. Although Albus Dumbledore changes from infallible moral guide to a fallible human being in the last two books, he still adopts this role in Rowling's series, and is the adult who provides Harry Potter with valuable and sound moral advice from a very young age, ensuring that he learns the necessary lessons as he matures. The third and final factor demands an opportunity for adolescents to discuss and contemplate moral dilemmas and beliefs. While a variety of adults in Rowling's series allow the young characters this opportunity, one often finds the younger individuals creating this opportunity for themselves: the characters engage in discussions on certain moral predicaments, gain insight into their peers' disparate opinions, and draw important conclusions. Through this one begins to comprehend the connection that exists between Rowling's series and the possible moral development of the youth.

The influence of the series on its readers has elicited much debate amongst critics, religious groups, educators, parents and academics on the controversial topic of moral education (Clark, 2001:752-754; Harrell and Morton, 2002:24-29; Gibson, 2007:197-210; McVeigh,

2002:197-214; Mills, 2006:1-13; Noctor, 2006:579-589; Nylund, 2007:13-24; Ragle, 2006:10; Strimel, 2004:35-52; Trites, 2001:472-485). In an article entitled *Harry Potter's provocative moral world: Is there a place for good and evil in moral education?*, Glanzer (2008:525-528) considers the implications of enforcing the type of moral education presented in Rowling's series on the, largely inclusive,⁶ American education system. The premise behind his reasoning hinges on the unmistakable difference between a school system where the syllabus aids the learner in his or her attempt to do what is morally right, as is the case at Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry, and an education system that teaches "...only those virtues, principles, and other moral teachings about which there is essentially no disagreement in American society" (Glanzer, 2008:525), as is the case in the public school system of the United States.

Glanzer (2008:525-528) recounts examples from the series to illustrate instances where the Rowling trio has to weigh up the consequences of doing what is right, *i.e.* not breaking school rules, with what is moral, *i.e.* breaking school rules in the fight against evil. He postulates that, because there is no incentive in the American public school system to do what is right, pupils will never gain a true understanding of the traditional idea of good and evil. His argument is that, because the American system excludes anything that may offend or infringe upon the beliefs, value system, or culture of any other group, the notion of "good and evil" is never created, and consequently there seems to be no need to teach pupils skills that would, under different circumstances (as is the case throughout Rowling's *Harry Potter oeuvre*), have aided them in the fight against that which is deemed "evil". Furthermore, Glanzer (2008:527-528) recommends three principles that should be followed in order to ensure that the youth receive an education that acknowledges both good and evil. The three proposed

⁶ An inclusive education system is one that aims to accommodate a conglomeration of nationalities, religions, ethnic and cultural groups, often to the detriment of many involved, as the system will refrain from infringing upon the rights or questioning the principles and beliefs of any other group.

principles state that the American youth should be made aware of: “1. [t]he temptation of evil or vices within”, “2. [e]xternal social evils”, and “3. [a proposed] metaphysical battle” (Glanzer, 2008:525-528). Consequently, Glanzer (2008) provides a strategy for moral education, as mentioned in the title of this study, which is rooted primarily in Rowling’s series.

1.3 EDUCATIVE POSSIBILITIES OF THE *HARRY POTTER* SERIES

J.K. Rowling’s series holds infinite possibilities for the classroom. Nilsen and Nilsen (2002:254-260) explore the possible reasons why children generally find it easier to acquire the foreign words present in *Harry Potter*, while their adult counterparts struggle with the acquisition of names and words of Arabic, Farci, and Pashtun origin. Furthermore, they propose the use of Rowling’s series as a means of teaching vocabulary and employing the author’s use of words and names rooted in Latin as a means of achieving word acquisition in young people (Nilsen & Nilsen, 2006:128-134). This approach to vocabulary development holds endless possibilities. Not only can Rowling’s series be used as a general improver of the young reader’s English vocabulary, but a set of sequential exercises could be developed with the seven *Harry Potter* texts as the foundation. Accordingly, one or two of the instalments in the series may be used at a time to design a syllabus for vocabulary development, aimed at a specific period of time (*i.e.* one book and its corresponding exercises per semester, thus two books per year). As the learner matures and his/her vocabulary is broadened, he/she will progress to the next year level, moving on to the next books and proportionately more difficult exercises. However, this remains but one of the many educative possibilities of Rowling’s series.

René Dickinson (2006:240-244) explores the pedagogical approaches used by a selection of Hogwarts teachers, as well as the prevalence of pupils being forced to teach themselves. One option would be to adopt a teaching approach, with this series as its foundation, where high school learners are taught the importance of self-education. Thus, one could select texts from the series and find examples of Hogwarts teachers who fail in their duty to educate their pupils successfully. One could instruct learners to find examples from the texts where the above-mentioned pupils attempt to counteract the lack of education by educating themselves. The class could be told to: a) identify the method(s) of self-education employed; b) categorise the advantages and disadvantages of the approach(es) to self-education; and c) make suggestions on how to improve the said self-education. From here the learners could be instructed to choose a topic and do some basic research on it (taking care not to make similar mistakes to those identified in the above exercise) and then deliver a presentation to demonstrate what they have learned.

There are numerous other individuals who explore the application of the *Harry Potter* novels in the classroom, mostly to different effect (see Simmons & Evely, s.a.:76-83; Black, 2003a:540-544; Tucker, 1999:221-234). Nicola (2001:747-748), a librarian at a Johannesburg high school, finds that the books are drawing pupils back to reading. Duffy (2002:170-187) analyses the syntactic complexities of Rowling's narrative and identifies Langham's (1992) three components of good writing⁷ (1992) in it, while Conn and Elliot (2005:31-36) critique the assessment methods used at Hogwarts by commenting on the efficacy of some strategies, criticising others and making suggestions as to how they could be improved. It becomes apparent that J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series holds many

⁷ First Langham (1992) implores the writer of English to remember that the verb "...is the heart of the sentence..." (Duffy, 2002:172); second, that verb-powered sentences have "...shapes and rhythm..." (Duffy, 2002:172) that should be moulded to respond to that section of the discourse which is to follow; and third, that individual sentences are part of a greater whole and should come together in a coherent, cohesive unity.

innovative possibilities for the classroom and could serve as a good foundation for either literature or language components of both primary and high school syllabi.

1.4 CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON *HARRY POTTER*

Other articles exploring the Potter phenomenon vary considerably in topic and content. Amanda Cockrell (2006:24-30) focuses on the various reasons why some individuals and groups find the series dangerous and/or offensive, while not harbouring such reservations about Tolkien's (1968) *The Lord of the Rings* or Lewis's (2001) *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Similarly, DeMitchell and Carney (2005:159-165) explore the opposing views of those who are in favour of including the series in the public school curriculum, and those who are avidly against it. Yet others explore whether or not *Harry Potter*, like various other forms of popular culture, is here to influence the youth and the society they live in negatively (Kidd, 2007:69-89), or, in the case of Rudski, Segal, and Kallen (2009:260-277), whether there are cases where avid fanatics of the series display symptoms that correspond with the criteria traditionally used to diagnose the presence of an addiction. In order to understand these opinions and beliefs about the series, it is important that the concept of culture be explored.

Taylor, Peplau, and Sears (2006:10) define culture as "...the shared beliefs, values, traditions, and behaviour patterns of particular groups" (*i.e.* nations, ethnic or religious communities, or gangs and fraternities), while Kramsch (1998:4) states that "...culture refers to what has been grown and groomed...", bringing to mind the traditional nature vs. nurture debate (*i.e.* are individuals what nature intends them to be from birth, or what culture permits them to be through education and socialisation?). Taylor *et al.* (2006:10) explain that socialisation is the "[p]rocess of acquiring the rules, standards, and values of a group...", and that it is the way in which children learn about their culture from adults, reading books, watching television, etc.

In *Harry Potter* the young Harry's initial interactions with individuals like Hagrid, Dumbledore, and the Weasleys, as well as the classes he attends and the books he reads, all contribute to his socialisation and familiarisation with the culture of the wizarding world. Another component of culture is social norms, which can be defined as "...rules and expectations about how group members should behave..." (Taylor *et al.*, 2006:10), also deemed to constitute '...a building block of culture' (Taylor *et al.*, 2006:10). Consequently, one finds culture to be a complex and important component of human experience that many have deemed to be integral to the continued existence of the human race and continue to explore from numerous angles (Geertz, 1973; Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; Kymlica, 1995; Merriam, 1974:48-49; Triandis, 1990:41-122; Triandis, 1995; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai & Lucca, 1988:323-338).

As Ember and Ember (2000:158-163) point out, humans expand and develop their culture in order to adapt and survive. Thus, even though one does not always realise this, almost everything one does (the way one talks, one's beliefs, even one's living arrangements) is dictated by culture. There are those who speculate that culture grows and changes (for the better or worse) in collaboration with the people who are part of the said culture. Ember and Ember (2000:158-163) state that a culture has three characteristics, namely: a) it is generally adaptive; b) it is mostly integrated; and c) it is always changing. Accordingly, they explain that there are certain actions and customs in a culture that are more prone to adapt than others, but that it remains of extreme importance for all facets of a culture to be able to adjust, and that the environment within which these exist should be similarly adaptable. At the same time neighbouring groups of people should realise that they may have an influence on one another⁸ should their cultures interact.

⁸ It is also of vital importance that two cultures should be able to adapt to each other when they are part of a multicultural community, as is the case in South Africa.

Ember and Ember (2000:158-163) also assert that the collection of actions, ideas and customs that constitute the cultural practices of any given culture are all connected to a certain extent. Thus, because a culture is undeniably integrated, it becomes common knowledge that the changing of one part of a culture will have a profound effect on all the other parts, which in turn relates back to the adaptive characteristic of a culture. Naturally the degree to which this integration is manifested will differ from one culture to the next; nevertheless, it has been found that cultures with a lesser degree of integration experience more imbalances than those which are more fully integrated (Ember & Ember 2000:158–163).

The third characteristic of a culture identified by Ember and Ember (2000:158-163) is the fact that it changes, and this aspect needs to be more closely scrutinised for the purpose of this study. The latter authors explain that a culture is always changing, largely due to the fact that people consider this both important and necessary. One will find that, although changes can be attributed to both external and internal factors, it is mostly the external factors that bring about modifications and alterations in a given culture. These may include the influence of the media (both printed and electronic), the internet, other cultures, as well as large-scale and ever-increasing westernisation and homogenisation of world cultures. Thus, one can assert that change is generally good, both on a personal and social level, as it aids the process of growth and development. In the same vein it may be stated that a culture also needs to change and grow, and one can deduce that most world cultures are in a continuous state of change. In addition one will find that it is this very salient feature of our species and its cultures which leads to the inception of a notion such as popular culture.

Kidd (2007:71-72) notes that the concept popular culture may invoke diverse, and at times overlapping, ideas of what the notion signifies, and identifies three diverse meanings connoted with the notion *popular*. Firstly, the term may pertain to *the people* or *folk*, thus implying a folk culture, which also refers to "...hand-made, locally produced goods that are

often distributed at the local level...” (Kidd, 2007:71), and may include symbols representing cultural identity, such as a flag or an anthem. Secondly, the notion may concern that which is distinctly commercial in nature and which normally suggests “...fame or widespread enjoyment” (Kidd, 2007:72). The third meaning refers to the concept of a “common culture...” (Kidd, 2007:72) and may include the former meanings, as well as commonly shared beliefs and values. Kidd (2007:72) emphasises the importance of clarifying which of these definitions are intended when a researcher is dealing with popular culture. For the purpose of this study the commercial definition of popular culture should be summoned when the term is referred to.

Despite what one may believe, popular culture plays an active role in our daily lives and is a phenomenon that is always present and undergoing a constant state of change. John Storey (2003:4) explains that “...popular culture is an arena of struggle and negotiation between the interests of dominant groups and the interests of subordinate groups”. Thus, he believes that what becomes popular in any given culture is that which the “victorious group” has been working towards, be it the dominant or subordinate. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of Storey’s (2003) view on popular culture, the two opposing traditions that influence it should be defined. Accordingly, Storey (2003:4) expounds that:

The first tradition viewed popular culture as a culture imposed by the capitalist culture industries; a culture provided for profit and ideological manipulation [...]. This is popular culture as ‘structure’. The second tradition saw popular culture as a culture spontaneously emerging from below; an ‘authentic’ folk, working-class or subculture – the ‘voice’ of the people [...]. This is popular culture as ‘agency’.

From this, one can deduce that there are two sides to the metaphorical coin: on the one hand there are those who speculate that whatever can be labelled a component of popular culture was created by consumerists who could foresee the monetary possibilities of, for example,

the Barbie doll or the *Hannah Montana* trend. Consequently, the followers of this theory argue that there are select individuals who group together and utilise their entrepreneurial cunning in such a manner that the consumer is enthralled, which in turn ultimately ensures that their venture is excessively profitable. On the other hand, there are those who hypothesize that that which is in vogue at any one point in time, is bestowed that status as a result of what the general public likes and enjoys. In other words, the extent of the *Beatles*' success and the recent popularity of *Farmville*⁹ are purely the result of an increased interest in these phenomena by the populace. And yet, Gramsci (1971) postulates that reality is an equilibrium compromised on the basis of the two theories. Famous for his theory of cultural hegemony¹⁰ and his writings on culture and popular culture, Antonio Gramsci mused that popular culture cannot ever be encapsulated in either of the traditions postulated by Storey (2003:4), and that a balance between the two concepts will manifest itself spontaneously (Crehan, 2002:52-58). As a result, and for the purpose of this study, the integrated concept of popular culture should be adopted. Thus, whenever the term is alluded to, the reader should appreciate that Gramsci's (1971) approach – a concessional balance between the two above-mentioned theories – is most applicable in terms of the parameters of this dissertation.

⁹ This game, where people grow and harvest crops and expand their virtual farm, is a gaming application on the popular social network *Facebook*.

¹⁰ The theory of cultural hegemony postulates that, in a culturally diverse society, one cultural group can rule over all the rest, imposing its practices, beliefs and values upon them (Crehan, 2002:99-104).

1.5 POPULAR AND FANTASY FICTION

In switching the focus from popular culture to popular fiction, it is necessary first of all to define the term fiction. Abrahams and Harpham (2005:116) explain that:

In an inclusive sense, fiction is any literary narrative, whether in prose or verse, which is invented instead of being an account of events that actually happened. In a narrower sense, however, fiction denotes only narratives that are written in prose (the novel and short story), and sometimes is used simply as a synonym for the novel.

Similarly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2008:127) defines fiction as:

The general term for invented stories, now usually applied to novels, short stories, novellas, romances, fables and other narrative works in prose, even though most plays and narrative poems are also fictional.

Accordingly, the fictional text is one that spans a broad spectrum of written work, such as poetry, drama, and prose, and refers to any of these forms when the subject matter pertains to that which is not factual. For use in this study, however, the narrower designation of fiction will be drawn on. Thus, when reference is made to a fictional text, the reader should accept that the researcher wishes a work of prose, in other words a novel, to be conceptualised. It should also be kept in mind that an array of genres exists under the term fiction (*i.e.* adventure story¹¹, detective story¹², and horror story¹³), but that only fantasy pertains directly to this study.

¹¹ The *adventure story* typically deals with the unusual, and often perilous, adventures of a “...hero or group of heroes...” (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2008:4). The focus of this genre is centred on the protagonist’s zealous, often dangerous, outdoor ventures, and frequently aims at honing “...such virtues as courage and loyalty”. (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2008:4). Furthermore, this genre is distinguishable on the grounds that episodes usually take place ‘...within a context provided by modern scientific knowledge’ (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2008:4), and examples include texts such as Jules Verne’s *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, and *The Lost World* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. For the purpose of this study, however, it is vital that the genre known as *fantasy*, and its various sub-genres, be defined.

¹² *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2008:86-87) describes this type of fiction as a narrative where a crime or criminal enigma is explored by either an amateur or expert detective who is at the centre of the action. Furthermore, “...the crime should be an especially baffling case that requires the uncommon ingenuity of the detective to find a solution and identify or pin the blame on the true perpetrator...” (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2008:86-87). Agatha Christie’s 1920 novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* is a good example of this style, while Dan Brown’s collection of texts, featuring the academic Robert Landon, serves as a more modern exemplar of the detective story.

Defining a concept such as fantasy fiction is not an easy task as many and varied explanations already exist. Generally characterised by content that is not realistic in the world as we know it, fantasy fiction contains settings where the magical or impossible is acknowledged and is routine (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2008:125-126). In *A Glossary of Literary Terms: Ninth Edition*, Abrahams and Harpham (2005:323) postulate that fantasy “...represent[s] an imagined reality that is radically different in its nature and functioning from the world of our ordinary experience”. As a result, the magical and unfeasible becomes real in these novels, and it is expected of the reader to suspend any disbelief while engaging in a text of this nature. Due to the diverse nature of this genre, attention needs to be directed at some of the major types of fantasy that exist and the manner in which they apply to this study.

The fairy tale is defined in the *Oxford dictionary of literary terms* (2008:124) as:

[a] traditional folktale adapted and written down for the entertainment of children, usually featuring marvellous events and characters, although fairies as such are less often found in them than princesses, talking animals, ogres, and witches[...]

This type of fantasy is probably the oldest form of narrative known to date and has its origin in the traditional folk tale (Pringle, 2006:20). *The ultimate encyclopaedia of fantasy* elucidates that, although the “...original wonder tales...” (Pringle (2006:20) of millennia ago were passed on through oral tradition from generation to generation and were consequently never written down, the more modern versions are those tales we read in books such as the Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm, and those relayed by Hans Christian Anderson. Although

¹³ The horror story is the type of narrative designed to strike fear and revolt into the heart of its readers. Typically characterised by its “...violation of physical taboos” (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2008:157-158), this is the type of tale where one would come across mutilated bodies and individuals who torture their victims in unimaginable ways, as compared to the gothic style where the action is habitually set in a “...gloomy castle furnished with dungeons, subterranean passages, and sliding panels...” (Abrahams and Harpham, 2005:137). Classic examples of the horror story are Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* with its grave robbing and the reanimation of corpses, and *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson.

they remain popular among children the world over to this day, one should acknowledge the fact that their content was once of a much more sinister nature and in certain cases designed for a more sophisticated audience.

Fairy Tales play a vital role in the *Harry Potter* series. Rowling, in writing *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* (2008), creates not just one fairy tale for the fantasy world in which Harry resides, but a range of narratives which ultimately play an integral role within the context of the series, and tie in with the eventual outcome of the plot. This initiative not only provides her fans and followers with a better understanding of the series and its conclusion, but also lends a greater sense of authenticity to the magical world of the much loved young wizard called Harry.

Animal Fantasy is another component of the fantasy genre, and is said to have "...ancient roots..." (Pringle, 2006:20) and is deemed by some as antediluvian. History reveals that the Greek slave, Aesop (620 B.C. to 564 B.C.), is most likely to have been responsible for the produced fables, hence the adoption of the name Aesopic Fable (Anthony, 2006:903-904). The genre can be defined as "...short allegorical tale[s] usually featuring personified animal characters displaying the foibles of human nature..." (Lazzari, 2000). Today fables have the primary purpose of entertaining children from modern societies¹⁴ and teaching them valuable moral lessons by employing fictional creatures to which they can relate.¹⁵ However, in writing these fables Aesop had a much larger purpose than to teach children moral lessons. At the time, the modern right of freedom of speech was still something of the distant future, and if someone were to speak out against certain people or practices, death would undoubtedly follow. Thus, works of Animal Fantasy became a means with which one could

¹⁴ Here it should also be noted that these fables exist in most, if not all, societies.

¹⁵ This is probably due to a child's ability to use his/ her imagination freely and believe completely that which the cynicism of adults does not allow them to believe.

assert his/her opinions, question the moral actions and behaviour of the state, or make political comments, all the while eluding serious consequences, as no one would seriously question the supposed motives of talking animals in a tale written by a prisoner (Lazzari, 2000).¹⁶

The role of the animal is vital to the success of Rowling's series. Both Harry and the evil Lord Voldemort can communicate with snakes, an aspect which becomes increasingly important as the series progress. It is Voldemort's ability to communicate with serpents that allows him access to the Chamber of Secrets in book two (Rowling, 1998), and that makes him trust his snake, Nagini, enough to store a fragment of his soul in her (Rowling, 2005; Rowling, 2007). Through his ability to communicate with snakes Harry is able to protect a fellow student from a serpent attack, and also to defeat Voldemort at the end of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Rowling, 1998). Furthermore, Hagrid has a giant pet spider that talks; Argus Filch, the custodian at Hogwarts, has a cat that seems to be able to communicate with him psychically; various prominent characters have the ability to transform into animals; and Dumbledore, the Hogwarts headmaster, has a phoenix which can cry tears that heal, and which sings a beautiful lament at the end of book six (Rowling, 2005) at Dumbledore's funeral. Even though not all of these animals can talk, it becomes clear that the role of the animal in the series is of cardinal importance.

Generally fantasy is not renowned for its humour, except maybe in select tales by Aesop, and yet Humorous Fantasy constitutes a separate sub-genre of this type of fiction. Hence, it is postulated that a positive correlation exists between humour and highly cultured civilisations. Accordingly, one finds traces of satire and Humorous Fantasy among the literature of the

¹⁶ An example in case of a text that serves this purpose is George Orwell's (1945) *Animal Farm*, which provides a satirical insight into the Russian Revolution and the flawed ideologies employed by its leaders.

Classical Greeks (Pringle, 2006:31). Most prominent in this sub-genre of fantasy today, is Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series. This vast collection of stories is set in the fantastical *Discworld* – a world, flat as a disc, which rests on the back of four elephants, all of which glide through space on the back of the gargantuan turtle, Great A'Tuin. *Discworld* embodies a civilisation that has its own traditions, laws, and religions, and which comprises witches, wizards, gods, humans, trolls, dwarves, and a wide array of other, less easily defined, beings. The series is characterised by Pratchett's sharp wit and humour, while at the same time dealing with serious issues, such as gender inequality, racism, sexism, and corruption in a manner that makes the reader laugh at first, but also think about the issues for some time. The purpose of Humorous Fantasy is thus not merely to make the reader laugh, but it is often employed with the hope of conveying a deeper, more meaningful message.

The *Harry Potter* series contains many instances of wit and humour. As the series progresses, the context becomes increasingly more dark and ominous, as Voldemort rises to power once more. Rowling, however, prevents this darkness from becoming too overpowering, by balancing it with subtle jokes and humorous anecdotes. Fred and George Weasley, for example, are pranksters and practical jokesters who provide the reader with much hilarity, such as when they try to cross an age line in book four (Rowling, 2000) and magically grow long gray beards. Rowling's wit and humour greatly add to the dynamic of her plots and contribute to the success of the series in general.

Another type of fantasy fiction is Sword and Sorcery. Coined by Fritz Leiber in the 1960s, the term refers primarily to R.E. Howard's stories of *Conan the Barbarian*, also known as *Conan the Conqueror* (Pringle, 2006:33). This type of fantasy is generally characterised by the presence of magical beings and/or sorcerers, entwined in an adventure with heroes brandishing swords, setting off on important quests to save the world or destroy an evil

tyrant. Ever since, Howard's formula has been put to use by many writers, such as Michael Moorcock and Karl Edward Wagner, to create wonderful tales of magic and adventure for generations to come.

At the end of book two (Rowling, 1998) Harry is able to pull the sword of Godric Gryffindor from an ancient hat – a feat said only to be possible by a true Gryffindor. Subsequently, Harry uses the sword to kill Slytherin's monster, and in so doing saves Hogwarts from closing down. This same sword makes its reappearance in the final instalment of the series, and it plays the vital role of allowing Harry and his two friends to destroy Horcruxes.¹⁷ Thus, it becomes clear that the sword plays a vital role in the eventual outcome of Rowling's series.

A notion of fantasy that is much broader than that of Sword and Sorcery, Heroic Fantasy, is defined as

...fantasy about a hero, or heroine, who has sundry adventures in an imaginary world where magic and the supernatural are often encountered. [...] [H]owever, the word 'heroic' should be understood in a wider sense – as not just pertaining to an individual hero, but to a cast of characters, a set of actions, a body of invention and a whole world conceived on a heroic scale (Pringle, 2006:35).

In terms hereof, a character or group of characters who live in a world of magic and fantastical creatures, set off on an adventure where they have to save someone or something – perhaps that very world itself. Examples are many and varied, ranging from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Ring* and C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, to select instalments in Pratchett's *Discworld* series and Tad Williams's *The War of the Flowers*. One can assert that it is mostly this kind of fantasy, compared to all the others, that ensures the genre's continued popularity in the twenty-first century.

¹⁷ A Horcrux is a magical object which contains a fragment of a wizard's soul. In order to make the said Horcrux a witch or wizard has to murder someone, which will cause his/her soul to fragment. The piece of soul needs then to be placed in a magical object for safe keeping, which is called a Horcrux (Rowling, 2005).

Of all the genres of fantasy, Rowling's series probably fits into this niche best. The trio (Harry Potter, Ronald Weasley, and Hermione Granger) represent the hero and at the beginning of the seventh book set off to fulfil their destiny and defeat Voldemort. Magic plays an integral role in their quest, and they meet evil wizards, magical creatures, and have to complete dangerous adventures in order to save both the wizarding world, as well as the world of non-magic people, from the mayhem and destruction that Voldemort plans to let loose.

Other types of fantasy include: Arthurian Fantasy, which relays the legendary tale of King Arthur and his round table, while providing "...medieval romancers with a wonderful new subject and a [...] new cast of characters..." (Pringle, 2006:24); Arabian Nights Fantasy, which refers to the wonder/fantasy tales of *The Arabian Nights* – a succession of stories said to have been told by Scheherazade to her pitiless spouse, who was King (Pringle, 2006:25); Chinoiserie, referring to those fantasy tales that originated in China and which are said to have influenced the modern myths and beliefs held true by westerners about the country (Pringle, 2006:27-28); and Lost Race Fantasy, which normally relays wondrous tales of "...lost races or strange peoples – featuring lost cities, lost lands, undersea or underground worlds, [and] forgotten civilisations..." (Pringle, 2006:28), and which was first propelled to popularity by H.R. Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* in 1885. Consequently, one can assert that fantasy is a varied genre with many sub-genres, and that *Harry Potter* falls into more than one of these categories.

1.6 READING AND RECEPTION THEORY

Being literate is a privilege often taken for granted. The ability to read the morning newspaper or the subtitles of one's favourite soap opera is deemed habitual if not trivial, and

yet South Africa's population is far from 100% literate. The focus of this study is to address this concern by attempting to determine whether Rowling's series has contributed to a revival of reading among young people, as stated in the title. In order to do this, a selection of texts will be analysed and the data gleaned from a questionnaire examined.

The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2004:1196) defines reading as "...the action or skill of reading..." and "...an interpretation of a text or situation..." Thus, someone who has the ability to read should not only be able to perform the action of picking up a book and reading the sequence of letters that are presented to him/her, but should also be capable of interpreting the meaning conveyed by the said words. The individual should, therefore, comprehend what he/she is reading and should, depending on the source, make specific inferences about the content, some of which would be more complex than others. Similarly, the *Collins English Dictionary* (1986:1273) explains that reading is "...an interpretation, as of a piece of music, a situation, or something said or written...", or more specifically (and for the purpose of this study) "...knowledge gained from books..."

To clarify, when the term *reading* is referred to in this dissertation, it will encompass the notion of comprehending, interpreting, and analysing a text.¹⁸ The aim of this study is to identify exactly how reading in general and Rowling's series in particular impact on a reader, either in terms of the latter's emotional growth and understanding of human relationships, or other areas of adolescent development that are addressed in books like Rowling's. To facilitate a better understanding of this almost symbiotic affiliation between reader and text, it is necessary to consider Reception Theory as a sound theoretical basis for this component of

¹⁸ Note that this may not always be a conscious cognitive process and that certain concepts/themes may often be dealt with on a subconscious level. In this respect the adolescent's hidden growth remains significant as it develops the individual's ability to process information that the conscious mind may not yet be prepared to deal with.

the study, since this will help to form a better idea of the specific role that reading can play in the development of literacy.

Reception Theory, which is not nearly as uniform as one may conceive it to be, is described by Iser (2006:56) as a “...basic duality, incorporating both the reception of the literary text and its effects on its potential reader”. When analysing a text, one seldom divorces the content of the said text from what is known about the author. Reception Theory takes a step away from this practice and is based on the principle that “...a text, once it leaves its author’s hands, is simply paper and ink until a reader evokes from it a literary work...” (Rosenblatt, 1978:ix). Thus, every reader of a text, irrespective of whether reading Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* or any one of the instalments in Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld* series, will interpret it and gain a unique understanding of the message(s) encapsulated within it.

The history of reception theory is long and varied, and includes the influences of the Russian Formalists, Prague Structuralists, Roman Ingarden, and theorist Hans-Georg Gadamer, all of whom contributed to its development over the years. For the purpose of this study, however, the focus will be directed at the two main proponents thereof, namely German academics Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser.

1.6.1 HANS ROBERT JAUSS

Drawing on the theories of the Russian Formalists and Prague Structuralists, Jauss (1982:20) believes that a relationship between a text and its reader comes into existence as soon as the reading begins, and that this affiliation is greatly influenced by components of both an aesthetic, as well as a historical nature. He theorises that the first reading of any text becomes a judgement of its aesthetic value, as the reader compares it with works that have

already been read. Thus, one's appreciation and enjoyment of a text is influenced by the nature and quality of similar works read in the past, and it is on the basis of these precedent experiences that the aesthetic value of the new text is determined. Furthermore, Jauss (1982) accepts that a text achieves historical significance when the perception thereof by one generation of readers is carried over to the next. This becomes clear when considering works from the canon, such as those by Dickens, the Brontës, Tolkien, Hemingway, and many more. Thus, one can infer that, even though the relevance of a text may differ from one generation to the next, the merit thereof will remain constant, and it is "...in this way [that] the historical significance of a work will be decided and its aesthetic value made evident..." (Jauss, 1982:20).

The relevance of Jauss's theory to this study lies in "[o]ne of [his] greatest contributions to Reception Theory [...] his concept [of] "the horizon of expectations"..." (Van Wyk, 1995:20). This is a concept that refers to the reader's enjoyment, and more importantly, involvement with a literary text, and, as Bosman (1987:9) points out, is a dynamic concept that is in a constant state of change as a result of the reader's personal development and the dynamic, altering relations in the text. Thus, the reader starts his/her reading with an existing bank of knowledge which becomes "...an element of the experience itself..." (Jauss, 1982:23). Progressively, the reverse can also be deduced, and it becomes logical to say that what a person reads will undoubtedly be added to, and in so doing broaden, his/her existing horizon of expectations – hence the link between Jauss's understanding of Reception Theory and this study.

When reading literature, be it a factual history book, a Dan Brown fictitious thriller, or a complex *scriptible*¹⁹ text like those by J.M. Coetzee and William Faulkner, the reader will gain some measure of knowledge from that text. Correspondingly, this study will aim to prove that Rowling's *oeuvre* has an effect on its reader that is of a similar nature. In the same way that Harry Potter struggles to come to terms with the torrent of emotions experienced when he falls in love for the first time in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Rowling, 2000), or battles to handle the continuous conflict that Ronald, Hermione and he encounter with the forces of evil throughout the series, so too will an adolescent reader have been exposed to certain evils, and that first love. As already explained, Reception Theory "...is firmly focussed on the role of the reader in the reading process" (Van Wyk, 1995:6). In other words, the adolescent reader of the *Harry Potter* series would either have had experiences similar to those of Rowling's teenage characters, or he/she may be taught possible coping strategies to employ when in parallel situations.

1.6.2 WOLFGANG ISER

Another theorist interested in directing the focus of literary theory away from the author/text notion and towards the text/reader paradigm is Wolfgang Iser (Van Wyk, 1995:25). Iser (2006:58) explains that the divergence surrounding the interpretation of literary texts experienced in the 1950s and 1960s played an integral role in establishing the parameters that govern Reception Theory today. Up to that point it had been believed that a text was the conveyer of meaning, and that the reader simply needed to interpret the text in order to extract this meaning (Iser, 2006:58). However, the 1950s and 1960s saw the question arise "...as to why the meaning had been concealed in the text, and why authors should indulge in

¹⁹ A term coined by literary theorist Roland Barthes, the *scriptible* (or writerly text) "...demands the reader's active cooperation, and requires him to contribute in the production [...] of the text" (Jefferson, 1986:108), whereas the *lisible* (or readerly text) is inertly read and does not require the reader to make much of a contribution in order to understand the text.

such a game of hide-and-seek...” (Iser, 2006:58). Consequently, theorists focussed more attentively on the interpretation of literary texts, and Iser (2006:58-59) mentions that insight was gained into the fact that readers brought certain presuppositions to their reading of the text and interpreted the meaning thereof differently from others, thus finding meaning unique to the individual.

Accordingly, and in contrast to Jauss’s approach to Reception Theory which is based on literary history, Iser is chiefly concerned with the way in which the reader relates to the text (Van Wyk, 1995: 25). Thus, Iser (2006:60) directs his attention to the “...triadic relationship between author, text, and reader”, which means the focus is diverted from “...what a text means to what it does...” (Iser, 2006:60). As Abrams and Harpham (2005:299) point out:

...Iser developed the [...] analysis of the reading process proposed by Roman Ingarden, but whereas Ingarden had limited himself to a description of reading in general, Iser applied his theory to the analysis of many individual works of literature, especially prose fiction. [...] In Iser’s view the literary text, as a product of the writer’s intentional acts, in part controls the reader’s responses, but always contains [...] a number of ‘gaps’ or ‘indeterminate elements’. These the reader must fill in by a creative participation with what is given in the text before him.

Iser (2006:60) continues his discussion by pointing out the three problems which arise when one assumes that a literary text affects a reader. First, he explains how its effect on the reader occurs because the “...literary text is in the nature of an event...” (Iser, 2006:60) which has to be processed without prior reference, necessitating the reader to react to and manage the said event by means of text processing. In other words, the reader has to draw on the information provided in the text alone to understand what is taking place, thus forcing him/her to cope through text processing (Iser, 2006:60). The second concern raised by Iser (2006:60) questions the degree to which the configuration of the literary text prefigures the reader’s processing ability, as well as the amount of leeway a reader has when attempting to

interpret the text. Thus, to what extent may a reader attempt to process the literary work he/she is reading and how would the structure of this text influence the interpretation process? The third and final problem identified by Iser (2000:60) stems from the relationship between a literary text and its socio-historical context, as well as its reader's disposition. Consequently, one can infer that a literary text ventures into the realm of social and cultural systems, and may disrupt their functioning accordingly.

