

Alex Mason (2019)

“Confirmation Bias Against Slytherin House”

My capstone project, “Confirmation Bias Against Slytherin House,” analyzes the use of a confirmation bias against Slytherin House to determine whether the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling can be considered Literature. Using William Safire’s definition of literature, literature is “written on two-levels, entertaining one generation while instructing another,” my project discusses how the series follows this definition through analysis of the bias against Slytherin House and three prominent members of the House: Lord Voldemort, Draco Malfoy, and Severus Snape. Lord Voldemort, the most evil wizard in the series, establishes a confirmation bias that all Slytherins are evil and creates a negative view for the reader. Draco Malfoy confirms the bias as a school bully and later on as a follower of Voldemort, or Death Eater; however, did he truly have agency in the choice to become a Death Eater? Severus Snape, the Head of Slytherin House, a Death Eater and a double agent, has more complex motives that are not revealed to the reader until the end of the series. However, the bias does not end when the series does. It continues on with the fans, but the series instructs readers of all ages to recognize their biases and realize how their biases can cause them to misjudge others. The series instructs while still entertaining the reader with the Harry’s magical adventures, thus proving that the series is literature as it both instructs and entertains.