# CELTIC MYTHOLOGICAL SYMBOLS IN ROWLING'S HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE

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#### **Abstract**

Symbol in literary work is often considered as unimportant thing in part of literary work because sometimes, symbol is only a little part of the story. Although actually symbol play an important role in the story as a tool to delivered the meaning that want to emphasize by the author. Which in this research the writer analyzed the symbol of celtic mythology in the novel harry potter and the sorcerer's stone. In order to find out the symbol of celtic mythology in the novel, this researcher conducted a descriptive-qualitative method with mythological approach and celtic myth theory to find all the symbol of celtic myth in the novel. The result of the research show that in the novel Harry potter and the sorcerer's stone there are three symbols of celtic mythology, which are the symbol of purity that picturized as a unicorn, the form of shape-shifting and the last is a harp of dagda. those symbols function as a tools to modify the story, to give a sense of the stroy to be more interesting and as a bridge beetwen the previouse story to the next story.

Key words: Celtic, Mythology, symbol

## INTRODUCTION

Harry Potter and The Sorcerer's stone is the first sequel of Harry potter series written by J.K Rowling. It is a phenomenal book in the world. J.K. Rowling published her first novel series in 1997 and it has been sold for more than 450 million copies in the whole world. Harry Potter's life is written in this novel in a very interesting ways. Furthermore, the author also gives an amazing touch of culture in the novel. As a britain and christian Rowling put kinds of interesting character and object inside of her novel, the writer can see this things by analyzing the novel (Afrianto & Inayati, 2016). She used the culture and tradition to gift a taste in the story that she create to attract the reader of the novel. Harry potter and the sorcerer's stone success to be her first novel series and make her famous. While the story of harry potter itself was packaged in a very interesting ways by her. Harry Potter is the only child of James and Lily Potter. Both of them are killed by the ruler of the darkness "Lord Voldemort" in a battle between the White Witch with the glutton death. Harry himself is nearly killed during the fight, but miraculously when a spell curse the demise from Voldemort to him, the curse instead turns toward Voldemort himself. Moreover, his soul apart from his body, while Harry survives with only scars like a bolt of lightning on his head, for that reason Harry is also known as survival child.

In Hogwarts, Harry's life is full of magic, until one day Harry and his friends break the school rules. They are punished by Professor McGonagall to go to the forbidden forest and to find out about who has killed the holly creature (Unicorn) that lives in the Forbidden forest. It is then revealed that the Unicorn is killed by Voldemort, the man who gives the scars on Harry's forehead. He must kill and drink the blood of Unicorn in order to survive from the curse that reflects back to him after he attacks Harry in that terrible night or he

will die immediately. This part of the story becomes one of the discussions of this research, since Unicorn is one of the symbol from Celts mythology.

Moreover the discussion of this novel is not only about the symbols of purity by celtic mythology, the story also become more interesting when the writer find another symbol of celtic myth inside of the story. The author put those symbols of Celtic myth to emphesaize the mythical atmosphere in the story . The purpose of it is to attract the reader of the novel and to deliver the message of the story through the symbols of myth (Adelina & Suprayogi, 2020; Puspita & Amelia, 2020; K. Sari & Pranoto, 2021).

Mythology gives a sense of education to literature, in the form of culture or tradition (Amelia & Daud, 2020; Endang Woro Kasih, 2018; EWK, 2018). Mythology is the study and interpretation of often sacred tales or fables of a culture known as 'myths' or the collection of such stories which usually deal with the human condition, good and evil, human origins, life and death, the afterlife, and the gods (Mandasari et al., n.d.; Pratiwi et al., 2020; Suprayogi Suprayogi & Pranoto, 2020). Myths express the beliefs and values about these subjects held by a certain culture (Amelia, 2021a; Journal & Kiranamita, 2021; Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021).

