***Harry Potter and the Chambers of Secret***

***Chapter 17***

***Summary and analysis***

***Summary:***

### The Heir of Slytherin

* The Chamber is lined with columns in the shape of snakes.
* Against the back wall is a huge statue of a wizard.
* At the base of the statue is a "small, black-robed figure with flaming-red hair" (17.5).
* Ginny isn't dead, but she won't wake up.
* There is a black-haired boy leaning against a nearby pillar.
* It's Tom Riddle.
* Riddle tells Harry that he is a memory, preserved in a diary for over fifty years.
* Confused, Harry asks Riddle to help him get Ginny out of the Chamber.
* Harry tries to lift Ginny while Riddle picks up Harry's wand.
* Riddle tells Harry that he has been waiting for the chance to speak to Harry.
* Harry finally twigs to the fact that something is wrong.
* Riddle begins to explain.
* Ginny has been writing in Riddle's diary for months and months, spilling her secrets to Riddle.
* Riddle has been writing back to her, making friends with her, and slowly developing his power over her.
* As Riddle's power grows, he begins "feeding Miss Weasley a few of [his] secrets, to start pouring a little of [his] soul back into her" (17.45).
* Riddle uses Ginny to kill the roosters, paint threatening messages on the walls, and set the basilisk on four students and Mrs. Norris.
* Harry is absolutely horrified.
* Riddle continues: Ginny begins to suspect that the diary is responsible for her periods of lost memory and for the terrible things that are happening at the school.
* She throws the diary away.
* Luckily for Riddle, the next person to pick up the diary is Harry, the one person Riddle wants to meet more than anyone else.
* Before Riddle can really get to know Harry, Ginny steals the diary back.
* She won't let Harry be harmed by Riddle.
* Still, Riddle knows by now that Harry will do anything to rescue his friends.
* So Riddle forces Ginny to "write her own farewell on the wall" (17.64) and come down to the Chamber of Secrets to wait for Harry to arrive.
* She is growing weaker and weaker as Riddle takes physical form outside of the diary.
* Harry asks why Riddle cares about Harry at all.
* Ginny has told Riddle that it was Harry who brought down Voldemort eleven years ago.
* Riddle wants to know what's so special about Harry, since Voldemort was "the greatest wizard of all time" (17.66).
* Riddle is eager to know because he is Voldemort as a young man.
* Rearrange the letters in his name – Tom Marvolo Riddle – and you get "I am Lord Voldemort" (17.71).
* Harry tells Riddle he isn't the greatest wizard in the world; that wizard is Albus Dumbledore.
* As Harry says this, he hears sudden music: "It was eerie, spine-tingling, unearthly; it lifted the hair on Harry's scalp and made his heart feel as though it was swelling to twice its size" (17.81).
* The song is phoenix song.
* Fawkes has arrived, and he's carrying the Sorting Hat.
* Riddle laughs at Harry, that these are the great reinforcements Professor Dumbledore sends his defender.
* Harry doesn't care. At least he's no longer alone.
* He tells Riddle that he survived because his "common Muggle-born mother" (17.94) died to save him.
* Riddle is glad to hear that it was only lucky chance that saved Harry from Voldemort.
* Riddle finally calls the basilisk to come out and kill Harry.
* Harry sees a massive snake slithering out of the mouth of the statue at the end of the hall.
* Harry runs.
* Fawkes swoops in and tears out the snake's eyes.
* Maddened with pain, the snake continues to hunt Harry.
* Harry grabs the Sorting Hat and jams it onto his head. He begs for help.
* Something lands on Harry's head with a clunk.
* It's a sword.
* Riddle keeps egging the basilisk on to kill Harry.
* The basilisk strikes, but Harry is fast enough to bury the sword into the soft palate of its mouth.
* Still, the basilisk sinks a poisonous fang into Harry's arm.
* Fawkes flies to Harry's side.
* Riddle gloats: Harry is dying, and Riddle gets to watch.
* Then, though, Harry starts to feel better.
* He realizes that Fawkes's tears are healing him.
* Riddle uses Harry's wand to zap Fawkes away, and then he raises his wand to Harry.
* Fawkes flies overhead and drops Riddle's diary into Harry's lap.
* Harry sticks the basilisk fang into the book.
* Ink streams out in ribbons and Riddle screams and disappears.
* At the other side of the Chamber, Ginny wakes up.
* She cries and apologizes.
* Ginny can't calm down. She's sure that she will be expelled.
* Soon, Ginny and Harry reach the pile of stone.
* They call for Ron, who is still there with Professor Lockhart.
* Ron shouts, "Ginny! […] You're alive! I don't believe it!" (17.158).
* Ginny climbs through the stones and Fawkes follows.
* Harry comes last.
* Ron explains that Professor Lockhart has completely lost his memory, thanks to that rebounded Memory Charm.
* Fawkes flies Harry, Ron, Ginny, and Professor Lockhart up the pipe and away from the Chamber of Secrets.
* Moaning Myrtle is astonished to see them all alive.
* She's a little disappointed that Harry won't be joining her as a ghost.

***Brief Summary:***

Harry finds himself in an eerie, dark chamber. Many stone pillars with carved serpents entwined around them support the shadowy ceiling. Harry progresses slowly into the depths of the chamber to look for Ginny. He finds her, lying face down at the foot of a large statue, and is horrified to find she isn't moving, her face deathly pale, and her breathing barely noticeable. To his surprise, Tom Riddle is also in the chamber. He appeals to Tom for help, informing him about the Basilisk and the need to leave the chamber quickly. But Tom is in no hurry to leave, and Harry realizes that there is something strange about him.

