

*Abstract*

Despite its trappings of both children's literature and the adolescent Bildungsroman, the *Harry Potter* series presents a grave conflict with repercussions beyond prompting the title character's personal growth. Far from contenting herself with mere descriptions of teenage rites of passage, J.K. Rowling raises and explores weighty ethical questions of consequentialism and moral autonomy by assaying the limits of virtuous conduct during wartime. At the same time, Rowling does not abandon the individuals engaged in this conflict for abstract theorizing. Instead, her treatment of characters' moral development is set fixedly within her broader critique of war and its potential justifications.

In this critique, Rowling places herself alongside classical and medieval scholars of just war theory like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. But rather than conforming to the latter's strict method of disputed questions, Rowling allows her heroic characters to transgress the conventional boundaries of ethical behavior in warfare. Such transgressions not only illuminate Rowling's particular interpretation of just war theory, but are also reflected in her characters' psychological maturation and the traumatic wounds that shape it. Ultimately, while Rowling does condemn the inescapable brutality of war, she argues in favor of the existence of justly started and justly fought wars.