Reception Theory can be seen to be focussing on two principal premises, namely "...the interface between text and context, and that between text and reader" (Iser, 2006:60). The former is based on the principle that literary texts usually contain references from a selection of "...social, historical, cultural, and literary systems..." which exist outside the text and serve a referential purpose (Iser, 2006:60-61). In other words, a text may refer to a street in Paris, practices and customs in a South American culture, or a specific battle during World War II, without providing additional information regarding the context referenced. This, in turn, may hold advantages for the reader, as it may enable "...contemporary readers to perceive what they normally cannot see in [their] day-to-day living..." (Iser, 2006:63) or allow "...subsequent generations of readers to grasp a reality that was never their own" (Iser, 2006:63). Thus, the reference is taken out of its intended or traditional context in order to fulfil a supplementary role in the literary text. However, Iser (2006:61) postulates that, as long as these references remain "...organisational units of the given [setting], in which they fulfil their regulatory function...", they will remain disregarded as inconsistencies or inaccuracies in the text, and will be deemed part of the reality constructed in the text (Iser, 2006:61). Accordingly, real-world settings such as a London suburb or King's Cross Station in Rowling's *Harry Potter* series authenticate the reading experience by introducing the familiar, without detracting from the fantasy world against which the books are set.

The second principle mentioned by Iser (2006:60) concerns the relationship between text and reader. Iser (2006:64) states that there is no existing system which governs the way in which a reader processes a text, and asserts that such a system can only be established during the course of the reading experience. Thus, the manner in which one derives meaning and understanding from a literary text will only be determined after the reading process has begun, and will undoubtedly be influenced by the text being read. Iser (2006:64) adds to this by declaring that the disparity between reader and text is a positive component of the reader's interaction with the text, as it allows the reader to delve more deeply in order to find meaning in what he/she is reading. Furthermore, he explains that this interaction between reader and text, albeit undefined, is not uncontrolled, as the text itself exerts the necessary guidance required for the reader eventually to achieve comprehension (Iser, 2006:64). In other words the text will steer the reader towards an understanding thereof, although it will be done indirectly through the reader's own ability to comprehend what he/she is reading.

From this it becomes apparent why Iser's approach is vital to this study. His insight and understanding of how the reader experiences and understands literary text, and reacts to it, help one to comprehend why Rowling's series may serve as a helpful guide during a teenager's growth from childhood to adulthood. Just as "...[t]he experience of reading is an evolving process of anticipation, frustration, retrospection, reconstruction, and satisfaction" (Abrams & Harpham, 2005:299), so too are the lives of all three Rowling's adolescent characters, and those of the young adults following their story.

In his book *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*, Iser (1976:9-10) says about the meaning of a text that:

Such a meaning must clearly be the product of an interaction between the textual signals and the reader's acts of comprehension. And, equally clearly, the reader cannot detach himself from such an

interaction; on the contrary, the activity stimulated in him will link him to the text and induce him to create the conditions necessary for the effectiveness of that text. As text and reader thus merge into a single situation, the divisions between subject and object no longer apply, and it therefore follows that meaning is no longer an object to be defined, but is an effect to be experienced.

In other words, an adolescent who is enthralled by the magical world of *Harry Potter* and enjoys reading the series, may find himself/herself in a state of conflict owing to religious beliefs. If the reader is, for example a Christian, who has constantly been told by teachers, parents, and the church that *Harry Potter* and its use of magic are evil, the onus will rest on that young reader to decide whether he/she is in agreement, and how to deal with the situation. The reader will interact with the text, and in so doing experience the conveyed message as an effect, and will have to decide whether there are, in fact, satanic undercurrents, or rather, that the focus is on a moral order where good prevails over evil.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

2.1. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to determine whether a culture of reading exists amongst the group under study, and whether J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series has played a part in establishing a reading culture. In order to reach any conclusion, one would have to consider what lessons, if any, are propagated by the *Harry Potter* series. On the one hand, this thesis explores the responses of young people who have been exposed to the series in terms of their interest in reading. Here the chief question arising from the study pertains to whether the selected group developed an increased affinity for reading and to what extent this influenced them. As this study focuses solely on Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, it will naturally not be quantifiable beyond these limitations. However, the results may still serve as a springboard for future studies. The focus of the study also extends to areas of a more personal (and of course ethical) nature, such as young people's responses to themes like good versus evil, and their understanding of social and moral commentary. The opinion of certain critics, such as Maretha Maartens who fervently denounces the texts for religious reasons, will also be considered in an attempt to verify whether young readers may be facing moral risks by their exposure to the magical aspects of Rowling's work, or whether, in sharing Harry Potter's experiences, they may form a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between good and evil and the complexities of life and human relations.

2.2. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Owing to the fact that this study works with human test subjects, a number of important ethical matters needed to be addressed. The identities of participants were kept anonymous to the extent that they were not required to provide any form of identification (*i.e.* name, surname, or student number). Participants were deemed to be adults at the age of 18 and no parental consent was required for the completion of the questionnaire. Moreover, respondents were accorded the opportunity to leave the venue before the questionnaire was handed out, as well as at any point during the completion thereof. Furthermore, the researcher was present during the data collection process to answer questions and clarify ambiguities where necessary. However, the researcher ensured that participants' responses were not influenced in any way and that at no point were respondents guided towards giving a specific answer or more or less favourable response to any given question.

2.3. APPROACHES TO RESEARCH

2.3.1. THE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

The quantitative research method is ideally suited to those aspects of a study that require the collection and accurate manipulation of empirical data in an attempt to accept or reject the proposed hypothesis. Creswell (1994:1-2) explains that “[a] quantitative study [can] be defined as an inquiry into a social or human problem, [...] measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures...” Accordingly, the approach “...is more highly formalised as well as more explicitly controlled, [while] [i]ts range is more exactly defined...” (Mouton and Marais, 1990:155-156), thus rendering it the ideal method to use when questionnaires and the capturing of large quantities of data are involved. To the above,

Fouche and Delport (2002-80) add the observations made by Reid and Smith (1981) about quantitative research:

- The researcher's role is that of the objective observer;
- Studies are focussed on relatively specific questions or hypotheses;
- Questions and hypotheses remain constant throughout the investigation; and
- Data collection procedures [...] are constructed in advance of the study...

Therefore, the quantitative method proves optimal for those aspects of the study that aim to determine the perceptions of the target group with regard to reading the *Harry Potter* series, personal development during the adolescent years, and the possible influence of the series on this development. However, this is not the only research approach utilised in the study.

2.3.2. THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

This style of research is usually associated with studies in literature, and differs from the quantitative method of conducting research in a number of ways. The method is well suited for capturing data that relate to largely unexplored areas of knowledge, where the "...qualitative researcher is [...] concerned with understanding [...] rather than explanation..." (McRoy, 1995:2009-2015), and where research does not require the compilation and completion of large quantities of questionnaires or the manipulation and interpretation of statistical data. It is a method that allows the researcher to direct his/her attention at the development of theories or the studying of texts and literature in order to achieve specific goals and objectives. Accordingly, Mouton and Marais (1990:155-156) note how, with the qualitative research approach:

- The procedures are not as strictly formalised;
- The scope is more likely to be undefined; and
- A more philosophical mode of operation is adopted.

Reid and Smith (1981) add to these observations by noting that the qualitative researcher endeavours to gain a comprehensive and immediate understanding of that which is being researched, and that the stratagem is often flexible, allowing it to evolve as the study progresses. Finally, Marshall and Rossman (1999:46) state that qualitative research “...cannot be done experimentally for practical [...] reasons...” and that it “...delves in depth into complexities and processes”. Consequently, this method of research proves ideal for those aspects of the study which require an investigation into perceptions created by the media and allows the researcher adequate scope to explore and interpret these perceptions and link them to the findings gleaned from the questionnaire used in this study.

2.4. METHOD AND DESIGN

2.4.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

When undertaking a research project, conducting a meticulous review of existing literature is vitally important to the success of a study from a quantitative as well as a qualitative perspective. Not only does this method aid the researcher in selecting a topic which is germane and worth investigating (Rubin and Babbie, 2001:120), prevent the duplication of existing research/data (Mouton, 2001:87), and introduce one to leaders in the field (Neuman, 2000:446), but it also aids the researcher in moulding and shaping the research question and hypothesis by familiarising him or her with the different notions and concepts involved (Fouché and Delport, 2002:128-129). Accordingly, the literature review chapter of this study aims to provide the following: an overview of existing literature and research regarding the *Harry Potter* phenomenon; insight into the theories (namely Reception Theory and Narrative Imagination Theory) employed to support the research and findings of the study; and lastly, lucid and comprehensive definitions of the terms and notions referred to in the study.

For the purposes of any quantitative or qualitative study it is important that "...the underlying assumptions behind the general research questions..." (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:28) are demonstrated, "...the researcher is thoroughly knowledgeable about related research..." (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:28), and that "...the proposed study will fill a demonstrated need" (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:28). Hence, each of the three chapters to follow that relay the findings of this study commences with an in-depth appraisal of media texts on the subject relating to that chapter, spanning a ten year period, and provides insight into the media's varied perception of the *Harry Potter* phenomenon and its influence on the public.

2.4.2. DESIGN AND STRATEGY

The term research design (Campbell and Stanley, 1963; Cook and Campbell, 1979; Graziano and Raulin, 2000:229) is commonly associated with a quantitative research approach, and as Neuman (2000:121-155) points out, differs from the qualitative approach in that it "...includes [...] surveys and content analysis". Accordingly, a one-shot case study (Fouché and De Vos, 2002:140-141) is the chosen design for the section of this study where the quantitative approach is followed. "This is a design in which a single [...] group is studied..." (Fouché and De Vos, 2002:140-141), as is the case with this research project. This contrasts with the term research strategy, which is commonly associated with the qualitative research approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) and "...does not usually provide the researcher with a step-by-step plan or fixed recipe to follow" (Fouché, 2002:272). As a result "...qualitative researchers will, during the research process, create the research strategy best suited to their research..." (Fouché, 2002:272). Consequently, the strategy chosen for the qualitative section of this study entails an analysis of the existing, media-related texts (largely South African) and the perceptions created by this literature.

2.4.3. SAMPLE

The term “sample” is described by Arkava and Lane (1983:27) as comprising “...the elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study”. For the quantitative part of this study a group of first- year English literature students from the University of the Free State was selected to participate.²⁰ The group, consisting of 200 registered students, was chosen specifically because they had had exposure to English literature, the majority of the group had just progressed to young adulthood with their adolescent years still fresh in their memories, and they were easily accessible as the researcher saw them four times a week for class. No human sample was required for the qualitative research, as printed media constituted the chosen source from which data were collected.

2.4.4. DATA COLLECTION

At some point in the course of a study, the researcher has to obtain data, which is achieved by employing the chosen data collection method. As Delpont (2002:165) points out, “[q]uantitative data collection methods often employ measuring instruments”, which in this case take the form of a questionnaire, and to ensure that the instrument is valid, any method used has to do “...what is intended...” and should measure “...what it is supposed to measure...” (Bostwick & Kyte, 1981:104-105). In order to ensure the questionnaire used for this study complied with the above specifications, a three-step design was used.

²⁰ The original plan was to visit three or four high schools in the Bloemfontein area where the questionnaire would have been presented to grade eight pupils. This notion was, however, abandoned early in the study, as logic dictated that more mature groups would be much better at revisiting their adolescent years, than would individuals who were still in the throes of teenage hormonal changes.

2.4.4.1. Step 1: Drawing up the questionnaire (Appendix A)

The first step in designing this questionnaire entailed the identification of three primary areas of investigation. These areas were identified as 1) *Establishing the existence of a reading culture*; 2) *Adolescent personal development*; and 3) *Followers of the Harry Potter series*. Accordingly, questions within the first area of investigation were designed to determine to what degree participants enjoyed leisure reading, if at all, and also to probe their reaction to the *Harry Potter* series, in an attempt to establish whether a culture of reading existed among them. The questions posed in the second area of investigation were formulated to ascertain whether participants thought reading could influence one's thoughts, feelings, and/or emotions in order to determine the proposed influence that reading a series like *Harry Potter* could have on, specifically, an adolescent's personal development. Finally, the third area of investigation was designed solely for those individuals who had read one or more books in Rowling's *Potter* series, with the aim of establishing their opinion about the series and its contribution to literature, reading, magic and the occult, and religion. The first draft of the questionnaire was handed to the supervisor who suggested several changes pertaining to flaws in the design and layout of the questionnaire. Adjustments were made accordingly and the questionnaire was subsequently deemed ready for distribution to the pilot group.

2.4.4.2. Step 2: The pilot study (Appendix B):

The purpose of the pilot study was to obtain input on the following: the structure and layout of the questionnaire; the ambiguity and/or clarity of questions; any language-related errors; and the general accessibility of the instrument. Accordingly, the group selected to complete the pilot test consisted of 22 colleagues, peers and fellow academics who were expressly instructed to complete the questionnaire as critically as possible, and who were informed that the purpose of their completing the document was not to obtain data, but to enable the

researcher to design an improved, more comprehensible, and more reliable instrument for the gathering of data. This exercise resulted in insightful, constructive, and expert feedback which led to multiple adjustments, the most significant of which was the implementation of a seven-point Likert scale for the majority of questions. The motivation for this modification was primarily to ensure more reliable and accurate data, as the scale provides participants with a greater range of responses to choose from. Other alterations included a wider range of options with questions where the Likert scale was omitted, the clarification of questions that were ambiguous or unclear, and streamlining of the layout of the questionnaire. With these improvements introduced to the questionnaire, the main study was ready to be conducted.

2.4.4.3. Step 3: The main study (Appendix C):

After including the Likert scale and implementing various changes to other sections of the questionnaire, it was decided to make use of an optical reader sheet (see appendix D). These sheets are ideal for the type of questions posed in this questionnaire as they do not require respondents to write extensively (which can be problematic in cases where participants are completing a questionnaire voluntarily), and can be fed into a machine which captures the data almost instantaneously. The questionnaires were taken to the chosen group of participants and administered within a 24-hour period to 82 individuals (convenience sample), with only one or two instruction errors detected (and rectified during the group's completion of the questionnaire). With this step completed, the required data (from a quantitative perspective) were collected successfully, and the optical reader sheets were ready to be processed, providing the raw data within seconds. However, quantitative data did not constitute the only information used for this study.

The method employed to obtain the qualitative data required for the study is referred to by Strydom and Delpont (2002:321) as “document study”, while Dane (1990:168) calls it “archival research”. The researcher visited SA Media, a unit stationed on the campus of the University of the Free State, where an archive of printed and publication media spanning two to three decades exists. When an article is added to the collection, a list of ten key words, as well as the date of the publication, the author’s name, and the name of the source, are archived with the article. As a result, one need only provide a list of key search terms, for example: *Harry Potter*, *Maretha Maartens*, *literacy*, *reading*, *religion*, *the occult*, *criticism*, and *personal development*, and the computer will display a list of articles that meets any one, or a combination, of these search terms. Consequently, and with the search having been done successfully, a collection of no less than 150 articles spanning the last decade was identified, which meant that the collection of the required qualitative data had been completed successfully.

2.5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

After the quantitative data had been captured into a *Microsoft Excel* spread sheet, the data was ready to be refined and analysed, and a statistician was approached for this purpose. Using a computer programme called SAS version 9.2, the data was manipulated and analysed to the point where the data could be visually represented in graph form. These graphs, with their corresponding information, were then given to the researcher who proceeded to interpret, and draw conclusions from them (see chapters three, four, and five). While this was the procedure followed for the analysis and interpretation of quantitative data, the qualitative data was approached in a different manner. The collected articles were first divided into groups according to subject (*i.e. Harry Potter* and literacy/reading, *Harry Potter* and the occult/religion, *Harry Potter* and moral/personal development). The disparate

batches were then taken one at a time, the corresponding articles read, and the necessary inferences and conclusions drawn. With this done, the data collected and interpreted during the quantitative approach were paired with the corresponding data interpreted through the qualitative method, and discussed in the three chapters that follow.

2.6. LIMITATIONS AND VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

From an academic point of view, there is no doubt that literacy is a vital and invaluable asset which everyone should be privileged enough to possess. In conducting this research, I anticipate a contribution to the already existing body of data pertaining to the study of literacy and young people's affinity for reading. Furthermore, I hope to confer a greater sense of credibility, from a literary perspective, on Rowling's *oeuvre*, which at the same time addresses relevant moral concerns. I believe that the lessons learned from the texts, as well as the companionship they afford young people, who may often feel alone and unappreciated, are benefits which may not always be acknowledged. Additionally, I believe that *Harry Potter* is the ideal material to prescribe to both first- and second-language speakers at primary school level. Apart from the moral and thematic aspects that young people of this age group will be privileged to encounter, the series will also expose them to a body of work that contains a wide range of words for vocabulary improvement, and a standard of English that will establish a reliable basis for any future studies in the language.

CHAPTER 3

HARRY POTTER AND THE RELIGIOUS DILEMMA

Ever since J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series was introduced to the South African market, it has occupied a controversial presence in the national media. Commentaries on the series have taken on numerous forms, including book reviews and articles dealing with the author's journey from rags to riches²¹ and innovative ways in which the books may be used in the classroom. Along with these a number of warnings were issued that the series is rooted in *Wicca witchcraft* or the occult and that it lures innocent children to the type of dangerous magic associated with the above. The chapters that follow combine analyses of selected newspaper articles from May 2000 to the present (which were obtained from S.A. Media²²) with the interpretation of results gleaned from the questionnaire described earlier, each chapter focussing on one of the main premises of this study. As a result, one should be capable of determining to what extent the public's perception of the series has been influenced by the media. Furthermore, and to show the origins of the examples used, each chapter commences with a short description of two or three books in the series, thus ensuring a comprehensive synopsis of Rowling's *oeuvre*.

3.1. *HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE (ROWLING, 1997)*

The first instalment in the series about a boy wizard raised in the world of *muggles*, introduces the reader to a baby Harry who is left on the doorstep of his recently deceased

²¹ Joanne Kathleen Rowling was a struggling single mother living on welfare when she worked on *Harry Potter and the philosopher's stone* (1997), which was rejected by multiple publishers before being accepted by Scholastic Inc. From here on success was the order of the day and Rowling is at present one of the richest women in the world, with a net worth which exceeds that of the queen of England (Wohlberg, 2005:23-26).

²² S.A. Media is an organisation that archives the content of most South African, and some international, newspapers and magazines for research purposes. They have a database that can be searched by typing in keywords, providing the researcher with links to every article or publication that has a record of the topic.

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mother's non-magic sister. Here he is to grow up, loathing every day of the eleven years that lead to his learning about his wizarding heritage. Unbeknownst to him, he enjoys a protection that prevents the evil Lord Voldemort and his followers from determining his whereabouts. On his eleventh birthday, Harry is informed of the truth and his journey into the world of magic begins. He finds himself a celebrity and becomes famous for causing the downfall of Lord Voldemort, the most evil wizard the world has ever known. Harry embarks upon an adventurous journey, buying spell books and potion supplies for the school year ahead, acquiring a wand, and meeting complete strangers who treat him like royalty. Soon he boards the scarlet Hogwarts Express and steams off to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Situated as a castle in the remote English countryside, the school lives up to its reputation as one of the best institutions for magical education in Europe. Harry meets his future best friends Ronald (Ron) Weasley and Hermione Granger, comes face to face with a mountain troll, and learns that the potions master, Severus Snape, despises him for reasons that come to light only much later in the series. Soon the boy and his companions attempt to determine why the legendary philosopher's stone (which can turn any metal into gold and give the owner eternal life) is being guarded at Hogwarts, and who is trying to steal it in order to restore Voldemort to his previous position of power, and how this is to be accomplished. In the end Harry comes face to face with the dark lord again, and is once more able to escape death due to the ancient branch of magic (rooted in his mother's love for him) that ensured his survival as a young child. At the end of the school year Harry has to return to his aunt and uncle's home for the summer holiday as this is where he is magically protected, leaving the boy frustrated yet excited about the school year that lies ahead.

3.2. HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS (ROWLING, 1998)

Book two in the series finds Harry stuck with his bullying cousin Dudley at number four Privet Drive, where he has to stay for the summer and is not allowed to do magic due to the International Statute of Secrecy.²³ Jailed in his upstairs bedroom after a house elf caused mayhem with a pudding in the presence of his magic-loathing guardians and a work colleague of his uncle, Harry is alone and depressed, his miserable state severely compounded by the lack of correspondence from his friends. He soon finds out that the afore-mentioned house elf had intercepted his friends' letters in an attempt to keep Harry from returning to Hogwarts, as he would be in grave danger should he go back. Disregarding the warning, Harry is soon rescued by Ron and his brothers, who stole their father's flying car, and is whisked off to the Weasley home (The Burrow) outside a small English village. They spend the remainder of the holiday here, and soon find themselves flying an enchanted Ford Anglia back to Hogwarts for a new year of learning and adventure.

Their second school year brings novel demands, as the trio is forced to deal with the new and quite pompous Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, an increase in their workload, and a series of attacks on half-blood (a witch or wizard who has one muggle parent and one magical one) and *muggle*-born students. In addition, Harry finds himself hearing a bodiless voice that talks of murder and bloodshed, while it also comes to light that Harry is a Parselmouth (*i.e.* he can talk to snakes), an ability that has for centuries been associated with the evil wizard, and founder of Slytherin House, Salazar Slytherin. Once more Harry, Ron, and Hermione take it upon themselves to solve the puzzling events, and it is during their

²³ A law imposed upon witch and wizard children who are not yet 17 years old, and who may thus not perform magic outside the walls of Hogwarts. The purpose is to prevent the non-magic world from becoming aware of their existence as a result of reckless magic performed by those who are not yet old enough.

“investigation” that Harry comes across a mysterious diary. Although revealing to him how the Chamber of Secrets²⁴ had been opened fifty years prior, the diary is in fact a preserved fragment of the young Voldemort’s soul, which is attempting to resurrect itself into a human form. Harry Potter is once again able to defeat Lord Voldemort, preventing the dark wizard from returning and killing the monster in the process. By the end of the school year he boards the train back to London, destined to spend another summer in the home of his guardians, and again wishing that time would pass as speedily as possible.

3.3. CONTROVERSY, CRITICS, AND CRITICISM

3.3.1. FIGHTING AGAINST HARRY

From the very beginning, despite receiving substantial critical acclaim, Rowling’s series has been harshly criticised for its subject matter and the way in which it exposes its readers (especially young children) to the world of magic and the occult (De Villiers & Smith, 2005:1; Koekemoer, 2005:4; Reinecke, 2003a:7; Reinecke, 2003b:7; They want to ban dear Harry, 2001:7; Walter, 2005:12). Especially at the time when the series was not yet well known, it was subjected to much criticism. Von Klemperer (2000:7) explains that many believe that the series encourages practicing the occult and dangerous witchcraft, and provides details about an American group, called Freedom Village USA Ministry, that denounced *Harry Potter* on the grounds that it led children to believe they could escape their reality by retreating to a world of fantasy and serious, dangerous magic. Furthermore, she reports that some local bookstores lost customers due to their stocking the series, and it also came to light that a variety of schools (*i.e.* Heritage Academy, Grace College in Hilton, and

²⁴ This is a legendary chamber, the entrance of which is said to be hidden somewhere in the school, accessible only to the true heir of Salazar Slytherin. It is believed to hold an ancient monster that kills when instructed and causes the death of anyone who looks it in the eyes.

Maritzburg Christian School) refused to add the books to their libraries. Based on the above, one could predict that more criticism would follow, and it was not long after Von Klemperer's (2000:7) article that a media frenzy erupted as a result of *Harry Potter*.

In November 2000, Maretha Maartens (2000:10) postulated in her column, ironically entitled "Soos ek dit sien" [my emphasis], that even though parents were more than willing to give their children the *Harry Potter* books which were seemingly an innocent means of escaping reality, Potter's actions were in fact rooted in magic and could only be classified as evil. Maartens supported her argument by quoting the following supposed interview with J.K. Rowling from the *London Times*:

I think it's absolute rubbish to protest children's books on the grounds that they are luring children to Satan. People should be praising them for that! These books guide children to an understanding that the weak, idiotic Son of God is a living hoax who will be humiliated when the rain of fire comes.

The outrageous nature of these statements, purportedly made by Rowling, is quite self-evident and any objective person would immediately question the authenticity of such claims. Unfortunately, Maartens lacked the insight to question or research the accuracy of Rowling's so-called proclamations, and instead used them as the foundation of her argument that although Harry fought against evil, he was in fact a product of evil who taught children how to do magic. Shortly after this article was published, Kerneels Breytenbach (head of the publishing company Human & Rousseau) indicted Maartens for making false accusations about Rowling. The ensuing battle saw Maartens (2000:1) retaliate by saying that what she had said was noted in black on white, and that Rowling had admitted her books were rooted in evil. To this Breytenbach (2000:6) dealt the final blow by establishing that Maartens had quoted the *London Times* out of context, and that her argument had in effect been based on a mock article in *The Onion*. This satirical online-newspaper is well known for publishing

fabricated information, and it was on the basis of one of their lampoon articles that Maartens had formulated her argument. As a result, Breytenbach relayed that Maartens's accusations amounted to libel, and continued by stating his disappointment in her and the fact that she had not done proper research. However, and despite the fact that Breytenbach had set the record straight, Maartens had given many of her readers reason to believe that the *Harry Potter* series, and its author, were an evil from which their children required protection (Benadé, 2001:6; Maqetuka, 2004:12; Reaksie op *Harry Potter* debat, 2002:8).

An increase in reports followed covering the detrimental effect of Rowling's series on readers, especially young and impressionable children. In March 2001, *Beeld* (Katolieke priester sê Potter is duiwels, 2000:3) reported that a Catholic priest, Gerhard Wagner from Austria, had deprecated the books due to the demonic rituals described in them and the references made to the sucking out of someone's soul, while Keyser (2000:6) expressed shock at parents in Amsterdam who deemed the criticism against the series ludicrous and refused to prevent their children from reading the novels. Other publications explored the "...real world occult parallels..." (They want to ban dear Harry, 2001:7) of the series, proclaiming that "[k]ids are curious and when they are [...] reading the books they become curious about witches and spells..." (Hunt, 2000:16). Yet others published since then cover cases where e-mail chains are created to warn about the release of the sixth Potter book (Capazorio, 2005:1). The list is virtually endless and it appears that there will always be those who condemn the books for their portrayal of dangerous magic as having both a good and a bad side. Surprisingly, however, there are an equal number of reports, if not more, of critics who disagree with or oppose those who are against Rowling and/or her work.

3.3.2. DEFENDING THE BOY WIZARD

From the aforesaid, it seems undeniable that the *Harry Potter* series remains controversial, and yet one finds many authors and critics willing to take up the fight for the boy wizard and his author (Brand, 2007:13; Donnelly, 2007b:7; Garreau, 2005:26; *Harry Potter*, 2003:14; Hugo, 2005:11; Jones, 2005:7; Kennicott, 2004:11; Reid, 2004:13; Reinecke, 2003a:6). In an article entitled “Fantasie verhale maak die lewe draaglik” (2001:34), *Lig/Kollig* reports a conversation with a young Australian girl that serves as testimony for the good that *Harry* is doing. This article coincided with the Vatican’s support for Potter (Vatican backs *Harry Potter*, 2003:5) and Professor Maritha Snyman’s (2003:11) assertion that there are more serious matters for parents to concern themselves about than the boy wizard. The eight-year-old Australian girl, when asked about the *Potter* book she was reading, explained that Voldemort will never succeed, and that the *Bible* has taught her good always triumphs over evil. Thus, contrary to Maartens’s claims and warnings, this child possesses the ability to place *Harry Potter* into a Christian perspective, and shows no interest in dangerous magic or Satanism despite the fact that she is an avid Rowling fan. From this one can extrapolate that Bruno Bettelheim’s (1976) theory, which postulates that children need fairy tales and fantasy in order to prevent them from getting too caught up in reality at a young age (failing which they may later try to compensate by experimenting with drugs and sex), is therefore quite plausible.

Various others (Christie, Freeborn, & Heldsinger, 2005:7; Du Toit, 2008:40; Killinger, 2004; Reinecke, 2003b:6; Smit, 2005:14) take a stance in favour of *Harry*, urging people to see the “...Christian values of truth, love and sacrifice” (Potter the Parable, 2002:1) that are tied in with the plot. Theologian Christina Landman (2001:14) mentions that the story is not

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focussed on witchcraft, but a young boy's escape to a world where children are treated with respect, and that one should also consider how Harry's outsider status is replaced by feelings of self-worth and significance when he finds out about the world to which he actually belongs. Furthermore, Van der Walt (2002:8) elucidates that many critics of the series have never read the books, nor seen the movies, and that *Harry Potter* constitutes a web woven from themes and ideas that children are already aware of. Very early in the first book, the reader is made aware of the struggle between good and evil (a prominent theme that can be tracked throughout the series), when baby Harry is orphaned as a result of his parents taking up the fight against the dark wizard, Lord Voldemort (Rowling, 1997:7-18), and it is at the end of the same book that one comes to understand how the most sincere love (like that of a mother for her child) will serve as protection for the rest of the child's life (Rowling, 1997:216).

In addition to the above, the reverend GJM Wolmarans (2002:3), after having read the series critically, states that he cannot find evidence of deliberate or obscured references to Satanism or the occult, while Dr Bill Domeris (former head of religious studies at the University of the Witwatersrand) is quoted as saying that it is highly unlikely the series will lead children to magic (Maluleke, 2003:11). Reinecke (2003:6) even relates the fact that many Christians find the series to be an allegorical²⁵ equivalent to the story of Christ. Thus, there are countless cases of individuals who do not consider *Harry Potter* to be a prophet of doom and

5 The definition of allegory varies greatly. As a result, one finds Stephen Murray (2007: 903) referring to Meyer's (2003: 214) musings on allegory explaining that "[a]llegory is understood as a language capable of 'saying other things'..." thus "...cloaking hidden meaning behind palpable form". One can thus draw the conclusion that a text that is allegorical in nature will more often than not be concerned with issues that require serious consideration, and that the opinions regarding those issues will be camouflaged in a conspicuous manner, a manner that causes the text to be seen as allegorical. Furthermore, Joseph Mazzeo (1978: 2) identifies allegory as "...a principle of construction [where] the author constructs his work to be read allegorically..." Consequently, one will find this style or mode intertwined in the narrative in which it is employed, and that the narrative becomes "...the vehicle through which such a process is both represented and structured" (Johnson, 2004: 233).

evil, the latter view becoming even harder to believe when considering that Harry and his friends desire not only to clear their friend Hagrid's name after he is wrongfully accused of unleashing Slytherin's monster in book two, but also to stop the young Voldemort from rising to power again (Rowling, 1998).

3.4. UNDERSTANDING THE *HARRY POTTER* PHENOMENON

At this point it would be appropriate to shift the attention from the qualitative mode employed to explore the perception of the series through media coverage, to a more analytical mindset to assist with the quantitative component of the study. This section provides an analysis of the data (in graph form) gleaned from the responses to the questionnaire, in an attempt to gain insight into the readers' opinions on the series. The questions analysed in this chapter pertain specifically to the topic under discussion, and serve as a means of understanding the opinions of select members from the general public regarding the possibility that *Harry Potter* lures people (especially young people) to magic and the occult.

Figure 1 (below) represents the results of question 7, which asks participants to indicate whether they have ever started reading a *Harry Potter* book, and then, based on their answer (yes or no), to progress either to question 8 or question 9. The graph shows that while 28 of the 82 (34.15%) contributors had started reading at least one of the books in Rowling's series, a disappointing 65.85% (54 out of 82) had never opened one of the *Harry Potter* novels. However, the reasons for these results vary and are conveyed through participants' responses to either question 8 or 9.

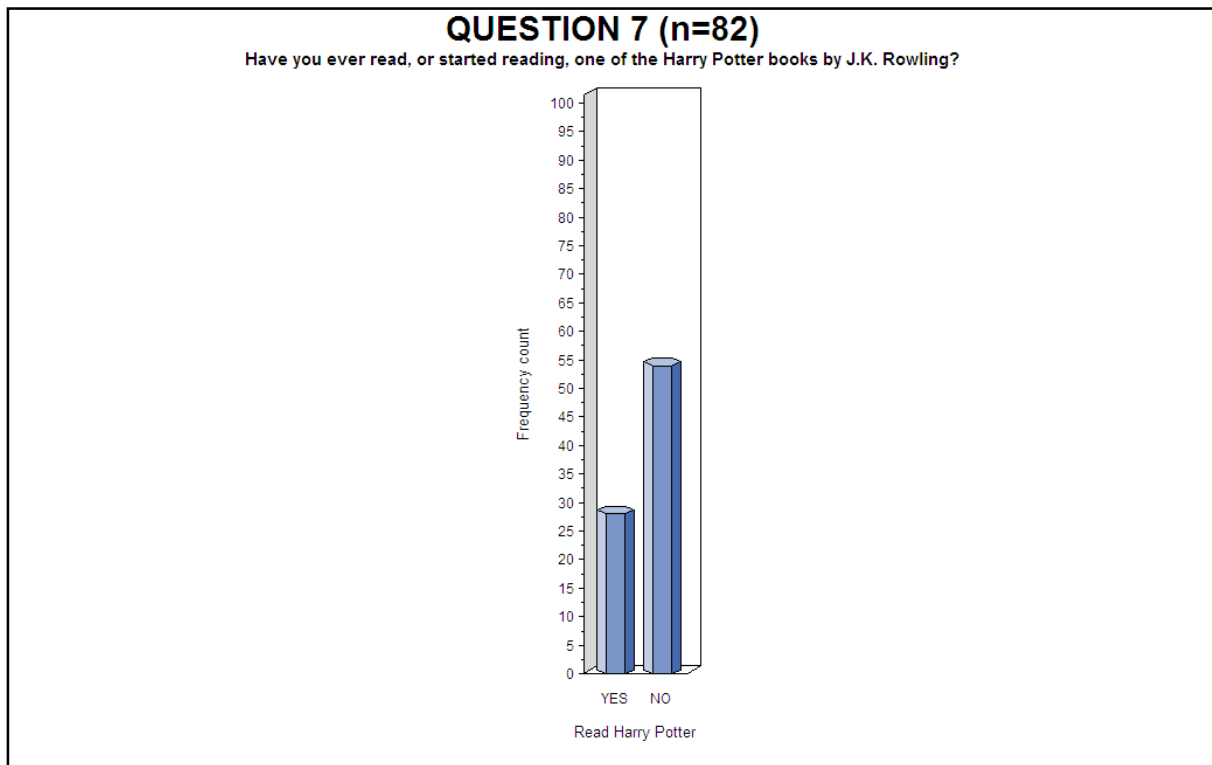


Figure 1: Question 7 results

It was established that of the 65.85% of participants who had not started reading a *Harry Potter* book, six (11.11%) quoted religious/spiritual objections, while 21 (38.89%) indicated that they were not interested in the series, and four (7.41%) stated that they still planned to read one or more of the books. Furthermore, two (3.70%) ascribed their lack of reading the series to an aversion to participating in activities that are “mainstream”; one (1.85%) individual indicated that he/she was not allowed to read any of the books, while 13 (24.07%) indicated that they had already seen the movie versions of the series and therefore did not deem it necessary to read the books. Seven (12.96%) maintained that none of the above-mentioned reasons described why they had not read any of Rowling’s books. On the other hand, the statistics show that, of the 34.15% of the group who had picked up a *Harry Potter* novel, four (14.29%) indicated that they had started reading one of the books, two (7.14%) stated that they had finished reading one of the books, and five (17.86%) noted that they had

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read *some* of the books in Rowling's series. Moreover, four (14.29%) participants had read the entire series once, while an impressive 42.86% (12 out of 28) indicated that they had read the entire series more than once. One person noted that none of the above options applied to him/her. Thus, despite the fact that a large proportion of the participating population had not read any *Harry Potter* instalments, it is reassuring to note that, of those who had, almost half had read the entire series more than once.