Myth is created by the culture from the ancients to give people understanding about nature, human, supernatural beings, creatures and many others to express their beliefs and value (Al Falaq & Puspita, 2021b; Keanu, 2018; Nurmala Sari & Aminatun, 2021). However mythology criticism attempts to bring out the cultural myths underlying literature, and many are indeed apparent in novel, poem and play (Kuswoyo et al., 2020a; Purwaningsih & Gulö, 2021; Puspita, 2021a). Myth often means different things to different people, myth can be defined neither by its object nor by its material, Myth will never have a fixed form of its own form. In fact, mythology will gift us understanding about the encient, the reason why they did such kind of thing, will help us learn abou what we have to do when kind of things happen to us (Amelia, 2021b; Kardiansyah, 2016; Kuswoyo et al., 2020b).

Celtic mythology is an ancient British myth. It is a belief of the Iron Age Celts before the Christianity comes. The Celts worship variety of gods that appear in their tales. Each tribe has its own God who protects and provides the welfare of that tribe, for example Dagda, the god of life and death in Ireland, is known as the good God as well as the leader of the Gods at his time. After the coming of Christianity in the fifth century onwards, the monks record the myths of Celts, and there are so many myths that survive today (Al Falaq & Puspita, 2021a; An & Suyanto, 2020; Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2020). It means, Celtic mythology influences a belief of Christian in Britain, some aspects like symbol by Celtic mythology is reflected in Christian belief.

Regarding to the issue; the writer chooses this novel because the novel uses the symbols of Celtic mythology. The novel provides insights of how the symbol is described and applied in the story. J.K. Rowling puts a touch of symbol of Celts mythology inside of the novel, to make the readers feel the atmosphere of the story. Symbol is a figure of speech that is used when an author wants to create a certain mood or emotion in a work of literature. Symbol can also be a tool to signify the ideas and qualities by giving the literary work symbolic meanings that are different from the literal sense. It is the used of an object, person, situation or word to represent something else, like an idea, in literature. Symbol is used to

deliver the meaning of something critically in literature (Amelia & Dintasi, 2019; Ngestirosa et al., 2020; Sartika & Pranoto, 2021).

Symbol has an important part of the story, as a bridge between the previous story to the next story to make the reader understand about the plot of the story that written by the author of the novel (Heaverly & EWK, 2020; Liu et al., 2020; Mertania & Amelia, 2020). Without it, it will hard for the reader to understand the meaning of the story. For that reason, the function of symbol as a form of communication is important to be understood. A true symbol has no fixed meaning but, rather, points to a greater reality that can never be totally understood because it contains wisdom that transcends the knowing mind that usually reflected in literature (Journal et al., 2021; Samanik & Lianasari, 2018; Setri & Setiawan, 2020).

Literature is a written work that considered as an art, because as a work of art, literature does not only have aesthetic values, but also educational value. According to Arthur Krystal in *What Is Literature*: "literary means not only what is written but what is voiced, what is expressed, what is invented, in whatever form". Literature becomes a media to transferring the culture and tradition in the form of words and narration (Gulö, 2014a; Puspita, 2021b; S Suprayogi & Pranoto, 2020). It can be also in the form of allegory, metaphor or symbol. To make the reader get the point and education of the literary work in an attractive way because through the symbol tradition also can be accepted by the reader implicitly (Ayu et al., 2017; Pustika, 2020; Laila Ulsi Qodriani & Wijana, 2020).

This research focuses on the symbol of Celtic mythology, since the function of symbol is to emphasise the story inside of the novel and to deliver the message from the author to the reader, moreover this research also explaining the description of Celtic mythology, and this becomes the reason why the writer wants to discuss about the reflection of symbolof Celtic mythology in Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Sorcerer's Stone*.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

# Mythological approach

Mythological approach is a symbol, character, situation, or image that comes from a deep universal response. Myths also a primitive fictional, illusions, or opinions based on a reason from the ancient. This approach also emphasizes the recurrent universal patterns underlying most literary works. Combine the knowledge from anthropology, psychology, history, and comparative religion. Mythology is highly developed elements of the collective unconscious. Being unconscious, the existence of mythology can only be deduced indirectly by examining behavior, images, art, religions, or dreams.

