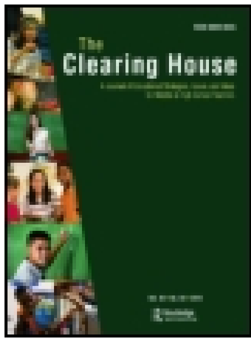

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The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Pedagogy in Harry Potter: An Inquiry Into the Personal Practical Knowledge of Remus Lupin, Rubeus Hagrid, and Severus Snape

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ABSTRACT
On the 20th anniversary of J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, we examine the narratives of pedagogical practice of three teachers at "Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry". By drawing on these characters' stories of teaching as presented in Rowling's novels, we foreground their personal practical knowledge and the relationship of this knowledge to their curriculum-making. We do this in order to highlight the importance of narrative perspective and context in the assessment and evaluation of teachers' pedagogical practice.

KEYWORDS
Personal practical knowledge; narrative inquiry; Harry Potter; J. K. Rowling; Hogwarts

Like the ghosts that roam J. K. Rowling's fictional Hogwarts castle, tales of the good, the bad, and the ugly of teachers and teaching haunt the halls of real-world schools. Reflective of the encounters and narratives of experience various stakeholders—students, parents, colleagues, and administrators—have with teachers and their practice, these tales do not often reflect the pedagogical context or the personal narrative perspective of the teacher being assessed. To demonstrate the role narrative perspective and context can add to the formal and informal assessment and evaluation of teachers, we present a textual examination of the knowledge, pedagogical practice, and curriculum-making (Connelly and Clandinin 1985, 1988) of three fictional teachers—Remus Lupin, Rubeus Hagrid, and Severus Snape from J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series.

Since the initial publication of Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (1997), scholars have interrogated facets of teaching and learning depicted in the fictional boarding school, "Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry." (Birch 2009; Bixler 2011; Dickinson 2006; Helfenbein 2008; McDaniel 2010). Dickinson (2006), for example, notes that the extraordinariness of Hogwarts as a magical school is in contradistinction to the ordinariness of its students having "to attend class, read books, write exercises, take tests, and be graded on a competitive scale" (240). Meanwhile, Bixler (2011) highlights problems in the teaching and administration of the wizarding school, labeling Hogwarts a "technical school" where "[s]tudents practice skills more than they strive to understand theory" and where they acquire knowledge "on their own, either by working on assignments outside class or through various adventures" (75).

From the narratives of experience Rowling's seven canonical Harry Potter novels provide of teaching and learning in this wizarding environment, Hogwarts does indeed operate like a technical school; in fact, a Hogwarts education leads students to becoming "fully qualified wizards" (Rowling 1999, 94). Likewise, a significant amount of student learning does occur outside of the classroom, as evidenced by the student-initiated spell practice group, "Dumbledore's Army" (Rowling 2003).

Despite the validity of these critiques of pedagogical practice at Hogwarts, the assessments fail to consider that the narratives of experience foregrounded within the novels are told principally from the perspective of its young protagonist,

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Harry Potter. As the novels' focalizer—"that character through whose eyes the reader sees the story" (Fife 2005, 149)—Harry provides a perspective on teaching at Hogwarts that is not readily reliable. His stories of teachers and their practices are filtered through the lens of his personal and emotional experiences as a wizard reared and educated in a Muggle environment. Additionally, Harry is not immediately privy to the personal histories of his teachers, nor does he always have access to the larger social context in which to interpret their curricular actions. Instead, Harry acquires much of his knowledge about the thoughts and actions of his teachers through accident (a benefit to his possessing an infallible invisibility cloak), hindsight (only later does Harry realize that Snape's werewolf assignment was designed to expose Remus Lupin as a werewolf), or magical glimpses into the past (e.g. Dumbledore's pensieve). The lack of context and limited narrative perspective the texts provide requires a more nuanced inquiry into teaching and learning at Hogwarts, one that foregrounds the stories of pedagogical practice and curriculum-making that Hogwarts teachers tell about themselves and the personal practical knowledge (Connelly and Clandinin 1985, 1988) these stories reveal.