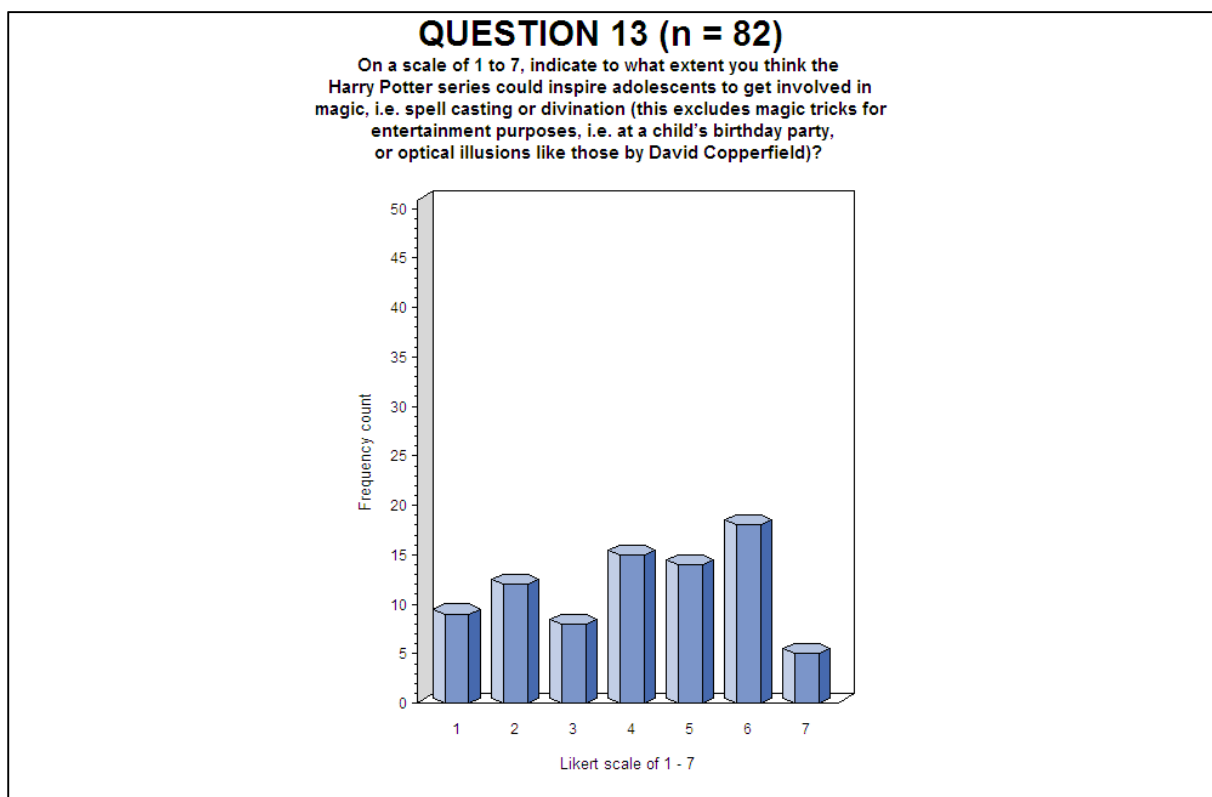


Figure 2: Question 13 results

In terms of question 13, one participant did not answer the question, while nine (11.11%) felt that there was no likelihood of the series having the proposed influence on its readers, and 20 (24.69%) contributors indicated that it was highly unlikely to affect adolescents in this manner. Furthermore, 15 (18.52%) individuals rated the question at a neutral four on the seven-point scale, while the remaining 45.68% (37 of the 81 who answered the question)

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were of the opinion that it was fairly to very likely that Rowling's texts could lead to an increased interest/involvement in serious magic. Evidently, as indicated by the majority of this group, many people were of the opinion that the *Harry Potter* novels increased young people's interest and/or participation in magic, most likely because of what had been propagated in the media, rather than by empiric research.

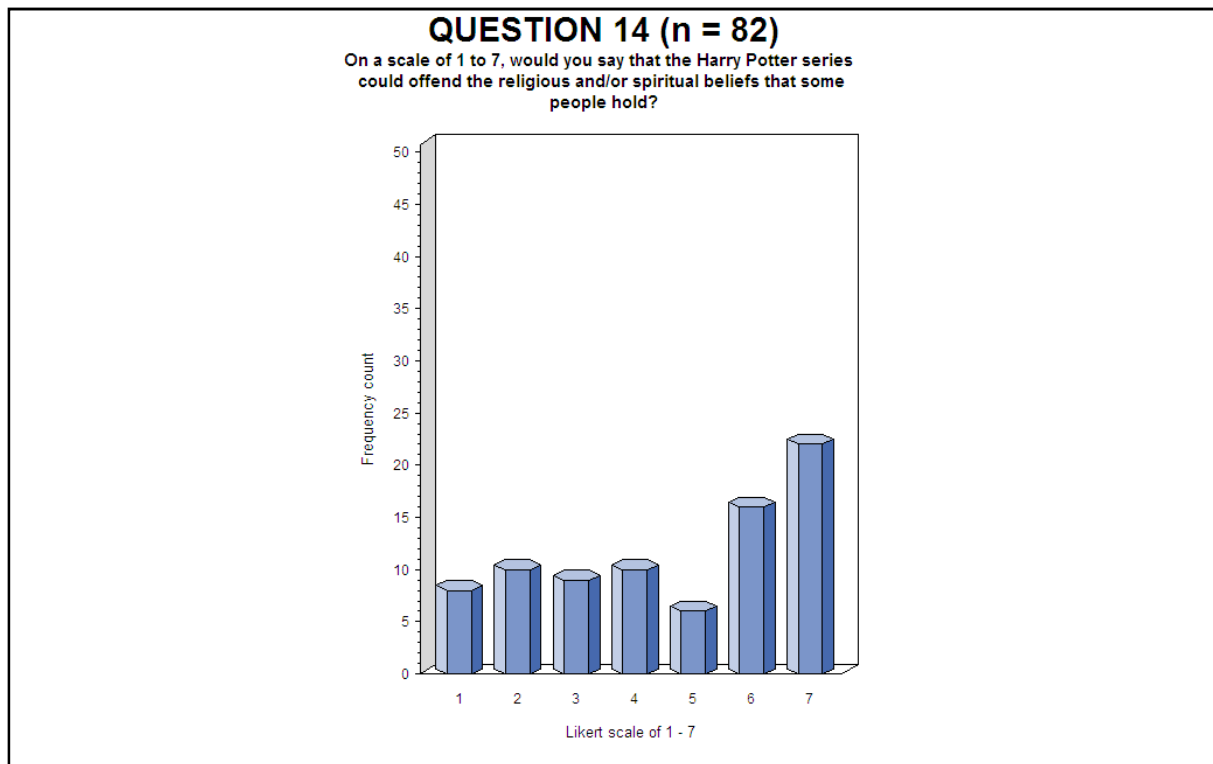


Figure 3: Question 14 results

As was the case with question 13, one person did not answer this question, which can probably be attributed to his/her reservations about the topic, aka *Harry Potter*. The graph shows that 37 (45.68%) of the respondents who answered this question were of the opinion that the series was either unlikely to offend the religious/spiritual beliefs of others or would not do so at all, and rated their responses in the region of one to four on the seven-point scale. The remainder of those who took part in the study, on the other hand, rated the question between five and seven, leaving one to infer that 44 of the 81 (54.32%) contributors who

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answered this question deemed it highly plausible, if not definite, that reading *Harry Potter* could jeopardise the religious/spiritual beliefs of its readers. Once more this was probably ascribable to what participants had come across in the media or what had been propagated to them by others, rather than their own conclusions.

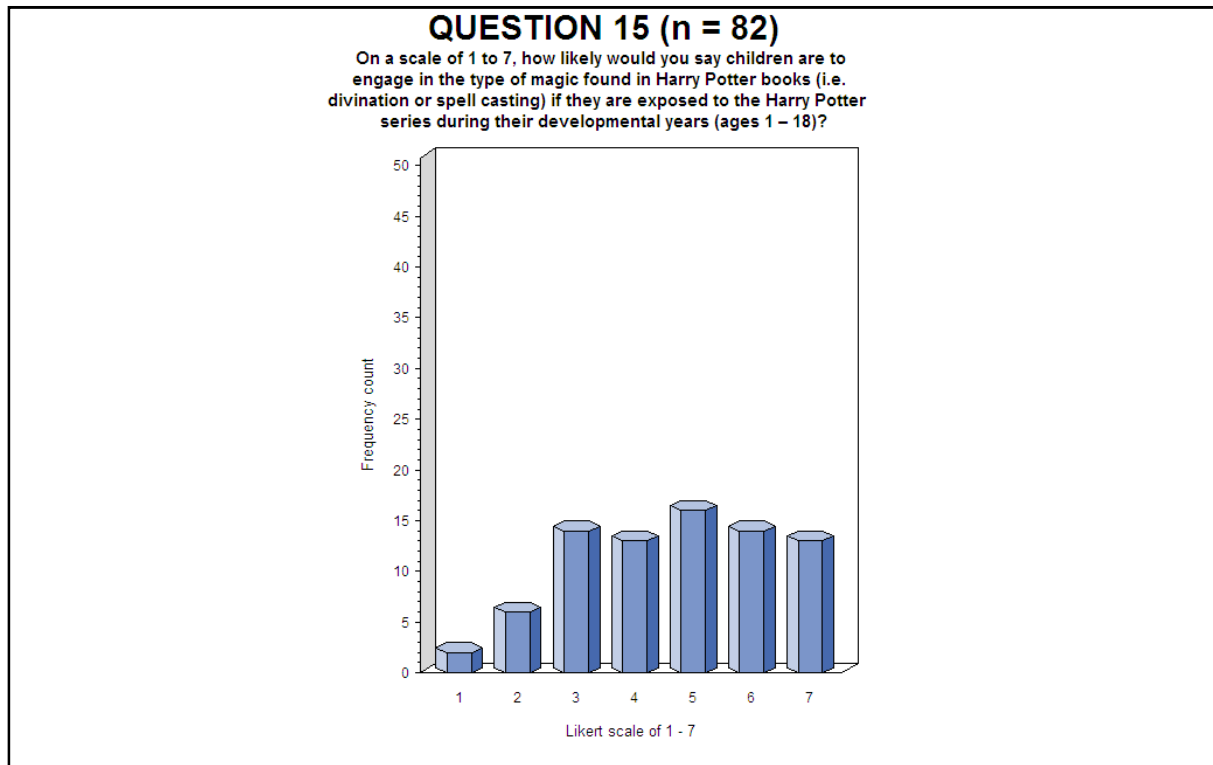


Figure 4: Question 15 results

Figure 4 represents the findings of question 15. Interestingly enough, four people opted not to answer this question, which could be attributed to the fact that they held certain reservations about the matter. The diagram shows that, while 28.21% (22 of the 78 who answered the question) rated involvement in magic as being highly (if not entirely) unlikely, 13 (16.67%) participants gave a rating of four which could indicate their uncertainty or indifference about the matter. The remaining 43 (55.13%) participants indicated that they deemed the series fairly to highly likely to have the described effect on children. As a result,

one may infer that the majority of the participants deemed the series risky in terms of its supposed repercussions.

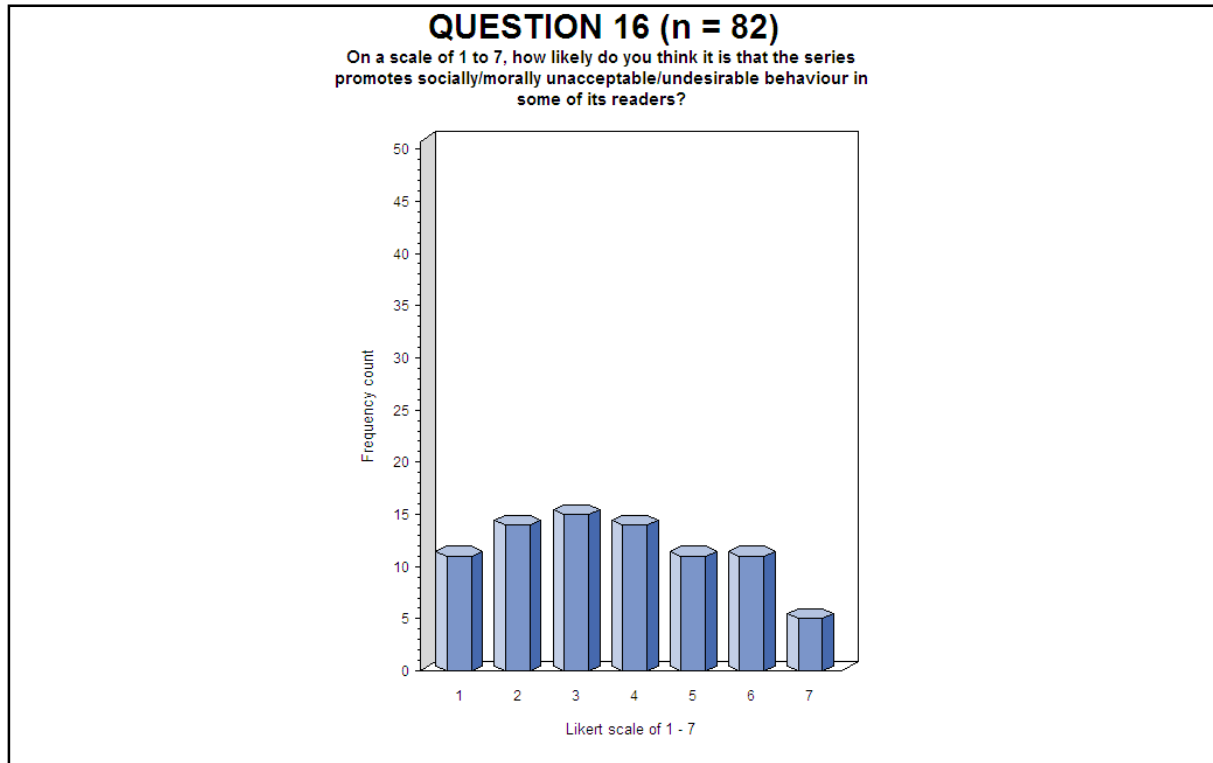


Figure 5: Question 16 results

Question 16 posed quite a challenging question to those taking part in this study, as the concepts involved could prove difficult to define. Broad terms were thus used in the hope that contributors would come to their own conclusions about what is socially/morally unacceptable/undesirable. Again, one participant did not answer the question, leaving a sample size of 81 once more. Figure 5 shows that 54 of the 81 (66.67%) individuals who answered the question, chose a value ranging from one to four on the Likert scale, attesting that a large proportion of the group deemed it fairly unlikely to not at all likely that the series promoted the said behaviour. This was countered by the 33.33% (27 of 81) who considered the series moderately to highly likely to bring about socially/morally unacceptable/undesirable conduct in its readers. Consequently, one can surmise that the

influence of this series on its readers' behaviour was not a concern for the majority of the participating group.

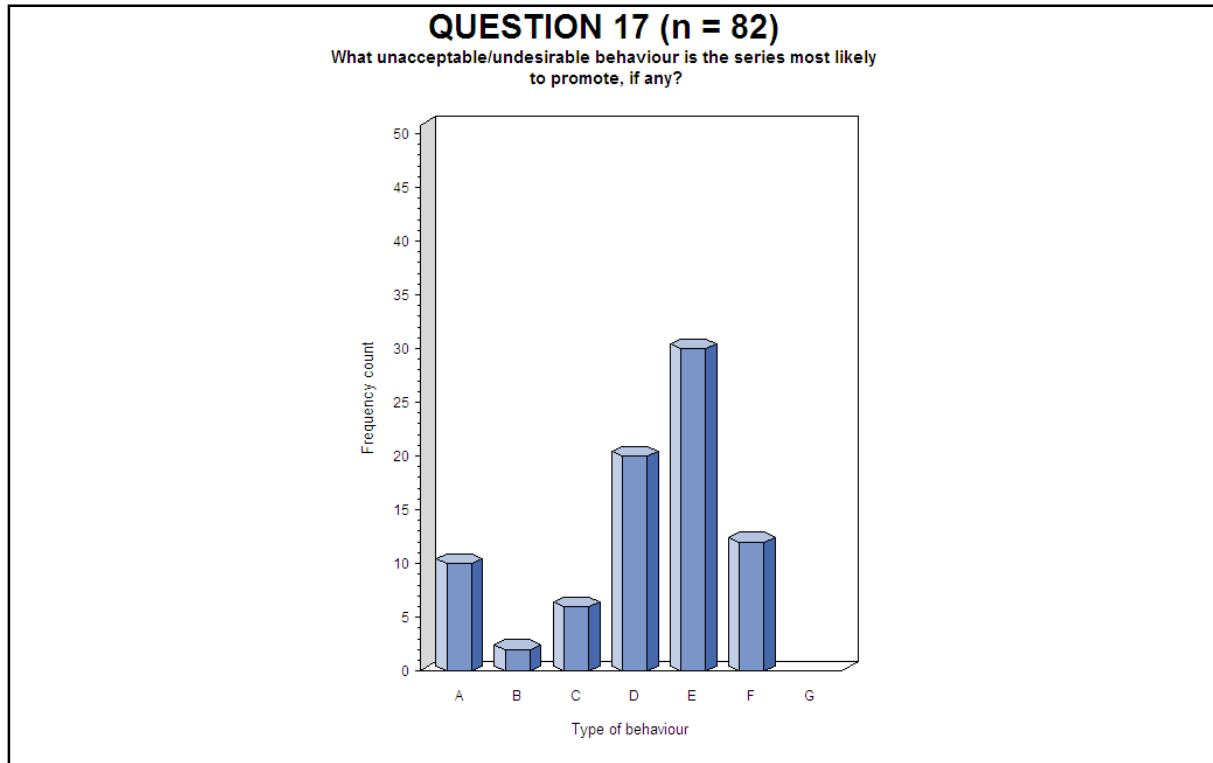


Figure 6: Question 17 results

Question 17 was the final question that had to be answered by the entire participating population. It should be noted that two participants did not complete this question, and of the 80 who did, two (2.50%) felt that the series could ignite an interest only in divination, and a mere six were of the opinion that spell casting alone had seen an increase as a result of the Potter texts. Furthermore, ten (12.50%) individuals chose a general interest in magic as the most likely type of behaviour to be exhibited and 12 (15.00%) felt that no unacceptable/undesirable behaviour could be blamed on Rowling's books. Finally, from the two responses with the highest prevalence, one finds that 20 (25.00%) participants chose "an unhealthy detachment from reality" as being the most likely corollary of the series, while 30 (37.50%) asserted that "an interest in magic, divination, and spell casting" combined was

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most likely to result from reading *Harry Potter*. Subsequently, one can deduce that the stigma²⁶ surrounding the series is believed by 82% of this group.

The graphs that follow reflect the results of the data gleaned from the questions posed only to those participants who had read one or more of the books in the *Harry Potter* series. The purposes of these questions were to determine whether the majority of participants held more or less similar views regarding the books, or where their responses were disparate. Also note that question seven asked participants to indicate whether they had ever *started* reading any of Rowling's books, to which 28 candidates answered in the affirmative. Questions 18 onward required responses only from those who had read at least one book, if not more, for the purpose of validating the responses of the 26 contributors who responded to these questions.

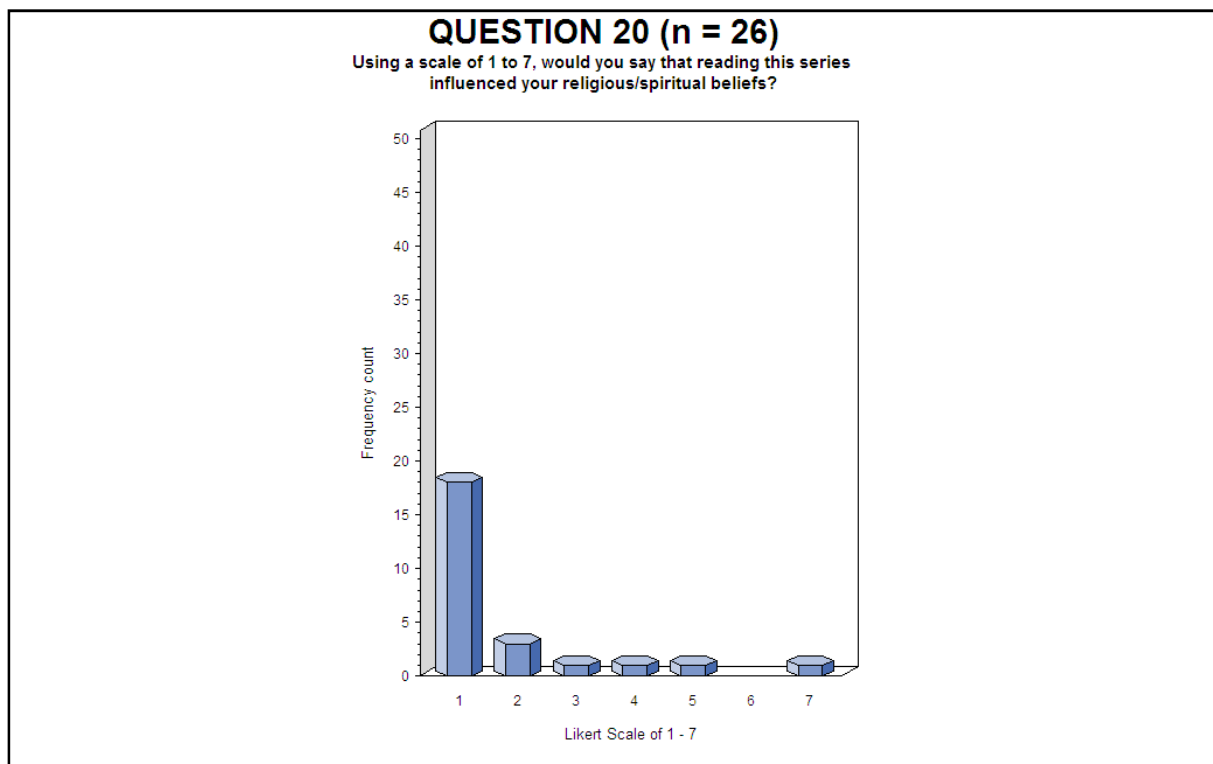


Figure 7: Question 20 results

²⁶ There are many who strongly believe that this series serves the purpose of propagating the use magic, especially to children, and that it is done in quite an unobtrusive manner, which is exactly why some deem Rowling's work so unsafe.

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With regard to this question, one participant did not respond, while none of the remaining 25 contributors chose a rating of six. Furthermore, one can deduce that only one (4.00%) person selected ratings seven, five, four, and three, while three people gave a ranking of two (12.00%) out of seven, with a staggering 18 (72.00%) respondents providing a rating of one to reflect that reading Rowling's series had no effect on their spiritual/religious beliefs whatsoever. Subsequently, one can infer that, for the majority of this group, *Harry Potter* had no influence on their faith, hence opposing the conflicting viewpoint held by many, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

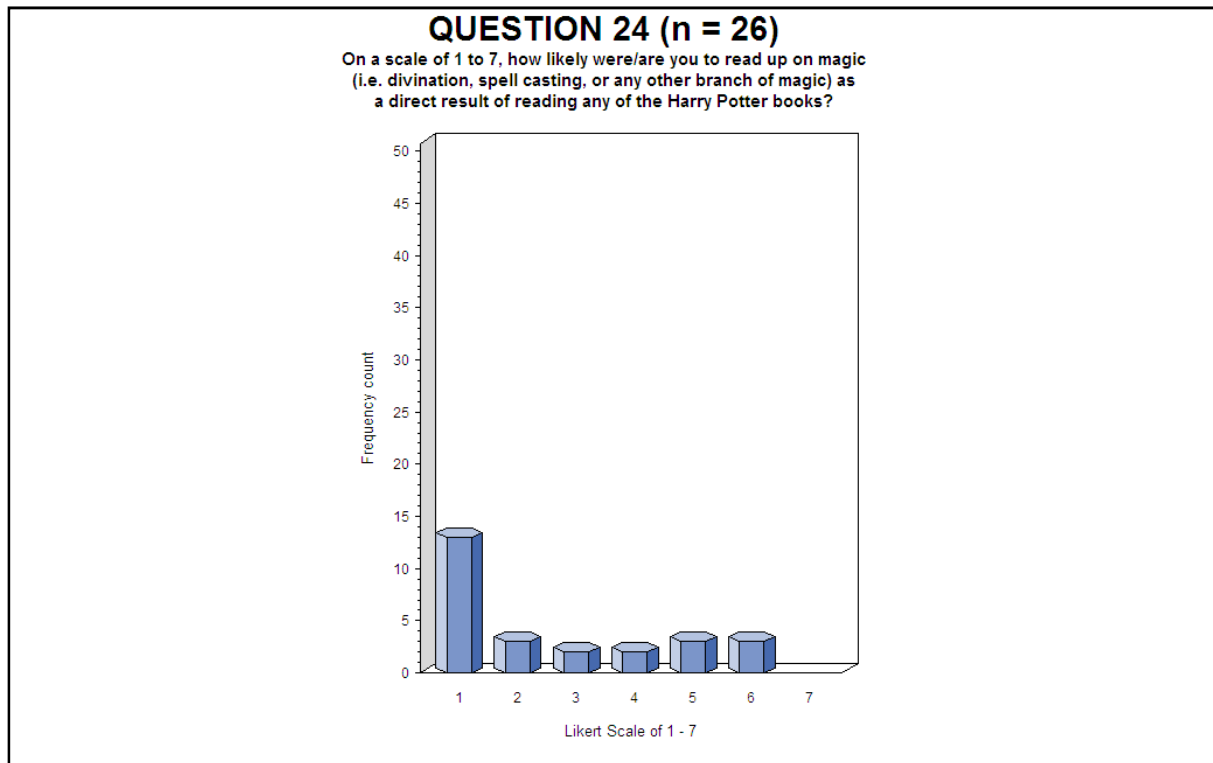


Figure 8: Question 24 results

The next question was aimed at determining whether respondents found themselves more inclined to read up on magic (*i.e.* spell casting or divination) as a direct result of reading J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*. In this case all 26 participants who had read Rowling's series responded to the question, and no one gave a rating of seven to indicate that they were/are

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highly likely to read up on magic as a direct result of reading *Harry Potter*. 30.77% (8 of the 26) gave a ranking of between four and six on the seven-point scale, which indicates that a portion of the class had read up on this phenomenon or might do so. However, this still does not prove that any of them had or had not taken part in activities of this nature, leaving the matter open for further probing. The rest of the participants indicated that they were very, if not wholly, unlikely to read up on the type of magic referred to as a direct result of reading these books. Therefore, one can concur that there is no concrete proof gleaned from this study to indicate that the series leads to an increased interest in magic, or the desire to learn more about it.

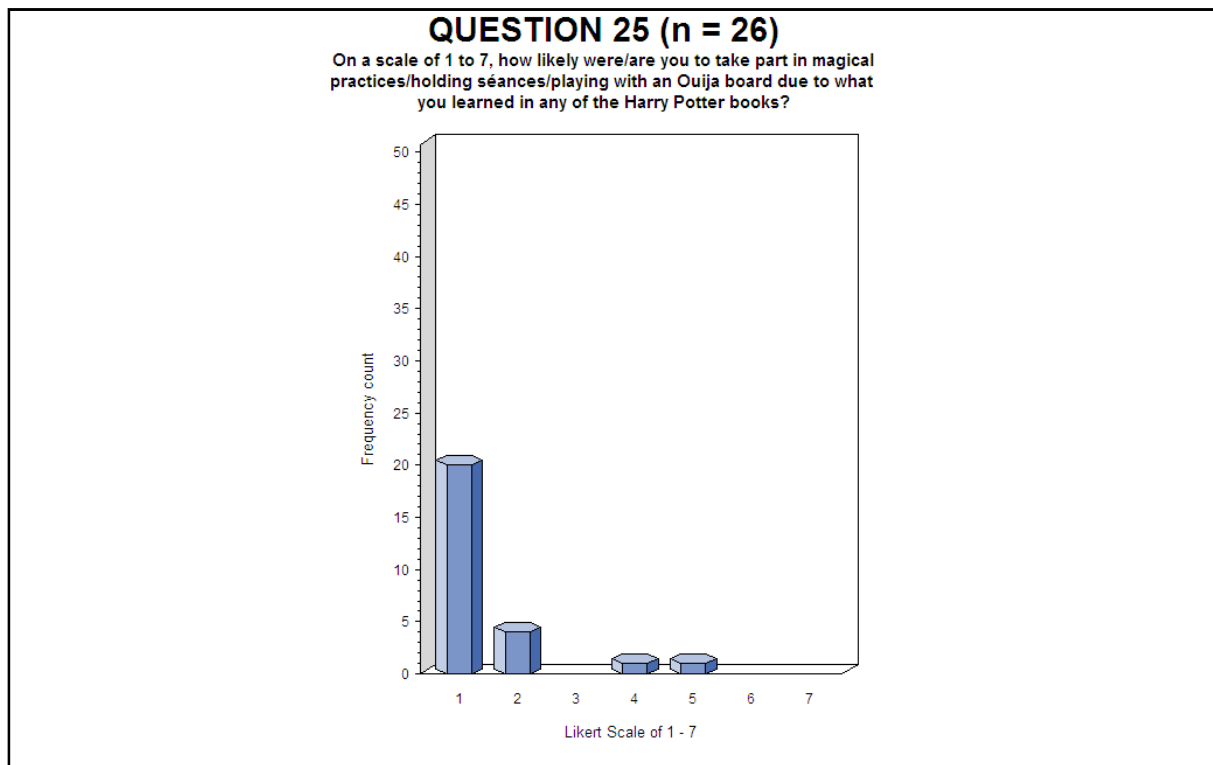


Figure 9: Question 25 results

Question 25 was posed to participants in an attempt to explore further the possibility that Rowling's series lures its readers to magic. The graph shows that not one person selected options three, six, or seven on the scale, while one of the 26 (3.85%) respondents chose a four

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and another marked a five on the Likert scale. Thus, one can deduce that two participants were inclined to involve themselves with some aspect of the dangerous magic referred to, with the remaining 24 (92.31%) respondents marking a one or two to indicate that they were highly unlikely or not at all inclined to engage in the activities mentioned. The inference to be made is that very few participants of this study felt that the series had lured them to serious/dangerous magic.

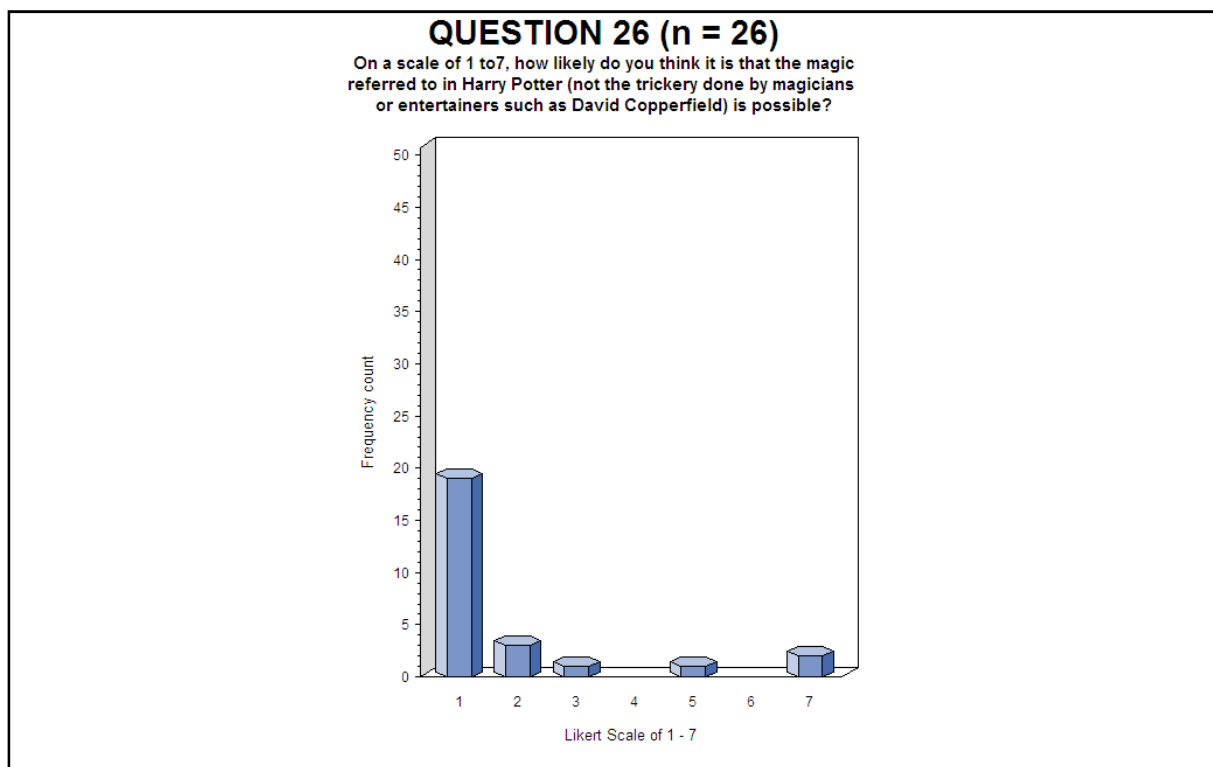


Figure 10: Question 26 results

From the data gleaned from question 26 (see figure 10), it becomes distinctly clear that, of the 26 individuals who had answered this question, not one selected a four or a six on the scale, while one (3.85%) chose a five to indicate that they were fairly certain this type of magic did exist. Two (7.69%) people indicated that they were certain, beyond any doubt, that the type of magic mentioned in Rowling's series was possible. The remaining 88.46% (23 of the 26) noted that they were quite to very certain that this type of magic was impossible. One

(3.85%) person ranked the question at five, three (11.54%) ranked it at six, and the remaining 19 (73.08%) contributors chose a rating of seven on the Likert scale. Consequently, one can deduce that, although there were a few participants who felt that magic was possible in the sense referred to in J.K. Rowling's novels,²⁷ the majority of the group who completed this questionnaire did not concur with this opinion. One may thus conclude that the series can most likely not be blamed for bringing about a newfound interest in magic among its readers.