Tom was a pupil at Hogwarts over fifty years ago, but he looks no older than sixteen, and an unusual light surrounds him. He looks at Harry in a peculiar way, holding Harry's wand and then pocketing it. He tells Harry that Ginny had the diary before Harry did. She used the diary to pour all her hopes and fears into. Tom existed in the diary as a memory preserved in time, until someone found the diary and wrote in it. The more Ginny wrote in the diary, the more powerful Tom became, until it was Tom controlling both the diary and Ginny. Tom was able to kill the school roosters and carry out the attacks using the power he had through Ginny, without Ginny being aware of her actions. Eventually, Ginny linked the attacks to the lapses in her memory and began to distrust the diary. She got rid of the diary in Myrtle's toilet and that is when Harry found the diary.

Riddle explains to Harry that Harry is the person he wanted to meet the most. He recounts the way in which he set Hagrid up when the chamber was originally opened, and believes he convinced Harry that it was Hagrid, too. Harry contradicts him by telling him that Hagrid is his friend, whom he had never doubted. Tom continues to explain that he is curious to know all about Harry, especially how he defeated Voldemort. Harry doesn't see the relevance of this and tells Tom to mind his own business.

This is when Tom reveals his true identity as Lord Voldemort, evil dark lord and heir to Slytherin. He describes how he rejected his past part-Muggle self, transformed himself into Voldemort and, in his opinion, became the greatest sorcerer in the world. Harry retaliates, saying that Dumbledore is the greatest. Their argument is interrupted by an eerie music, and the source of the music turns out to be Dumbledore's phoenix, Fawkes. Fawkes deposits a package at Harry's feet, a package which proves to contain the school Sorting Hat. Riddle laughs at the hat, a gift he sees as useless. He asks Harry to tell him how he conquered Voldemort, and Harry realizes that the longer his explanation takes, the longer Harry has to live.

Harry has to think quickly, as he knows Voldemort is becoming more powerful. Harry describes how his mother died to save his life, and how it was the power of good that saved him, something that Voldemort would never be able to understand, being so foul and evil. Voldemort is relieved it isn't Harry's power that saved him. The similarities between themboth have one Muggle parent, both were brought up as orphans, and they are the only two Parselmouthes to come to Hogwarts since Slytherinare nothing more powerful than coincidences, as Harry's mother giving her life for Harry is merely a lucky charm, in Voldemort's opinion.

Voldemort challenges Harry to fight. Preparing to kill Harry, he calls forth the evil Basilisk. Not knowing what to do, Harry runs blindly from the Basilisk, desperate not to look into his evil eyes. He can hear the heavy body reach the ground and advance towards him; he is convinced that he is going to be killed, but then hears another sound. He risks opening his eyes to find out what is happening, and he sees Fawkes blinding the Basilisk by pecking its eyes out. Voldemort is furious and urges the Basilisk to kill Harry. Desperate, Harry places the Sorting Hat on his head and pleads silently for help. A sword appears in the hat. Harry removes the sword in time to see the open mouth of the Basilisk coming towards him. He rams the sword into the Basilisk's open mouth, killing it by driving his sword through the roof of its mouth. Unfortunately, one of the Basilisk's fangs is embedded in Harry's arm, and the poison begins to kill him.

Harry can hear Voldemort's voice gloating about Harry's death, but he's amazed to find that he is no longer dying. Fawkes has healed his wound with its tears, bringing Harry back to life. Voldemort prepares for his final attack but Harry knows instinctively what to do: piercing the diary with the Basilisk fang, he poisons Voldemort, once again defeating him. As Voldemort dies, Ginny returns to life. She and Harry escape from the chamber, traveling back through the tunnel to find that Ron had managed to clear a gap for them to climb through. Their dilemma concerning how to escape the tunnel is solved by Fawkes, who magically flies the three pupils and Lockhart; who is still enchanted by the memory charm, to safety.

***Brief Analysis:***

Chapter 17 is essential in the study of the battle of good and evil. Minor clashes in the rest of the novel have been preparing us for this chapter. Up until this point, the dark side has been triumphant, with the power of good becoming less and less. The final battle between Voldemort and Harry proves that good will triumph over evil every time. Harry symbolizes all that is good, as opposed to Voldemort who symbolizes all that is evil, Harry's victory, although in doubt at times, was inevitable.

Voldemort is similar to other characters in the way that his pride leads him to believe he is the best without his action supporting it. Lockhart, who believes he is the best Defense Against the Dark Arts wizard, is revealed as a fake, and Voldemort, who believes he is the greatest sorcerer, is defeated by Harry.

Harry's belief in his faith and belief in the power of good leads to his success. His faith in Dumbledore never leaves him, allowing Dumbledore to help him. If Harry had stopped believing, his victory would not have been possible. Like his mother, Harry is prepared to die for what he believes in, making him powerful and courageous.

Fawkes and the Basilisk, although not human, can also be seen as symbolic in the fight between good and evil. Fawkes, although physically smaller and weaker than the Basilisk, defeats it by pecking out its eyes, demonstrating that good will triumph against evil even when that evil seems to be much larger and more powerful.