## **Transitivity System**

## **Celtic Mythology**

Celtic mythology is a belief of Celts at that time before the Christianity come. It was lived with a thousand of tales, and stories about their deities, creatures and many others. Celtic mythology referred to stories from the ancient race of people known as the Celts, who spoke the Celtic language. They were a varied people bound together by language, customs, and religion. Just like the other myth, Celts also have a kind of hierarchical pantheon, but it

is different with oth er myth like Greek mythology (Gulö, 2014b; Kardiansyah, 2019; Laila U Qodriani & Wijana, 2020). Celts did not have an organized hierarchical pantheon, celts see their gods as a families arranged. Mythology of celts is close to the nature, the corelete their god to the nature and animal for example the descendants of Danu or Dôn, both mother goddesses. These gods did not live in the sky but in mountains and the sea, in trees and in running streams.

## **METHOD**

In doing this research, the writer uses qualitative research. Qualitative research as follows Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social context of particular populations (F. M. Sari & Wahyudin, 2019). The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (Choirunnisa & Sari, 2021; Srianto, 2018)

Since It implies that descriptive-qualitative research is to describe the issue that happens in some places especially in Afghanistan. By using qualitative research, the data will be in form of words. On the other hand, we can understand of phenomenon what the subject research done (Gulö, 2018). The ability to develop performing within the method has been explained or depicted the matter in conclusion especially the theory has used of according true or not yet. Then, the other will know the theory has correlated or has not with the issue that has developed by the researcher. Thus, the statement above has correlated with the phenomenon which is happening where the researcher must know the phenomenon happened so it will learn by the reader what actually happened in the context. Than Qualitative research can be reported by using narrative explanation without numbering or statistical analysis (Nuraziza et al., 2021; Pranoto & Afrilita, 2019; Putra et al., 2022). Therefore, this research uses qualitative method. The data is taken from J.K. Rowling novel entitled *Harry Potter and The Sorcerer's Stone* that contain the Celts mythology symbol of purity inside of the story.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This analysis is focused on describing Celtic mythological symbols that reflected in Rowling's *Harry Potter and The Sorcerer's Stone*, and the symbols are: symbol of purity, the harp of Dagda and the dragon of Celtic myth

## 4.1. The Symbol of Purity

Symbol is used to deliver the meaning of something critically in literature (Suprayogi Suprayogi et al., 2021). Symbol can be a tool to signify the ideas and qualities by giving the literary work symbolic meanings that are different from the literal sense. It is the uses of an object, person, situation or word to represent something else, like an idea, in literature The symbol helps the reader of literary work to implicitly get the meaning of what is the author trying to deliver to the reader in the story. Symbol played an important part in the story that has function to connect the idea of one chapter into another.

Further, in the *Harry Potter and The Sorcerer's Stone* novel, there are also some symbols that is concerned as mythological symbols. One of the symbols that can be seen is the Celtic mythology symbol of purity that is described as a Unicorn. In many mythological story or fairy tale, the existence of unicorn is quite famous, since in the story book of

fantasy, the author put them as one of the mythical creatures that live freely and friendly to human. However, in this story, the author symbolized this creature as the symbol that is related to Celtic mythology.

Talking about Celtics, they are one of the ancestors from Britain. Celts gradually infiltrated Britain over the course of the centuries between 500 and 100 B.C. Yet, Celtic mythology itself is a belief of Celts before the Christianity's arrival. Celtic mythology tells about their beliefs and values. The story about their mythology is formed into a thousand of tales, and stories about their deities, creatures and many others.

However, in this story, unicorn is killed by the lord Voldemort. He has to kill that mythical creature so that he can consume it so that he can survive from his own curse. Voldemort kills the unicorn although he knows that killing the unicorn is forbidden since by drinking its blood, whatever the creature will be cursed for life.

"That is because it is a monstrous thing, to slay a unicorn," said Firenze. "Only one who has nothing to lose, and everything to gain, would commit such a crime. The blood of a unicorn will keep you alive, even if you are an inch from death, but at a terrible price. You have slain something pure and defenseless to save yourself, and you will have but a half-life, a cursed life, from the moment the blood touches your lips."