One can further deduce that many of the individuals who participated in this study and who had not read J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series were of the opinion that the texts stimulated an increased interest in magic and that children were lured to the occult by its negative influences. These individuals also regarded the series to be a threat to the reader's religious beliefs. Most of these views were based solely on what had been propagated by the media or on what others had relayed to survey participants about the series. From this it may be deduced that the stigma surrounding *Harry Potter* was fuelled to a significant extent by misinformation, as evident also in the results gleaned from those questions answered by individuals who had read at least one book in the *Harry Potter* series. These respondents made it clear that the series had not influenced their religious convictions, nor lured them to magic or the occult. Consequently, and despite what many believe about the series (and regardless of the fact that they had not read any of the books), one can infer that J.K. Rowling's series has had no negative influence on those *Harry Potter* aficionados who took part in this study – a finding that should be announced to followers and critics of *Harry Potter* worldwide.

²⁷ This is probably a belief that these respondents held well before reading this series and which was not brought about by their reading of the *Harry Potter* novels.

CHAPTER 4

HARRY POTTER AND THE REVIVAL OF READING

Whereas the focus of the previous chapter was on the possible religious implications and occult undertones of Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, this chapter concentrates on those aspects of the series that may have led to a revived interest in reading among the youth, as well as the influence of Rowling's books on adult followers, specifically on the basis of information gained from media reports. As before, a short synopsis of two books in the series (numbers three and four will be given), followed by analyses of articles in the media (mostly newspapers), published between 2000 and the present, dealing with the topic at hand. Finally, the chapter concludes with an interpretation and examination of those items in the questionnaire that assess a possible revival of reading, thus allowing one to draw conclusions and make assumptions.

4.1. *HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN (ROWLING, 1999)*

The third book in Rowling's series sees Harry back at his aunt and uncle's house for the summer, once more at the mercy of his cousin and, this time round, his uncle's very arrogant and bombastic sister, Marge. In a fit of rage he magically inflates Marge (causing her to float away like a balloon), grabs his possessions, and storms out of the house without knowing where he is headed. Soon the Knight Bus (a means of magical transport for witches and wizards) comes to his rescue and takes him to the Leaky Cauldron, an inn, situated in London, serving those who live in the world of magic. All the while fearing that he will be expelled for having used magic outside of Hogwarts, he is surprised to be greeted with open arms by the Minister for Magic. Only on the last night of the holidays, after having met up with Hermione and Ron, as well as Ron's family, does he learn about the escape of a

convicted mass murderer from the wizarding world, Sirius Black, who is said to have been part of Voldemort's innermost circle.

Not paying too much heed to the reports, the trio returns to school for a year filled with fascinating new lessons, a werewolf, Quidditch matches, Dementors, and a magical map of Hogwarts. Before long, however, it comes to light that Black was Harry's father's best friend, that he betrayed Harry's parents and caused their deaths, and that he is, in fact, Harry's godfather. This infuriates the young wizard, who is determined to avenge his parents' murder. Hermione and Ron manage to convince him that it is too dangerous, but it seems that Black is equally, if not more, resolved to get to Harry. Towards the end of the book one learns that Black is not guilty and that he was sent to prison unjustly. His reason for wanting to return to Hogwarts was because another of his and James's friends, Peter Pettigrew, who is the real traitor, had been living with Harry for most of his three years in the wizarding world as Ron's pet rat, Scabbers. Pettigrew manages to escape, making it impossible to clear Black's name. Black goes into hiding, and Harry ends his third year at Hogwarts with the knowledge that he may one day be able to leave the Dursleys' house for good and move in with his godfather. With this information he returns to Privet Drive for what may be a much more bearable summer.

4.2. *HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE (ROWLING, 2000)*

In this fourth book of the series Harry is growing up as a young man who, in addition to his concerns about Lord Voldemort, Death Eaters (the Dark Lord's followers), and the safety of his fugitive godfather, has to deal with raging hormones, rampant emotions, and a dangerous temper. After his usual stint at the Dursleys', Harry is fetched by the Weasleys, with whom he is to stay for the remainder of the summer holiday, and with whom he is to visit the

Quidditch World Cup: the biggest sporting event in the wizarding world. Once there, the joyous aftermath of the games is tainted by the presence of rioting Death Eaters who attack a muggle family, and soon Harry and his friends are back at the Burrow, more worried about Voldemort's rise and whereabouts than ever before. Before long, they must travel back to Hogwarts, where unknown dangers and adventures await.

Shortly after their arrival, the students learn that an age-old wizarding tournament is to be held, for the first time in many years, at Hogwarts, and that the delegations from two other institutions of magical education are to arrive there shortly. Everyone is shocked when Harry, who is under age for the event, is magically chosen as a fourth champion in The Triwizard Tournament, which originally allowed only three competitors. Harry is thus forced to compete with three students, who are more advanced than he is in experience and knowledge, and what ensues is a brush with dragons, an adventure braving the cold depths of the Hogwarts Lake to meet with mer-people, and dangerous challenges in a massive maze. In the end, when Harry and his fellow Hogwarts contender, Cedric, touch the Triwizard Cup (which has been bewitched by one of Voldemort's followers), they are both magically transported hundreds of miles away to the place where Lord Voldemort plans to resurrect himself and kill Harry. Unfortunately, Voldemort succeeds in securing himself a body once more and Cedric is murdered, but Harry manages to escape, bringing the news of Voldemort's return to the wizarding world. It then comes to light that the man who was the Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher for the entire year is an imposter, and that he was responsible for ensuring Harry's place in the competition. The year ends on a sad note, with many lamenting the loss of their fellow student, and Dumbledore relaying the news of Voldemort's return. At the end of the novel Harry returns to Privet Drive, where he is to spend another summer, something which he has come to dread, but accept as inevitable.

4.3. LITERACY AND *HARRY POTTER*: A NEW GENERATION OF READERS

Since early 2000 the number of *Harry Potter* fans has been increasing exponentially, resulting in websites being created, *Facebook* groups being formed, fan fiction being written, editions sporting adult covers being published (Pottermania enchants adults, 2002:16), and conferences being organised. Hewitt (2002:16) mentions a collection of academic essays due for release at the end of 2002, while July 2003 saw the first symposium for adult Potter followers being hosted in Orlando, Florida. This event, which was restricted to voting-age fans, created the opportunity for adult devotees – like Lynley Donnelly (2007a:6), who speculated about the outcome of the series, and Jocelyn Newmarch (2007:6), who contemplated Severus Snape’s true allegiance – to attend lectures, take part in discussions, and meet kindred spirits, proving that *Harry Potter* had officially lost its status as purely children’s literature (Harry’s spell over adult ‘muggles’, 2003:16). However, adult interest in the series has stretched beyond symposiums and lectures.

Groenewald (2007:6) and Trachtenberg (2007:23) report how Rowling’s series sparked in its fans a need to explore those facets of the series that the author did not reveal (*PhoenixSong.net: A Harry Potter fan fiction archive*, s.a.; *Mugglenet Fan Fiction*, n.a.; *Harrypotterfanfiction*, n.a.). “They have taken Rowling’s universe and its characters and fashioned their own stories and plot lines to create new adventures for Potter and his friends”, explained Groenewald (2007:6), and it seems there are few boundaries when it comes to this fan fiction,²⁸ much of which stays true to the author’s style. One such fan fiction writer is “Melindaleo”, who fashioned a 700-page rendition of what the final book in Rowling’s series might disclose, before *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* was released on 21 July 2007.

²⁸ On the popular social network *Facebook*, for example, there is an application (a game designed specifically for *Facebook*) called *School of Wizardry*, which is based on Hogwarts. Although the names (and most of the spells) had to be changed due to copyright protection, players are vividly reminded of Rowling’s series when they cast spells and embark on quests.

It portrayed Melindaleo's conjecture as to what answers the seventh book might yield, complete with revelations by Peter Pettigrew about Harry himself being the seventh horcrux, sexual tension between Harry and Ginny resulting in the characters losing their virginity, and Molly Weasley's vehemence when Ron, Hermione, and Ginny follow Harry to Albania (Groenewald, 2007:6). Other writers based their works of fan fiction on the "parallel universe" principle,²⁹ with one individual speculating about what Harry's life would have been like had Lily and James raised him, and another providing a scenario where Harry had been raised by Sirius and Remus, resulting in a much more powerful and arrogant young wizard. Yet others explored Harry's life subsequent to Voldemort's defeat, including settings where a twenty-something Potter enjoys loud music and has a soft spot for fast brooms, or is a committed enforcer of the law (Groenewald, 2007:6). Through such instances of fan fiction it can be seen that *Harry Potter* not only had a positive influence on reading amongst adults, but also contributed positively towards an increase in writing amongst this sector.

"*Harry Potter* may have done for literature what David Beckham and Posh Spice have done to re-entrench the role of the quintessential [...] sporting/pop idol" (Pather, 2003:10). Statements such as this one illustrate how since the series was released in the late 1990s, parents and educators alike have been praising J.K. Rowling, commending her for giving the youth a reason to start reading again. For years parents and teachers the world over had been concerned about young people's lack of interest in reading (Dean, 2009:12; Hudleston, 2008:5; Van Rooyen, 2008:1; Rademeyer, 2008:7), and the presence of computers, the internet, television, and game consoles had provided them with a good reason to be apprehensive about this trend. *Harry Potter*, however, seemed to be the magic cure to the problem, and despite some who harboured serious reservations about the boy wizard's

²⁹ This approach explores what would have happened had circumstances in characters' lives been different, to reveal alternative outcomes to current situations.

supposed ability to lure the youth back to the written word (Cowell, 2000:18; Eaton, 2007a:29; Eaton, 2007b:29; *Harry Potter* and the Not That Interested South Africans, 2007:6), most parents, academics, and teachers found the increased interest in reading a blessing. The question remains, however, whether they were celebrating in vain, or whether Harry had truly come to improve the literacy of the youth.

Malan (2007:12), like many others (Die boekedans, 2003:10; *Harry Potter's* greatest magic, 2003:12; Jeffreys, 2004:19; Koning Potter, 2003:12; Potter mania, 2002:8; Potty about Harry, 2000:12; Thanks, Harry, 2000:8), explores the topic critically and attempts to determine whether Rowling has truly created an opportunity for young minds to start reading. Having noted that 325 million copies of the books had been sold worldwide by August 2007, Malan (2007:12) mentions how countless young people found Harry a character they could easily relate to. Emotional struggles, an increased pressure to live up to his reputation, and even his growing sexual awareness, are all aspects to which adolescents can relate, and it stands to reason that Rowling's ability to communicate with her audience on a personal level is of immense importance. An illustration hereof is the episode in book three when Harry finds out about Sirius Black's alleged involvement in his parents' murder, and that Black was supposed to be their best friend. Harry resolutely vows to avenge Sirius's betrayal. Consequently, Rowling relays the somewhat blind rage that teenagers often experience when an injustice has been committed, hence providing young readers with something that they can both associate with, and learn from.

Makgalemele (2000:6) asserts that, due to *Harry Potter*, South Africa is experiencing a "Reading Renaissance", which is most reassuring in a country where three million adults are illiterate, and a further five to eight million are functionally illiterate. In addition, Harris (2002:8) postulates that the series has not only drawn young readers to the world of books,

but has also led to an improvement in the relationship between parents and their children. This is supported by a British survey which showed that 90% of the participating parents were reading bedtime stories to their children, as compared to the mere 40% who had been doing so two years earlier; the increase being attributable to Rowling's series. Therefore, it becomes evident that the series is subtly coercing its fans to become part of a culture of reading, thus generating individuals who are "...reading, and thinking, more critically" (Weeks, 2003:3). Accordingly, the reader is capable of comprehending the complex emotions involved when Harry experiences the first pangs of young love in book four, and can also be expected to start questioning characters and their motives, as is the case with Snape, whose allegiance remains a mystery for most of the series.

Additionally, one should acknowledge the fact that Rowling's series has been translated into more than just one or two languages, rendering it easily accessible to children who may not be English literate (Burger, 2007:3; Jacobs & Pepler, 2001:4). De Klerk (2001:13) reports that the prize winning South African children's author Janie Oosthuysen, who had started translating the first book even before receiving the go-ahead from Human & Rousseau publishers, translated books one to four into Afrikaans. By October 2003 192 million copies of the books had been sold already in 200 countries in 55 languages (Greef, 2003:12; Weeks, 2003:3). Moreover, it was reported (Conjugating *Harry Potter*, 2001:15) that Bloomsbury had planned to release versions of the series in Latin and ancient Greek in an attempt to make the studying of these languages easier and more fun. The fact that *Harry Potter* is readily available in more than 60 languages (Malan, 2007:12) implies that the series is accessible to a large number of the world's children in at least one of the languages they understand, leaving Rowling's series free to work its literary magic.

4.4. UNDERSTANDING THE *HARRY POTTER* PHENOMENON CONTINUED

At this point attention once again needs to be shifted from the qualitative mode employed to explore the perception of the series through media reports to a more quantitative analysis. This section provides an analysis of the data (in graph form) gleaned from the responses to the questionnaire, in an attempt to gain insight into the opinions of readers on the series. The questions analysed in this chapter pertain specifically to the possible contribution of *Harry Potter* to the revival of a reading culture, especially amongst young people.

The first question (Figure 11 below) posed in the questionnaire marks the start of the researcher's attempt to determine whether a reading culture exists among the participating respondents. Contributors were required to rate their keenness to read fiction on a scale of one to seven, and from Figure 11 it becomes apparent that 12 of the 82 (14.63%) participants ranked their enjoyment of leisure reading within the range of one to three, four participants noted a one on the scale, five noted a two, and three chose a three. This reflects that 14.63% of those who had completed the questionnaire did not enjoy leisure reading very much. Figure 11 also shows that 28 of the 82 (34.15%) participants ranked their enjoyment of reading at four or five on the Likert scale, leaving one to infer that 34.15% of the group found leisure reading fairly enjoyable. Finally, 42 of the 82 rated their enjoyment of leisure reading at a six or a seven on the scale (51.22%), making it apparent that more than half the participants who took part in the study deemed leisure reading to be a highly enjoyable activity, which verifies that a reading culture did exist among the majority of people who completed the questionnaire.

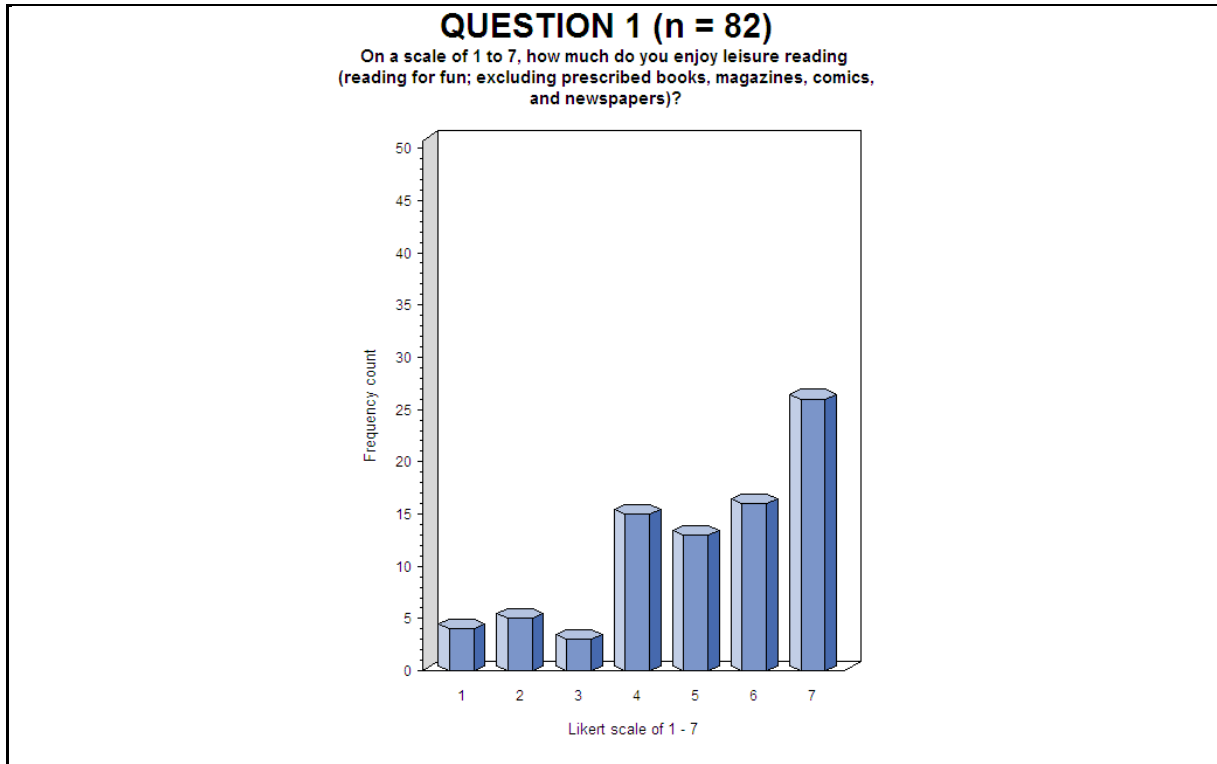


Figure 11: Question 1 results

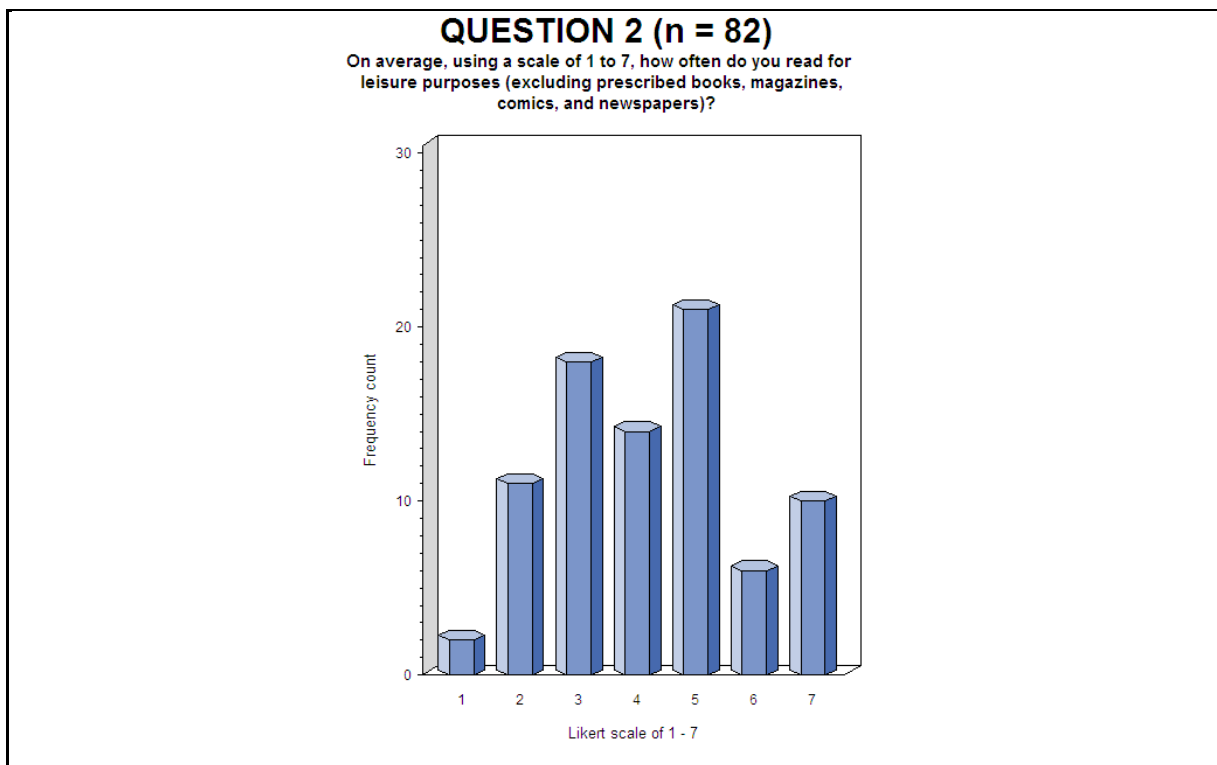


Figure 12: Question 2 results

Question two required participants to determine the frequency with which they read fiction. Accordingly, Figure 12 shows that 31 of the 82 (37.80%) participants ranked the frequency with which they read for fun at either one, two, or three, suggesting that 37.80% of the group did not read for leisure very often, if at all³⁰. The number of participants who ranked the regularity of their reading at either four or five on the scale constituted 35 of the 82 (42.68%) participants, which indicates that 42.68% of the contributors read for leisure on a fairly regular basis. Finally, Figure 12 illustrates that 16 of the 82 (19.51%) participants in the study ranked the prevalence with which they read at a six or seven, leaving one to infer that 19.51% of the group read for relaxation whenever they had the time to do so. Therefore, it becomes apparent that 62.20% of the contributors rated the frequency of their reading between four and seven, indicating that most members of the group read for leisure on a fairly regular basis.

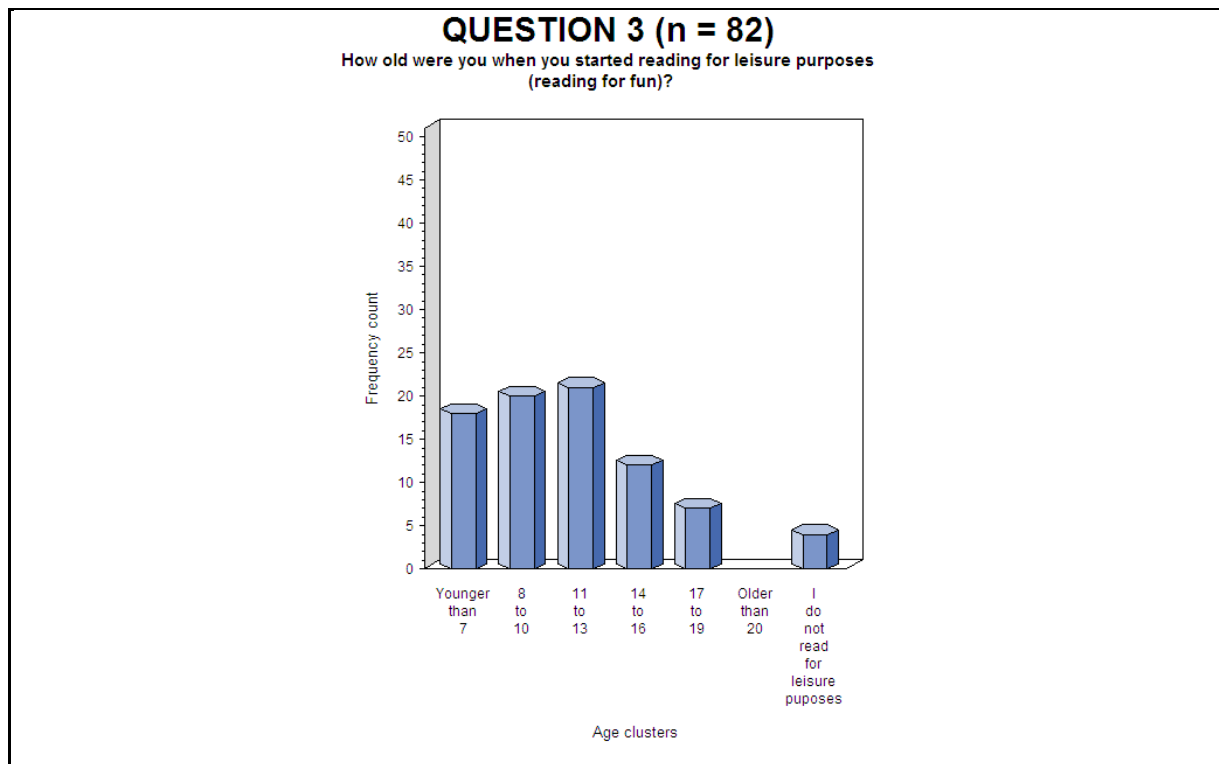


Figure 13: Question 3 results

³⁰ This may be ascribed to a variety of reasons, the most likely of which is that they do not have the time to read purely for enjoyment (as was pointed out by the majority of the participants who partook in the pilot study).

Question 3 set out to determine the age at which participants started reading for enjoyment and the bar diagram shows that, of the 82 participants who completed the questionnaire, 38 started reading either at an age younger than seven or between the ages of eight and ten. This implies that 46.34% of the contributors started reading before the age of 12, which could be interpreted as a possible reason why 51.22% of the participants indicated that they greatly enjoyed reading for leisure purposes. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that 21 of the 82 (25.61%) specified that they started reading for enjoyment at ages 11 to 13, constituting the age cluster with the highest prevalence. From here the statistics indicate a steady drop in numbers, with 14.63% (12 out of 82) of the participants indicating that they started leisure reading between the ages of 14 and 16. 8.54% (seven out of 82) signified that they started reading for fun between ages 17 and 19, while none of the participants selected the option that would suggest they were older than 20 when they started reading fiction for relaxation. Moreover, four of the 82 (4.88%) noted that they did not read for leisure purposes at all. Subsequently, one can gather that, despite the few individuals who did not enjoy reading as a pastime, most of the participants took pleasure in reading for relaxation.

According to Figure 14 (below) one can construe that 15 of the 82 (18.29%) candidates who participated in the study preferred adventure stories when leisure reading, while 12 (14.63% each) contributors preferred detective stories and fantasy novels respectively. These statistics are marginally higher than the 3.76% of the respondents (8 out of 82) who favoured horror stories, and distinctly higher than the 2.44% (2 of the 82) who enjoyed science fiction stories and thrillers respectively. One person (1.22%) said that he/she did not read for enjoyment or relaxation. The genre with the highest incidence of the seven offered, was romance with 30 of the 82 (36.59%) participants indicating that they chose this genre above the rest. From this it becomes apparent that, while romance was the genre most favoured by participants, with the

adventure, detective and fantasy genres also quite popular, very few individuals found science fiction novels and thrillers enjoyable.

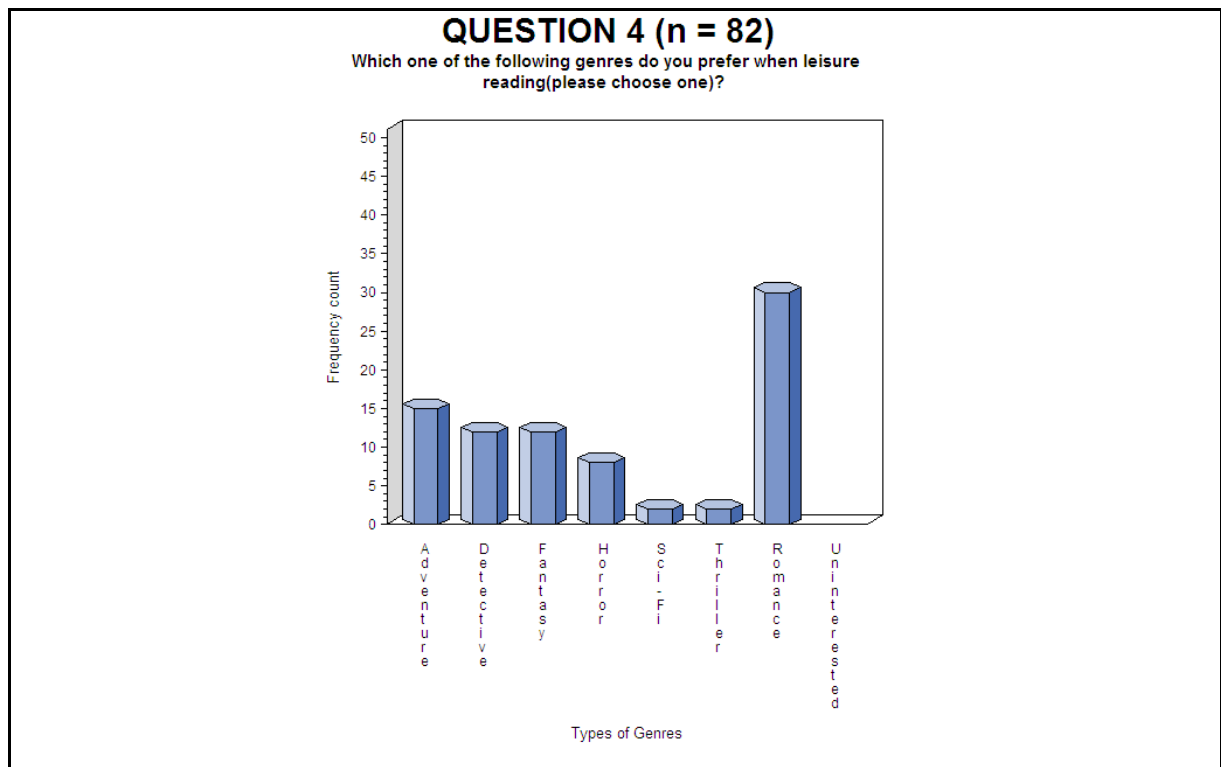


Figure 14: Question 4 results.

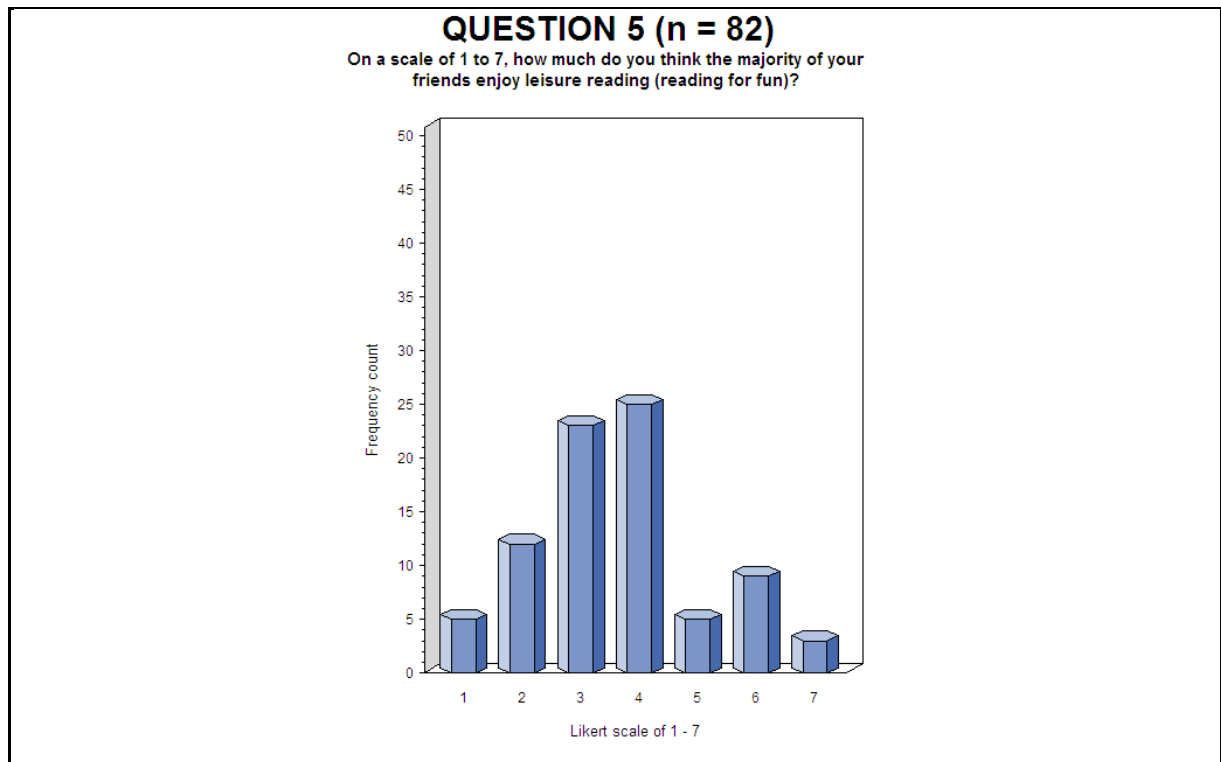


Figure 15: Question 5 results

The graph indicates that a total of 17 participants rated their friends' predilection for reading at a one or a two on the seven-point scale, meaning that 20.73% of the participants were of the opinion that their friends did not like leisure reading. This is counterbalanced by the 58.54% of participants who imagined that their friends found reading fairly enjoyable, and rated the question at a three or a four. Although this may designate a gravitation toward the lower echelons of the scale rather than the higher, an error margin should be accommodated as participants cannot be completely certain of their friends' affinity for leisure reading. Finally, there are those candidates who ranked their friends' liking of leisure reading at a five, six, or seven, thus implying that 17 of the 82 (20.73%) participants were of the opinion that their friends quite enjoyed reading for fun and relaxation.

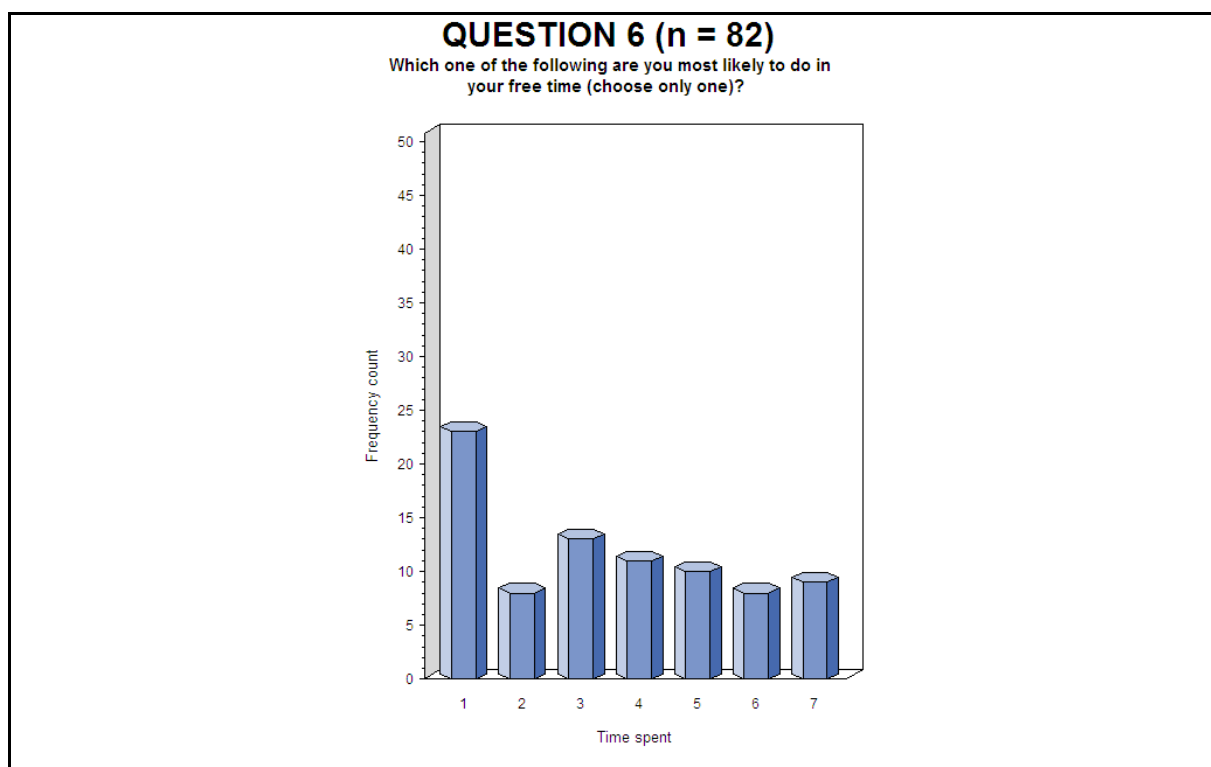


Figure 16: Question 6 results

It is clear that the most popular recreational activity chosen was socialising with friends, as 28.05% (23 out of 82) of the contributors selected this option. This was followed by watching television and/or DVDs with 13 of the 82 (15.85%) respondents selecting this option.

