

Fires cannot extinguish Harry Potter or its creativity

Jennifer Guarino
Editor in Chief

A year ago, I couldn't understand the hype. I didn't know what quidditch was or who muggles were. I thought Harry Potter was nothing but another attempt by Hollywood to make a buck.

But I gave in. I picked up two copies of "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," at Border's: one to give a friend for Christmas and one to keep for myself.

Twenty-four hours later I was back at the store to purchase books two and three - "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets" and "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban".

For a week, I only moved from the couch to make another cup of hot tea. I stayed up all hours of the night as I drifted into the magical world of Harry Potter. When I was forced to move, I took the book with me, just in case I might be able to steal a few minutes to read. My mom didn't like that at the dinner table.

During Christmas break, I regained a little of the passion that I had as a child for reading, much of it thanks to a little wizard named Harry.

This series about the struggles of a teenage wizard has taken the world, as well as me, by surprise. The movie based on the first book has made \$300 million since the release in North America and has passed \$800 million worldwide.

The first four books are on USA Today's best-seller lists.

Despite the acclaims from reviewers worldwide, Harry Potter and author J.K. Rowling have received a lot of criticism. Schools have banned the books and churches are burning the books.

A church in New Mexico sponsored a "holy bonfire" to destroy the books the pastor says are an "abomination to God." He said, "Harry Potter books are going to destroy the lives of many young people." And it's not just in New Mexico; fires are blazing across the country in attempts to stifle ideas and good literature.

Huck Finn has seen the flames, and so has Little Red Riding Hood. Alice's Wonderland has felt the heat, as well as Pinocchio. Fairytales, yes, but do they destroy the lives of children?

After reading Harry Potter, I could visualize myself competing in the Quidditch Cup, flying on a broomstick chasing the golden snitch. But that doesn't mean I'm going to hop on a broomstick and attempt to fly out the window. Critics say children have a harder time discerning reality and fantasy. But by the time children read the stories about Harry, they are old enough to know this isn't possible or safe. If they can't reason between right and wrong, good and bad, then the parents are at fault.

Parents are the first teachers to whom children are exposed. They set the course for the moral development of their children. If parents



KRT Campus

Harry Potter, the movie, took the world by storm. The movie has brought in \$300 million since November.

tell their children that the stories in Harry Potter, Snow White and Mother Goose are purely fictional and for entertainment only, children won't attempt to cast a spell with a magic wand. (And surely if they tried, they would realize the stick has no power.)

Harry Potter has the magical power to fight off demon Lord Voldemort or wear an invisible cape to sneak around Hogwarts after dark, yet the critics forget that this fictional teen's power cannot leap from the pages into our 21st century world. By casting the blame on books, movies, etc., we're ignoring the role and responsibility of parents.

When we burn books, or censor them, we do the world a disservice, especially the children. Judge Lowell A. Reed, responding to another case brought by the Ameri-

can Civil Liberties Union said, "Indeed, perhaps we do the minors of this country harm if First Amendment protections, which they will with age inherit fully, are chipped away in the name of their protection."

We cannot afford, as a country, to take away a fellow citizen's speech or expression of ideas. We cannot afford to kill, burn or hide Harry Potter, just as we cannot afford to silence the critics. Their complaints and actions may be ridiculous, but just as we are entitled to celebrate the passion of reading, the need for creativity and the importance of discernment, they are entitled to criticize and, unfortunately, burn.

But we're lucky; ideas don't die in a bonfire. Flames can't extinguish a story. President Dwight Eisenhower said in 1953 at

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Dartmouth College, "Don't think you're going to conceal faults by concealing evidence that they ever existed." We live in a country where our ideas and speech are protected from government suppression by the First Amendment. We can speak freely, yet we have to respect the right of others to speak freely. "If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable," Supreme Court Justice William Brennan said in 1989.

Fairytales and stories like Harry Potter encourage children (and adults) to dream and imagine. They encourage us to be creative and to think outside the box. Thank goodness that the fires won't consume Harry Potter. After all, he's survived "he who will not be named" four times and there are three more books on the way.

Winter term takes away from academic development

Andrew Holmberg
Columnist

Now, why is it that most colleges don't have Winter Term?

After being on the Elon campus for the past two weeks, I have realized that the Winter Term has become a way for students to sleep all day and party all night. During the Winter Term, Elon loses any academic feel that has been built over the past semester.



Throughout the first semester, freshmen adapt to the new chal-

lenges that college introduces. Class schedules are more challenging than last year, and it takes the student time to adapt. After finals, the students are exhausted from the challenge that they were just presented. Everyone is given a break to relax, go home and celebrate the holidays with their friends and family. Instead of returning to college after the break and begin studying again, we are presented an opportunity to take an additional four weeks off.

We get to attend the Elon Win-

ter Term. During this term, students take one class for three hours a day for a month. The problem is that the students are given too much free time. The student can take a class that starts at 8:30 a.m. or 1:30 p.m. This gives the student the option to either sleep all morning or sleep all afternoon.

There aren't very many classes that can give enough work to fill the empty schedules of the Elon students. So what do most college students do with the increase in free time and decrease in responsibility?

They socialize in a party setting.

The Winter Term seems to be more of a chance to live up the "college experience" than to study single topics with more depth.

To defend Winter Term, it does give students a good chance to study abroad or do an internship. But Winter Term on the Elon campus needs to be studied again, because the term seems to be taking away from the academic development of the students on the campus.