***Critical Analysis:***

Harry enters the snake statue-lined Chamber of Secrets and approaches an enormous stone figure of Salazar Slytherin, at whose feet lies the still, small figure of Ginny Weasley. Harry runs to her and examines her, and while he is doing this he notices the misty, shadowy figure of Tom Riddle standing nearby. Harry desperately asks Tom to help him rescue Ginny and escape the Chamber of Secrets, but Tom remains where he is, speaking in a lofty voice, unconcerned about the situation. At one point he captures Harry's wand, slightly alarming Harry, but more than anything else, rendering him more impatient to get himself and Ginny out of the way of the hidden basilisk. Harry finally asks Tom how Ginny got to be in her present state, and Tom smiles broadly and begins to speak.

He tells how Ginny found his diary and poured all of her worries about Hogwarts and her crushes on Harry into it, and how Tom wrote back, comforting her. Through this dialogue, Tom grew stronger and ultimately poured a little of his soul into Ginny, manipulating her to kill Hagrid's roosters and open the Chamber of Secrets. Inside of the diary, Tom explained, he had captured his sixteen- year-old self so that one day, he could lead another to finish the work begun by Slytherin himself. Harry got hold of this diary, delighting Tom, and when Ginny broke into Harry's dorm and stole it back, she had already put so much of herself into the diary that Tom could persuade her to write her own farewell, come down into the Chamber, and allow Tom to leave the pages at last. Tom then begins to question Harry about Voldemort, and Harry grows suspicious and more impatient. Tom then traces the letters of his name, Tom Marvolo Riddle, into the air, and rearranges them to read "I am Lord Voldemort," proclaiming himself the greatest wizard in the world.

Harry argues with this statement, declaring that Dumbledore is a greater wizard, and Tom grows angry. Suddenly, a strange singing bird appears, and Harry soon recognizes it as Fawkes, Dumbledore's pet phoenix, carrying in his beak the school Sorting Hat. Tom begins to laugh at the weapons sent by Dumbledore, and he commands Harry to explain how he survived his attack eleven years before. Harry angrily answers that it was because his mother died to save him, and Tom's smile widens at the thought that there is nothing genuinely special about Harry. He proceeds to point out certain odd similarities between them, in their origins, childhoods and appearances, and then he challenges Harry to a duel. Tom hisses for the basilisk to emerge from its chamber, and Harry closes his eyes and feels Fawkes leave his shoulder. He hears a great, weighty slithering noise and he begins to run, fearing for his life. From above him he hears a great spitting sound among all the hissing, and he squints open his eyes only to catch sight of Fawkes puncturing the basilisk's other eye. The blind snake sways madly about the chamber, and its tail sweeps the Sorting Hat into Harry's hands. Harry puts it on and wishes desperately for it to help him, and out of nowhere it produces a glittering sword, which Harry then slides into the mouth of the striking serpent, killing it, but getting injured by a fang in the process. Fawkes lands back on Harry's shoulder and begins to cry. Tom laughs, proclaiming that even the bird knows that Harry is dying, but then all of a sudden Harry's wound seals up, due to the healing properties of phoenix tears. Tom is angered by this and lifts his wand to exterminate Harry, but before he can cast a spell, Fawkes knocks the diary into Harry's hands, and Harry thrusts the basilisk tooth into the center of it, causing Tom to scream in agony and disappear.

At this time, Ginny begins to stir, and Harry collects her, his wand, the punctured diary, the sword, and the hat, and follows Fawkes out of the Chamber where Ron and a thoroughly vacant Gilderoy Lockhart await him. Ginny is weeping and fretting, and Ron has cleared a space in the fallen rock wall, and the four of them hold onto Fawkes' tail feathers and are pulled back up the pipes. Back in the bathroom, Moaning Myrtle is a bit disappointed that Harry didn't die, because she had developed a crush on him and was hoping that he might share her toilet. They all leave the bathroom and are led by Fawkes into Professor McGonagall's office.

Here, as in the Aragog chapter, Harry enters a situation bearing only courage and a faint inborn hope that he may be helped along his way. Here, he remains faithful to Dumbledore, and Dumbledore in turn sends the help that brings Harry to triumph. Harry trusts people before suspecting them, as we see when he tries to elicit Riddle's help in removing Ginny from the Chamber, and only after some explanation does he realize that Riddle is working against, not for him. This lack of suspicion is a mark of Harry's inherent innocent and good-intentions; he first gave Riddle the benefit of the doubt, thinking that perhaps he made a mistake in turning in Hagrid as the Chamber of Secrets culprit. But when he finds that Riddle is in fact Voldemort, Harry's attitude changes and he speaks boldly and spitefully, refusing to bow to Voldemort's power or give him the answers he wants to hear. Harry is determined to die struggling, if he must die.

Voldemort is once again the evil instigator. Even though Harry defeated him as a baby, and then again in the first book of the series, Voldemort always finds a new, clever way to return. This pattern will continue through the series, and Harry will continue to do his best to restrain Voldemort from gaining full power and massacring his opposition once again. Although Harry can, with a great struggle, hold him at bay, he cannot yet defeat him. This recurrence of the same evil in different guises reveals a certain truth, which is that no matter how hard a person fights and tries, certain obstacles are never fully absent. The beauty in this is that Harry can go about his life, engage in friendship, learn in his classes, while still in the back of his mind knowing that Voldemort is still lurking out there somewhere, waiting to strike again. All Harry can do is to be alert, careful, brave and lucky, and he must enjoy his days while preparing for the next encounter. Certain strains of worry or tragedy will always be themes in individual human lives, and they will reappear in one of many different forms to challenge us again; as seen through the combat of evil in this book, all we can do it be vigilant while not letting it ruin our lives.