Furthermore, reading as preferred pastime was selected by 13.41% of the respondents, with 11 indicating that this was what they would most likely do during their free time. Outdoor activities were chosen by 10 contributors, indicating a 12.20% interest in this option. The remaining options were ranked more or less equally, with 9.76% of the group opting for exercise or interacting on the internet respectively, and 10.98% pointing out that they would rather catch up on work than engage in any of the other mentioned activities. As a result, one may presuppose that, although reading as pastime scored higher when compared to some of the other options, the majority of this group would rather spend time with their friends or watch television, possibly because (as one of the participants in the pilot test pointed out) it required much less effort than reading a book. From the above it may be concluded that a healthy percentage of this group found reading moderately to decidedly enjoyable. Thus, it is safe to infer that a culture of reading exists at least amongst a proportion of the participating group.

The graphs that follow reflect the results of the data gleaned from the questions posed only to those participants who had read one or more of the books in the *Harry Potter* series. The purpose of these questions was to determine whether the majority of participants held more or less similar views regarding the books. It should also be noted that question seven asked participants to indicate whether they had *started* reading any of Rowling's books, to which 28 candidates answered in the affirmative. Questions 18 onward required responses only from those who had read at least one book, if not more.

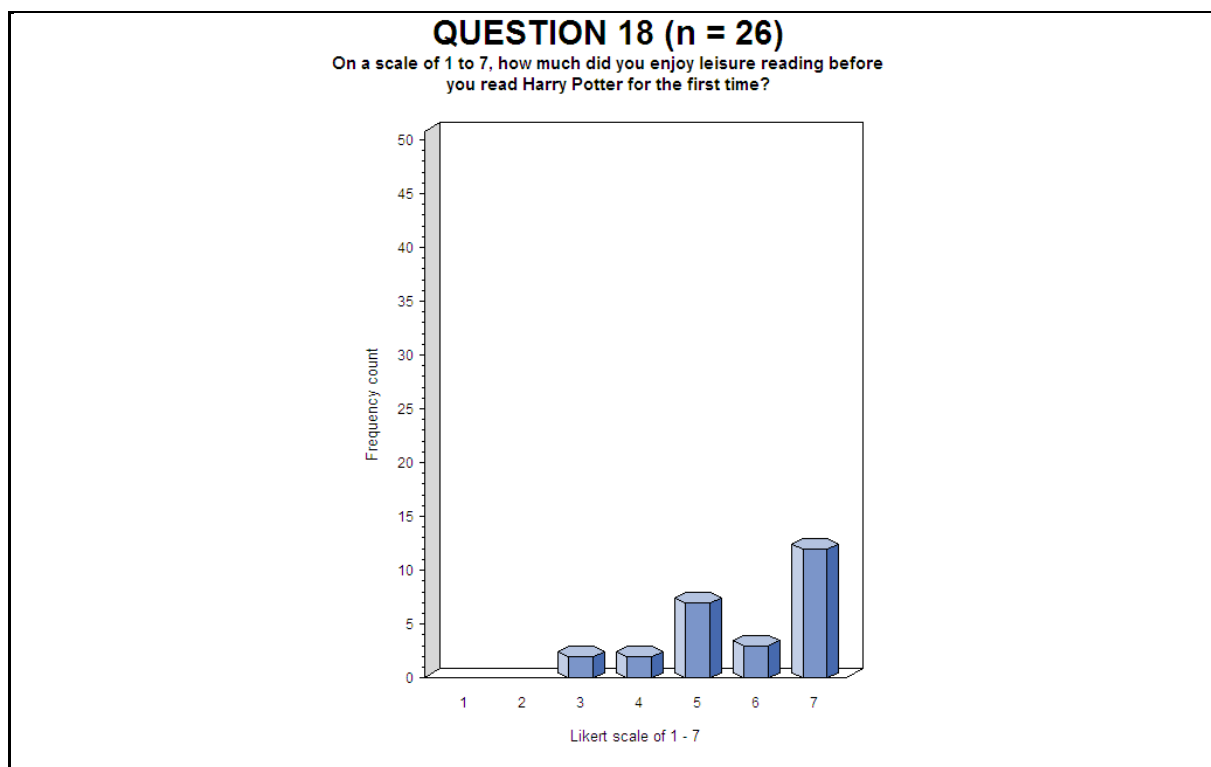


Figure 17: Question 18 results

Figure 17 shows that none of the 26 contributors selected a one or two (which would have indicated that they did not enjoy leisure reading at all before reading the series) on the seven-point scale, which means that all of them liked to read for relaxation to some degree. Options three and four on the Likert were only chosen by two individuals respectively (thus, 7.69% each), indicating that four people found leisure reading somewhat enjoyable before having read *Harry Potter*. The remaining 84.62% (22 of 26) indicated that they enjoyed leisure reading reasonably to a certain extent, thus making it impossible to assert that anyone from this group was drawn to leisure reading by Rowling's series.

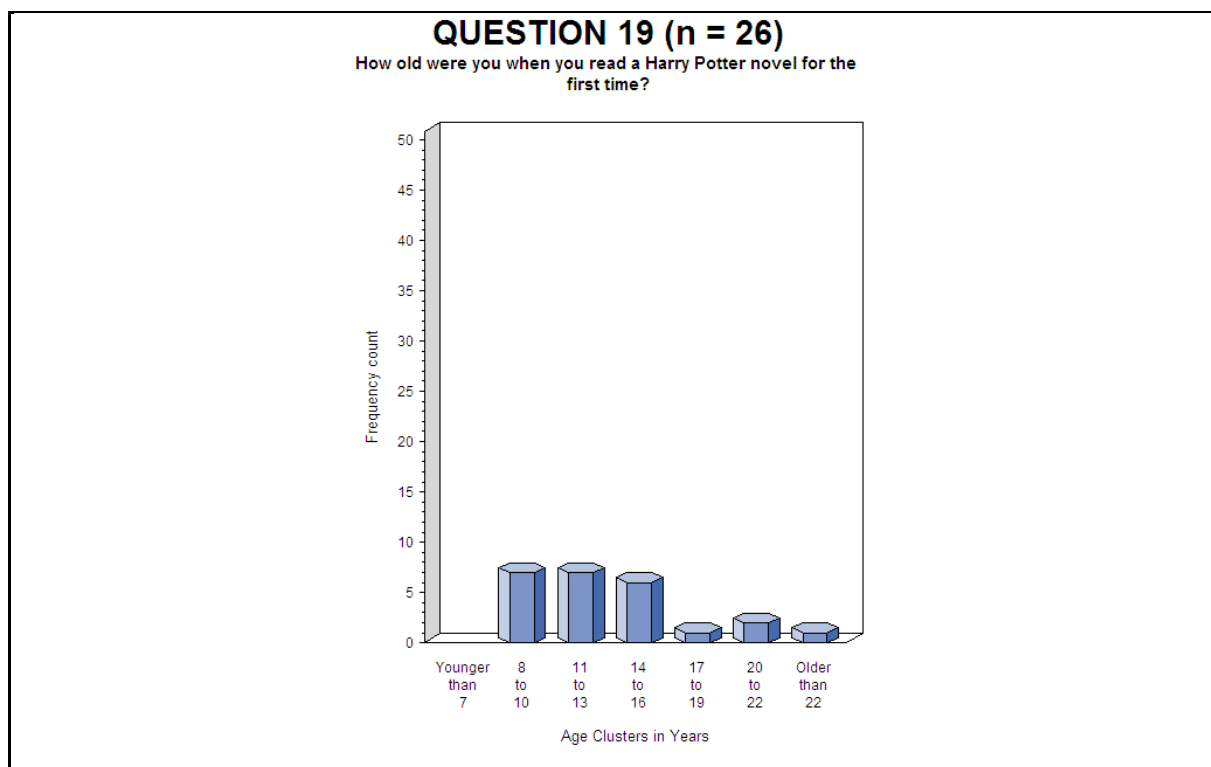


Figure 18: Question 19 results

Firstly, it should be mentioned that one participant did not answer question 19, while nobody said that they had their first *Harry Potter* experience at an age younger than seven. Secondly, one can deduce that the majority of the 25 individuals who answered the question had read their first Rowling novel between the ages of eight and 16, with seven (28.00%) people starting at ages eight to ten, seven (28.00%) starting at ages 11 to 13, and six (24.00%) starting at ages 14 to 16. The five (20.00%) remaining participants noted that they had read their first *Harry Potter* book at age 17 or older, proving that, of the population that completed this questionnaire, 80% had read their first Rowling novel when they were 16 years old or younger. Consequently, of those who had read the series under discussion, most had been exposed to it during their formative years.

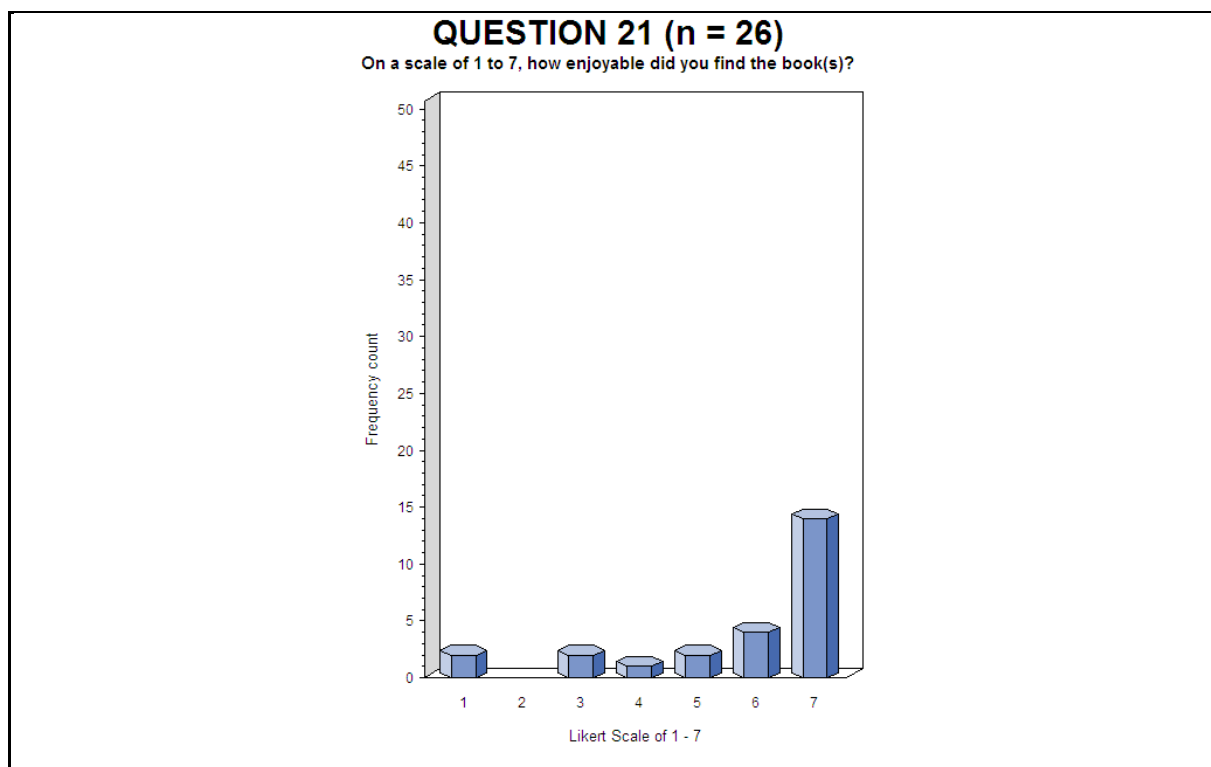


Figure 19: Question 21 results

Similarly, 25 of the 26 people, who indicated that they had read the books under study, responded to question 21, which asked contributors to specify how much they enjoyed Rowling’s books on a scale of one to seven. Clearly no-one chose a rating of two, while seven (28.00%) people rated their enjoyment of the books at one to five on the seven-point scale, while the remaining 18 (72.00%) chose a six or seven on the Likert scale. As a result, one can infer that almost three-quarters of the group who took part in this section of the study found the books exceptionally enjoyable, a promising prospect if one were to propose them as part of a school or university curriculum.

There will always be those who are very sceptical about reading as a leisure activity or relaxing pastime. Question 30 required the 26 participants who responded to indicate whether they thought it possible that *Harry Potter* could serve as a means of showing the sceptics and those young people who did not like reading, that it could be a relaxing and enjoyable way of spending their time. While six (23.08%) contributors provided ratings

between one and four to indicate that they thought it fairly to very doubtful that the series could be used to show the above, the remaining 76.92% (20 of 26) felt that the series was fairly to very eligible for the above purpose. Thus, Rowling's series may prove to be a useful tool to teach young people to read and at the same time to increase the number of people who like to read merely as a means of relaxation.

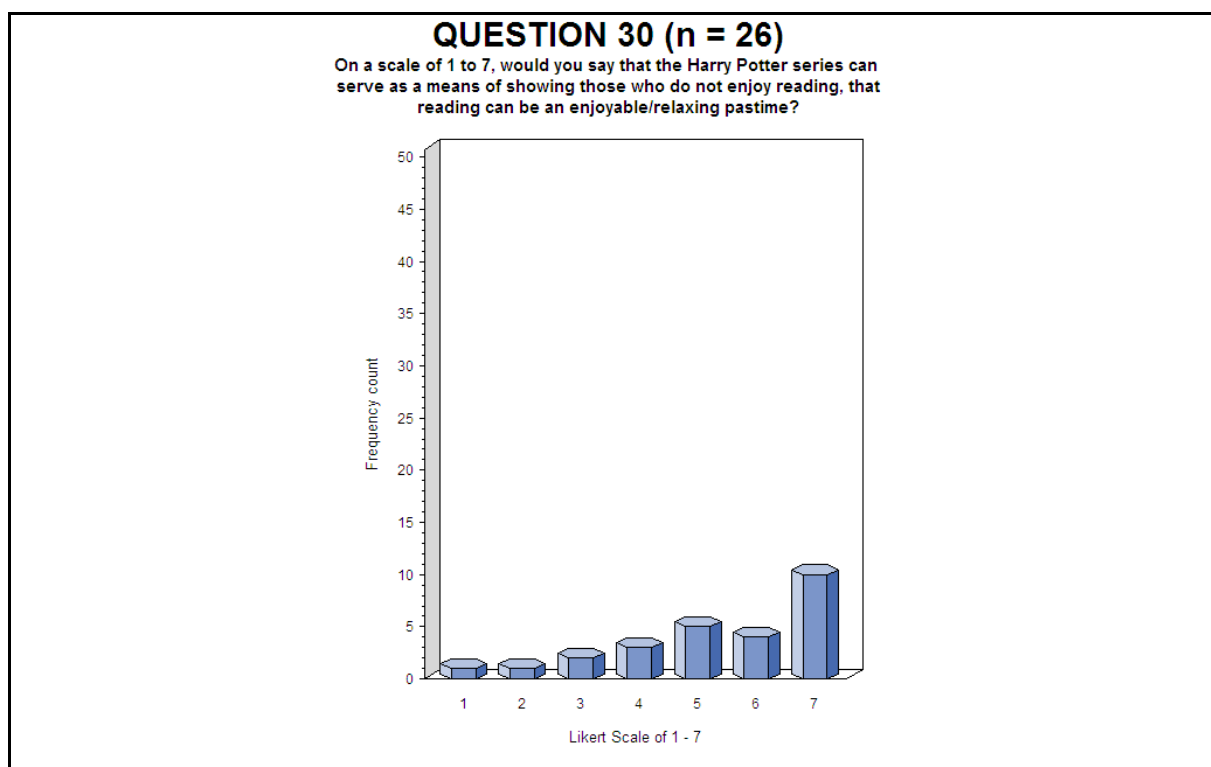


Figure 20: Question 30 results

In conclusion it is clear that a reading culture does exist among the majority of the individuals who participated in this study, and that most of them read for leisure on a fairly regular basis purely for reasons of enjoyment. Furthermore, one can also infer that since the respondents have friends whom they regard as leisure readers, a culture of reading does exist beyond the group of people who participated in this study. What is disappointing is the fact that not one of the individuals who had read *Harry Potter* had been drawn to the practice of leisure reading by the series, even though the majority of them had read the series during their adolescent years. They did, however, find the series exceptionally enjoyable and most of

those individuals who had read the series agreed that it may serve the important purpose of drawing people in general, and young people in particular, to leisure reading.

CHAPTER 5

HARRY POTTER AND MORAL EDUCATION

Adolescent years are notoriously difficult and a phase of life that is inescapable and generally characterised by raging hormones, mood swings, and experimentation on various levels, all of which are attributable to an emerging identity. In this chapter the spotlight is directed at Rowling's series in an attempt to determine whether it can be used as a moral guide for the youth (and anyone else who may find it useful). The chapter commences with a synopsis of the three concluding instalments in the series, followed by an account of the topic as presented in media publications (mostly South African), and ends off with an interpretation of those graphs that represent the results from the questionnaire pertaining specifically to what extent, if any, the series could impact positively on the moral education of its readers.

5.1. *HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX (ROWLING, 2003)*

At the beginning of book five the reader is introduced to a Harry who is characteristically quite unlike the boy whom the reader has come to know over the course of the previous four books. He is distinctly more moody and generally angrier than before. Now fifteen, Harry Potter exudes increasing frustration at having been left at the Dursley's house for another summer, this time with no news from the wizarding world, and this shortly after the return of the evil Lord Voldemort. One evening, while skulking around Little Whinging, Harry and his cousin are attacked by two Dementors, and he is forced to use magic to protect them from a fate worse than death. Unfortunately, as he is not allowed to use magic outside of Hogwarts, Harry is ordered to appear at a disciplinary hearing at the Ministry of Magic to determine his fate, which could lead to his expulsion and having his wand snapped in half.

Shortly after this summons, Harry is retrieved from Privet Drive and taken to his godfather's house, which has also been made the headquarters for The Order of the Phoenix (a group, founded by Albus Dumbledore, which fights against Voldemort and his followers). Once there, Harry's mood does not improve, and while he gets off scot-free at his hearing thanks to Dumbledore's assistance, he finds himself travelling to Hogwarts at the end of the holiday with a brooding anger bubbling just below the surface.

Year five starts with an extraordinarily large amount of school work as Harry and his friends are to sit a series of extremely important exams at the end of their fourth term. Apart from the copious amounts of work, it soon becomes clear that many (spurred on by the Ministry of Magic) believe Harry and Dumbledore's stories of Voldemort's return are completely untrue, and that the former is trying to overthrow the Minister of Magic and take over position of power. As a result, Harry has to endure taunts and whispers in the corridors, while the new Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, Dolores Umbridge, who has been sent there by the Ministry of Magic, slowly but surely spreads her tentacles of tyranny throughout the school. Before long the trio and a select group of other students form a Defence Against the Dark Arts study group, led by Harry, in order to practise the defensive magic which has been deemed superfluous by Umbridge and the Ministry. The sessions prove to be extremely successful, and when Harry sees a vision of Sirius, who is in danger toward the end of the book, he and his friends fly to Sirius's rescue knowing that they are as prepared as they could hope to be. The vision turns out to be a trick played by Voldemort and in the ensuing fight Harry's godfather is murdered, making the Minister of Magic's sighting of Voldemort a bittersweet triumph for Harry. The year ends on a sad note for the young protagonist who struggles to come to terms with Sirius's passing, and he leaves Hogwarts and his friends for a very lonely summer holiday.

5.2. HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE (ROWLING, 2005)

Sirius's death casts a dark shadow over Harry's summer holiday, and the first two weeks marks the most depressing period in the teenager's life. However, when he receives a letter from Albus Dumbledore, headmaster of Hogwarts, which tells him that he will accompany Dumbledore to complete a task before being taken to the Weasleys' home for the remainder of the holiday, Harry's spirits are slightly lifted. Shortly after Dumbledore fetches Harry, he finds himself in the presence of Horace Slughorn who he has to convince (unbeknownst to himself) to take a vacant post at Hogwarts. Dumbledore is elated when the task is managed and before long Harry is at the Burrow (the Weasleys' home) enjoying Mrs Weasley's cooking, and playing two-on-two Quidditch with Ron, Hermione, and Ginny (Ron's youngest sister). All too soon he has to pack his belongings and prepare for the coming school year, and on 31 August they board the scarlet Hogwarts Express which takes them back to their magnificent school of witchcraft and wizardry.

The new school year sees students return to a castle where security has been increased exponentially, with Dumbledore even having arranged members of the Order to keep watch at the gates and patrol the school's corridors at night. Harry is excited at the prospect of having personal lessons with Dumbledore, and the trio speculates excitedly about what these sessions could entail. In due time, and in between lessons, Quidditch practices, and a battered old Potions textbook rife with notes by a mysterious character named The Half-Blood Prince, Harry accompanies Dumbledore down memory lane, learning as much about Voldemort's past as possible in an attempt to gain insight into the way he thinks and acts. It is after Dumbledore and Harry's first actual journey, when they return to Hogwarts with Dumbledore seriously weakened, that they find the Dark Mark (the symbol usually cast over a dwelling to indicate that Voldemort's Death Eaters have been there, thus signifying the

spilling of blood) has been cast over Hogwarts' Castle. With Dumbledore weakened and Harry fearing the worst, they hasten to the top of the highest tower where the mark has been cast, to find out whether their worst nightmares are about to be confirmed. To their relief they learn that they have been tricked and, for the moment, no one has died. What follows, however, is a confrontation between Dumbledore and Draco Malfoy (Harry is rendered immobile under his invisibility cloak), with the latter having been set the task (by Voldemort) of murdering the headmaster. Malfoy fails in his task and in the end it is Severus Snape, who also turns out to be "The Half-Blood Prince", who kills Dumbledore and flees from Hogwarts to relay his triumph to his master. The year ends on a sorrowful note and the trio leaves Hogwarts, knowing that they will not return, as they need to find and destroy Voldemort's Horcruxes before bringing an end to the Dark Lord and his reign of terror.

5.3. *HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS (ROWLING, 2007)*

For Harry Potter life has changed significantly over the past two to three months. His knowledge about the man once known as Tom Riddle has been expanded considerably, Albus Dumbledore has been murdered, and Severus Snape appears to have betrayed those fighting against the rise of Voldemort. Harry finds himself back at his aunt and uncle's house for what proves to be the final time, as he will come of age on his seventeenth birthday and the protection once rendered during his visits to the place will be broken. Before long, select members of The Order of the Phoenix arrive at his doorstep with a plan that should ensure that Harry reaches the Weasleys' house safely. However, all does not go according to plan and the young wizard has yet another brush with the evil Lord Voldemort, barely escaping death as he has done so many times before. The aftermath of this fresh brush with Voldemort sees one of the order members killed and another permanently scarred, yet their only concern seems to be for Harry's safety. Once at The Burrow, and between preparations for Ron's

eldest brother's wedding, the trio discusses the mission that Dumbledore had left them: to destroy Voldemort's Horcruxes in order to ensure his ultimate downfall. On the day of the wedding Harry is disguised as a Weasley relative and the ceremony takes place without trouble. However, halfway through the wedding reception news arrives of the Minister of Magic's murder and the subsequent overthrow of the Ministry of Magic by Voldemort. Harry, Ron, and Hermione escape by disapparating (the ability to disappear magically from one place and reappear at another destination) moments before hooded figures arrive among the guests in the big marquee tent.

After this incident the trio stays on the move save for a three week stint, directly after their escape from the wedding, at the home that Harry has inherited from Sirius. While there, they are able to determine the whereabouts of another Horcrux, which leads to their breaking into the Ministry of Magic, stealing the Horcrux, and once more narrowly escaping capture. Moving from forest to forest, they continue their search for pieces of Voldemort's soul, a task which proves increasingly more difficult and taxing. With tempers flaring, and Ron who leaves the group for a short period of time, another narrow brush with death in Godric's Hollow (the place where Harry was born), and a meeting with Voldemort's inner circle at Malfoy manor, the three are somewhat worse for wear by the time they meet a goblin who used to work at the wizarding bank Gringots. They decide to break into the vault of a Death Eater who is very close to Voldemort, as they suspect a Horcrux is being hidden there. The heist is a success and the trio escapes on the back of a dragon with another Horcrux that needs to be destroyed. In their continual search for the bits of Voldemort's soul, they find themselves journeying to Hogwarts, and it is here where the final standoff takes place. In a complex and nerve-wracking ending, all the Horcruxes are destroyed and Voldemort dies when the killing curse meant for Harry backfires and kills him. The novel ends with a

glimpse of the trio and their families nineteen years later, confirming that Voldemort is dead for good.

5.4. MORAL GUIDANCE AND LESSONS FOR THE MODERN ADOLESCENT

Raising a child to be a moral, ethical, and socially apt adult is often a concern for parents/guardians, but it appears as if *Harry Potter* may provide a modern-day solution to address this concern. Le Roux (2001:7) mentions the receptive manner in which Rowling addresses issues of governmental corruption, disadvantaged minorities, racial tension, and the undermining of those in positions of authority, while Smit (2003:13) reveres the fact that Harry and his friends acquire integrity as the series progresses. Accordingly, book five sees the reader presented with a young man who is experiencing the pressures and demands of adolescence and growing up. Rautenbach (2000:6), like many others (Hajela, 2003:4; Irvine, 2003:80; Kononczuk, 2003:10), notes that Harry crosses into the world of adolescence, where he experiences a sexual awakening as well as a heightened awareness of the self. In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (Rowling, 2003), for example, one finds Harry constantly thinking about Cho Chang, a young girl from another House, who is the first person he falls in love with. Throughout the text his sentiments for her develop and one is constantly reminded of the way Harry feels, especially when he sees her in the corridors, and also when they have their first kiss at Christmas time, or go on their first date on Valentine's Day. These occurrences allow adolescent readers insights into feelings and emotions that they themselves may be experiencing at the time, and serve as platforms for the development and expansion of these readers' narrative imaginations.

Rautenbach (2000:6) also mentions Rowling's ability to express the traditional dissent between adults and children, an aspect of the texts which undoubtedly finds resonance with

its younger readers and, as Landman (2004:13) points out, allows freedom of imagination. The most prominent of the many examples of disagreement found throughout the series, is the dynamic between Harry and Snape. From their first meeting onward (Rowling, 1997:102-103), there is tension between these characters that spurs readers to continue reading, and by the end of the series their relationship is poised to be one of the most complex. Snape and Harry loathe each other, due to the former's history with Harry's father, James. As a result, Harry continually suspects Snape of committing dark deeds and questions Dumbledore's reason(s) for trusting someone who was once a Death Eater, while Snape unremittingly accuses Harry of being an arrogant attention seeker, never missing an opportunity to treat him unfairly. But Rowling does not allow her young characters to be ruled by unfair, rigid adults, (*Harry Potter* laat kinders voel of hulle êrens behoort, 2001:11). The friendship forged by the trio (Harry, Ron, and Hermione) and Hagrid, the Hogwarts Game Keeper, is one of intense sincerity and loyalty, and no other adult shows Harry the respect or tolerance that he enjoys when in Dumbledore's company. Accordingly, and even if the dynamic between the adults and young people in Rowling's series may seem somewhat unrealistic, one still cannot deny the fact that it may well encourage adolescent followers to confide and trust in adults in times of need and trouble.

Finally, Rautenbach (2000:6), like Lenta (2007:11), commends the *Potter* series for being a beacon of morality. She notes that it is not just Rowling's manner of portraying the age-old conflict between good and evil that sets the series apart from other works of children's fiction, but also her ability to convey the actualisation that bad cannot be warded off permanently, and that the fight against it is a continuous one, a fact confirmed at the end of book six when Harry recalls Dumbledore once telling him it is imperative "...to fight, and fight again, and keep fighting, for only then could evil be kept at bay, though never quite eradicated..." (Rowling, 2005:601). In this respect one may deem Rowling's most important

lesson to be the one about love, as only love will persevere against evil. From very early on in the series the reader is aware of Lily Potter's sacrifice for her son, which resulted in Harry's survival when Lord Voldemort tried to kill him as a young boy. Dumbledore recalls how Voldemort had once proclaimed "...nothing I have seen in the world has supported your famous pronouncements that love is more powerful than my kind of magic..." (Rowling, 2005:415) and it comes to light that the Dark Lord's ignorance about the power of love seems to lie at the root of his ultimate demise. It is his inability to foresee love's power which prevents him from killing Harry as a baby, making it impossible for Professor Quirrel³¹ to touch Harry in book one (Rowling, 1997), rendering Voldemort and his followers incapable of determining Harry's whereabouts when he is at his aunt and uncle's home in Little Whinging, and making it unbearable for Voldemort to inhabit Harry's body when he attempts to do so at the end of book five. The power of love is made implicitly clear in Rowling's work, and can be deemed the ideal principle on which to build a young person's moral education.

The moral development of a young child involves many stages. Binnendyk and Schonert-Reichl (2002:198-199) refer to Lawrence Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory of moral reasoning (see Kohlberg, 1984, Kohlberg & Higgins 1987:102-128) which can be applied to the *Harry Potter* series. This theory helps elucidate how *Harry Potter* can be employed as an aid to foster morality in maturing adolescents. By applying the various stages of the model to a selection of characters in Rowling's series, it becomes clear that the series could be utilised to lay a moral foundation for young people. Accordingly, Binnendyk and Schonert-Reichl (2002:198-199) apply Stage One: Heteronymous Morality (Obedience and

³¹ In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* Quirrel is the Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, and is also a follower of Voldemort who is trying to steal the Philosopher's Stone (which can give the owner eternal life and turn any metal into gold) to resurrect his master. Later in the book Voldemort shares Quirrel's body in order to keep an eye on him, and to ensure that all goes according to plan.

Punishment Orientation) – which implies the principle that wrongdoing must be physically punished – to the house elves in the series. Both Dobby and Kreacher start punishing themselves when they do something wrong, even when their masters are not present and have not witnessed their insubordination. Furthermore, stages two (Naïve Egotism and Instrumental Orientation), three (Good Boy/Good Girl Orientation), and four (The Law and Order Orientation) can be applied to select characters in the series. Finally, Stages Five and Six can also be deemed relevant: Social Contract/Universal-Ethical Principles Orientation, which refer to an ability to focus on practices that are just, in the same way that fair social and individual rights are accorded to Harry Potter himself. Harry's ability to want to do what is just and right as opposed to what is easy and questionable firmly positions him in this particular stage of Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning. Consequently, one could state that in terms of Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory of moral reasoning Rowling's series can potentially be used successfully for the purpose of the moral development of the youth.

5.5. TOWARDS A FURTHER UNDERSTANDING OF *HARRY POTTER*

This section provides an analysis of the data (in graph form) gleaned from the responses to the questionnaire pertaining specifically to the issue of moral education and the possibility that Rowling's series may serve as an aid to adolescent personal development.

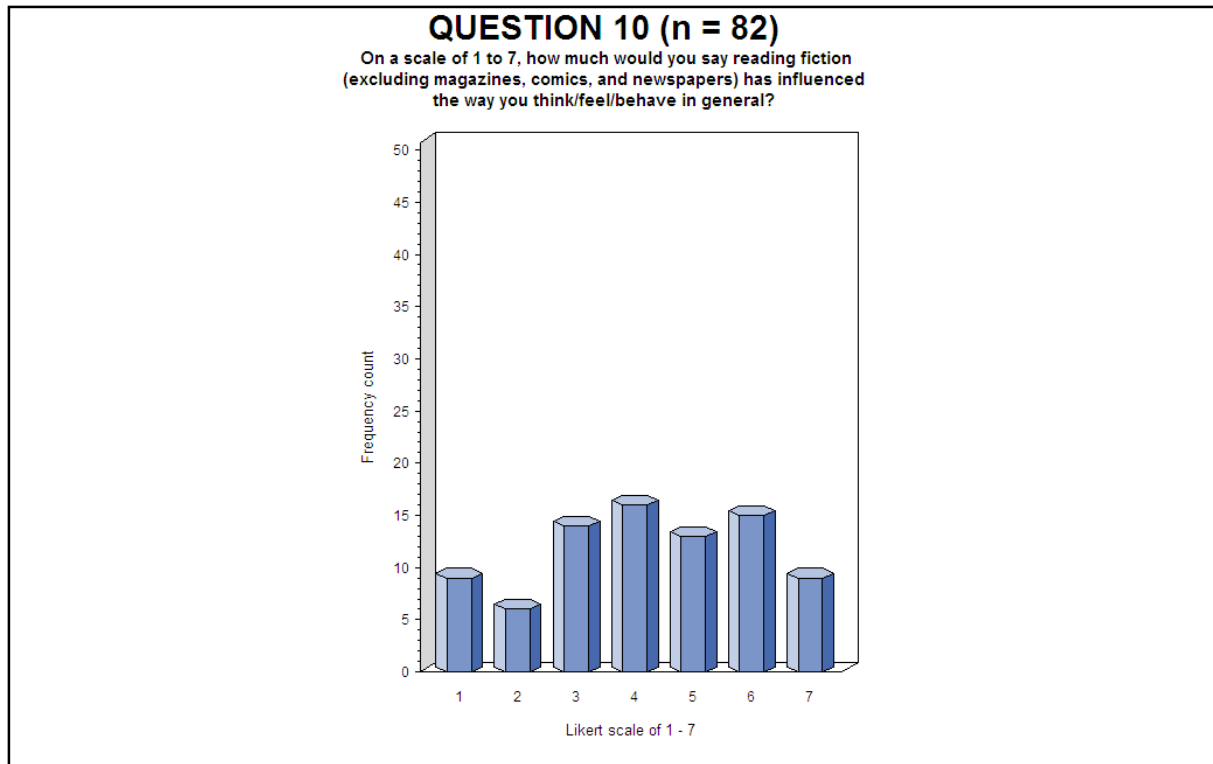


Figure 21: Question 10 results

As indicated above, this section focuses on the possible personal growth and/or development of the survey respondents. Subsequently, question ten required participants to establish whether reading fiction (excluding magazines, comics, and newspapers) had influenced the way they thought, felt, and/or behaved in general. Figure 21 presents a bar diagram where the y-axis constitutes the frequency with which candidates chose one of the seven ranks on the Likert scale, which is displayed on the x-axis. From the graph one can deduce that, while nine out of 82 (10.98%) participants claimed that reading had no effect on the way they thought/felt/behaved and six of the 82 (7.32%) respondents indicated that reading had very little effect on their way of thinking/feeling/behaving, a total of 43 participants noted that reading had affected their thoughts/feelings/behaviour to some degree and they selected a three, four, or five on the seven-point scale. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that 15 of the 82 (18.29%) contributors rated the influence of reading on the way they thought/felt/behaved at a six on the Likert scale; suggesting they found it highly influential, while 10.98% (nine

out of 82) marked a seven on the scale, insinuating that reading did affect the way they thought/felt/behaved to a great extent. Consequently, and with a total of 53 (64.63%) participants marking the scale at four or above, one may infer that a large proportion of the participating group had experienced a sense of personal development/growth through reading, therefore demonstrating that they had emergent to well-developed narrative imaginations (see Nussbaum, 1997), and that they took what was relevant to their situation from the reading text, as is proposed by reception theorists (Iser, 1976; Iser, 2006; Jauss, 1982).

