Influence Of The Harry Potter Series On The Children’s Literature Market In Terms Of Content

Harry Potter is a widely known children’s fantasy book series written by Joanne Kathleen Rowling, a United Kingdom native. Her book series garnered mass success by selling approximately 450 million copies in a variety of different languages (Cox, 2017). In just one week after its release, Harry Potter and The Philosopher’s Stone surpassed sales of all other books from prior years. The series has gotten incredibly popular, that not only has it brought in huge revenues from the books, but the movies have also been very successful, with the final movie installation bringing in $381 million at the box office (Thompson, 2018). It even has its own themed amusement park; The Wizarding World Of Harry Potter at Universal Studios, Orlando (Sherrill, 2014). In the 1970s, funding for schools and public libraries decreased dramatically. The effect of the Harry Potter series, alongside society's desire for increased financing, had an ameliorative effect on the market for children’s books (Taxel, 2002). This essay will demonstrate how the Harry Potter series has had a colossal impact on the market for children’s books in terms of the types of books now available in bookstores.

The demand for children’s books increased in the market after the Harry Potter series was published in 1997. At that time, reading was not as common of a pastime as was playing video games or watching television (Gunelius, 2008). However, a study conducted in 2005, before the release of the second last Harry Potter installation, showed that there was an astonishing increase in the number of book releases for children every month since the year after the first book was published (Bearn, 2017). The popularity of the Harry Potter titles expanded the market rapidly. When demand increases, supply must follow; it paves the way for other individuals producing the product, which in this case, are authors for young adults and children. Consumers wanted more to read after they had finished reading Harry Potter. Hence, the years between releases of subsequent parts of the series gave other authors a chance to publish their own novels in a market full of people who were longing for something to fulfil their desire to read (Fallon, 2017). Some very popular children’s authors were inspired by the success of Rowling’s work and its effect on children. For example, Rick Riordan, the author of the Percy Jackson and The Olympians series stated that he was also inspired by the way Harry Potter grasped the attention of so many of the elementary school students he taught. When he started writing his own stories, he took note of what made his students like the Harry Potter in the first place (Riordan, 2005). The profitable possibilities of books for children, in addition to the decreased cost of production, allowed for publishers to fill not only bookstores but other public spaces like airports and malls. (Taxel, 2002).

Fantasy became the more dominant genre for children’s books after the release of the Harry Potter series. Prior to that, in the 1990s, fantasy novels had become less and less popular as people were reading more non-fiction books. The wizardry aspect of the books ended up becoming very influential, with fantasy turning out to be one of the most popular genres for children’s books (Buzacott-Speer, 2017). A number of adolescents stated that the Harry Potter series introduced them to reading and also motivated them to read more. They stated that they looked more specifically for novels in this genre after they finished reading the Harry Potter series, especially those books centred around magic and adventure. They added that as soon as they had finished a book, they would begin searching for another one with similar themes

right away (Dempster, Oliver, Sunderland, Thistlethwaite, 2016).

The Harry Potter series introduced a lot of children to books with more pages than they were initially used to. Some who were already avid readers before they started the series found that they were more motivated to read thicker novels (Dempster, Oliver, Sunderland, Thistlethwaite, 2016). In 1996, the average page count of a children's book was 140 pages, but by 2006, after numerous parts of the Harry Potter series had been introduced to the market, the page count jumped significantly to around 290 pages. There was a time before the release of Rowling's series where publishers would deny voluminous manuscripts, but afterwards, it became the new trend and longer books were appreciated (Bearn, 2017). Delving further into the future, by 2016, there was a 115% increase in the page lengths of children's books, and it was decided that the Harry Potter series, which had a relatively high page count, was possibly responsible for that increase to some degree (Buzacott-Speer, 2017).

In the final analysis, the Harry Potter series had a revolutionary effect on the market for children's books. The seven-part series paved the way for other authors to come into the ever-changing and ever-growing book industry, especially as the demand for books increased dramatically after 1997. This trend followed throughout the years as Rowling took breaks between each release to work on the sequel. In addition, the Harry Potter series also popularized the fantasy genre which was not as common prior to its publication. Lastly, the series exposed children to books with a larger number of pages than was common at the time. This acceptance of thicker books allowed those authors who were previously let down by the size of their own writings to also enter the field, especially now with publishers actively seeking books with higher page counts. This gave authors the chance to build on their stories and add more details that would refine the reading process. Although the Harry Potter series isn't the only one that garnered critical acclaim for the fantasy genre, it had a tremendous impact in the aforementioned three ways that molded the market into what it is today, and even brought older, thicker novels back into circulation.