

Harry Potter and the Crossing of Lakes

“‘Firs years this way!’ bellows Hagrid.” This is what greets all Hogwarts students upon their arrival to school. First years are introduced to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry by journeying across The Black Lake with Hagrid. In the school years to follow, they will instead take the horseless carriages from train to school. The lake is the traditional initiation for these young 11-year-olds just beginning their official foray into the world of magic.

The Black Lake has many appearances throughout the series. It features heavily in book four, when the second Triwizard Tournament challenge is held there. However, it is the crossing of the lake for first years that provides the greatest symbolism. Ironically enough for Harry, his initial trip to Hogwarts is not the first time he crosses a lake via a tiny boat. He undertakes this type of journey before ever reaching Hogwarts’ shores. This is the means by which he escapes from the Dursley’s, also with the help of Hagrid. Before his first trip, Harry learns he is a wizard. When he crosses The Black Lake, he reaches Hogwarts for the first time.

As if this is not enough, Harry crosses a third lake during his sixth, and what turns out to be his final, year at Hogwarts. He crosses the lake inside the cave where Voldemort has hidden a horcrux, this time with the assistance of Dumbledore. Much like the first two crossings, this event leads to a significant change in the life Harry has come to know. Each crossing signifies an important shift for Harry. After this final crossing, Harry leaves Hogwarts and begins actively pursuing his destiny.

By exploring J.K. Rowling’s use of water in these three instances and the various symbolisms of water itself, I hope to prove that the crossing of water signifies a certain type of character growth, specifically for Harry. The water becomes a true rite of passage that provides Harry the opportunity to grow as a person and takes him one step closer to fulfilling his destiny.