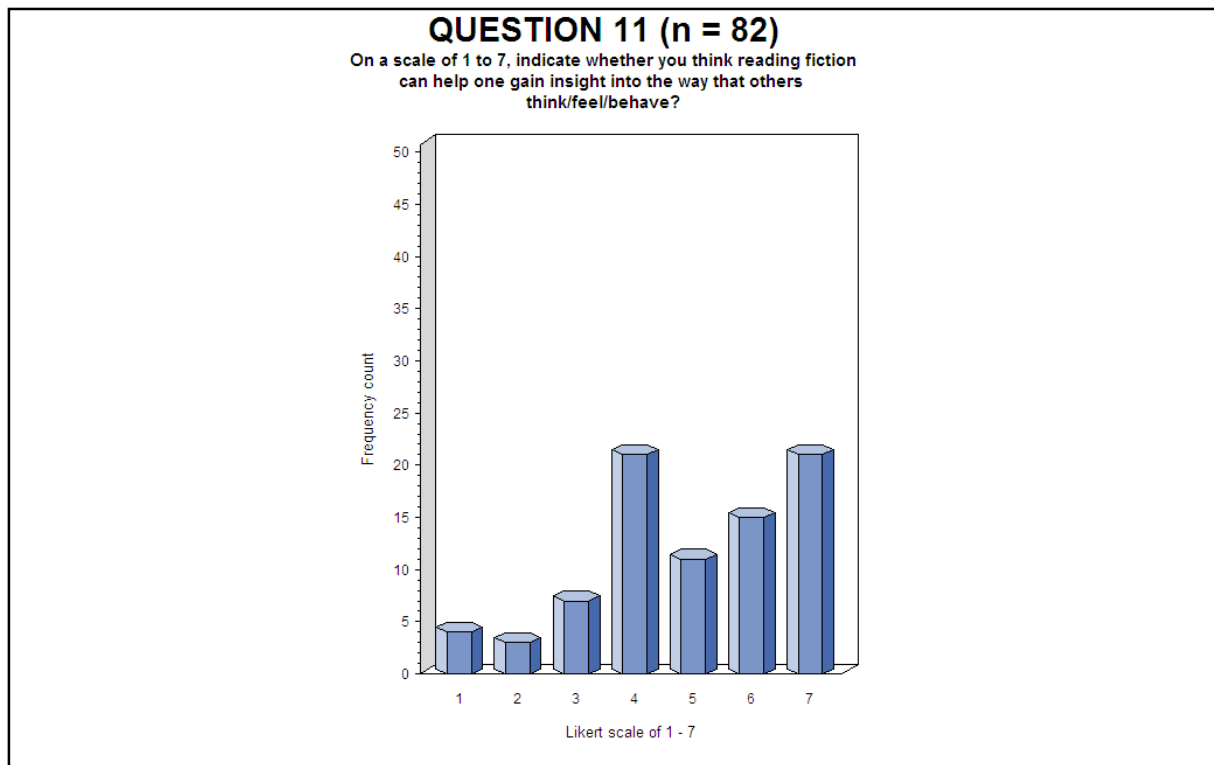


Figure 22: Question 11 results

Question 11 asked participants to stipulate, once more using a Likert scale of seven, whether they deemed reading to be a tool to aid understanding of the way that other people thought/felt/behaved. From Figure 22 one can construe that a total of 14 (17.07%) participants ranked the likelihood that reading could aid understanding of others at one, two,

or three on the Likert scale, showing that 17.07% of the population deemed it unlikely that one could gain from reading in this regard. The graph also shows that 32 of the 82 (39.02%) participants who took part in the study estimated that reading fiction may be fairly influential when it comes to understanding others, and selected either a four or a five on the scale of one to seven. Furthermore, the largest number of participants (36 of the 82) ranked the question at either a six or a seven, indicating that 43.90% of the population felt that reading fiction doubtlessly aided one's insight into the way that others thought/felt/behaved. Subsequently, this leaves one free to presuppose that a large proportion of this group was able to gain an understanding of people who differed from themselves by reading about such individuals, and could suggest that they have emergent (and in some cases even developed) narrative imaginations. As a result, it appears that at least a decent fraction of the population tested may already, or will one day, conform to Nussbaum's (1997) notion of the "world citizen".

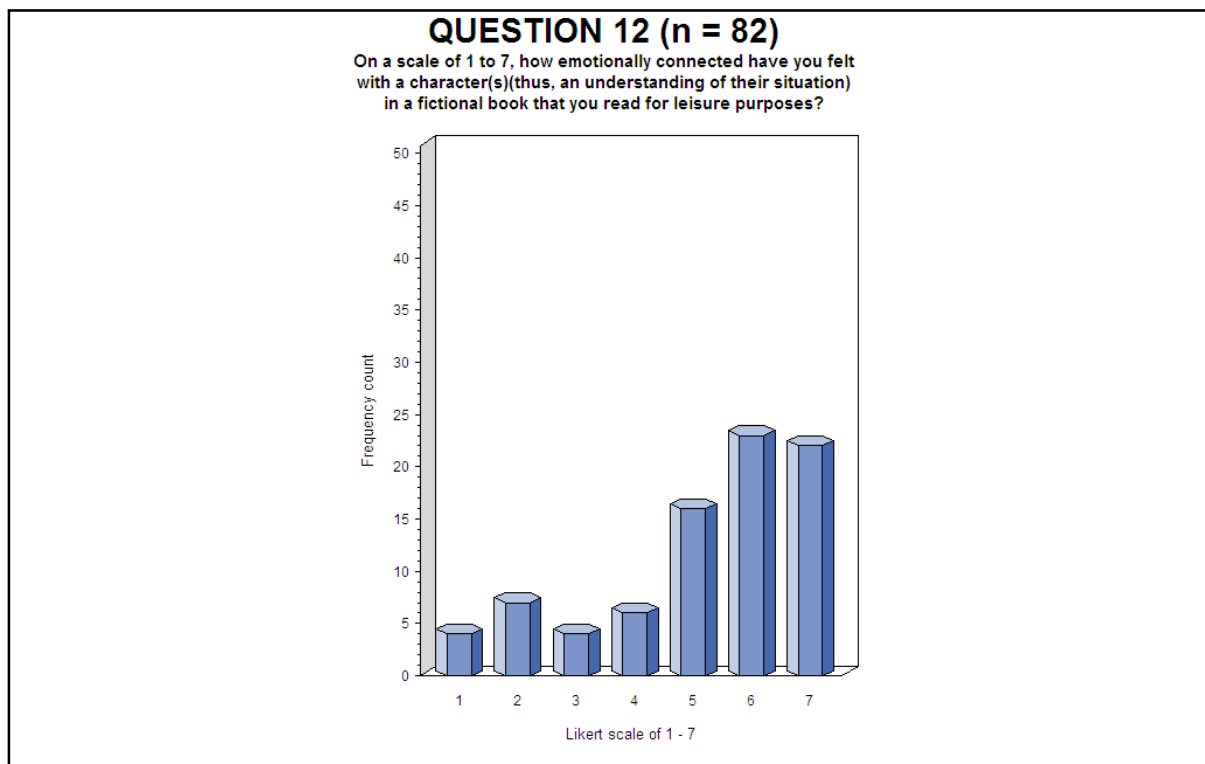


Figure 23: Question 12 results

Figure 23 portrays the findings gleaned from question 12 in graph format. The question aims at determining the degree of emotional connectedness (if any) participants felt with a character or characters while reading a work of fiction. The bar diagram shows that, of the 82 individuals who took part in the study, 21 (25.61%) responses range from one to four on the seven-point scale. These participants represent those persons who had not experienced particularly strong emotional connections to the characters of fiction. In contrast, 61 (74.40%) contributors rated their emotional connection with (a) character(s) in a work of fiction between five and seven on the Likert scale, demonstrating that close to three-quarters of the class had felt this kind of connection in a work of fiction. Furthermore, this serves to prove that most of the participants who took part in this study had the ability to bring a sense of understanding to their reading experience, as Iser (1976; 2006) and Jauss (1982) propose in their analysis of Reception Theory; this aspect also serves to provide evidence of the development or existence of a narrative imagination (Nussbaum, 1997).

The graphs that follow reflect the results of the data gleaned from the questions posed only to those participants who had read one or more of the books in the *Harry Potter* series. The purpose of these questions was to determine the views of the majority of participants. It should also be noted that question seven asked participants to indicate whether they had *started* reading any of Rowling's books. 28 candidates answered in the affirmative, while questions 18 onward required responses only from those who had read at least one of the books.

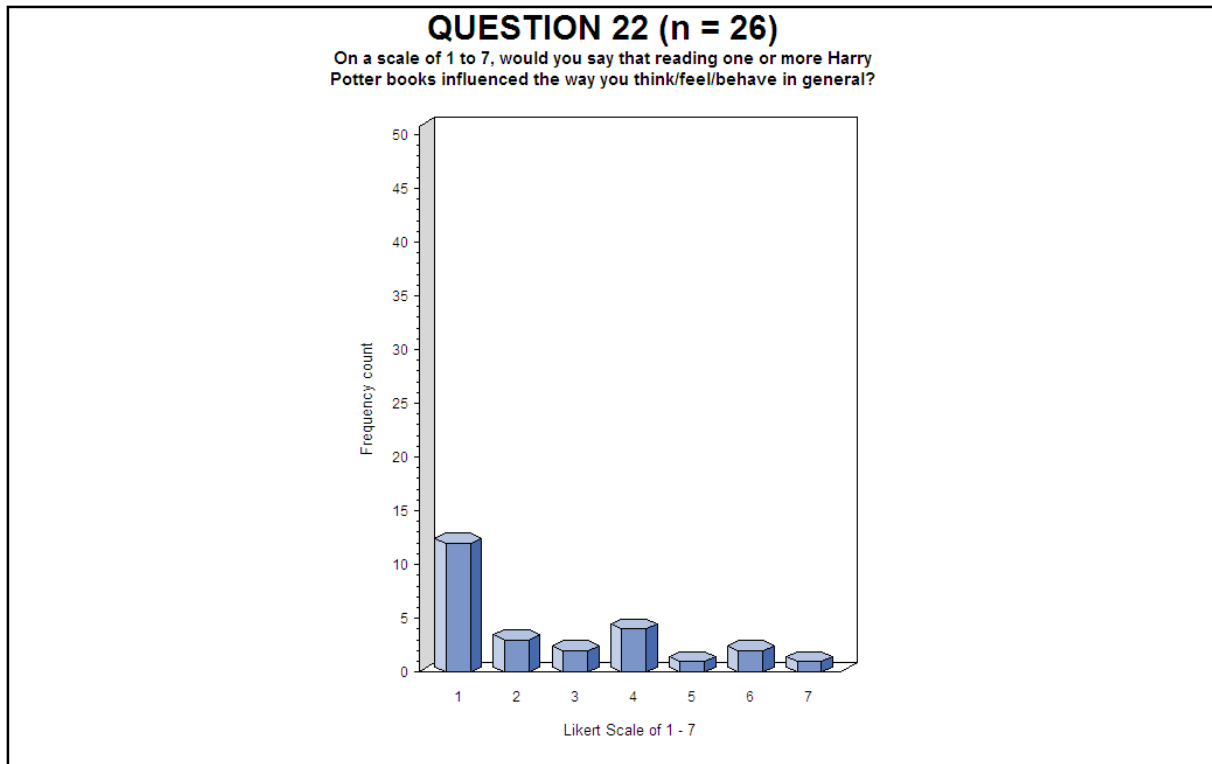


Figure 24: Question 22 results

Figure 24 reflects the data gained from the responses to question 22, which asked participants to rate the influence (if any) *Harry Potter* had had on their thoughts/feelings/behaviour. This question was paired with question 23, where participants were asked to explain briefly the response they gave to question 22. Therefore, from figure 24 one can conclude that, while four (16.00%) said that the series had had little to no influence on the way they thought/felt/behaved, and four (16.00%) people had selected the somewhat neutral rating of a four on the seven-point scale, the residual 17 (68.00%) contributors indicated that the series had had a significant to highly significant effect on their thoughts/feelings/behaviour. However, the results of question 23, which asked participants to respond to question 22 by indicating how their thoughts/feelings/behaviour had been influenced by the series did not quite reflect the statistics for question 22, which was left blank by two respondents. Of the 24 individuals who completed this question, 14 (58.33%) appeared to have misinterpreted it and thought the question was trying to determine whether they were easily swayed in their

principles and beliefs. Their responses serve to make it explicit that they deemed the series to be purely fictional and that they had not easily been influenced by this type of text. A further 25.00% (six of the 24) interpreted the question correctly, and their responses reflect the various influences of the series. Some respondents had gained insight into others' thoughts and perceptions, while others had found a renewed interest in Northern mythology. Yet others mentioned that the series had allowed them to gain a fresh perspective on life and made them realise that there is more to life than the everyday brainwashing of society. One mentioned that the series had given him/her insight into adolescence, integrity, and friendship. Of the remaining four respondents, two (8.33%) indicated that they deemed the series to be purely entertainment, and one (4.17%) noted that he/she had read the series for the first time at age 23 and that it had changed his/her spiritual beliefs. The remaining respondent provided a completely irrelevant response. Therefore, and despite the fact that many had erroneously inferred the purpose of the question, the series seems to have positively influenced at least some respondents' thoughts/behaviour/feelings.

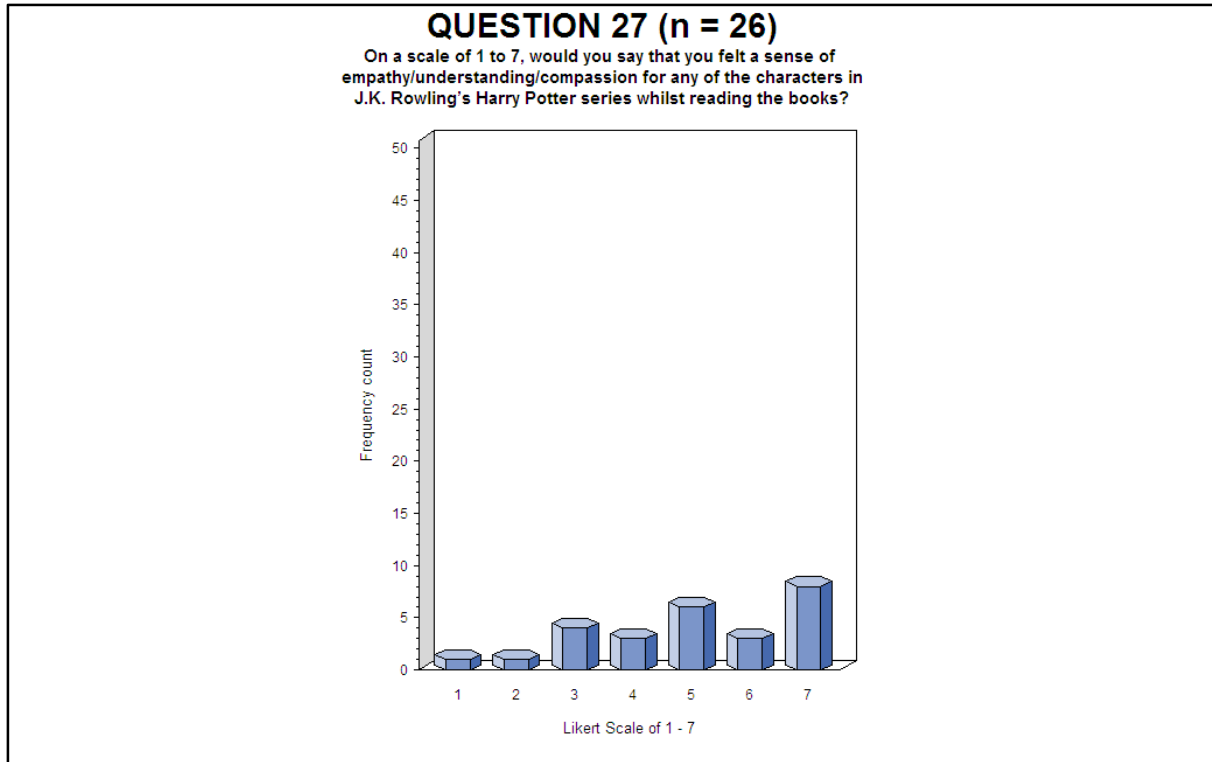


Figure 25: Question 27 results

Question 27 marks the first of a few questions aimed at drawing a correlation between the notions of Reception Theory, Narrative Imagination Theory and the *Harry Potter* series in an attempt to determine whether one could make a connection between reading these novels and the personal development of adolescents in particular. The graph once more reflects the options that participants could choose from on the x-axis and the prevalence of any given option on the y-axis. Contributors were asked to indicate, on a scale of one to seven, whether they felt a sense of empathy/understanding/compassion for any of the characters in Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Figure 25 shows that one (3.85%) person selected one or two on the Likert scale, indicating little to no empathy/compassion/understanding for any characters in this series, leaving one to assert that the series had been read purely for enjoyment. Moreover, another 13 (50.00%) contributors rated this question between three and five, indicating that at least 50.00% of those who completed this section of the questionnaire were of the opinion that they had felt at least some form of empathy/understanding/compassion for

one or more of the characters represented in the novels. Finally, one can extrapolate that the remaining 42.31% (11 of 26) experienced a strong to very strong sense of empathy/understanding/compassion with one or more characters from the series, hence suggesting that the majority of the participating group had displayed the ability both to relate to the text and to comprehend a character's situation.

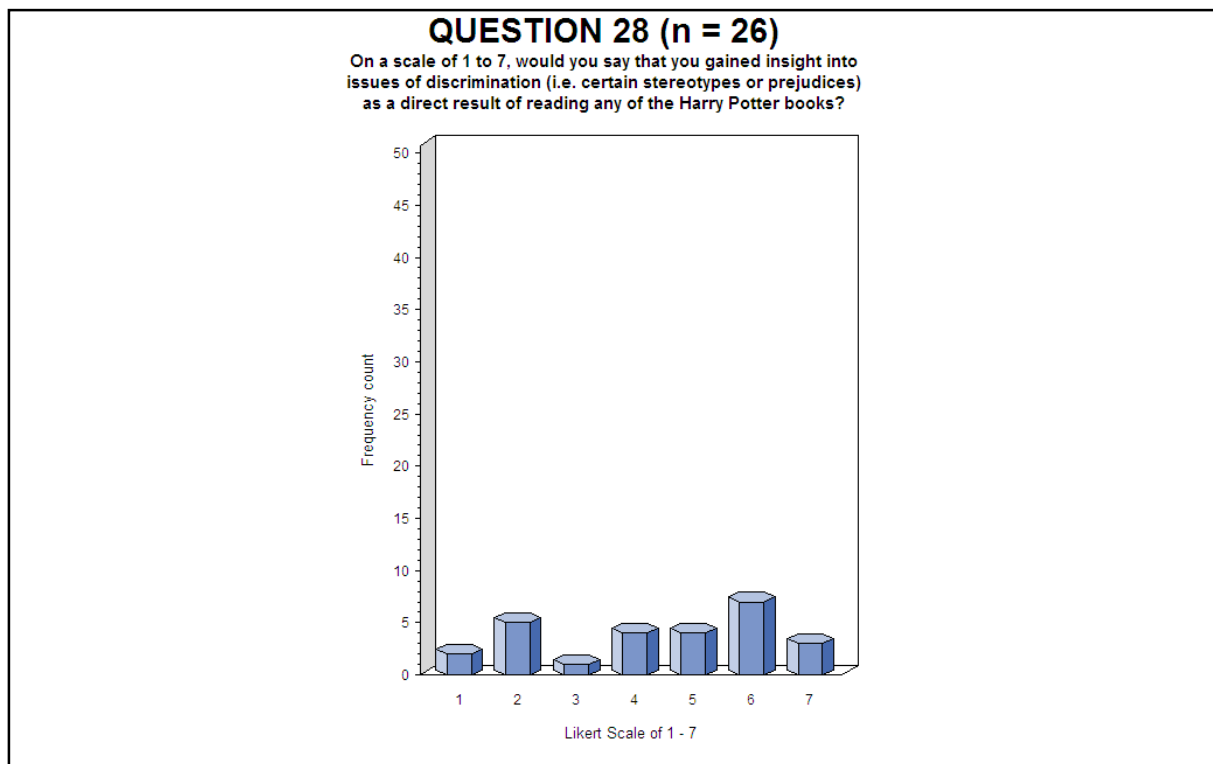


Figure 26: Question 28 results

The diagram in Figure 26 presents the visual results of question 28, which required contributors to indicate to what extent they had gained insight into issues of discrimination (*i.e.* stereotypes or prejudices) as a direct result of reading any of the *Harry Potter* novels. On the x-axis one finds reflected information pertaining to the seven-point Likert scale used in this question, while the y-axis shows the frequency with which a specific option from the scale was chosen. Figure 26 allows one to infer that, of the 26 participants who completed this question, eight (30.77%) rated it between one and three, indicating that 30.77% of them

did not gain insight into matters of prejudice or inequity from the series. In the case of the remaining 69.23% (18 of 26) a rating of four to seven reflects the influence Rowling's series had on their perception of discrimination, which can be interpreted as showing a fair to significant influence on the way that these individuals' perceptions and/or understanding of discrimination had changed. Accordingly, one may postulate that *Harry Potter* could serve as a means of morally educating its readers by making them sensitive to prejudices, discrimination, and inequity. This, in turn, can be linked to Nussbaum's (1997) notion of narrative imagination, as one of its main precepts is that a person should be able to deal with others and their situations with understanding and sensitivity, even when they hold views and partake in practices which are very different from one's own.

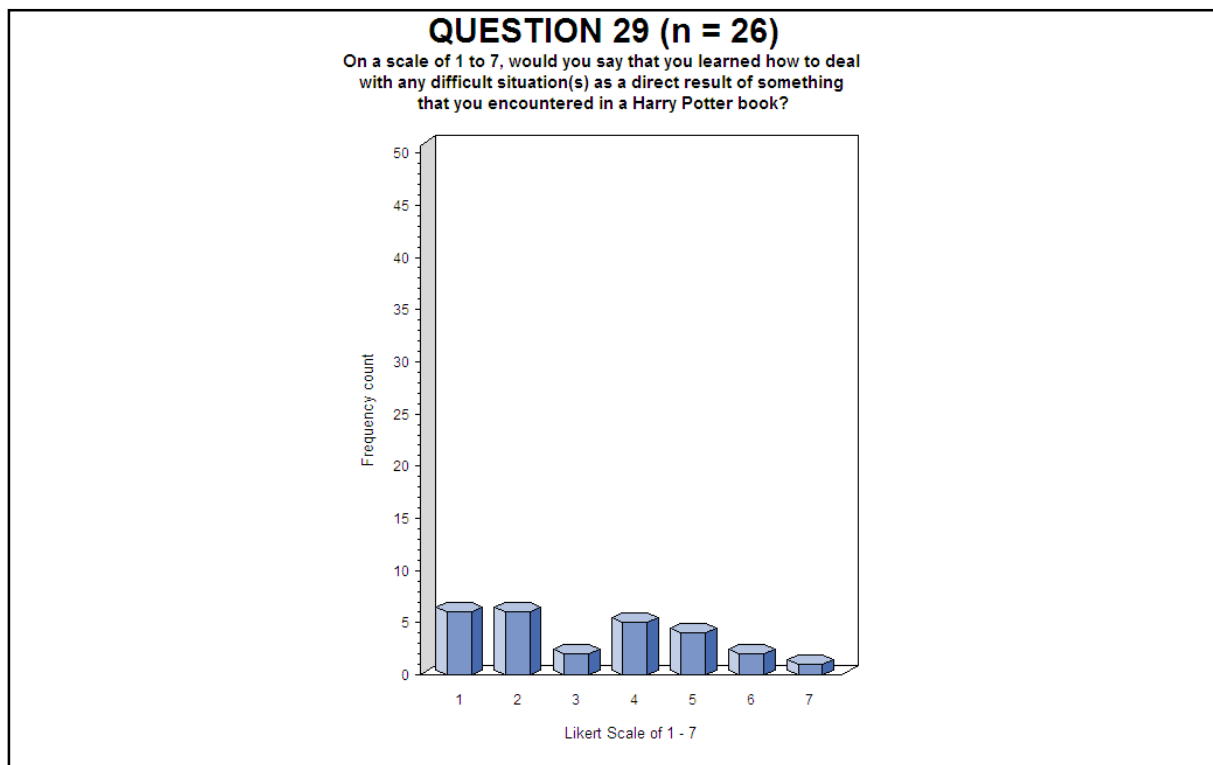


Figure 27: Question 29 results

Life is often rife with challenges and difficult situations which demand to be addressed and resolved, a fact which many characters in *Harry Potter* will be able to attest to. Isser (1976)

and Jauss (1982) postulate that once a person starts reading a text, that person adds meaning to the literature based on his or her past experiences, and in turn one is able to deduce that the individual should also be able to take from the reading what is relevant to his/her own life. Question 29 required participants to rate, on a scale of one to seven, whether something they had encountered while reading *Harry Potter* had taught them to deal with any difficult situation(s). Figure 27 presents these results, with the frequency count of any given rating on the Likert scale found on the y-axis, and the seven-point scale represented on the x-axis. Of the 26 contributors who answered this question, 19 (73.08%) rated the question between one and four, leaving one free to infer that most of the participants did not feel that they had learned how to deal with a difficult situation as a result of reading Rowling's series, which is somewhat disappointing. The seven (26.92%) remaining participants gave a rating of between five and seven on the Likert scale, and as a result one can conclude that the majority of this group did not take what was hoped for from their reading experience, and that most of them displayed little development of the narrative imagination (Nussbaum, 1997).

Accordingly, one may infer that the majority of the population who took part in this study deemed reading to be a pastime which could influence their thoughts/feelings/behaviour, and assist them in understanding other people's points of view, allowing them in turn to relate to individuals who may be unfamiliar to them. For those participants who had read one or more books in the *Harry Potter* series, most exhibited the ability to comprehend a character's situation, even when it occurred outside their frame of reference, and stated that reading the series has affected the way they thought/felt/behaved in general. Even though none of the Potter fanatics had learned how to deal with difficult situations through Rowling's series, many were of the opinion that *Harry Potter* could be employed as an aid to educating the youth and cultivating a sensitivity to discriminatory and prejudicial attitudes. Consequently,

Harry Potter shows some fruitful possibilities which could be used as a tool to aid the development and moral education of adolescents in particular.

CONCLUSION

The rationale for this study was to determine to what extent (if any) a specific author's contribution to literature had motivated young people to read again, and whether her texts could be deemed viable as an aid to the moral education and personal development of the youth. Consequently, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter oeuvre* constituted the main material under study, and was explored in terms of the series' supposed connections with the occult, its possible contribution to the re-establishment of a reading culture among the youth of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as well as its potential as an aid to moral development (and the consequent lessons that could be learnt from it). As a result of the study's dual nature, both the quantitative and qualitative research methods were utilised. Both methods proved ideally suited to the respective uses they were put to and greatly assisted with the process of analysis involved in this study.

The first step explored allegations of involvement with the occult and the series' supposed indoctrination of young readers, which some critics claimed enticed the youth to magic. The opinions of certain critics, such as Maretha Maartens who fervently denounced the texts for religious reasons, were also considered in an attempt to verify whether young readers were being exposed to moral risks by the magical aspect present in Rowling's work. The findings showed that many of the participants who had not read any of the texts in the series were of the opinion that the novels did increase the readers' interest in magic, especially in the case of children who were more easily influenced, proving that the stigma surrounding the series is of a pronounced nature. However, this contrasted with the opinions of those participants who had read one or more books in the series and who stated that the series had not affected their faith/religious conviction in any way, nor had they experienced an increased interest in magic

or the occult. This shows that *Harry Potter* followers do not concur with what is so readily believed by those who have not yet read any of the books in the series. Consequently, it is safe to infer that the negative perception of the *Harry Potter* series as a work of fantasy fiction that attracts the youth to magic and the occult, is largely the result of media influence and misinformation, rather than reality.

The next, very vital, step involved establishing whether a culture of reading existed amongst the group under study, and also if Rowling's texts had played a part in this. From the data obtained through the questionnaire and the analysis of articles from the media, it is safe to assert that a reading culture did exist among the group under study, and that respondents read for leisure on a fairly regular basis. The data also showed that at least some of them enjoyed leisure reading as a pastime. Unfortunately, it cannot be stated that the respondents had been drawn to leisure reading by Rowling's series, as most had read the novels during their adolescent years. What is promising, however, is the fact that respondents found Rowling's texts exceptionally enjoyable, affirming the notion that her series could be utilised as a tool with which to lure young people to the world of books and reading.

The above having been established, the final step was to consider what moral lessons, if any, Rowling's work had propagated, and whether Rowling's series was a viable aid to the moral education of young people. The collected data indicated that the majority of the respondents had experienced a change to their thoughts/feelings/behaviour through reading fiction and that reading had helped them to understand other people, and also to relate to the circumstances of others, despite the fact that these may have been alien to their own lives. Furthermore, the statistics showed that the *Harry Potter* series had had a similar effect on those members of the participating group who had read the series, and that this effect on their thoughts/feelings/behaviour had been coupled with an ability to comprehend the decisions

and/or actions of others, even if the reader did not necessarily agree with them. What is disappointing is the fact that none of the *Harry Potter* followers had learned to deal with difficult life situations through the Potter series, an area of study that could easily be explored in further research. It was, however, satisfying to learn that the followers had acquired a greater sensitivity to discrimination after reading one or more of the texts in the series, which proves that the proposed use of Rowling's texts as a device to assist with adolescent personal development and moral education is practicable.

From an academic point of view there is no doubt that literacy is a vital and invaluable asset to which everyone should have access. In conducting this research, it is hoped that a contribution has been made to the already existing body of data pertaining to the study of literacy and young people's affinity for reading. Furthermore, the researcher trusts that an increased measure of credibility, from a literary perspective, has been conferred on Rowling's *oeuvre*, and that the value of the novels in addressing relevant moral concerns has been brought to the fore. It is believed that the lessons learned from the texts and the companionship the books afford to young people, who often feel alone and unappreciated, are not always acknowledged. Furthermore, *Harry Potter* holds great potential for the classroom and would be the ideal material to prescribe to both first- and second-language speakers of English, especially at primary school level. Apart from the moral and thematic aspects that young people of this age group can encounter, Rowling's series will also expose them to a body of work that contains an impressive range of words for vocabulary improvement, and a standard of English that will establish a reliable basis for any future studies in the language. In conclusion, it is safe to assert that *Harry Potter* holds a wealth of possibilities for the classroom, moral education, and personal development, and it is hoped that the future will see great advances made in these areas with a little literary magic and a great deal of help from an influential young wizard.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE: DRAFT 1

Age: _____
Home Language: _____
Year of study in English (e.g. first year): _____

This questionnaire has been designed as part of the M.A. research of a postgraduate student in the English department at the University of the Free State. It will attempt to assess the participant's interest in leisure reading and will also pose some questions on J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Your participation will be greatly appreciated and your anonymity can be assured. Note, however, that you are welcome to leave at this moment or at any point during the completion of the questionnaire, no matter what the reason(s) may be.

Please return ALL completed and blank questionnaires.

Mark the appropriate box(es) with an X.

Thank you

QUESTIONS ON: THE RE-ESTABLISHING/EXISTING OF A READING CULTURE

1. Do you enjoy leisure reading (reading for fun)?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

2. How often do you read a book (excluding magazines, comics, and newspapers) for leisure purposes?

- Every day
- A few times a week
- Once every two weeks
- Once a month
- Once a year
- Never

3. Do you think your friends enjoy leisure reading?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

4. Which of the following would you rather do in your free time?

- Read a book
- Watch television
- Interact on a social network (*i.e.* Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Exercise
- Other (Please specify) _____

5. Have you ever read one of the *Harry Potter* books by J.K. Rowling?

- Yes (Please go to question 6)
- No (Please go to question 7)

6. If yes at number 5, which of the following applies to you?

- I have read the first book
- I have read some of the books
- I have read the entire series once
- I have read the entire series more than once

7. If no at number 5, why not?

- Religious reasons
- I am not interested
- I plan to read one or more of the books
- Other (Please explain) _____

QUESTIONS ON: ADOLESCENT PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

8. Would you say that reading fiction (excluding magazines and newspapers) has influenced the way you think in general?

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

9. Do you think reading fiction gives one insight into how others think?

- Yes
- No

10. Have you ever felt an emotional connection with a character(s) (thus, an understanding of their situation) in a fictional book that was read for leisure purposes?

- Yes
- No

11. Do you think the *Harry Potter* series inspires adolescents to get involved with the occult?

- Yes
- No

12. Do you think the *Harry Potter* series contradicts the beliefs of some religions?

- Yes
- No

13. Do you think that children would be more inclined to engage in the occult if they are exposed to the *Harry Potter* series during their developmental years?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

14. Do you think the series promotes unacceptable/undesirable behaviour in its readers?

- Yes (Please got to question 14)
- No (Please continue to question 15)

15. If yes at question 13, make a tick next to all the boxes you deem relevant and then progress to question 15.

- Interest in magic
- Interest in the occult
- Detachment from reality
- Other (Please specify) _____

IF YOU HAVE READ ONE OR MORE *HARRY POTTER* BOOKS, PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

16. Did you enjoy leisure reading before you read *Harry Potter* for the first time?

- Yes
- No
- I cannot remember

17. How old were you when you read a *Harry Potter* novel for the first time?

- 5 to 10 years old
- 11 to 15 years old
- 16 to 20 years old
- 21 years old or older (Please indicate age if older than 21) _____

18. Did you find the book(s) generally enjoyable?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- Other (Please explain) _____

19. Would you say that reading one or more *Harry Potter* books influenced the way you think in general?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

20. Did you read up about the occult as a direct result of reading any of the *Harry Potter* books?

- Yes
- No

21. Did you ever take part in occult activities owing to what you learnt from any of the *Harry Potter* books?

- Yes
- No

22. Have you ever believed that magic is possible as a direct result of what you have read in any of the *Harry Potter* books?

Yes

No

23. Did you experience a sense of empathy/understanding/compassion for Harry Potter (the character) whilst reading the books?

Yes

No

24. Did you gain insight into issues of discrimination as a result of reading any of the *Harry Potter* books?

Yes

No

I do not know

25. Did you learn how to deal with any difficult situation as a direct result of something that you came across in a *Harry Potter* book?

Yes

No

I am not sure

26. Do you think the *Harry Potter* series can serve as a means of showing those who are uninterested the joys of reading?