Voldemort is an especially frightening and well-cast enemy figure because he is no longer human, and therefore not subject to the limitations of natural human laws. He can feed off of people and return, or let his belongings fall into unknowing hands and still return. Perhaps the greatest advantage possessed by Voldemort (Riddle) was foresight. Before his strength was diminished by the infant Harry, he had set his affairs in order so that he could return in a number of different ways. This makes him threatening, the most difficult possible challenge to fight in a series such as this. Harry is required to act especially resourcefully, as he did when he stabbed the fang into the center of the diary, in order to combat this multi-faceted enemy creature.***Critical Study:***

Harry is standing at the end of a long, dimly lit chamber. He pulls out his wand and moves forward between the serpentine columns. He keeps his eyes narrowed, ready to shut them at any sign of movement. When he reaches the last pair of pillars he sees a tall statue of a wizard with a long beard. Between his gigantic feet lies a small, black-robed figure with flaming red hair: Ginny. Harry sprints to her and drops to his knees. He flings his wand aside and turns her over. Her face is white and cold. Her eyes are closed, so she isn’t petrified. He shakes her and says, “Ginny, please wake up.”

“She won’t wake.” says a soft voice behind him. Harry turns around to find a tall black-haired boy leaning against the nearest pillar, watching. He is blurred around the edges. Harry recognizes him as Tom Riddle. He says that Ginny is still alive, but only just barely. Harry asks Riddle if he is a ghost. He replies that he is a memory, preserved in a diary for fifty years. He points to his diary, lying on the floor near the statue’s toes. Harry wonders briefly how it got there.

Harry asks Tom Riddle for his help getting Ginny out of the Chamber. He explains that there’s a basilisk that could appear at any moment. Riddle doesn’t move. Harry, sweating, hoists Ginny half off the floor, and then bends down to pick up his wand. But it’s gone. Harry starts to ask Riddle if he has seen it, then notices that Riddle is twirling his wand between his fingers. He says thanks and stretches his hand out for it. Riddle smiles, still twirling the wand idly. Harry tries again urgently to get Riddle’s help with Ginny before the basilisk comes. Riddle assures him that it won’t come until it’s called. Unable to hold her weight any longer, Harry lowers Ginny to the floor, and asks again for his wand. Riddle says he won’t be needing it. Riddle tells Harry that he has waited a long time to see and speak to him. Harry loses his patience, saying that they’re in the Chamber of Secrets; they can talk later. Riddle replies that they’re going to talk now, and pockets his wand.

Harry realizes that there’s something funny going on, and asks slowly how Ginny got like this. Riddle answers, “I suppose the real reason Ginny Weasley is like this is because she opened her heart and spilled all her secrets to an invisible stranger.” He explains that Ginny has been writing in his diary for months, telling him all of her worries and woes, including how she didn’t think [Harry Potter](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#harry-potter) would ever like her. Riddle wrote back sympathetically. As Ginny poured her soul into him, he grew “stronger and stronger on a diet of her deepest fears, her darkest secrets.” He grew “far more powerful than little miss Weasley. Powerful enough to start feeding Miss Weasley a few of my secrets, to start pouring a little of my soul back into her…”

Riddle reveals that Ginny Weasley opened the Chamber of Secrets. She strangled the roosters and wrote the messages on the walls. “She set the Serpent of Slytherin on the four Mudbloods, and the Squib’s cat.” Harry is horrified. Riddle goes on to say that Ginny didn’t know what she was doing at first. She wrote in his diary that she was losing her memory; that there are rooster feathers all over her robes and she doesn’t know how they got there; that she has paint all down her front; that Percy suspects her; that she thinks she’s going mad; and finally that she thinks she’s the one attacking everyone. Harry is furious. Riddle explains that it took a long time for Ginny to stop trusting her diary. After she tried to dispose of it Harry found it, to the delight of Riddle. Ginny told Riddle all about Harry’s history, so Riddle wanted to meet Harry. Riddle looks at Harry’s scar hungrily.

Riddle says that he decided to show Harry his “famous capture of that great oaf, Hagrid” to gain Harry’s trust. Harry replies that Hagrid is his friend, and accuses Riddle of framing him. Riddle laughs, and says it was his word against Hagrid’s. "Well, you can imagine how it looked to old Armando Dippet. On the one hand, Tom Riddle, poor but brilliant, parentless but so brave, school prefect, model student…on the other hand, big, blundering Hagrid, in trouble every other week, trying to raise werewolf cubs under his bed, sneaking off to the Forbidden Forest to wrestle trolls….” His plan worked; only Dumbledore, the Transfiguration teacher, thought that Hagrid was innocent. Dumbledore persuaded Dippet to train Hagrid as gamekeeper. And Dumbledore kept a close watch on Riddle, so he knew that it wasn’t safe to open that Chamber of Secrets again while he was still at Hogwarts. But Riddle wasn’t going to waste the five years he spent searching for the Chamber. So he left behind a diary, preserving his sixteen-year-old self in its pages, so that one day he would be able to lead another to “finish [Salazar Slytherin](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#salazar-slytherin)’s noble work.”

Harry replies triumphantly that Riddle hasn’t finished Slytherin’s work—no one has died, and the Mandrake Draught will soon revive everyone who is petrified. Riddle says that killing Mudbloods doesn’t matter to him anymore. His new target is Harry. He was angry when Ginny opened his diary again. She had seen Harry with it and panicked that he might learn all of her secrets. So she stole it back. In order to lure Harry, Riddle made Ginny write her farewell on the wall and then come to the Chamber to wait. According to Riddle, Ginny struggled and cried “and became very boring.” There’s not much life left in her because she poured so much into the diary, enough for Riddle to leave its pages. He has been waiting for Harry to come, and has many questions for him.