By personal practical knowledge, we refer to a teacher's perceptions; ways of thinking, understanding, and doing; and beliefs and principles that reflect the experiential and embodied nature of their knowledge and practice (Clandinin and Connelly 1987). Such knowledge is "reconstructed out of the narratives of [an individual's] life" (Connelly and Clandinin 1985, 183), reflective of that individual's personal and professional lived experiences, and specific to contextually relevant aspects of the individual's social, moral, and intellectual identity (Clandinin and Connelly 1995). Furthermore, this knowledge influences the ways in which teachers structure, value, and prioritize their classroom learning experiences and engage with students, parents, and administrators. To access and interpret the personal practical knowledge of Hogwarts' teachers requires readers to reconstruct, reorganize, and reflect on the pedagogical actions of these teachers as they are presented over the seven Harry Potter novels.

The thoroughness of the fictional world presented in Rowling's Harry Potter allows for such an exploration. Therefore, we showcase three of Hogwarts' professors—Remus Lupin, Rubeus Hagrid, and Severus Snape—coming alongside them as reader-collaborators in order to foreground the textual voices of "their [personal] knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and values" (Clandinin and Connelly 1987, 487) as they are revealed across time and space of the novels. Though we appreciate the cinematic aspects of the Harry Potter franchise films, we limit our examination to Rowling's seven canonical Harry Potter novels as they provide a single authorial voice—while the eight films reflect the voices of five different directors. We draw upon the textual conversations, memories, and oral histories the novels provide, examining the ways in which the texts project images, metaphors, and rules by which the three characters live and make meaning as teachers. In presenting this inquiry, we draw upon the iconic category of "the good" (Lupin), "the bad" (Hagrid), and "the ugly" (Snape), not to essentialize the pedagogical knowledge and actions of these three individuals, but to playfully engage with and ultimately disrupt the simplicity with which narratives about teachers and teaching—both real and fictionalized—are told.

The good

Introduced to readers as "Professor R. J. Lupin"—the title engraved "in peeling letters [on a] small, battered case held together with a large quantity of neatly knotted string" (Rowling 1999, 74)—Lupin serves as Hogwarts' third Defense against the Dark Arts (DADA) teacher. The "good" of Lupin is first encountered by readers when he rescues Harry from a passing dementor on the Hogwarts Express. Banishing the dementor from the train car with a protective *Patronus* charm, Lupin helps Harry recover from the dementor encounter by providing him with "enormous slab[s] of chocolate"—a course of action that prompts the school's nurse to proclaim, "So we've finally got a Defense against the Dark Arts teacher who knows his remedies?" (Rowling 1999, 84, 90). Lupin's actions in this

scene, and in particular his preparedness with an anti-dementor remedy at hand, reflect a pedagogical knowledge—and perhaps even a foreknowledge—of the Dark Arts that is very practical.

Yet, there is a personal dimension to Lupin's practical knowledge that unfolds through conversations he holds with students during his tenure at Hogwarts. This personal aspect of Lupin's knowledge is reflected through the language of inclusion that marks his instructional discourse. Lupin tells lively stories of engaging in the very Dark Arts defensive practices students are poised to learn, narrating these stories from a personal, first-person perspective: "I once met [a boggart] that had lodged itself in a grandfather clock" (Rowling 1999, 133) and "I once saw a boggart… [try] to frighten two people at once and turned himself into half a slug" (Rowling 1999, 134). Further, he linguistically situates himself within the instructional dialogue—"*We* will practice the charm without wands first" (Rowling 1999, 134) and "… *we* have a huge advantage over the boggart before we begin" (Rowling 1999,133, italics not in the original text).

This language of inclusion is likewise reflected in the Socratic discourse Lupin adopts in his pedagogical interactions with students. Lupin engages students in lines of questioning that challenge their thinking and invite the development of "intelligent habits" (Nelsen 2015). In the interaction that follows, Lupin employs the traditional "initiation-response-evaluation" (Mehan 1979) structure of student–teacher interaction, though he does so in a manner that encourages dialogue by drawing upon authentic and open questions, nomination of specific students, and revoicings of their responses (Boyd and Markarian 2011).

> "So, the first question we must ask ourselves is, what *is* a boggart?"
>
> Hermione put up her hand. "It's a shape-shifter," she said. "It can take the shape of whatever it thinks will frighten us most." "Couldn't have put it better myself," said Professor Lupin, and Hermione glowed (Rowling 1999, 133).

