Mikaela Burke

Second Draft- Paper 1

At recess on the third day of second grade, a girl named Althea handed over to me her copy of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone. “Don’t forget to give it back as soon as you’re done!” she said. The day before, we were assigned seats next to each other in class. That was when I first saw her reading it. “Hey, what book is that?” I asked. She replied, “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone! It’s my favorite book so far. You can borrow it after I read it if you want.” Even though I wasn’t much of a reader, I didn’t want to upset my new friend by not wanting to read her favorite book. So, as convincingly as possible, I said, “Sure!” The next night I read the first of what turned out to be thousands of pages about a boy named Harry, the Boy Who Lived. I never expected to fall completely in love with the story like I did. I found myself overwhelmed with anticipation because I could not wait for the next morning so that I could tell my new friend how amazing the first chapters of the book were. The following morning when we took our seats in the second grade classroom, I turned to Althea and immediately gushed, “I’m already half-way done with the book! I love it!” She returned my enthusiasm saying, “I know! Isn’t it great? You have to read the rest tonight because the ending is awesome.” Then in the middle of our conversation, we heard another voice that was as excited as ours say, “Hey, I’m reading that right now too!” We turned around and saw a girl with ridiculously curly brown hair holding another copy of the first Harry Potter novel. A million questions ensued. “What chapter are you on?” “Can you believe how evil the Dursley family is?” “Which character is your favorite?” The conversation went on and on all throughout the day up until we were waiting in the Parent Pick-Up line for our rides home. I promised them I would read as much as I could of the book that night because I was so far behind that I was holding up the conversation.

After that day, the three of us were inseparable. We ate lunch together everyday and had three-way phone calls for hours almost every night. These were some of the liveliest conversations that I have ever had, and they were not always about Harry Potter. We talked about our horoscopes, the intense drama happening in second grade, and just about everything else in between. The only thing that stopped us from talking all night was Althea’s lack of T-Mobile minutes. A few weeks later, we all made sure that we read Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets in time for the movie to come out so that our parents could drop us off at the movie theater to watch it together. Seeing the movie just made the books even more real to us.

For some reason, I know that no series other than Harry Potter would have brought the three of us together so closely. Maybe it was because no other series was quite like it at the time. The books required of second graders to read were just not that entertaining to us. Arthur, Johnny Appleseed, and random books about dinosaurs had nothing on the excitement that came from Dumbledore, Hogwarts, and Fluffy the three-headed dog. Johnny Appleseed didn’t have a pensieve to store his memories in or a phoenix with tears that heal; Arthur’s house didn’t have paintings that talked, Nearly-Headless Nick, or staircases that moved; and Fluffy the three-headed dog was about the scariest thing that we could handle when we were second graders. Or maybe it was because no other series gave us a glimmer of hope for a letter from Hogwarts when we finally hit the golden age of eleven. Althea was the first to turn eleven; needless to say, she didn’t get a letter. Olivia and I took it upon ourselves to write one to her though, just because. It said something along the lines of, “Dear Ms. Palisoc, We are pleased to inform you of your acceptance into Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry…” I still think that is one of the best birthday presents that I have ever given to someone, just because Olivia and I were so proud of it. Maybe the series brought us together because it was different, exciting, and special. We identified with it because we felt like we were Harry, Ron, and Hermione. They were portrayed as kids like us, who happen to do magic; whatever they felt, we felt too, whenever they were scared, we were scared too, and whenever they cried, we cried too. Harry was the chosen one for us too.

As we grew up and moved on to middle school together, we continued to anxiously wait for the release of the next book: Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince. It was the same routine every time J.K. Rowling created a new masterpiece since we were second graders: we would hear about it, start a countdown, and be some of the first cool kids to own a copy of the newest book. No one knew Harry Potter like we did. We were the kids who would correct people if they were talking about the series and they forgot to mention something or they said something wrong. We would plead with our parents to let us go to the midnight movie premieres then get shot down the majority of the time for reasons that just made no sense to us: “But Mom, why can’t you pick us up when the movie is over?! It will only be 3 a.m.” That didn’t faze us though. Every time a new movie came out we would try again; when we finally got to go to the premiere of Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix at midnight, it was everything that we always thought it would be. Some people were in complete Hogwarts attire, wands and all; as if they were ready to either start Potions Class or duel. I would have never done it, but I can appreciate the people who did. They were some of the coolest, weirdest people ever. Just like some of the most admirable characters in the novels, they were not even slightly concerned about what anyone was thinking about them. I don’t know about Olivia and Althea, but I remember thinking that was awesome at the time. That midnight premiere and all of the ones after were one of a kind.

Around the same time that the Order of the Phoenix hit theaters, the final installment of the series, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, was released. It was just before the beginning of our last year of middle school, and it was the last time that we would all be obsessed with the releasing of a new book. At the same time, it was the last year that all three of us would be going to the same school. For high school, all three of us were going our separate ways. When we finished reading the final novel, it was exactly like we were Harry, Ron, and Hermione in their final times at Hogwarts. However, instead of finally destroying Voldemort and his Death Eaters, we squeezed past the awkward and sometimes just horrible stages of middle school: the weird dances on Fridays, the school uniforms, the weekly spelling quizzes, and the evil bully Ashlyn. These were our trolls in the dungeon, our Voldemorts, our Dementors. So, maybe Ashlyn didn’t really have the potential to suck out our souls, but at times I think she was about as close as a person can get. She was the type of person that if you were getting a drink at the water fountain, and she got in line behind you, you suddenly weren’t thirsty anymore or if you were on the monkey bars at the playground, and Ashlyn wanted to use the monkey bars, you got off the monkey bars. She was just scary. Still, we were finally free from her and on to bigger and better things.

After all, the development of the Harry Potter series paralleled our lives growing up together and the closing of our experience as students at Sacred Heart School. The series brought us together in a way that nothing else ever would have. It is amazing to think that something like a series of books has the power to connect people so strongly. Not only did it connect with my friends and I, but also with people all over. People who probably would have never been friends or even met each other at all can relate and bond over the Harry Potter series or Harry Potter jokes. People fell in love together with the characters and Hogwarts. I guess I underestimated the impact that a really good book can have.