Riddle wants to know how it is that Harry, “—a skinny boy with no extraordinary magical talent—managed to defeat the greatest wizard of all time? How did you escape with nothing but a scar, while Lord Voldemort’s powers were destroyed?” Harry wants to know why Riddle cares how Harry escaped; Voldemort was after his time. “Voldemort is my past, present, and future, Harry Potter...” Riddle pulls out Harry’s wand from his pocket and traces it through the air, writing: TOM MARVOLO RIDDLE. Then he waves the wand, and the letters rearrange themselves to: I AM LORD VOLDEMORT. Riddle says he already started to use this name at Hogwarts, to his most intimate friends. “You think I was going to use my filthy Muggle father’s name forever? I, in whose veins runs the blood of Salazar Slytherin himself, through my mother’s side? I, keep the name of a foul, common Muggle, who abandoned me even before I was born, just because he found out his wife was a witch? No, Harry. I fashioned myself a new name, a name I knew wizards everywhere would one day fear to speak, when I had become the greatest sorcerer in the world!”

Harry forces himself to speak to Riddle, to tell him that he’s not the greatest wizard in the world—that’s Dumbledore. He points out that even when Riddle was strong, he didn’t try to take over Hogwarts. Dumbledore saw through Riddle at school and still frightens him now. Riddle replies that Dumbledore has been driven out of Hogwarts by the mere memory of him. Harry “speaking at random, wanting to scare Riddle, wishing rather than believing it to be true” retorts, “he’s not as gone as you might think!”

Harry and Riddle hear “eerie, spine-tingling, unearthly” music, growing louder. When it reaches such a pitch that Harry feels it vibrating in his ribs, flames erupt at the top of the nearest pillar. A bird appears, singing the weird music. The bird is crimson, the size of a swan, with a long golden tail, golden beak, and golden talons. It drops a bundle at Harry’s feet and lands on his shoulder. It stops singing and gazes at Riddle, who recognizes the bird as a phoenix. Harry breathes “[Fawkes](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#fawkes)?” and feels the bird squeeze his shoulder gently. Riddle identifies the bundle as the Sorting Hat, and laughs hard, saying, “This is what Dumbledore sends as his defender! A songbird and an old hat! Do you feel brave, Harry Potter? Do you feel safe now?” No longer alone, Harry feels his courage mounting.

Riddle points out that they have met twice, in Harry’s past and Riddle’s future, and both times Riddle has failed to kill him. Riddle wants to know how Harry has managed to survive their encounters. “The longer you talk, the longer you stay alive.” Harry weighs his chances, thinking that Fawkes and the Sorting Hat won’t be much good in a duel against Riddle without his wand. The longer he delays, the more life is dwindling out of Ginny. Harry notices that Riddle’s outline is becoming more solid. He decides that if there has to be a fight between him and Riddle, it had better be sooner rather than later.

Harry tells Riddle that no one knows why Riddle lost his powers when he attacked Harry. But Harry knows why he wasn’t able to kill him: Because Harry’s mother died to save him. “My common Muggle-born mother.” Harry adds that he saw the real Riddle last year: an ugly, foul, barely alive wreck in hiding, and that’s where all his power got him. Riddle replies: “So. Your mother died to save you. Yes, that’s a powerful counter-charm. I can see now—there is nothing special about you, after all. I wondered, you see. Because there are strange likenesses between us, Harry Potter. Even you must have noticed. Both half-bloods, orphans, raised by Muggles. Probably the only two Parselmouths to come to Hogwarts since the great Slytherin himself. We even look something alike ... But after all, it was merely a lucky chance that saved you from me. That’s all I wanted to know.”

Riddle mocks Harry: “Let’s match the powers of Lord Voldemort, Heir of Salazar Slytherin, against famous Harry Potter, and the best weapons Dumbledore can give him…” Then Riddle speaks to the gigantic statue in Parseltongue. Its mouth opens, and something slithers up from its depths. Harry backs away, shutting his eyes tight, and feels Fawkes take flight. Harry feels something huge hit the stone floor and then hears Riddle hiss “Kill him.” Harry hears the basilisk slither towards him. He runs sideways blindly with his hands outstretched. He can hear Riddle laughing.

Harry trips, falls hard on the stone and tastes blood. He hears the serpent feet from him. Then there’s an explosive spitting sound above him. Something hits Harry so hard he is smashed into the wall. He hears more hissing and thrashing, and squints his eyes to see what’s happening. The enormous serpent is snapping at Fawkes, who is flying around his head. Fawkes dives. There’s a sudden shower of blood. Before Harry can shut his eyes the basilisk turns. Harry looks straight into its face and sees that both of its eyes have been punctured by the phoenix. Riddle screams at the snake to leave the bird and kill the boy, who is right behind him.