(Rowling, 1997: 190)

The author is trying to convey the same situation as like the Celts did, which is they did not kills horse or even eat their meats in order to honor them as their partner in battle and also to honor the goddess of Epona. Although there is someone who dares to kills them, it can be said that it is not a person but something more like inhuman that worship evil.

Table 1. Comparison of celtic symbol of purity in the novel

<u></u>	
Celtic Myth	Novel
	That is because it is a monstrous thing, to slay a unicorn," said Firenze. "Only one who has nothing to lose, and everything to gain, would commit such a crime.

In this part of the story one of the character in the novel (Firenze) emphasizing the action of killing the unicorn (a white horse) is "a monstrous thing" because when someone kills the unicorn they "would commit such a crime". It has a same theme with Celtic mythology, in which killing the horse is forbidden for them.

In the belief of celts, they often paired the white horse with the celtic oak and the unicorn with the celtic winter holly, to represents the re-birth that winter brings. They see a white horse as a transformation of a white horse and connect both of it to the sacred oak tree, from winter to spring. It means the unicorn purified the condition of the nature from winter to spring. in which it makes the nature survive and gift the re-birth of the nature.

The author of the novel try to create a stronger atmosphere in the story, by putting the unicorn as a symbol of purity from Celtic mythology, the author make the reader get in

touch with it. The action did by someone who killed the unicorn is something really terrible, and it is represent a believer of Celts about killing a horse is a taboo things to do.

Because they believe the horse, especially the white horse is paired with the Celtic Oak and the unicorn with the Celtic holly to represents the duality of the two trees. The summer oak becomes the winter holly and the white horse becoming the Unicorn. The strength of the white horse brought the Celts through summer while the Unicorn's endurance helped the Celts survive the re-birth that winter brings.

Here, the author's religion also affects the character of the unicorn. Since J. K Rowling is a Christian, then it could be the aspect of how she creates a story in the novel. In Christian, people believe that a white horse is symbolizing the purity and it was written in **The Pulpit Commentary - The New Testament**. (Spense, Exell). Therefore, the writer assumes that the indication of unicorn existence is influenced by those things mentioned above.

Although the unicorn itself is just mentioned in certain parts of the story, but the purpose of this mythical creature is quite important since it is symbolized an ancient history of Celts' believe. The unicorn emphasized the function of the symbol in the novel as a tool to transfer the meaning of the story and create the atmosphere to make the reader get in touch with the story that created by the author. Afterwards, the unicorn also proves that mythology also can be a system of culture. As it is mentioned previously, just like unicorn, the Celts treat horse as their partner of war and to honor the Epona so that they are have no intention to kills and consume horse.

# **Shape-shifting** (Transfiguration)

Transfiguration is an ability to change in form or appearance, according to oxford dictionary, "transfiguration is a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state". In Celtic mythology transfiguration is well known as Shape-shifting. Shape-shifting is an ability of god and goddess in Celtic mythology. When gods and goddesses possess the ability to shape-shifting, it means that they could change themselves into animal or goods and even vice-versa. The Celts typically did not described gods and goddesses divinities in human form, since they had power of shape shifting assuming multiple forms, including both humans and animals

Dealing with shape-shifting, Celtic folklore was telling the form of shape shifting of their gods, as the writer mention in the part of Literary review about Celtic Mythology, the gods and goddess of Celt could change themselves into animals and grain wheat in order to self protection or to show their power to others. This symbol of transfiguration will emphasize the supernatural atmosphere of the story. Since symbol is a figure of speech that is used when author wants to creates certain moods or emotions in literary work. Symbol can also be a tool to signify the ideas and qualities by giving the literary work symbolic meanings that are different from the literal sense.