This Socratic instructional stance reflects the democratic nature of Lupin's pedagogy. The democratic dimension of Lupin's pedagogy is reflected in an exchange that takes place between Lupin and Harry when the latter suggests that Sirius Black—an escapee from the wizarding prison, Azkaban, who is believed to have murdered Harry's parents—deserves to die via a wizarding form of capital punishment known as the dementor's "kiss". Lupin pointedly asks Harry, "You think so? Do you really think anyone deserves that?" (Rowling 1999, 247). In posing this question, Lupin encourages Harry to engage his own moral reasoning in a manner that diverts Harry's emotional attention from the crime towards the ethics of this form of capital punishment.

Interestingly, the democratic aspect of Lupin's pedagogy is in ready contrast to his social status within wizarding society. As a wizard who was traumatically turned into a werewolf, Lupin is marginalized within wizarding society. "I'm not a very popular dinner guest with most of the community", Lupin reflects. "It's an occupational hazard of being a werewolf" (Rowling 2003, 94). This marginalization has left Lupin isolated—"shunned all my adult life, unable to find paid work because of what I am" (Rowling 1999, 356). His pedagogical practice often aligns and reflects a consideration toward students who like himself are marginalized (Hermione Granger as a Muggle-born wizard) and traumatized (Harry Potter and Neville Longbottom as victims of magical prophecy) by the wizarding community. It is a pedagogy that surfaces through an instructional language ("I" and "we") that is compassionate and pedagogically aware. Perhaps it is this reason that Muggle-born Dean Thomas cites Lupin as "the best Defense against the Dark Arts teacher we've ever had" (Rowling 1999, 170).

The bad

Rubeus Hagrid serves as Hogwarts' Keeper of Keys and Grounds and is one of the school's two Care of Magical Creatures (CoMC) instructors. The other CoMC instructor is Professor Wilhelmina Grubbly-Plank, a fully qualified wizard who initially serves as the course's substitute teacher, though later in the novels she shares the teaching load for the course with Hagrid. Given that Hagrid and Grubbly-Plank both teach CoMC, comparisons between the two instructors

are readily made by the school's major stakeholders.

While Hogwarts' stakeholders praise Grubbly-Plank's ability to select curricular topics that feature "proper creatures like unicorns, not monsters" (Rowling 2000, 441) and that "most often come up in O.W.L.", the wizarding student exam (Rowling 2003, 323), they criticize Hagrid's curricular choices as "dull" (Flobberworms) and "dangerous" (Thestrals)(Rowling 2003, 258, 447). This incommensurability of the stakeholder-sanctioned curriculum with the curriculum Hagrid enacts is epitomized when he assigns *The Monster Book of Monsters* textbook in his first year of teaching CoMC. Surprised to find that none of the students were able to open these "aggressive", "snapping", "scuttling", "biting" books (Rowling 1999, 33, 8, 34), Hagrid explains his textbook choice, stating, "I—I thought they were funny"—to which the antagonistic Draco Malfoy responds, "Really witty, giving us books that try and rip our hands off" (Rowling 1999, 113). Hagrid's statement and Malfoy's response are reflective of the continual mismatch of curricular expectations that haunt Hagrid's experiences as a CoMC teacher and mark him a "bad" teacher for a number of the school's stakeholders.

At the heart of the mismatch is the failure of Hagrid's curriculum-making to account for the institutionally-shaped knowledge and identities of his students. The experiential and hands-on aspects of Hagrid's pedagogy induce fear for those students whose bodies have been secure and protected much of their lives and whose knowledge has been textually cultivated through Ministry-approved curriculum and reinforced through institutional values (i.e., Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, and Draco Malfoy). This failure to incorporate knowledge about his students' backgrounds into his planning can be seen in Hagrid's first lesson as a Hogwarts teacher. In this lesson, Hagrid designs an activity that draws students away from the safety of Hogwarts to "the edge of the Forbidden Forest" (Rowling 1999, 112) where they are physically positioned outside of their comfort zones. In this space, Hagrid introduces them to Hippogriffs—magical creatures with "the bodies, hind legs, and tails of horses, but the front legs, wings, and heads of what seemed to be giant eagles, with cruel, steel-colored beaks and large, brilliantly, orange eyes". The sight of these magical beings causes students to "[draw] back slightly", while Hagrid exclaims, "Beau'iful, aren' they?" (Rowling, 1999, 114).