Harry asks someone, anyone, to help him. The basilisk swipes the Sorting Hat into Harry’s arms with its tail. Harry rams the hat onto his head and throws himself flat on the floor, as the serpent's tail swings over him. He thinks, please help me. The hat contracts. Something hard and heavy lands on Harry’s head, almost knocking him out: a silver sword with rubies on its handle. Riddle continues to shout at the serpent to smell the boy behind it and to kill him. Harry gets to his feet. The basilisk lunges at Harry blindly several times. Finally, Harry drives the sword into the serpent’s mouth to the hilt. Harry feels warm blood drenching his arms and searing pain above his elbow. A long poisonous fang sinks deep into his arm and then splinters as the basilisk falls to the floor. Harry slides down the wall. He wrenches the fang out of his arm, but knows it’s too late, as the pain spreads. He drops the fang and watches the blood soak his clothes as his vision grows foggy. He senses Fawkes beside him and tells him he was fantastic. He feels the phoenix lay his head on the spot where the serpent’s fang had pierced him.

Riddle tells Harry that he’s dead, and even Dumbledore’s bird knows it: he’s crying. Harry sees Fawkes' tears trickling down his feathers. Riddle says that he is going to sit there and watch Harry die. Harry feels drowsy and the world seemed to be spinning. Riddle narrates Harry’s death: “So ends the famous Harry Potter. Alone in the Chamber of Secrets, forsaken by his friends, defeated at last by the Dark Lord he so unwisely challenged. You’ll be back with your dear Mudblood mother soon, Harry ... She bought you twelve years of borrowed time ... but Lord Voldemort got you in the end, as you knew he must.”

Harry feels the pain leaving him and sees the Chamber coming back into focus. He looks at his arm and sees a pearly patch of Fawke’s tears where the wound used to be. Riddle tells the bird to get away. He points Harry’s wand at Fawkes. There’s a loud bang and the bird takes flight. Riddle remembers that phoenix tears have healing powers. He tells Harry that it makes no difference and he prefers it this way: just the two of them. As Riddle raises his wand, Fawkes drops Riddle’s diary into Harry’s lap. Without thinking, Harry seizes the basilisk fang and plunges it into the book. Ink spurts out torrentially. Riddle screams, writhes, and then disappears. Ink oozes from the diary. The basilisk venom had burned a hole through it.

Shaking, Harry pulls himself up and gathers his wand, the Sorting Hat, and the sword from the serpent’s mouth. He hears a moan from the end of the Chamber. As Harry hurries towards her, Ginny sits up and looks bemused at the dead basilisk, blood-soaked Harry, and then to the diary in his hand. She gasps, cries, and explains to Harry that she tried to tell him at breakfast, but couldn’t in front of Percy: It was her, but she didn’t mean to; Riddle took her over. She asks how he killed the basilisk and what happened to Riddle. Harry shows her the fang hole in the diary and assures her that Riddle and the basilisk are finished.

Ginny weeps as Harry helps her up and urges her forward, out of the chamber. She frets about being expelled and what her parents will say. Fawkes joins them at the Chamber entrance. They step over the basilisk and back into the tunnel, hearing the stone doors close behind them. When Harry hears the sound of shifting rock he calls to Ron that Ginny is okay. Ron gives a cheer. They find him staring eagerly through the gap he has managed to make in the rock pile. Ron pulls Ginny through, excited that she is alive. He is surprised to see Fawkes and the sword. Harry, not wanting to upset Ginny further, tells Ron that he will explain when they get out of there.

Lockhart is sitting at the mouth of the pipe, humming to himself. Ron says that Lockhart’s Memory Charm backfired and hit himself, so his memory is gone. He has no idea who he is, who they are, or where they are. They look up at the pipe and wonder how to get back up. Fawkes flutters in front of Harry and waves his long gold tail feathers. Ron, perplexed, says that the bird looks like he wants Harry to grab a hold. Harry explains that Fawkes isn’t an ordinary bird, and tells everyone to hold onto each other. Ginny holds onto Ron and Lockhart’s hands. Harry tucks the sword and Sorting Hat into his belt. Ron takes ahold of Harry’s robes. Harry takes hold of Fawke’s hot tail feathers. A lightness spreads through Harry’s body, then they fly upward through the pipe, finally hitting the wet floor of Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom.

The sink slides back into place. Myrtle is disappointed that Harry is still alive. She had been hoping that had died and would want to share her toilet. Ron teases Harry that Myrtle has grown fond of him, and teases Ginny that she has competition. Ginny is still crying silently. Hawkes leads them to Professor McGonagall’s office where Harry knocks and pushes the door open.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) enters the Chamber and sees [Ginny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ginny-weasley) on the floor of the Chamber, very still, along with a blurry version of [Tom Riddle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/tom-riddle-voldemort). Riddle explains that Ginny has been writing in his diary for months, pouring her heart and soul into it while he wrote back. He explains that he grew stronger the more she poured herself into him. In turn, Riddle started to possess her, preying on the fact that she felt lonely and insecure at school. Using Ginny, Riddle then opened the Chamber of Secrets and set the [basilisk](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-monster-basilisk) on the students—all without Ginny knowing that she had done it.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Riddle’s ability to possess Ginny through the diary confirms the danger of information that comes from an unknown source. Ginny assumed that Riddle was a friend as he wrote back to her and sympathized with her, but as she slowly realized that she was missing pieces of her own memory, she started to fear the power that he had over her. Additionally, this revelation shows how lacking close friendships can leave a person vulnerable. Ginny was lonely at school, which led her to rely on someone untrustworthy.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Ginny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ginny-weasley) became suspicious of the diary and tried to throw it away, [Riddle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/tom-riddle-voldemort) explains. Then [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) picked it up, and Riddle showed Harry his memory in order to gain his trust. Harry realizes that Riddle framed Hagrid fifty years before. Riddle reveals that [Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-dumbledore) (who was a teacher at the time) always suspected him and kept a close eye on him after that. And so, Riddle left a diary behind so that someone else could finish his work in the future.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Just as Ginny was lulled into a false sense of security by the diary, so too was Harry fooled because he assumed that the information Riddle was showing him was reliable. Riddle’s ability to manipulate information is what enabled him to commit his crimes not only in the present, but also in the past.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) says that in a few hours, [Riddle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/tom-riddle-voldemort)’s plan will be derailed because the Mandrake Draught will be ready to revive the petrified students. But Riddle says that his new goal has been to meet Harry—and he knew that Harry would “go to any lengths to solve the mystery—particularly if one of [his] best friends was attacked.” And so, Riddle continues, he made [Ginny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ginny-weasley) come down into the Chamber so that Harry would follow.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Even just from Ginny’s descriptions of Harry in the diary, Riddle realizes one of Harry’s key qualities is loyalty. He figures out quickly that Harry will go to any lengths to solve the mystery if doing so means saving his friends.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Riddle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/tom-riddle-voldemort) asks [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) how he managed to escape Voldemort. When Harry asks why he cares, Riddle explains that Voldemort is his “past, present, and future.” He rearranges the letters in his name, “Tom Marvolo Riddle,” to spell “I am Lord Voldemort.” Riddle explains that while he was at school, he made a new identity for himself because he knew that one day he would become “the greatest sorcerer in the world!”

