
Byronic Hero in Harry Potter

The Byronic hero can be considered as a cultural figure as much as a literary phenomenon. It has survived through time and can be seen in films and fiction even today. The famous predecessors of Byronic hero such as Heathcliff in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and Rochester in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, continue to attract attention of the leading actors even to the present day. He is a character with a brooding sense and stays away from the social mainstream, thus considered an outcast. He seeks constantly the woman he loves though she rejects him, hoping beyond hope that she will finally accept his devotion. He does not accept that his lover is simply not interested and he carries a torch for her. One result of this rejection is that the Byronic hero, when not feeling miserable, takes out his misery on those around him. In Byron's day Lord Thomas Maccaulay described the Byronic figure as "proud, moody, cynical – with defiance on his brow, and misery in his heart, a scorner of his kind, implacable in revenge, yet capable of deep and strong affection" (qtd. in Wolfson 695).

The common criteria among Professor Snape and the Byronic hero is that they both hate humanity. A common example is his hate for his students. He calls them "a big bunch of Dunderheads" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 137).

J.K. Rowling portrays Snape as a Byronic hero in his relationship with Lily Evans and as the tormentor of Harry Potter. Snape is much like the other Byronic heroes - Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* and Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, in his characteristics of showing unrequited love, an alltime devotion to Lily, constant brooding, enjoying loneliness and taking out his misery on those around him. The seventh book, *The Deathly Hallows*, shows the darker side of romantic love and its adult pain. It is here that the frustrated love that Severus Snape, the potions professor and tormentor of Harry Potter, bears for Lily Evans, Harry's mother is revealed. The presentation of Snape's love for Lily throughout all the seven books resembles the Byronic hero. He hates Harry and does not stop once to humiliate or torture him.

Harry is humiliated in his first class when Snape questions him about potions and Harry is unable to answer. Snape comments sarcastically, "Tut, Tut– fame clearly isn't everything."

In *The Chamber of Secrets*, Snape calls Hermione an "insufferable know it all". He goes out of his way to place Harry in difficult situations- like he arranges for Harry to duel Draco Malfoy at a school assembly.

In *The Prisoner of Azkaban* Snape catches Harry sneaking back to the castle from an unauthorized visit to Hogsmeade and compares him to his father with a face "face full of malice" (284). He also tells about the trick played on him by Harry's father and his friends that almost cost him his life, "with a terrible grin twisting his face," The story concludes when Snape's "uneven, yellowish teeth [are] barred" (285).

Snape always speaks of Harry with a sneer. In the *Tri Wizard Tournament* Snape was convinced that Harry had stolen the gillyweed from his private stocks to perform the second task he threatens him with the banned truth serum, *Veritaserum* to get the truth out (*Goblet of Fire* 517).

Snape lacks the qualities of a good teacher. Even when Harry follows Snape's instructions and makes a good potion he is criticized as not being a good wizard. He tells Harry that while he may "live under the delusion that the entire wizarding world is impressed with you," for his part, Snape considers "Potter ... nothing but a nasty little boy who considers rules to be beneath him" (516).

Like a typical Byronic hero Snape has very few social skills and maintains a cold relationship with his colleagues but respects their skills. Snape qualifies as a Byronic hero as the reason of his hatred for Harry is a mystery in most part of the novel. As a student of Hogwarts Snape had an interest in Dark Arts and though he was a Mudblood, he took pride in being a member of the Slytherings. His fellow students teased him mercilessly about his dress and hair calling him Snivellus.

In The Prisoner of Azkaban, when he meets his fellow students in Shrieking Shack, it is found that Snape dislikes them considerably. When later he joins Hogwarts after leaving Lord.

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