The form of shape-shifting is can be seen in the first chapter when professor McGonagall and professor Dumbledore visiting Harry in his uncle's house. Professor McGonagall form of transfiguration is first seen in chapter one when her and professor Dumbledore were in Privet Drive.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Fancy seeing you here, Professor McGonagall." He turned to smile at the tabby, but it had gone. Instead he was smiling at a rather severe-looking woman who was wearing square glasses exactly the shape of the markings the cat had had

around its eyes. She, too, was wearing a cloak, an emerald one. Her black hair was drawn into a tight bun. She looked distinctly ruffled. "How did you know it was me?" she asked. "
(Rowling, 1997: 6)

The quotation is indicating as prove of the transfiguration or in this case, the shape-shifting progress of Professor McGonagall from cat into human form. In this part of quotation, this is the part of the story where the story is about to begin. As additional information, although Professor McGonagall can change herself into inhuman form, it does not mean she is an antagonist character, instead, she is one of the major protagonist character who is then will help Harry, the main character of the story as one of the teacher.

Table 2. The shape-shifting between humans and animals in the novel

Celtic Myth	Novel
	Instead he was smiling at a rather severe-looking woman who was wearing square glasses exactly the shape of the markings the cat had had around its eyes.

The cat that seating all day long at the Fence in the corner of Privet Drive, was change itself into a woman who was wearing square glasses exactly the shape of the markings the cat . The cat that sitting at the fence was transformed itself into a woman which is professor McGonagall.

The purpose of shape-shifting in this part of the story is to camouflage, because wizards are forbidden to show themselves or even use their magic to the muggle's world. That is why professor McGonagall, change herself into a cat because she is protecting wizard's world. This part of the story also shows the same theme of transfiguration in Celts myth. Just like what just stated in Celtic folklore story about *Taliesin* in chapter two. It has a same theme with the story which is human can change himself into an animal.

Professor McGonagall shows the students the magic of transfiguration. She gives the example by changing the desk into animal (a pig) and turn it back into its origin. Although the magic looks very easy to do, but Professor McGonagall warned the students to not mess with this kind of magic. Since in mastering one magic, it will needs at least years and that is why McGonagall feels that the students are not ready yet to do the practice

Table 3. Comparison of shape-shifting from human to a thing in the novel

Celtic Myth	Novel
Gwion change himself into a grain wheat and Ceridwen into a hen, and Ceridwen eat the Gwion.	Then she changed her desk into a pig and back again. They were all very impressed and couldn't wait to get started, but soon realized they weren't going to be changing the furniture into animals for a long time

The author tries to give the analogy between the prologues of the story into this part to remind the reader the same theme that could happen in some of events in the story. The author gives the same symbol which is the symbol of shape-shifting by Celtic myth in the form of transfiguration. The author using the same character who can change herself into an animal which is professor McGonagall to be the one who teach the students about the ability of shape-shifting that she can do and the writer understand about the reason why the author chose her as the one who teach it. Than this part of the story is showing the same theme of shape-shifting by Celtic myth, Celtic gods can change themselves into thing or animals. The table shows that a desk is changed into a pig is proofing that the story have a same theme but in the different object and form. This proves that they can also change an animal into things and vice versa.

## The Harp of Dagda

The Dagda is a powerful Irish god, also known as Eochaid Ollathair "All Father", Ruad Rofhessa "Lord of Great Knowledge", or Lord of the Heavens. His name means "good", and is known as the god of protection, warriors, knowledge, the arts, magic, music, initiation, prophecy, weather, reincarnation, death, fire, the sun, healing, regeneration, prosperity and plenty. The Dagda was an artisan and a diviner, a husbandman and a warrior and a wise king, all at once.

The Dagda was described as a huge and stocky man, with superhuman strength as well as superhuman appetite. He possessed several magical objects. One of them was a great treasure of the Tuatha Dé Danann, the magic cauldron from a magical city of Murias. Cauldron that was never empty and from which no one went away hungry. The ladle was so big that two people could lie in it. Dagda also owned an orchard of fruit trees where the fruit was always ripe and two pigs that were cooked and ready to eat. In addition, he had a club with two ends—one for killing living people and the other for bringing the dead back to life. The Dagda also possessed a magic oak harp called Uaithne, or "the Four Angled Music", used to change the seasons and weather, or to command the order of battle.