Yes, definitely

Possibly

Probably not

No, definitely not

27. Do you think life lessons (*i.e.* what is morally acceptable in society, how to react to difficult situations, when to make certain decisions, etc.) can be learnt from the *Harry Potter* series?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

28. Would you recommend any of the *Harry Potter* books to someone else?

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE: PILOT STUDY

Age: _____

Home Language: _____

Year of study in English (e.g. first year): _____

School and town/city where you matriculated: _____

First or second language English in matric: _____

This questionnaire has been designed as part of the M.A. research of a postgraduate student in the English department at the University of the Free State. It will attempt to assess the participant's interest in leisure reading and will also pose some questions on J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Your participation will be greatly appreciated and your anonymity can be assured

Please return ALL completed and blank questionnaires.

Mark the appropriate box(es) with an X.

Thank you

1. Do you enjoy leisure reading (reading for fun)?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

2. How often do you read books for leisure purposes? (Excluding prescribed books, magazines, comics, and newspapers).

- Every day
- A few times a week
- Once every two week

- Once a month
- Once a year
- Never

3. Do you think your friends enjoy leisure reading?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

4. Which of the following would you rather do in your free time?

- Read a book
- Watch television
- Interact on a social network (*i.e.* Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Exercise
- Other (Please specify) _____

5. Have you ever read one of the *Harry Potter* books by J.K. Rowling?

- Yes (Please go to question 6 first and then skip to question 8)
- No (Please go directly to question 7 and then answer question 8)

6. If yes at number 5, which of the following applies to you?

- I have read one of the books
- I have read some of the books
- I have read the entire series once
- I have read the entire series more than once

7. If no at number 5, why not?

- Religious objections
- I am not interested
- I plan to read one or more of the books
- Other (Please explain) _____

8. Would you say that reading fiction (excluding magazines and newspapers) has influenced the way you think in general?

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

9. Do you think reading fiction gives one insight into how others think?

- Yes
- No

10. Have you ever felt an emotional connection with a character(s) (thus, an understanding of their situation) in a fictional book that you read for leisure purposes?

- Yes
- No

11. Do you think the *Harry Potter* series inspires adolescents to get involved in magic (this excludes magic tricks for entertainment purposes, *i.e.* at a child's birthday party, or optical illusions like those by David Copperfield) or something similar?

- Yes
- No

12. Do you think the *Harry Potter* series offends the beliefs of some religions?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

13. Do you think that children would be more inclined to engage in the type of magic found in *Harry Potter* books (*i.e.* divination or the occult) if they are exposed to the *Harry Potter* series during their developmental years?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

14. Do you think the series promotes unacceptable/undesirable behaviour in its readers?

- Yes (Please go to question 15)
- No (Please continue to the next section)

15. If yes at question 14, make a tick next to all the boxes you deem relevant and then progress to the next section.

- Interest in magic
- Interest in the occult/divination
- Detachment from reality
- Other (Please specify) _____

IF YOU HAVE READ ONE OR MORE *HARRY POTTER* BOOKS, PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS. IF YOU HAVE NOT, YOU HAVE FINISHED. THANK YOU.

16. Did you enjoy leisure reading before you read *Harry Potter* for the first time?

- Yes
- No
- I cannot remember

17. How old were you when you read a *Harry Potter* novel for the first time?

I was _____ years old.

18. Did you find the book(s) generally enjoyable?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- Other (Please explain) _____

19. Would you say that reading one or more *Harry Potter* books influenced the way you think in general?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

20. Briefly explain your answer to question number 19.

21. Did you read up on magic (*i.e.* divination, the occult, or any other branch of magic) as a direct result of reading any of the *Harry Potter* books?

Yes

No

22. Did you ever take part in magical practices due to what you learned in any of the *Harry Potter* books?

Yes

No

23. Have you ever believed that real magic (not the trickery done by magicians or entertainers like David Copperfield) is possible as a direct result of what you have read in any of the *Harry Potter* books?

Yes

No

24. Did you experience a sense of empathy/understanding/compassion for any of the characters in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series whilst reading the books?

Yes

No

25. Did you gain insight into issues of discrimination as a result of reading any of the *Harry Potter* books?

Yes

No

I do not know

26. Did you learn how to deal with any difficult situation as a direct result of something that you came across in a *Harry Potter* book?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I am not sure

27. Do you think the *Harry Potter* series can serve as a means of showing those who do not enjoy reading, that reading can be an enjoyable/relaxing pastime?

- a. Yes, definitely
- b. Possibly
- c. Probably not
- d. No, definitely not

28. Do you think life lessons (*i.e.* what is morally acceptable in society or on what basis to make certain decisions) can be learnt from the *Harry Potter* series?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know

29. Please provide an example if you answered yes to question 28.

30. a) Would you recommend any of the *Harry Potter* books to someone else?

- a. Yes
- b. No

30. b) If yes to question 30.a, to whom would you recommend the books?

- c. Only children
- d. Children and adults
- e. Only adults

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE: MAIN STUDY

Age: _____

Home Language: _____

Year of study in English (e.g. 1st/2nd year/Hons.): _____

School and town/city where you matriculated: _____ **high school in** _____

First or second language English in matric: _____

This questionnaire has been designed as part of the M.A. research of a postgraduate student in the English department at the University of the Free State. It will attempt to assess the participant's interest in leisure reading and will also pose some questions on J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Your participation will be greatly appreciated and your anonymity can be assured

Please return ALL completed and blank questionnaires.

Please use a pencil to colour the letter, which corresponds with the answer of your choice, on the optical reader sheet provided.

Thank you

1. On a scale of 1 to 7, how much do you enjoy leisure reading (reading for fun; excluding prescribed books, magazines, comics, and newspapers)?

Not at all							A great deal
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

2. On average, using a scale of 1 to 7, how often do you read for leisure purposes (excluding prescribed books, magazines, comics, and newspapers)?

Never							As often as possible
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

3. How old were you when you started reading for leisure purposes (reading for fun)?

- a) Younger than 7
- b) 8 to 10 years old
- c) 11 to 13 years old
- d) 14 to 16 years old
- e) 17 to 19 years old
- f) Older than 20
- g) I do not read for leisure purposes

4. Which one of the following genres do you prefer when leisure reading (please choose one)?

- a) Adventure story
- b) Detective story
- c) Fantasy
- d) Horror story
- e) Science fiction
- f) Thriller
- g) Romance
- h) I do not read for leisure purposes

5. On a scale of 1 to 7, how much do you think the majority of your friends enjoy leisure reading (reading for fun)?

Not at all							A great deal
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

6. Which one of the following are you most likely to do in your free time (choose only one)?

- a) Socialise with friends
- b) Interact on the internet/a social network (*i.e.* Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

- c) Watch television/DVDs
- d) Read a good book
- e) Outdoor activities
- f) Exercise
- g) Catch up with work

7. Have you ever read, or started reading, one of the *Harry Potter* books by J.K. Rowling?

- a) Yes (Please go to question 8 first and then skip to question 10)
- b) No (Please go directly to question 9 and then answer question 10)

8. If yes at number 7, which of the following applies to you?

- a) I started reading one of the books
- b) I finished one of the books
- c) I have read some of the books
- d) I have read the entire series once
- e) I have read the entire series more than once
- f) None of the above

9. Which one of the following would you identify as the main reason for answering no to question 7?

- a) Religious/spiritual objections
- b) I am not interested
- c) I plan to read one or more of the books
- d) Rebellion against things that are 'mainstream'
- e) I am not allowed to
- f) I have already seen one of/all the movies
- g) None of the above

10. On a scale of 1 to 7, how much would you say reading fiction (excluding magazines, comics, and newspapers) has influenced the way you think/feel/behave in general?

Not at all							A great deal
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

11. On a scale of 1 to 7, indicate whether you think reading fiction can help one gain insight into the way that others think/feel/behave?

No, not at all							Yes, definitely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

12. On a scale of 1 to 7, how emotionally connected have you felt with a character(s) (thus, an understanding of their situation) in a fictional book that you read for leisure purposes?

No emotional connection							A very strong emotional connection
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

13. On a scale of 1 to 7, indicate to what extent you think the *Harry Potter* series could inspire adolescents to get involved in magic, *i.e.* spell casting or divination (this excludes magic tricks for entertainment purposes, *i.e.* at a child's birthday party, or optical illusions like those by David Copperfield)?

Not at all							A greatly deal
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

14. On a scale of 1 to 7, would you say that the *Harry Potter* series could offend the religious and/or spiritual beliefs that some people hold?

No, not at all						Yes, definitely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

15. On a scale of 1 to 7, how likely would you say children are to engage in the type of magic found in *Harry Potter* books (*i.e.* divination or spell casting) if they are exposed to the *Harry Potter* series during their developmental years (ages 1 – 18)?

Not at all likely						Highly likely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

16. On a scale of 1 to 7, how likely do you think it is that the series promotes socially/morally unacceptable/undesirable behaviour in some of its readers?

Not at all likely						Highly likely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

17. What unacceptable/undesirable behaviour is the series most likely to promote, if any?

- a) An interest in magic
- b) An interest in divination
- c) An interest in spell casting
- d) An unhealthy detachment from reality
- e) An interest in magic, divination, and spell casting
- f) None

IF YOU HAVE READ ONE OR MORE *HARRY POTTER* BOOKS, PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS. IF YOU HAVE NOT, YOU HAVE FINISHED. THANK YOU.

18. On a scale of 1 to 7, how much did you enjoy leisure reading before you read *Harry Potter* for the first time?

Not at all						A great deal	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

19. How old were you when you read a *Harry Potter* novel for the first time?

- a) Younger than 7
- b) 8 to 10 years old
- c) 11 to 13 years old
- d) 14 to 16 years old
- e) 17 to 19 years old
- f) 20 to 22 years old
- g) Older than 22

20. Using a scale of 1 to 7, would you say that reading this series influenced your religious/spiritual beliefs?

No, not at all						Yes, definitely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

21. On a scale of 1 to 7, how enjoyable did you find the book(s).

Not enjoyable at all						Very enjoyable	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

22. On a scale of 1 to 7, would you say that reading one or more *Harry Potter* books influenced the way you think/feel/behave in general?

No, not at all						Yes, definitely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

23. Briefly explain your answer to question number 22.

24. On a scale of 1 to 7, how likely were/are you to read up on magic (*i.e.* divination, spell casting, or any other branch of magic) as a direct result of reading any of the *Harry Potter* books?

Not at all likely						Highly likely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

25. On a scale of 1 to 7, how likely were/are you to take part in magical practices/holding séances/playing with an Ouija board due to what you learned in any of the *Harry Potter* books?

Not at all likely						Highly likely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

26. On a scale of 1 to 7, how likely do you think it is that the magic referred to in *Harry Potter* (not the trickery done by magicians or entertainers such as David Copperfield) is possible?

Not at all likely						Highly likely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

27. On a scale of 1 to 7, would you say that you felt a sense of empathy/understanding/compassion for any of the characters in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series whilst reading the books?

No, not at all						Yes, definitely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

28. On a scale of 1 to 7, would you say that you gained insight into issues of discrimination (*i.e.* certain stereotypes or prejudices) as a direct result of reading any of the *Harry Potter* books?

No, not at all						Yes, definitely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

29. On a scale of 1 to 7, would you say that you learned how to deal with any difficult situation(s) as a direct result of something that you encountered in a *Harry Potter* book?

No, not at all						Yes, definitely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	

30. On a scale of 1 to 7, would you say that the *Harry Potter* series can serve as a means of showing those who do not enjoy reading, that reading can be an enjoyable/relaxing pastime?

No, not at all

Yes, definitely

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a	b	c	d	e	f	g

Thank you.

APPENDIX D

OPTICAL READER SHEET

VAN / SURNAME		VRL INIT	FOUTLEWE MERKE INCORRECT MARKS		KORREKTE MERK CORRECT MARK	UV / UFS	
1	A B C D E F G H	31	A B C D E F G H	61	A B C D E F G H	91	A B C D E F G H
2	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	32	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	62	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	92	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
3	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	33	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	63	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	93	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
4	A B C D E F G H	34	A B C D E F G H	64	A B C D E F G H	94	A B C D E F G H
5	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	35	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	65	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	95	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
6	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	36	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	66	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	96	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
7	A B C D E F G H	37	A B C D E F G H	67	A B C D E F G H	97	A B C D E F G H
8	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	38	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	68	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	98	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
9	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	39	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	69	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	99	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
10	A B C D E F G H	40	A B C D E F G H	70	A B C D E F G H	100	A B C D E F G H
11	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	41	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	71	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	101	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
12	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	42	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	72	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	102	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
13	A B C D E F G H	43	A B C D E F G H	73	A B C D E F G H	103	A B C D E F G H
14	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	44	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	74	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	104	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
15	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	45	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	75	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	105	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
16	A B C D E F G H	46	A B C D E F G H	76	A B C D E F G H	106	A B C D E F G H
17	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	47	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	77	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	107	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
18	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	48	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	78	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	108	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
19	A B C D E F G H	49	A B C D E F G H	79	A B C D E F G H	109	A B C D E F G H
20	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	50	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	80	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	110	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
21	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	51	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	81	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	111	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
22	A B C D E F G H	52	A B C D E F G H	82	A B C D E F G H	112	A B C D E F G H
23	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	53	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	83	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	113	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
24	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	54	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	84	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	114	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
25	A B C D E F G H	55	A B C D E F G H	85	A B C D E F G H	115	A B C D E F G H
26	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	56	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	86	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	116	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
27	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	57	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	87	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	117	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
28	A B C D E F G H	58	A B C D E F G H	88	A B C D E F G H	118	A B C D E F G H
29	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	59	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	89	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	119	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
30	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	60	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	90	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	120	9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

STUDENTE NOMMER STUDENT NUMBER	TAAK NR. TASK NO.
01	01
02	01
03	01
04	01
05	01
06	01
07	01
08	01
09	01
10	01
11	01
12	01
13	01
14	01
15	01
16	01
17	01
18	01
19	01
20	01
21	01
22	01
23	01
24	01
25	01
26	01
27	01
28	01
29	01
30	01

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APPENDIX E

COMPARATIVE AND DEMOGRAPHIC GRAPHS

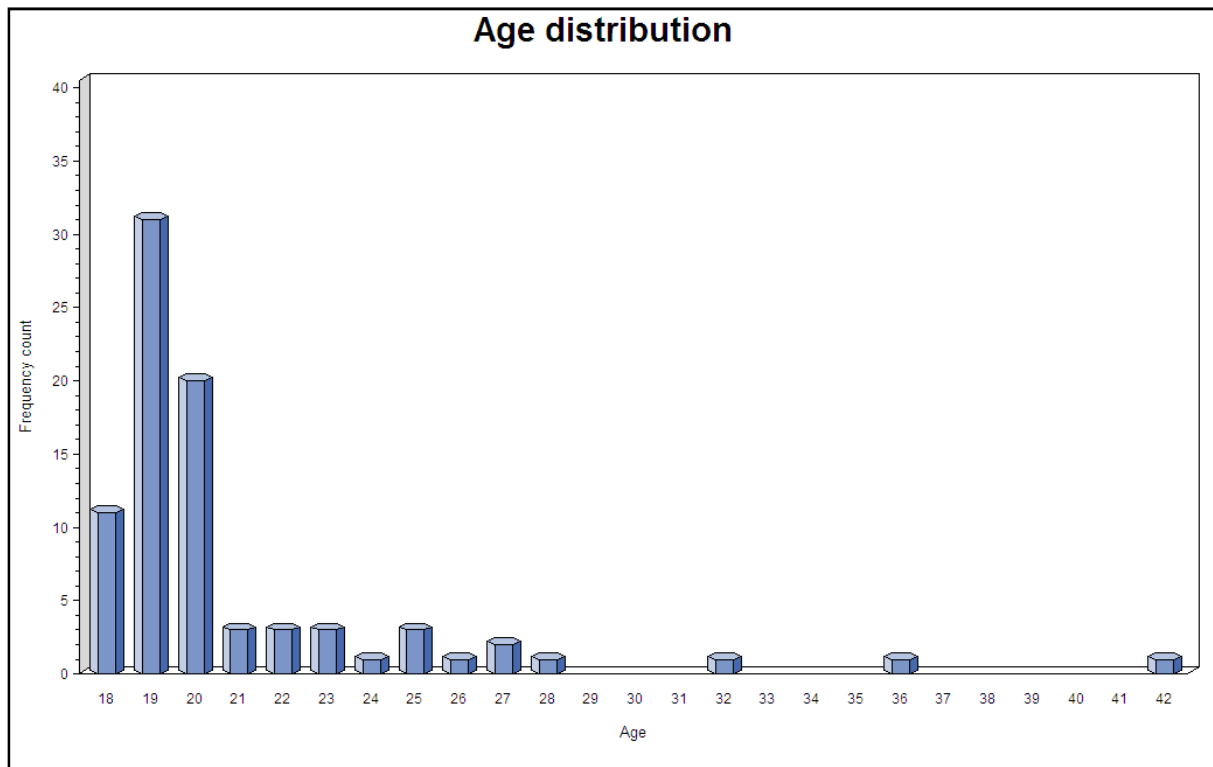


Figure 28: Age distribution

The group of participants taking part in this study consisted of 82 students from a first-year English literature class that had a total of 200 registered students for the semester. Figure 28 clearly indicates the diversity (in terms of age) of the students who were willing to complete the questionnaire, with ages ranging from 18 to 42. The y-axis of the graph displays the frequency with which a specific age appears, as opposed to the x-axis which displays the age range, starting at 18 and ending at 42. It can be seen that 11 of the 82 (13.41%) candidates participating in the study were 18 years of age when the questionnaire was completed, while 31 out of the 82 (37.80%) candidates were 19 years old, and 20 of the 82 (24.39%) candidates were 20 years of age. The afore-mentioned constituted the three most prevalent age groups, with the 19-year olds being the most representative. The remaining age groups can be

clustered into: a) those represented three times out of the 82 (3.66% each), comprising ages 21, 22, 23, and 25; b) those featuring two times out of 82 (2.44%) and whose ages comprised solely those aged 27 years; and c) the set of candidates whose ages were represented one time out of 82 (1.22% each) which covers age clusters 24, 26, 28, 32, 36, and 42. Consequently, one can infer that the majority (79.27%) of the candidates who partook in the study could be classified as young adults (ages 18 to 21).

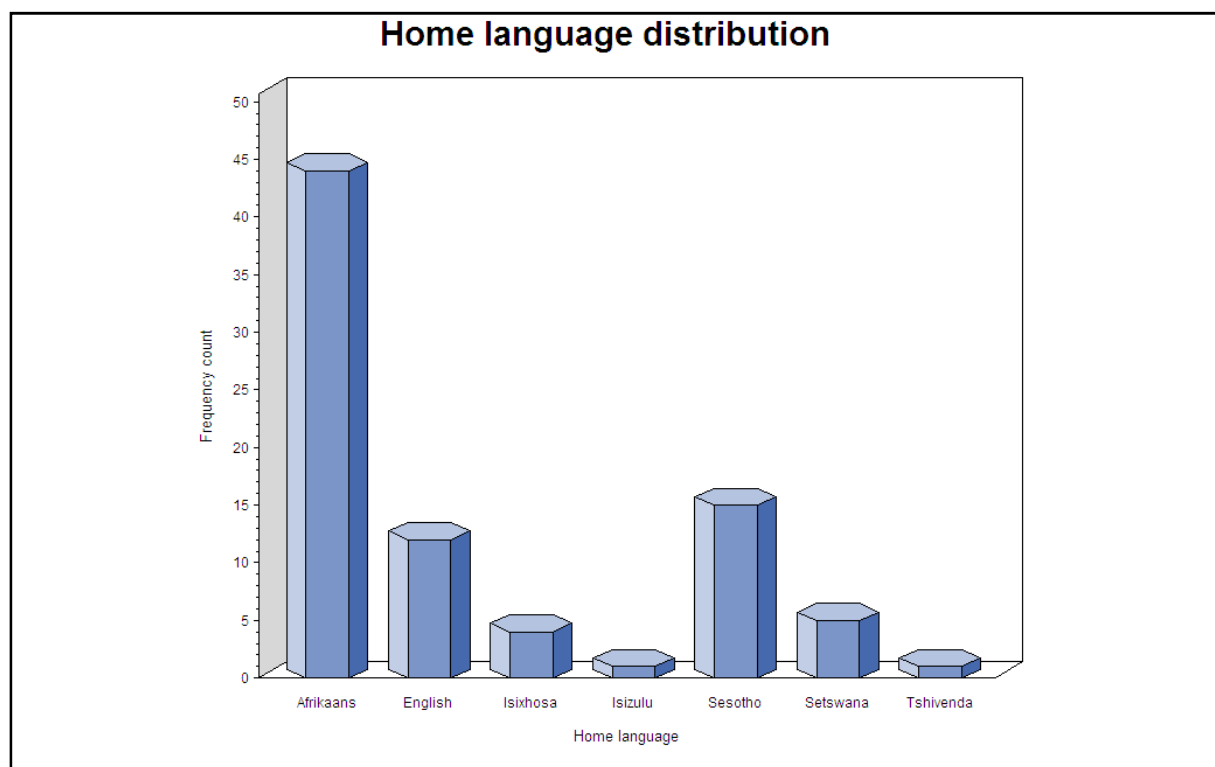


Figure 29: Home language distribution

Figure 29 depicts visually the home language diversity of the 82 students who took part in the study, from which it can be seen that 7 of the 11 official languages of South Africa were represented: Afrikaans, English, Isizulu, Isixhosa, Sesotho, Setswana, and Tshivenda. Not represented were: Isindebele, Sepedi, Siswati and Zitsonga. The y-axis of the graph in Figure 29 represents the regularity with which a specific home language was represented, while the x-axis signifies the seven different home languages as gleaned from the completed

questionnaires. Accordingly it becomes evident that the three most prevalent home language groups of the respondents were Afrikaans, Sesotho, and English (in that order), with Afrikaans being the home language of 44 of the 82 (53.66%) participants, Sesotho the mother tongue of 15 of the 82 (18.29%) participants, and English the home language of 12 of the 82 (14.63%) participants. The remaining 13.42% was made up of the other four language groups that were part of the cluster of students who completed the questionnaire. These include the Setswana speakers who comprised five of the 82 (6.08%) participants, those who were Isixhosa mother tongue speakers and constituted four of the 82 (4.88%) candidates who completed the questionnaire, and Isizulu and Tshivenda speakers which each had one person out of the 82 (1.22% each) representing these language groups. Subsequently, it is clear that while the group of Afrikaans home-language students was undoubtedly the largest (53.66%), the two African languages, Isizulu and Tshivenda, had the smallest representation with 1.22% each.

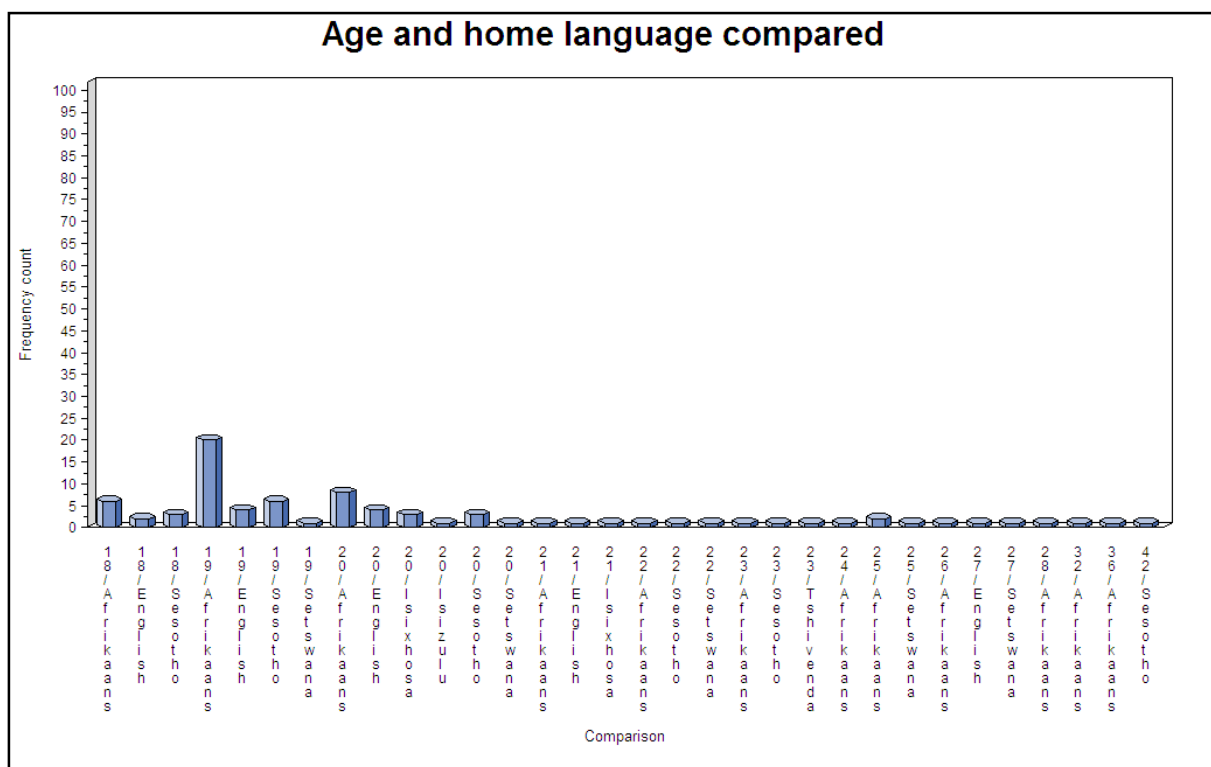


Figure 30: Age and home language compared

A comparison between the participating age groups and home languages is graphically represented in Figure 30. This graph reflects the number of participants of a specific age group and correlates the latter with their home languages. As a result one finds that the x-axis shows an age (*i.e.* 18) and a home language, (*i.e.* Afrikaans) indicating how many of the 18-year olds in the group were Afrikaans speaking (in this case, six of the 82 participants, hence 7.32% of the entire group). The significance of this comparison was to determine which corresponding age and home-language group had the highest frequency in the class. From the graph one can infer that the group of 19-year old Afrikaans speaking respondents had the highest prevalence with 20 out of the 82 (24.39%) candidates falling into this category, while the 20-year old Afrikaans speakers had the second highest prevalence with eight out of the 82 (9.76%) participants falling into this group. From here on the numbers decrease, and one finds that there are six Afrikaans speaking candidates who were 18 years of age (see example above), while six of the 82 (7.32%) Sesotho-speaking participants were 19 years old. There were four 19-year old and four 20-year-old English-speaking participants respectively, each constituting 4.88% of the total. Furthermore, one finds that three Isixhosa and three Sesotho speakers were 20 years of age (3.66% each), two were 18-year old English and Sesotho speakers respectively, and two were 25-year old Afrikaans-speaking participants, each comprising 2.44% of the total. The remaining clusters each constituted one out of the 82 (1.22% each) participants (*i.e.* one 18-year old Sesotho speaker, one 19-year old Setswana speaker, one 20-year old Isizulu speaker, and so forth). Consequently, one can infer that the largest proportion of the class consisted of Afrikaans-speaking participants aged 19, while a variety of the (mostly older) contributors represented the diversity of languages present in single units.

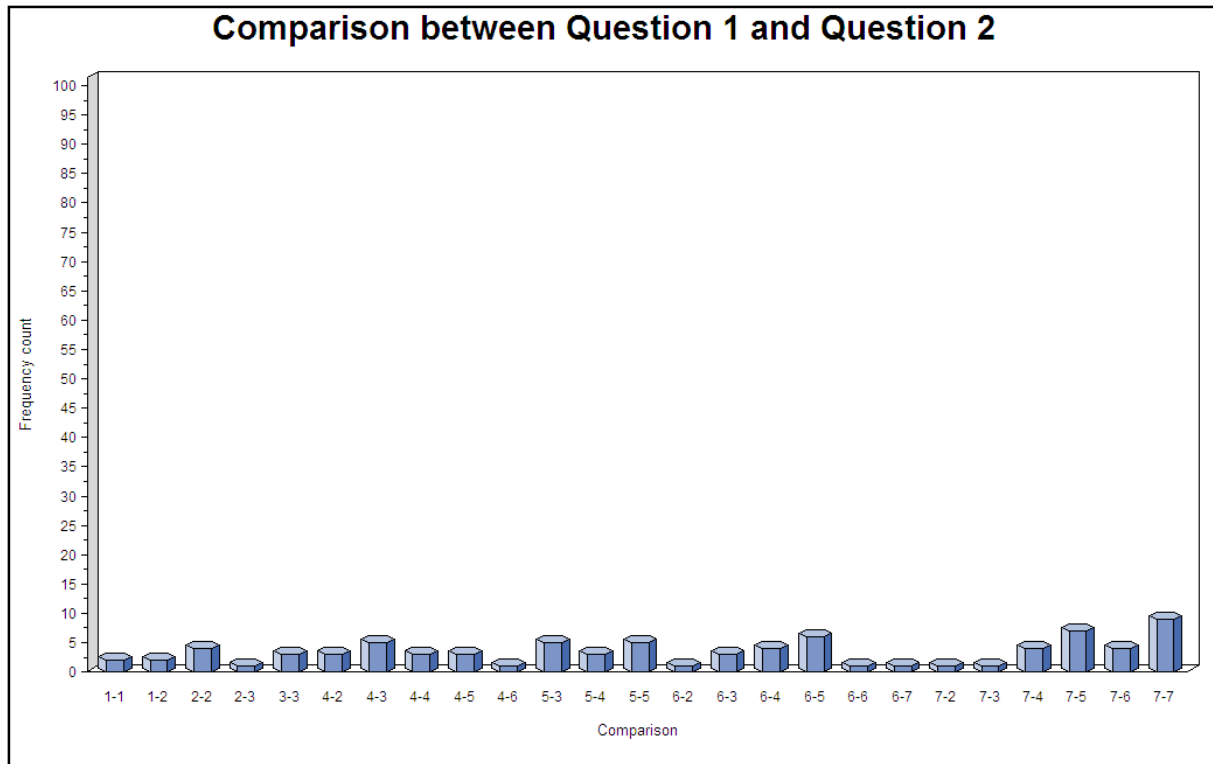


Figure 31: Questions 1 and 2 compared

In an attempt to determine whether the results of questions one and two corresponded with one another, a graph was drawn to depict the correlation between the two questions. The y-axis of the bar diagram in Figure 31 represents the frequency with which the range of numbers on the Likert scales of the respective questions correspond with one another (x-axis). From the graph it becomes apparent that all the candidates who rated their enjoyment of leisure reading between one and three on a scale of one to seven (a negligible rate) also ranked the prevalence of reading for leisure purposes at one, two, or three. This leads one to presuppose that those individuals who do not enjoy leisure reading seldom, if ever, make time for it. In addition Figure 31 shows that, from the group of contributors who selected either a rating of four or five to indicate to what extent they enjoy leisure reading (question one), not everyone ranked the frequency with which they read for fun within the same parameter. The graph illustrates that the participants who selected either four or five at question one, made selections on the one to seven scale whose range is from two to six for question two

(frequency of leisure reading). This phenomenon could once again be ascribed to time constraints in the participants' schedules. Furthermore, one finds that those individuals who ranked their enjoyment of leisure reading at either a six or a seven under question one, placed the frequency with which they read for fun at anywhere between two and seven, leaving one to assume once more that some factor(s) (probably time constraints) prevented certain participants from reading for pleasure.

The purpose of the comparison below is to demonstrate the correlation, if any, between candidates' enjoyment of leisure reading and the age at which they began reading for enjoyment. The graph in Figure 32 shows that, of those individuals who indicated that they did not enjoy leisure reading very much (one to three on the Likert scale), some started reading at an age younger than seven, while others started when they were eight to ten years of age or 11 to 13 years old. Others started leisure reading at ages 14 to 16 or 17 to 19, and two people indicated that they did not read for leisure purposes at all. Furthermore, there is a

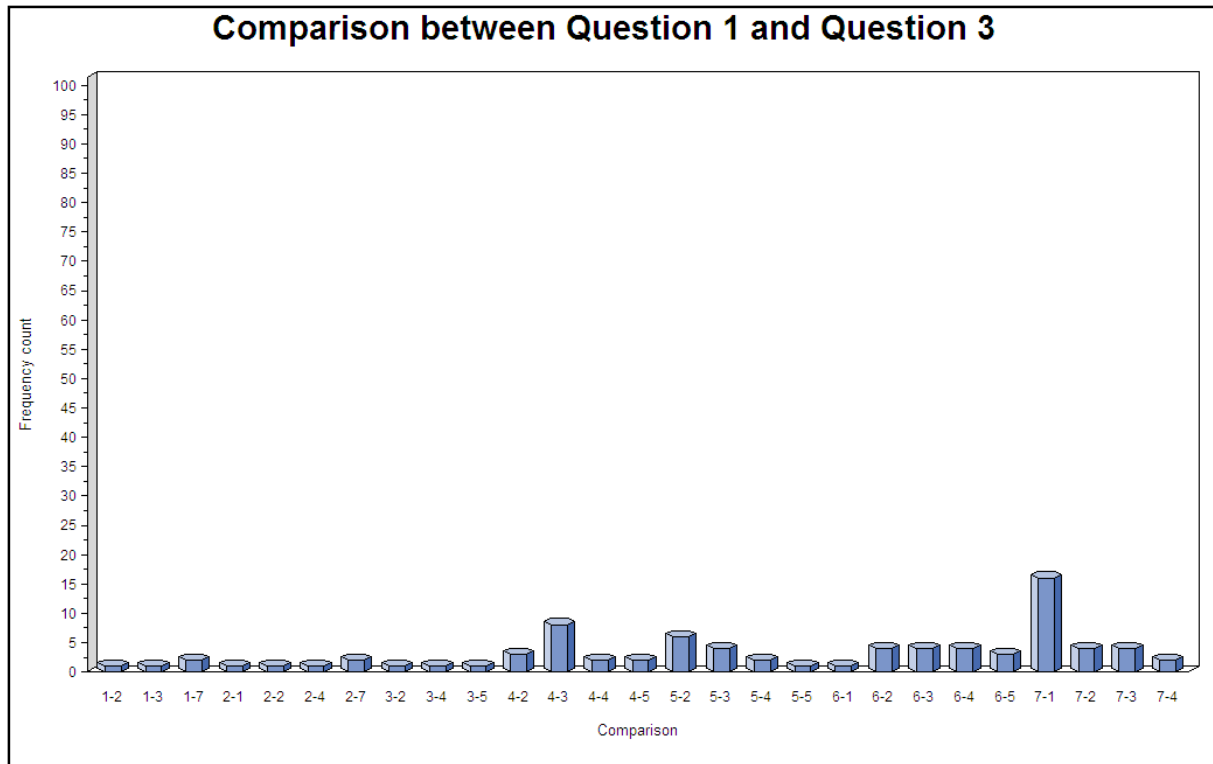


Figure 32: Questions 1 and 3 compared

similar diversity in the responses of those individuals who indicated that they found leisure reading fairly enjoyable, and the age at which they started reading, with the only significant correlation being the one between those contributors who indicated that they enjoyed leisure reading a great deal (a seven on the Likert scale) and those who started reading for enjoyment at an age younger than seven. This cluster constitutes 16 of the 82 (19.51%) participants and could be interpreted as an indication of a correspondence between the age at which some individuals started reading for fun, and the degree of enjoyment they derived from it. This, however, only applies to cases where contributors started reading at a relatively young age.