Hagrid does everything right, pedagogically, in executing this first lesson. He introduces the lesson, provides contexts, asks for a volunteer, and later, he even provides guided instruction on mounting a Hippogriff:

> "Now, firs' thing yeh gotta know abou' Hippogriffs is, they're proud," said Hagrid … ."Yeh always wait fer the Hippogriff ter make the firs' move," Hagrid continued. "It's polite, see? Yeh walk toward him, and yeh bow, an' yeh wait. If he bows back, yeh're allowed ter touch him. If he doesn' bow, then get away from him sharpish, 'cause those talons hurt." "Right —who wants ter go first?" (Rowling 1999, 114)

Yet, the lesson is literally a bloody disaster. Though practical, Hagrid's lesson draws from curricular knowledge that is too personal—it is not scaffolded for the limited encounters his students have had with danger to-date (but that increasingly they will face over the course of the novels). The lesson reflects the unique experiences his identity and life history have afforded him as a half-giant/half-wizard whose height and size—"twice as tall as a normal man and at least five times as wide" (Rowling 1997, 14)—allow him to go places (The Forbidden Forest), interact with creatures ("Fluffy", the three headed dog), and survive spaces (the Wizarding prison, Azkaban) other wizards could not. Expelled from Hogwarts "in his third year for a crime that he had not committed" (Rowling 1999, 94)—and thus not a fully qualified wizard—Hagrid is self-taught. The fact that he "jus' thought [Hippogriffs would] make a good firs' lesson" for third years (Rowling 1999, 121) reflects the institutionally *un*sanctioned nature of his own educational experience. This leaves Hagrid?s experientially-based curriculum at odds with the institutionally sanctioned curriculum of Hogwarts? students, parents, and administrators, though with one notable exception. Harry, though internally critical of Hagrid's pedagogy, shows the most willingness to indulge Hagrid's pedagogy, perhaps because like Hagrid, his body has never been well-protected under the uncaring guardianship of his aunt Petunia and uncle Vernon.

The ugly

Severus Snape serves in several professional positions at Hogwarts over the course of Rowling's seven novels: first as Potions teacher, then Defense against the Dark Arts teacher, and ultimately, Headmaster of Hogwarts. Consistently across these three professional roles, Snape's pedagogy is marked by an interactional stance that at best is described as "cold" and "deadly calm" (Rowling 1999, 170, 171) and at worst, "cruel", "snarled", and "snide" (Rowling 2003, 83). The "ugliness" of Snape's disposition towards students is reflected in the language he uses to talk about them—"dunderheads" (Rowling 1997, 109), "easy prey", and "fools" (Rowling 2003, 536)—and to talk to them:

> "Before we begin today's lesson," said Snape, … "I think it appropriate to remind you that next June you will be sitting an important examination, during which you will prove how much you have learned about the composition and use of magical potions. Moronic though some of this class undoubtedly are, I expect you to scrape an 'Acceptable' in your O.W.L., or suffer my … displeasure (Rowling 2003, 232)

Such language reflects Snape's "language of practice"—the embodiment of his pedagogical thought and action reflected through "repeatable structures and patterns of experience" (Johnson 1989, 366)—that students come to expect in Snape's teaching. This language of practice is in marked contrast to Remus Lupin's inclusive language; whereas Lupin's language inspires risk-taking in even the least confident student (e.g. Neville Longbottom), Snape's language of practice inhibits the development of the kind of teacher–student trust "that impel[s] students to ask questions, take risks, [and] enjoy learning" (Breese and Nawrocki-Chabin 2007, 32).

Though "ugly", Snape's language of practice is marked by imagery and contradiction. In describing his pedagogical approach to the teaching of potion-making, Snape provides the following description to Harry and his fellow first-years:

> "As there is little foolish wand-waving here, many of you will hardly believe this is magic. I don't expect you will really understand the beauty of the softly simmering cauldron with its shimmering fumes, the delicate power of liquids that creep through human veins, bewitching the mind, ensnaring the senses … I can teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory, even stopper death—if you aren't as big a bunch of dunderheads as I usually have to teach" (Rowling 1997, 136, 137).