The Dagda has great magical powers, and the harp which comes to him when he calls and this harp also can play by itself. Dagda's harp was made of oak, it was covered in rich decorations including a double headed fish which ran up and down the curved pillar and had jewels for its eyes. This harp was had a magical power to heal, to strengthen or even to make the one who heard the music that played by the harp fell asleep. According to Friedman and Johnson on their website *The Dagda's Harp (An Irish Legend)*:

"The women bowed their heads and closed their eyes and fell asleep. The children crawled into their mothers' laps and curled up and slept. The men could not stay standing. They dropped into their seats and nodded off, closing their eyes, one after another after another until the only sound besides the music of sleep was the sound of their snores. "

In the room with the three headed dog, Harry and his friends see something that indicates as the magical item that is able to make the dog silent in his sleep. This magical item is in

the form of harp, a harp that has been spelled so that it can played by its own. Unfortunately, they come just right at the wrong time. A few moments after they enter the room, the music is stop and the beast starts to wake up.

Table 4. The reflection of dagda's harp in the novel

	<u> </u>
Celtic Myth	Novel
The power of Dagda's harp is not	"What's that at its feet?" Hermione
only can change the seasons but also	whispered. "Looks like a harp," said
could make the enemy fall a sleep,	Ron. "Snape must have left it
he played the song with his harp and	there." ."It must wake up the moment
the song could slowly make the	you stop playing," said Harry. "Well,
warrior falling asleep.	here goes"

The harp in the novel also plays the same role like The Dagda's harp in Celtic mythology, when the harp start to play its music, the three headed dog (fluffy) is fall asleep. When Hermione said "Snape must have left it there ", Hermione assumes that Professor Snape was left the harp there, and spelled it to make the three-headed dog fall asleep so he can sneak out to the room and stole the sorcerer's stone.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mythology is an ancient belief to make people understand about their belief and value. While mythological criticism is a symbol, character, situation, or image that comes from a deep universal response. Mythology also combination of anthropology, psychology, history, and comparative religion that combine into one. However mythology criticism attempts to bring out the cultural myths underlying literature, and many are indeed apparent in novel, poem and play. Myth often means different things to different people, myth can be defined neither by its object nor by its material, Myth will never have a fixed form of its own form. In fact, mythology will gift us understanding about the ancient, the reason why they did such kind of thing, will help us learn about what we have to do when kind of things happen to us.

Here, the writer tries to find the mythical symbols from celtic mythology inside of the novel entitled *Harry Potter and The Sorcerer's Stone* by J. K. Rowling. The result of the research show that in the novel there are three symbols of celtic mythology. The first is symbol of purity that is illustrated by the unicorn, the second is the form of shape-shifting by gods of Celtic myth in the form of transfiguration and the last is Dagda's harp that describe in the novel. This finding was put by the author as a tools to signify the idea and emphasizing the atmosphere of the story to attract and gift understanding to the reader about the things that want to give by the author to the readers, those three symbols was supporting the idea inside of the novel and make the story become more interesting to be read.

Apart from all of that the novel provides insights of how the symbol is describe an applied in the story. J. K. Rowling puts a touch of symbol of celtic mythology inside of the novel which are the symbol of purity " the Unicorn , shape-shifting, and dagda's harp, to make the readers feel the atmosphere of the story.

The unicorn is used by the author of the novel to create a stronger atmosphere in the story to emphasize the use of it as a tools to make the voldemort survive from the death. Meanwhile in celtic mythology, Unicorns endurance helped the celts survive the re-birth that winter brings. This things help the writer to make sure the symbol of purity itself. Then the shape-shifting and the dagda's harp was found as a symbols in this novel. Just like the function of the symbol as a tools, the form of shape-shifting and the the harp of dagda functions to help the author connecting the previous story to the next story and build the chemistry of the story, because symbol can also be a tool to signify the ideas and qualities by giving the literary work symbolic meanings that are different from the literal sense

However, the symbols also help the reader understand the meaning of the story, they will guide the reader to the other plot of the story, than the issues that exist by the symbols make the reader wondering what will happen next and make them continue to read the novel. The purpose of the symbols that has been found by the writer in the novel helps the reader to connect with the story and the massage that author trying to say behind the story. Without it the story will lose the bridge to make the reader understand about the plot of the story.

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