

Harry and Draco: Not as Different as They Seem

Whether you're sorted into Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw, or Slytherin, your background and behavior tell a lot about who you are. Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* are in opposite houses, and at times they seem like opposite characters. Even though Harry and Draco appear different in every way, readers can see how alike these two rivals really are.

The first difference between Harry and Draco is their upbringing. Harry was raised by Muggles (non-magical people), while Draco comes from an elite wizarding family that hates Muggles. When the boys meet for the first time, Draco talks about whether Muggle-born wizards should even attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry:

"I really don't think they should let the other sort in, do you? They're just not the same, they've never been brought up to know our ways. Some of them have never even heard of Hogwarts until they get the letter, imagine. I think they should keep it in the old wizarding families." (Rowling 61)

Harry doesn't respond to Draco's comment. Even though Harry is from an "old wizarding family" like Draco's, he is one of those people who had not heard of Hogwarts because of his Muggle upbringing. Draco's negative opinion about families he believes to be "lower" than his family creates his first conflict with Harry.

The way that Draco and Harry treat people from other backgrounds is another difference between them. On the Hogwarts Express, Harry and Draco meet again, this time with Ron Weasley. Harry makes friends with Ron, while Draco immediately insults him.

"You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there."

[Draco] held out his hand to shake Harry's, but Harry didn't take it.

"I think I can tell who the wrong sort is for myself, thanks," he said coolly. (Rowling 81)

Harry won't join in with Draco's put-down and even refuses to shake his hand. Harry is the kind of person who stands up for people, while Draco tears them down. But even though Harry and Draco are early enemies, their character traits can be quite similar, too.

They are both competitive and passionate about their houses. Both boys are even willing to break Hogwarts rules for their own purposes. When Hagrid, the school groundskeeper, has an illegal dragon that is about to hatch, Harry convinces his friends to break the rules and see it.

"Hermione, how many times in our lives are we going to see a dragon hatching?" (said Harry.)

"We've got lessons, we'll get into trouble, and that's nothing to what Hagrid's going to be in when someone finds out what he's doing." (Rowling 171)

Harry and his friends end up sneaking out to see the dragon. But, as they are about to leave, they find out that another student has also broken the rules to see the dragon: Draco.

Harry bolted to the door and looked out. Even at a distance there was no mistaking him. Malfoy had seen the dragon. (Rowling 172)

Harry broke the rules to protect Hagrid, and Draco broke the rules to get Harry in trouble. Their motivations are different, but neither character seems to care too much about Hogwarts rules. Later on, they both get detention at Hogwarts for different reasons, demonstrating that their behavior is treated the same way.

Even though Harry and Draco are enemies throughout the book, they are not completely different. Their similarities help them grow, and their differences help them make choices that are right for their character. Their houses may be opposites, but their characters certainly aren't.