Snape presents an image of potions-making that, as he states above, is "delicate" and yet "bewitching". Similar image-filled, yet contradictory, discourse appears in Snape's first and only year as a DADA teacher. In a room where "curtains ha[ve] been drawn over the windows, and … lit by candlelight", Snape describes the Dark Arts as "many varied, ever-changing, and eternal"; an art "[requiring defenses that] must therefore be as flexible and inventive as the arts [one seeks] to undo" (Rowling 2005, 177, 178).

Through memory, the images and contradictions associated with Snape's language of practice are accessed, and the intersection of his personal and professional identities are revealed. It is also through memory that one comes to know the stories Snape lives by—a life-long precarious situation under the threat of Lord Voldemort's overthrow of wizarding society, a "half-blood" (an individual with one Wizard parent and one Muggle parent) who grew up in a poor Muggle environment, a double agent planted by Lord Voldemort though working on behalf of Headmaster Albus Dumbledore, and a wizard in love with Harry Potter's deceased mother and in competition with Harry's deceased father. Through Snape's embodied memories in life (Rowling 2003) and disembodied memories at his death (Rowling 2007), the reader comes to see that the stories Snape lives by and that shape his pedagogical knowledge and identity as a Hogwarts teacher are marked with shame and contrition, and in contrast, by stealth, cleverness, patience, and restraint.

Despite Snape's restrained professional demeanor as a Hogwarts educator, emotional cracks periodically surface in Snape's interactions—and hence in his language of practice—with Harry. One notable crack occurs during Harry's Occlumency lesson with Snape. On Dumbledore's orders, Snape attempts to teach Harry this magical skill designed to block Lord Voldemort from accessing Harry's thoughts. Despite Harry's several failed practice attempts to block Snape from accessing his thoughts, Snape cruelly admonishes Harry

about "[f]ools who wear their hearts proudly on their sleeves, who cannot control their emotions, who wallow in sad memories and allow themselves to be provoked this easily ... " (Rowling 2003, 536). Yet, it is Snape who is unable to guard his own emotional responses, whose own "sad memories" allow him to be easily provoked. This failure is witnessed both through Snape's refusal to provide Harry with future Occlumency lessons, but also in hindsight when Snape—with a "twisted smile" (Rowling 1999, 171)—indirectly reveals to Harry and his classmates the most obvious and practical of facts: Remus Lupin is a werewolf.

In the end, it is Snape's language of practice that marks him as a Hogwarts teacher. It is a language filled with imagery and contradiction, and it is in direct contradiction to the risk-taking Snape assumes in his service as a double-agent for Dumbledore on behalf of Hogwarts. As such, Snape is the one character who Rowling compels the reader to reexamine at the end of the series where with his dying breath Snape tells Harry, "look ... at ... me" (Rowling 2007, 658), giving Harry permission to access his memories. It is in these last scenes of the novels that Snape's pedagogy is contextualized within the details of his personal history and present experience, "reveal[ing] the best of [him]" (Rowling 2007, 679)—as a person and as a pedagogue—only at the end of the series and retrospectively through memory.

What we can learn

In closing, by presenting the narratives of teaching of these three Hogwarts teachers—from their perspective and within the context of their personal and professional histories and identities—we attempt to broaden the understanding of their pedagogical practice and curriculum-making by foregrounding the emotional and cognitive aspects of teacher thought and action (knowledge) in the assessment of teacher practice and quality. We do so through an inquiry into the personal practical knowledge that undergirds their professional practice as depicted across Rowling's seven Harry Potter novels. This knowledge, which is the embodiment of one's lived experiences, provides the narrative perspective and context by which their pedagogical practice and curriculum-making can be and should be assessed. We highlight this knowledge in order to broaden the portrayal and evaluation of the fictional teachers at Hogwarts, while similarly supporting methodological approaches designed to assess and evaluate real-life teachers that incorporate the narrative expression of their knowledge and within a historical and pedagogical context.

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