***Analysis Part 4:***

Riddle’s description of himself at school actually presents a key distinction between himself and Harry. While Riddle made a clear choice to form an evil identity, knowing that one day he would amass greatness and power, Harry chooses instead to focus choosing a positive identity for himself and creating lasting friendships. These key differences show, as Dumbledore later points out, that one’s choices are more important than one’s innate abilities.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) counters, saying that [Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-dumbledore) is the greatest sorcerer in the world, not [Riddle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/tom-riddle-voldemort). Riddle says that Dumbledore has been driven out by “the mere memory” of Riddle. Harry says that Dumbledore is “not as gone” as Riddle thinks, although even Harry himself doesn’t know quite what he means by that. At that moment, [Fawkes](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/fawkes) swoops in, holding the Sorting Hat. Harry realizes that he is not alone and musters his courage.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Harry’s loyalty towards Dumbledore becomes key in stoking his bravery and in defeating the basilisk. Only after Harry affirms his loyalty to Dumbledore does Fawkes comes to his aid with the Sorting Hat, which in turn gives Harry a boost of courage.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Riddle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/tom-riddle-voldemort) once more asks Harry how he managed to survive Voldemort. [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) says that his “Muggle-born mother” prevented Voldemort from killing him, and now Voldemort is barely alive. Riddle understands that this is what protected Harry—that despite the fact that he and Harry share “strange likenesses” and many similar qualities, Harry simply got lucky.

***Analysis Part 6:***

The fact that Riddle notes many similarities between himself and Harry becomes even more concerning to Harry when he tries to grapple with his identity in the following chapter, as he worries that because they share many qualities, they could also share similar fates.

***Summary part 7:***

[Riddle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/tom-riddle-voldemort) then calls the [basilisk](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-monster-basilisk). [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) shuts his eyes and tries to blindly feel his way around. But then he hears [Fawkes](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/fawkes) attacking the snake, and Harry peeks long enough to see that Fawkes has punctured the enormous basilisk’s lethal eyes. Harry also grabs the Sorting Hat and begs it to help him. He pulls out of it a “gleaming silver [sword](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-sword-of-gryffindor).”

***Analysis Part 7:***

Harry’s loyalty to Dumbledore not only enhances his courage because he is no longer alone, but it also gives him the ability to defeat the basilisk. Fawkes blinds the snake, preventing it from being able to kill Harry on sight. Thus Harry’s loyalty for Dumbledore is reciprocated with loyalty to Harry.

***Summary Part 8:***

The [basilisk](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-monster-basilisk) charges toward [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter), using its hearing and smell to find him. But just as it opens its mouth to swallow him, Harry drives the [sword](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-sword-of-gryffindor) into the roof of its mouth. The basilisk keels over, but one of its fangs has sunk into Harry’s arm, and he can feel poison spreading throughout his body. Harry thanks [Fawkes](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/fawkes) for trying to rescue him, and the bird starts to cry. [Tom Riddle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/tom-riddle-voldemort) relishes watching Harry die. The pain starts to leave Harry, but he realizes that he is not dying: the wound is healing. Harry remembers suddenly that phoenix tears have healing powers.

***Analysis Part 8:***

Harry’s loyalty to Dumbledore leads Fawkes to deliver the sword, which enables Harry to kill the basilisk. The sword also becomes a key part of Harry’s understanding of his identity, which Dumbledore points out later. The sword belonged to Godric Gryffindor; therefore even if Harry believed that he might have been fated to be in Slytherin, his choices have led him to become a true Gryffindor.

***Summary part 9:***

[Riddle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/tom-riddle-voldemort) is aghast, and he raises the wand to try and finish Harry off. But before he can cast a spell, [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) grabs the [basilisk](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-monster-basilisk) fang and plunges it into Tom Riddle’s diary. Ink spurts out of it, and Riddle writhes and twists, screaming, until he disappears. Harry collects his wand, the Sorting Hat, and the [sword](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-sword-of-gryffindor).

***Analysis Part 9:***

The irony in Riddle dying from the basilisk fang highlights another key difference between himself and Harry. Harry was able to escape because of the deep bonds of friendship and love he has with Dumbledore. But Riddle has no such love, and so he dies alone, with his death caused by the only creature who might have been his ally.