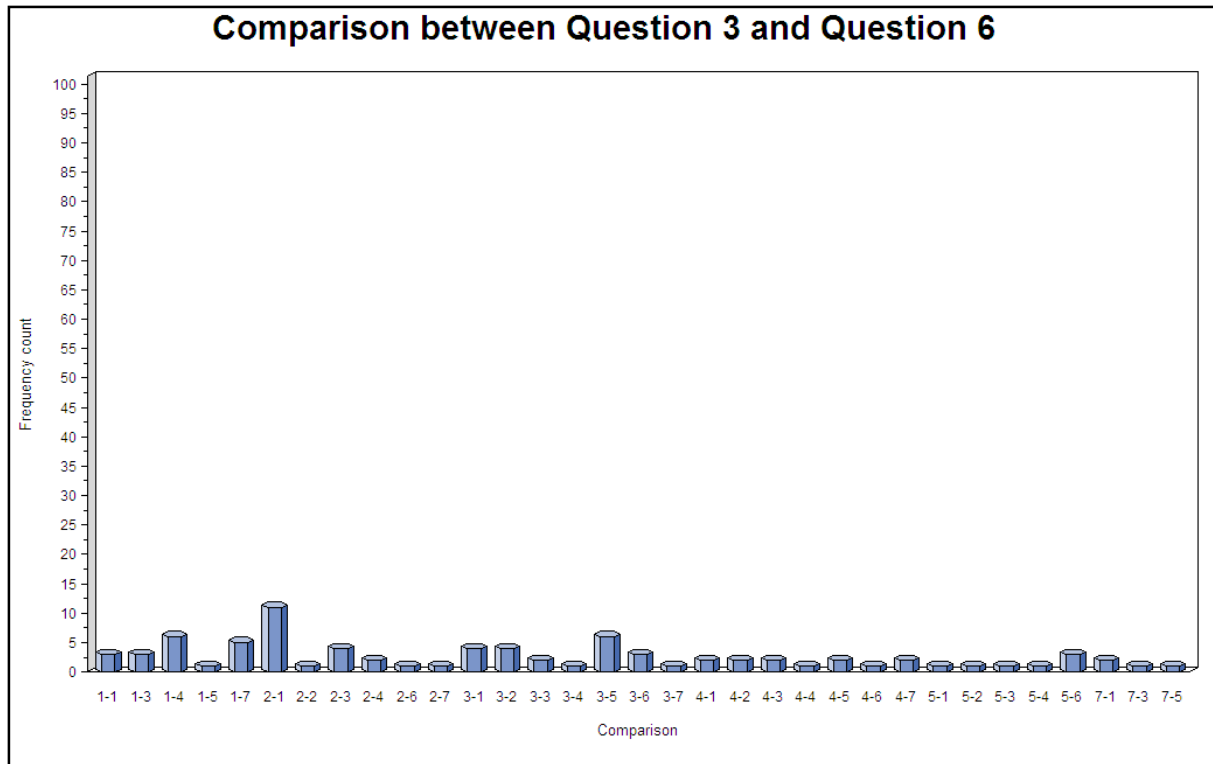


Figure 33: Questions 3 and 6 compared

The above comparison aims to determine whether there is a link between the age at which participants started reading for enjoyment/relaxation and the leisure activity they preferred during their free time. Figure 33 shows that, of the 82 individuals who partook in the study, 11 indicated that they began reading at ages eight to ten and that they preferred socialising with their friends more than anything else, this being the most significant of all the comparisons. The remainder of the combinations vary from one to six in frequency, disproving any distinct correlation between the two questions.

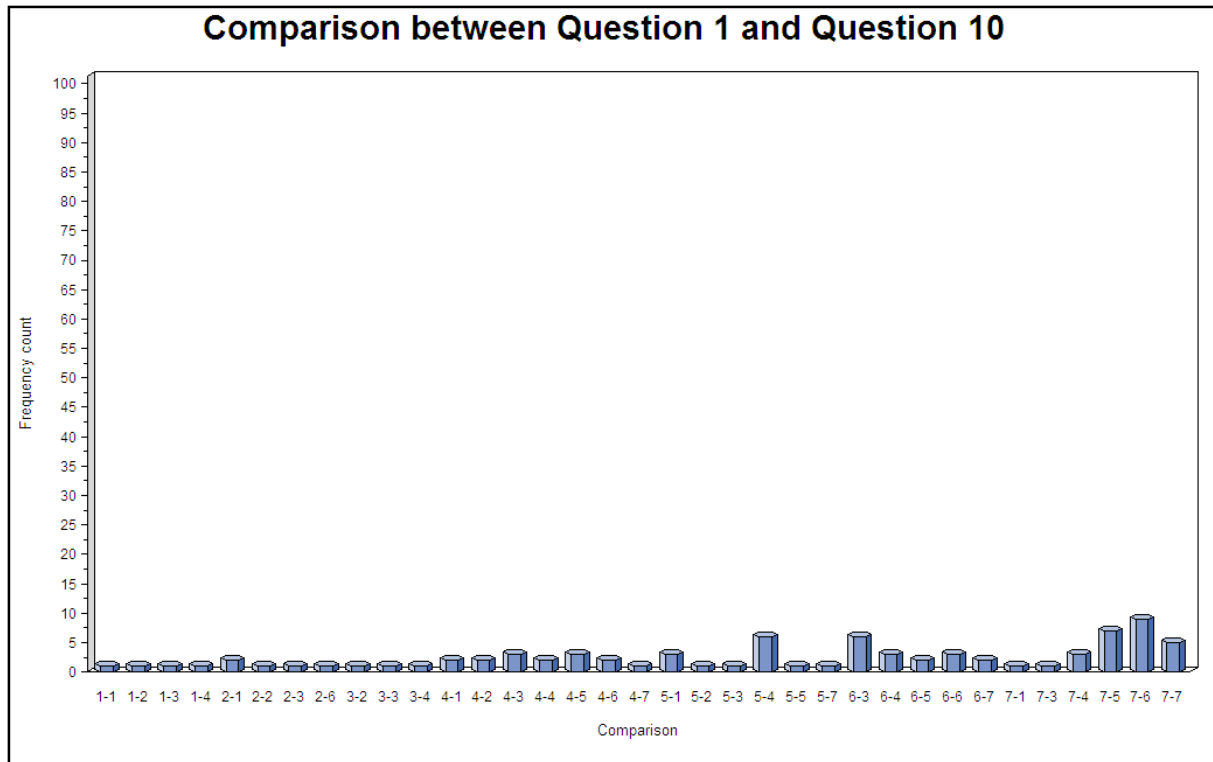


Figure 34: Questions 1 and 10 compared

Figure 34 once more presents a comparative bar diagram, this time contrasting the findings of questions one and ten with each other, in an attempt to determine whether there is a correlation between contributors' enjoyment of leisure reading and the degree to which they believe it has influenced their thoughts/feelings/behaviour. Once again the y-axis of the graph reflects the frequency with which answers in the disparate questions correspond with one another, while the x-axis reflects this correspondence. Figure 34 proves that most of the participants who rated their enjoyment of reading at either a one, two, or three (thus, not at all enjoyable or marginally so) similarly rated the degree to which they deemed themselves affected by it, with only three of the 12 ranking the effect which reading had on their thoughts/feelings/emotions at four or above. The rest of the graph lacks the uniformity of the afore-mentioned, as respondents who ranked their enjoyment of leisure reading at four to seven displayed no consistency when indicating to what extent they deemed themselves affected by reading fiction (rating ranged from one to seven). As a result, one can infer that

there is no apparent correlation between the degree to which participants enjoy reading and the level of effect it has on their thoughts/feelings/emotions, except in the case of those who do not find leisure reading enjoyable.

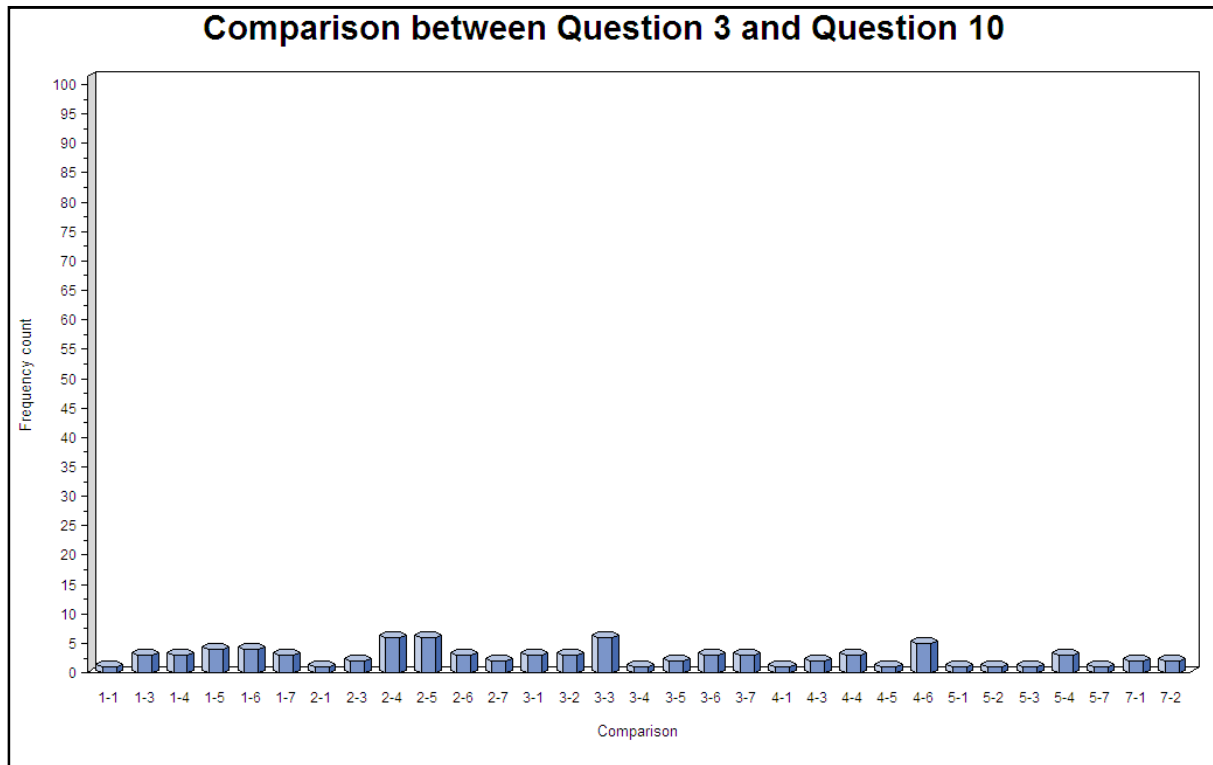


Figure 35: Questions 3 and 10 compared

In an attempt to ascertain whether there is a degree of correspondence between the age at which contributors started reading for pleasure, and the degree to which they indicated that their thoughts/feelings/behaviour were influenced by reading fiction, a comparison was drawn between the cluster of data obtained from questions three and ten respectively. The graph in Figure 35 is a visual representation of this comparison, and indicates the frequency with which a specific correlation is manifested on the y-axis, while showing the parallels on the x-axis. From the bar diagram above one can infer that, of those individuals who pinned the age at which they started reading as younger than seven, one (1.22%) felt that his/her thoughts/feelings/behaviour were not affected by the reading process, while the same number

of people (three (3.66%) each) ranked the degree to which they were influenced at either a three, four, or seven on the seven-point Likert scale. Four (4.88%) people rated the extent to which the way they thought/felt/behaved had been influenced at either a four or a five. Similar statistics may be found with all the comparisons, with three cases of six (7.32%) contributors displaying the same combinations (where two clusters of participants started reading at ages eight to ten, and one started reading at eleven to thirteen years of age), reflecting the combinations with the highest incidence. Consequently, one may conclude that there is no distinct example from this graph that verifies a significant correlation between the age at which participants started reading and the influence that reading had on them.

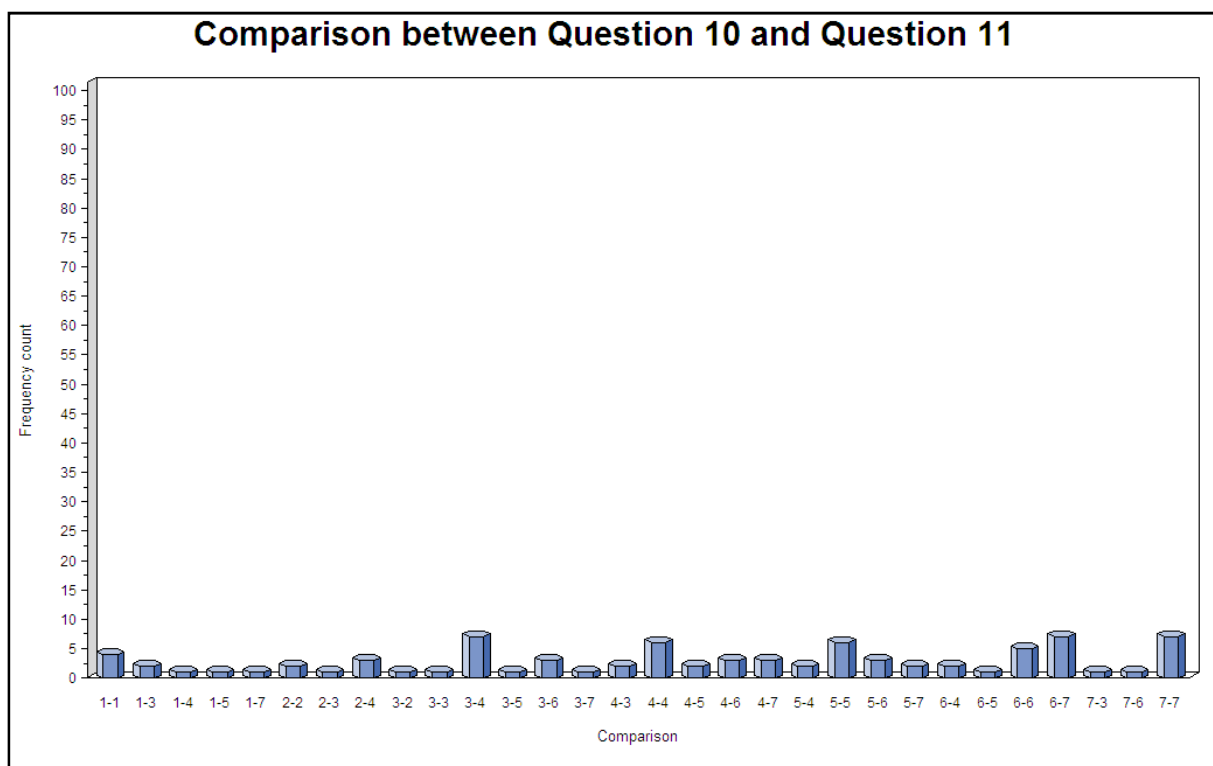


Figure 36: Questions 10 and 11 compared

In Figure 36 an attempt is made to determine whether a connection exists between the degree to which contributors feel they are influenced by reading, and the possibility that reading aids them in gaining an understanding of other people’s thoughts/feelings/behaviour. The graph

shows a frequency indication on the y-axis, while displaying the comparison between the rankings chosen on the seven-point Likert scale. First one can establish that the three correlations with the highest incidence can be ascribed to individuals who: a) ranked the influence of reading on their own thoughts/feelings/behaviour at three on the seven-point scale, and the degree to which they gained insight into others' thoughts/feelings/behaviour at four on the seven-point Likert; b) ranked the degree to which they felt reading influenced them at six and the insight it helped them gain into others' thoughts/feelings/behaviour at seven; and c) those who ranked both questions at seven on the seven-point scale, indicating that they believed reading to be highly influential in their lives and in terms of the way they saw others. The three above-mentioned clusters each made up 8.54% of the population, rendering their statistics the most informative, while those who selected a ratio of 4:4 or 5:5 for the two questions had the second highest prevalence, with 7.32% each. The rest showed a considerably less significant link. Consequently, it is plausible to assume that the majority of contributors who are mature enough to understand the developmental benefits of reading for the individual, found that they gained insight into the way that others thought/felt/behaved.

The graph below compares the results of question 10 (do participants believe that reading fiction has influenced the way they think/feel/behave) with question 12 (have they ever felt an emotional connection with a character in a work of fiction). The y-axis in this graph displays the regularity with which selections on the seven-point scale used in the two questions correspond with one another, while the x-axis shows these matches. The graph shows that the 35.37% (29 of the 82) of participants who ranked the influence which they thought reading had on their thoughts/feelings/behaviour between one and three (a negligible rating), showed no consistency in their rating of question 12, with their responses ranging from one to seven. The remaining 53 (64.63%) participants rated the influence of reading on

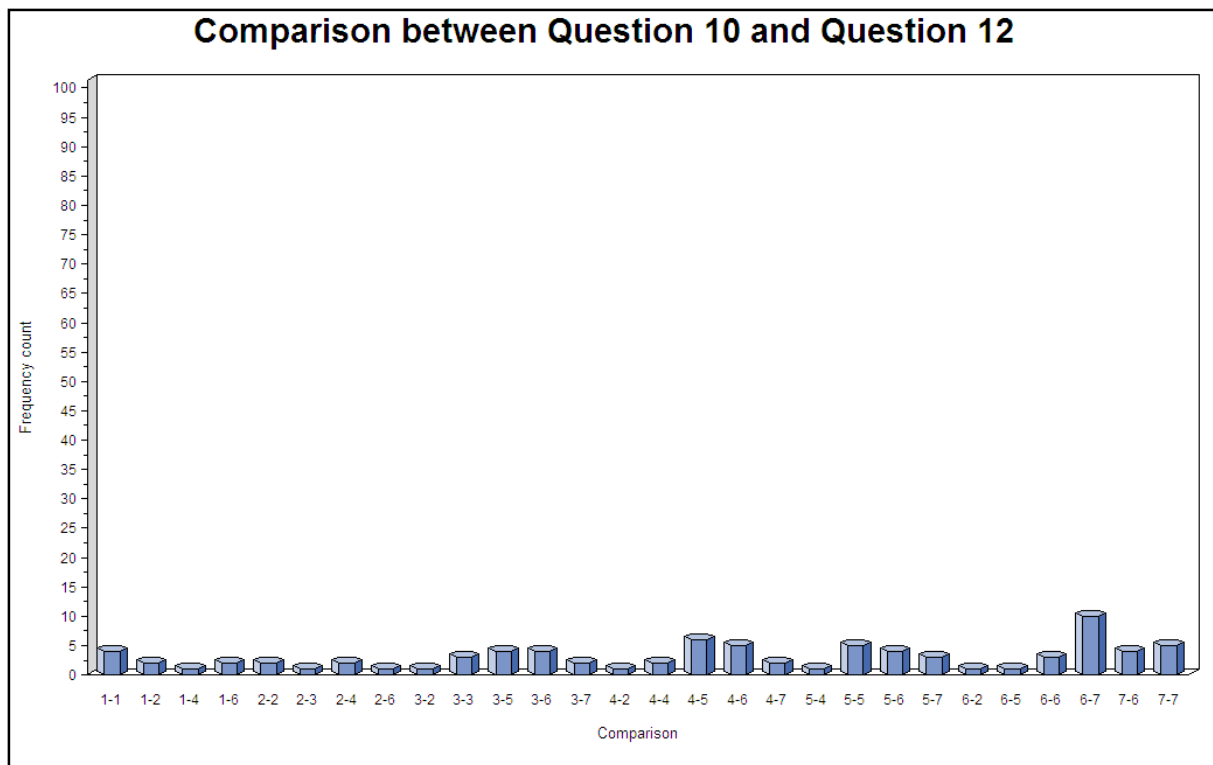


Figure 37: Questions 10 and 12 compared

their thoughts/feelings/behaviour between four and seven and ranked their emotional connectedness with a character in a novel identically, save for two of the participants. One may therefore infer that a large proportion of the individuals who developed in terms of their ways of thinking/feeling/behaving, also experienced fairly strong to strong affiliation with a character in a novel.

Figure 38 shows a correlation between the level of enjoyment which respondents ascribed to leisure reading and whether they had started reading any of the *Harry Potter* books or not. The y-axis displays the frequency count for any given combination of responses to the two questions, while the x-axis shows the various comparisons as gleaned from the two different data sets. From the graph it becomes clear that, of those individuals who ranked their enjoyment of leisure reading at one to four on the seven-point scale, only three (3.66%) indicated that they had started reading one of Rowling's texts, while 24 (29.27%) noted that

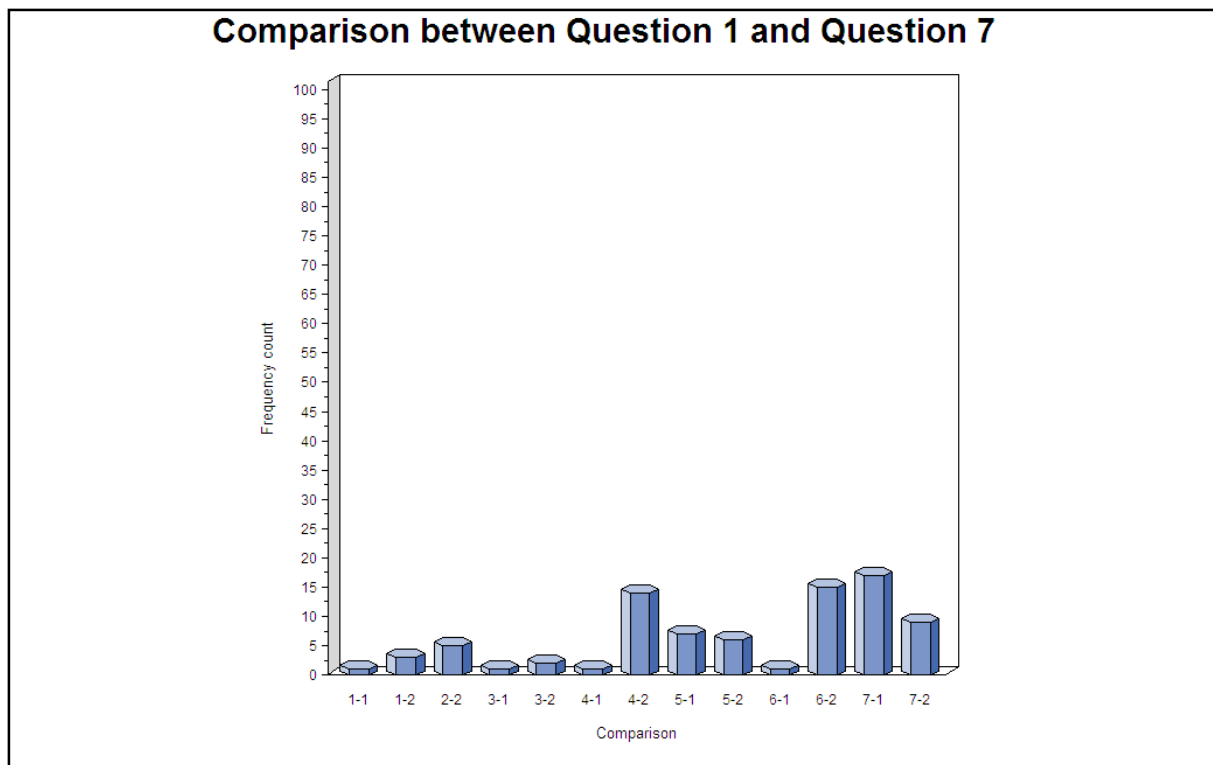


Figure 38: Questions 1 and 7 compared

they had never to date opened a Rowling book. For the rest it could be inferred that, while 30 (36.59%) of the contributors had rated their enjoyment of reading between five and seven (thus, fairly to very high), many had never actually read a *Harry Potter* novel and 25 (30.49%) of them had indeed started reading one of Rowling's texts. Subsequently, it could be inferred that those who did not enjoy reading in general, constituted a significantly higher number of people who had never read a *Harry Potter* novel. The ratings are more even when it comes to members of the group who measured their enjoyment of leisure reading at levels of fairly to very high frequencies.

The comparative representation (below) of the results between questions ten and 14 investigates whether there is a correlation between the degree of influence which participants believe reading has on their thoughts/feelings/behaviour, and their opinion about the

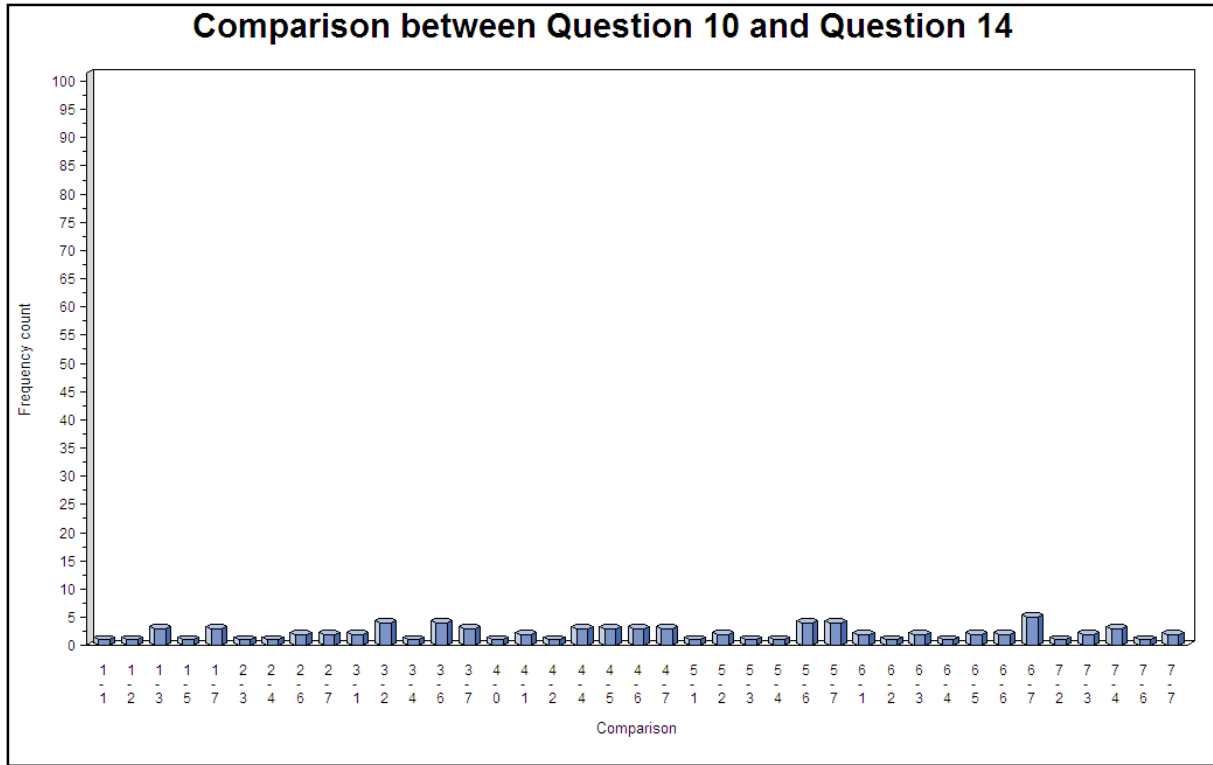


Figure 39: Questions 10 and 14 compared

threatening nature of Rowling’s *Potter* series on other people’s religious/spiritual convictions. On its x-axis, the graph displays the various combinations of choices from the two questions involved, while the frequency with which a specific combination appears is shown on the y-axis. From the bar diagram it becomes clear that there is no clear correlation between these questions, as the combinations are fairly equally spread across the board, with almost every option on the seven-point scale used in the one question corresponding with the selection of options posed in the other question. The most prevalent correlation can be found in the case of the five (6.08%) contributors who provided ratings of six for question ten and seven for question 14.

ABSTRACT

Being literate is a privilege which is often taken for granted. The ability to read the morning newspaper or the subtitles of one's favourite soap opera is often viewed as trivial, or incidental, and yet South Africa's population is far from 100% literate. The youth's preoccupation with technology (cell phones and computers, for example) has marginalised healthier pastimes like reading. Fortunately, this trend appears to have begun to shift: our youth may be rediscovering previous generations' love of reading thanks to best-selling authors like J.K. Rowling, Terry Pratchett, and Phillip Pullman. Consequently, the rationale for this study is to determine to what extent (if any) a specific author's contribution to literature is motivating young people to read again, and whether her texts can be deemed a viable aid to the moral education of the youth. Thus, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter oeuvre* is the main material under study, and is explored in terms of both its potential as an aid to moral development (and the consequent lessons that can be taken from it), as well as its possible contribution to the re-establishment of a reading culture among the youth of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The question then arises as to whether a culture of reading has, in fact, been established among the above-mentioned group, and whether the suggested texts have played a part in doing so. Moreover, one has to consider what moral lessons, if any, are propagated by Rowling. On the one hand, this dissertation explores the responses of young people who have and have not been exposed to the series in terms of their interest in and affinity for reading, and to what extent Rowling's series has influenced them, if at all. As the focus of this study is solely on Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, it is naturally not quantifiable beyond these limitations. However, the results may still serve as a springboard for future

studies. On the other hand, the focus of the study extends to areas of a more personal nature that deal with principles such as young people's responses to themes like good versus evil, and their understanding of social and moral commentary. The opinion of certain critics, such as Maretha Maartens who fervently denounced the texts for religious reasons, is also considered in an attempt to verify whether young readers are exposed to moral risks by the magical aspect of Rowling's work, or whether, in sharing Harry's experiences, they form a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between good and evil and the complexities of life and human relations.

From an academic point of view there is no doubt that literacy is a vital and invaluable asset that everyone should be privileged to possess. In conducting this research, I hope to contribute to the already existing body of data pertaining to the study of literacy and the affinity of young people for reading. Furthermore, I intend to confer a greater sense of credibility, from a literary perspective, on Rowling's *oeuvre*, which also addresses a number of relevant moral concerns. I believe that the lessons learned from the texts, as well as the companionship they lend to young people, who often feel alone and unappreciated, are not always acknowledged. Additionally, I believe that *Harry Potter* is the ideal material to prescribe to both first- and second-language speakers of English, especially at primary school level. Apart from the moral and thematic aspects that young people of this age group will be privileged to encounter, they will also be exposed to a body of work that contains an impressive range of words for vocabulary improvement, and a standard of English that will establish a reliable basis for any future studies in the language.

ABSTRAK

Geletterdheid is 'n voorreg wat dikwels as vanselfsprekend aanvaar word. Die vermoë om die ondertitels van 'n mens se gunsteling sepie of die oggend koerant te lees word telkens beskou as 'n gegewe, en tog is Suid-Afrika se bevolking ver van 100% geletterd. Die jeug se behepthed met tegnologie (byvoorbeeld selfone en rekenaars) marginaliseer gesonder tydverdrywe soos om te lees. Gelukkig blyk dit dat hierdie tendens begin skuif het en dat die jeug vorige geslagte se liefde vir lees herontdek te danke aan skrywers soos JK Rowling, Terry Pratchett, en Phillip Pullman. Gevolglik is die rasionaal vir hierdie studie om vas te stel tot watter mate (indien enige) 'n spesifieke skrywer se bydrae tot die literatuur jong mense motiveer om weer te lees, en of die tekste lewensvatbare steun kan bied tot die morele opvoeding van die jeug. J.K. Rowling se *Harry Potter oeuvre* sal as die kern literatuur in hierdie studie dien, en dit word in terme van beide potensiaal as hulpmiddel vir morele ontwikkeling (en die gevolglike lesse wat daaruit geneem kan word), sowel as die moontlike bydrae tot die hervestiging van 'n leeskuiluur onder die jeug van die twintigste en een en twintigste eeu ondersoek.

Derhalwe ontstaan die vraag of 'n leeskuiluur werklik onder die bogenoemde groep bestaan, en of die voorgestelde tekste 'n rol gespeel het in die toedoen van sake. Gevolglik is dit noodsaaklik om te oorweeg watter morele lesse, indien enige, uit die tekste geneem kan word. Hierdie tesis ondersoek die reaksie van jong mense wat wel blootgestel is aan Rowling se tekste en meet dit aan die reaksie van jong mense wat nie daaraan blootgestel is nie. Verder meet dit ook hul belangstelling in lees, met ander woorde, of hulle 'n affiniteit vir lees het en tot watter mate Rowling se reeks hulle beïnvloed. Aan die ander kant strek die fokus van die studie na meer persoonlike (en natuurlik beginselvaste) gebiede, byvoorbeeld jong

mense se reaksie op temas soos die goeie teenoor die bose, asook hul begrip van sosiale en morele kommentaar. Die mening van sekere kritici, soos Maretha Maartens se vurige veroordeling van die tekste vir godsdienstige redes, is ook in ag geneem in 'n poging om te kontroleer of jong lesers blootgestel word aan morele risiko's deur die magiese aspek van Rowling se werk, en of Harry se ervarings lesers help om 'n meer omvattende begrip van die verhouding tussen die goeie en die bose, asook die kompleksiteit van die lewe en menslike verhoudings, te vorm.

Vanuit 'n akademiese oogpunt is daar geen twyfel dat geletterdheid 'n belangrike en waardevolle bate is waaroor almal moet beskik nie. In die uitvoering van hierdie navorsing hoop ek om tot die reeds bestaande liggaam van data met betrekking tot die studie van geletterdheid en jong mense se affiniteit vir lees by te dra. Verder hoop ek ook om 'n groter sin van geloofwaardigheid te verleen, veral uit 'n literêre perspektief, aan Rowling se *oeuvre*, en om belangrike en verwante morele kwessies aan te spreek. Ek glo dat die lesse wat uit die tekste te leer is, sowel as die kameraadskap wat dit aan jong mense (wat dikwels alleen en ongewaardeerd is) verleen, 'n waardevolle rol kan speel in jong mense se ontwikkelingsjare. Verder vertrou ek dat *Harry Potter* die ideale materiaal is om voor te skryf vir beide eerste- en tweede-taal-sprekers van Engels, veral op primêre skoolvlak. Afgesien van die morele en tematiese aspekte waarby jong mense van hierdie ouderdomsgroep baat sal vind, sal dit hulle ook blootstel aan tekste wat 'n indrukwekkende verskeidenheid woorde (vir woordeskat verbetering) bevat, wat verseker dat die reeks 'n betroubare fondasie by die leerder vestig en dus enige toekomstige studies in Engels vergemaklik.

KEY TERMS

- Adolescent Development
- Fantasy Fiction
- Harry Potter/Popular Culture
- J.K. Rowling
- Moral Development
- Narrative Imagination Theory
- Reading/Literacy
- Reception Theory
- Religion
- The Occult