***Summary Part 10:***

[Ginny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ginny-weasley) wakes up and confesses that she is the one who’s been attacking the students. [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) tells her that it’s okay, and that [Riddle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/tom-riddle-voldemort) is gone now. They walk back to [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley), who has made a sizeable gap in the rock barrier. He is overjoyed to see Ginny alive. [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart) is also there, his memory wiped from the Charm that backfired. [Fawkes](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/fawkes) flies Harry, Ginny, Ron, and Lockhart through the air and back up to [Moaning Myrtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/moaning-myrtle)’s bathroom.

***Analysis Part 10:***

Harry’s success affirms that sometimes it is necessary to break rules in order to do the right thing: if he had not done so, he would not have been able to solve the mystery of the Chamber, rescue Ginny, and defeat the basilisk. At the same time, Ron and Hermione’s roles in his success also affirm the fact that he could not have done it without them.

***Quotations***

***Quotation 1:***

But I knew what I must do. It was clear to me that you were on the trail of Slytherin's heir. From everything Ginny had told me about you, I knew you would go to any lengths to solve the mystery – particularly if one of your best friends was attacked. And Ginny had told me the whole school was buzzing because you could speak Parseltongue…

So I made Ginny write her own farewell on the wall and come down here to wait. She struggled and cried and became *very* boring. But there isn't much life left in her…She put too much into the diary, into me. Enough to let me leave its pages at last…I have been waiting for you to appear since we arrived here. I knew you'd come. I have many questions for you, Harry Potter. (17.63-64)

***Explanation 1:***

Tom Riddle knows that Harry takes his friendships extremely seriously. He uses this knowledge to manipulate Harry right into a trap. Riddle's manipulation of Harry by threatening his friends foreshadows a similar maneuver he pulls on Harry in Book 5 with regard to Sirius Black. So Voldemort's sixteen-year-old self is already using tactics that his adult self continues to exploit later on in the series. This raises a question for us: when exactly did Voldemort *learn* to do all of this stuff? If he's already behaving as an adult Dark wizard at sixteen, was he born knowing how to cheat and manipulate? One way of looking at Voldemort is that he appears fated to become evil (as the Heir of Slytherin). Yet he also develops his evil tendencies in response to his family history and his awful Muggle orphanage background (see Book 6). So Voldemort both chooses the Dark side *and* seems fated to be Dark. Why do you think Voldemort is the way he is? Could Harry become like Voldemort, under the right circumstances?

***Quotation 2:***

"Sorry to disappoint you and all that, but the greatest wizard in the world is Albus Dumbledore. Everyone says so. Even when you were strong, you didn't dare try and take over at Hogwarts. Dumbledore saw through you when you were at school and he still frightens you now, wherever you're hiding these days – " (17.76)

***Explanation 2:***

Harry gives this speech to Riddle as he starts ranting about how great he is. At this stage in the series, Harry's loyalty and faith in Professor Dumbledore's power is absolute. Harry loves and admires Professor Dumbledore. The thing is, though, that Harry also has to become a leader in his own right. Eventually, he has to start questioning Professor Dumbledore's decisions, so that he can become his own man. When does Harry start distinguishing himself from Professor Dumbledore? When does he start challenging Dumbledore's authority? What events trigger Harry's break with Professor Dumbledore? How are Harry and Professor Dumbledore's leadership styles similar or different in the later novels of the series?

***Quotation 3:***

"The diary," said Riddle. "*My* diary. Little Ginny's been writing in it for months and months, telling me all her pitiful worries and woes – how her brothers *tease* her, how she had to come to school with secondhand robes and books, how" – Riddle's eyes glinted – "how she didn't think famous, good, great Harry Potter would *ever* like her."

All the time he spoke, Riddle's eyes never left Harry's face. There was an almost hungry look in them.

"It's very *boring*, having to listen to the silly little troubles of an eleven-year-old girl," he went on. "But I was patient. I wrote back. I was sympathetic. I was kind. Ginny simply *loved* me. *No one's ever understood me like you, Tom*…*I'm so glad I've got this diary to confide in…It's like having a friend I can carry around in my pocket…*"

Riddle laughed, a high, cold, laugh that didn't suit him. It made the hairs stand up on the back of Harry's neck.

"If I say so myself, Harry, I've always been able to charm the people I needed. So Ginny poured out her soul to me, and her soul happened to be exactly what I wanted…I grew stronger and stronger on a diet of her deepest fears, her darkest secrets." (17.41-45)

***Explanation 3:***

This is a terrible violation, as Tom Riddle exposes Ginny's deepest secrets to Harry. Tom Riddle's strategy for Ginny's possession involves lies and deceit, so we could certainly put this quote under that theme. Still, we also have to remark on how long it takes for Tom Riddle to gain greater control over Ginny's soul. We have very little sense of who Ginny is at this point of the series – she doesn't really begin to come into her own until Book 5 and later. Yet the fact that she could resist the complete domination of Voldemort for such a long time speaks to the strength of her character. We know Ginny is going to be important to Harry, not just because she's a Weasley or Ron's little sister, but because she shows the same kind of resilience that Harry did when he was eleven and facing down Voldemort. She may make bad choices – she *really* should have told someone about the diary earlier, and she doesn't actually succeed in throwing off Riddle's influence – but she perseveres as best she can against his powers. As well, she does try to protect Harry from Riddle's diary. We don't think we were so tough at eleven. So we're pretty impressed with Ginny Weasley.