

Give Nature a Wand and It Will Nurture Magic

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It is widely agreed upon in the psychological community that it is the combination of nature and nurture that makes up who we are and who we become; it comes from the genetics our parents gave us and how they raised us. Yet each individual is unique. Even identical twins have distinctly different characteristics despite sharing the same genes and often the same home environment. Cases like these have stumped psychologists and researchers for decades. One would think, that they also would be stumped as to why Tom Riddle and Harry Potter turned out so differently despite having similar upbringings. However, upon closer investigation, there are definite differences in their genetic predispositions and early development that set them apart. Family history, relationships with peers, behaviors that were reinforced or punished, temperament and personality, and secure attachment all play a critical role in the development of children, especially when considering Tom Riddle and Harry Potter.

A Brief Psychological History

During the 1920s, psychological research in personality theories and disorders and developmental psychology had only just started (Grusse 13). Very little was known about either subject, and what was known about them was not understood. Virtually nothing was known about how to treat psychological disorders, so most “treatments” were inhumane and untested. There was no universal standard of how research was to be conducted or how data should be interpreted. Many early studies ran experiments with little obligation to moral codes and interpreted their findings based on Freudian psychoanalysis.

Behaviorism at this time was becoming quite popular in the United States, so much so that it began to be preferred over Sigmund Freud’s research, but was less popular in Europe (Grusse 18). Behaviorism gained popularity quickly because the progress and efficacy of therapy could easily be observed and measured. Individual behaviors could be studied distinctly and have therapy focused on them specifically. As innovative as this type of therapy was, Europe preferred Gestalt psychology which examined the mind as a whole rather than the parts of which it was composed. They did not want to overlook the big picture by concentrating solely on details, which is why they saw flaws in behaviorism.

In Gestalt theory, there could be one explanation for multiple, or even all, of a person's symptoms instead of attempting to treat each one individually. Both Gestalt psychology and behaviorism had their benefits, but both also were still relatively new in the 1920s, with the pioneers in the field still improving their theories and techniques.

The history of psychology is important in this case, because Tom Riddle was born in the 1920s. Any psychological help that could have been given to him was severely limited by its time period. Treatments were rare, and those that worked were even scarcer yet. If someone had recognized the early warning signs in this boy, it is possible that intervention could have prevented his eventual demise that was greatly due to his own psychological abnormalities rooted deep in his childhood. Perhaps intervention would not have helped at all or would have been too late to change him, but the question will always remain open due to the restraints of time, research, and technology.

Biological Origins

Observations of family history can give some insight into what Tom Riddle was likely genetically predisposed to develop. Certain personality traits, behaviors, and cognitive processes can be traced in families as if they have been passed down like heirlooms that no one wants but cannot throw away. When the reader is first introduced to Tom Riddle's ancestors, the Gaunts, it is clear that they were unpleasant people to say the least. They believed themselves to be superior to everyone else purely on the premise of their ancestry and treated others like dirt. They thought so highly of themselves that they probably did not consider anyone to be of equal status. Dumbledore described them as

A very ancient wizarding family noted for a vein of instability and violence that flourished through the generations due to their habit of marrying their own cousins. Lack of sense coupled with a great liking for grandeur... with a nasty temper, a fantastic amount of arrogance and pride (HBP 200-201).

Although inbreeding has not been scientifically linked with mental or physical disability, lack of diversity in the gene pool does not allow for much variation in the display of recessive genes that would normally be hidden by dominant ones. Lack of genetic diversity could also cause some phenotypes to

become more severe. The Gaunts' narcissism, violence, and other psychological tendencies have likely been passed down and around their family for several generations if what Dumbledore said is true. Tom Riddle likely inherited these behaviors as well; since it would take much more than one generation to breed them out.

While less is known about Tom Riddle Senior's family, he obviously came from a wealthy family of Muggles. From how he addressed the Gaunts' house, it is safe to assume he probably had narcissistic tendencies of his own (HBP 198). He thought himself better than the Gaunts, who lived in a small, ragged cottage as compared to his family's grand estate. He also probably used his handsome looks to his advantage, and by what the reader knows about his son's childhood, Tom Riddle Junior likely inherited both the handsome looks and some of the manipulative behavioral tendencies and use them to his advantage. As much as he would hate to admit it, Tom Riddle was predisposed to multiple behavioral and psychological tendencies from both of his parents, which unfortunately left him extremely vulnerable to the environment that raised him (Quinsey 44).

From the information given to the reader about Harry Potter's parents, it can be inferred that they did not have any psychological abnormalities or violent behavioral tendencies. His father, James, did tend to be a little arrogant but Sirius told Harry that "[His] father was the best friend I ever had, and he was a good person. A lot of people are idiots at the age of fifteen. He grew out of it" (OOTP 671). Although his father had a bit of an ego, he was a teenager that let popularity go to his head. Sirius and Lupin admitted that his father jinxed people for fun, but there was never any serious harm done; it was nearly always a joke to try to get onlookers to laugh, and he eventually grew out of that as well (671). Rowling has said herself that jinxes are mainly used to annoy, irritate, embarrass, or poke fun at their victims and do not have lasting harmful side effects (Spell Definitions 2).

Even more, James hated the Dark Arts and would go to any lengths to avoid using them or aligning himself with anyone who uses them. Harry has expressed his adamant dislike of the Dark Arts as well, which is likely partly inherited and partly based on the fact that it was the Dark Arts that had led to his parents' deaths in the first place (HBP 477). He also expresses the James-esque arrogance

occasionally when he thinks that he can get away with breaking the rules without punishment. On the whole however, Harry grows up to be a very fine young man who has very mature morals for his age. He certainly is his parents' son, amazingly so when he had such little time to know them and was raised in a less than ideal environment.

Peer Relationships

As a boy, Tom Riddle clearly had no friends at the orphanage in which he was raised. Mrs. Cole, the matron, said that he bullied the other children and they were afraid of him (HBP 650). She also said he was an odd boy, which likely meant that the other children rejected him at a young age, and he was never accepted into any peer groups. When he got older and discovered he had power over his peers and was cunning enough to deceive authority figures, he became a bully. While most children would have displayed the typical, obvious signs of aggression, such as hitting or fighting, Tom Riddle instead expressed his aggression through magic. He would let his emotions build up until it would cause an outburst of magic. Despite his young age, he was highly intelligent and figured out that he could intentionally bring about this magic within him, and he learned to control it. After this happened, he completely lost the need to communicate his true emotions. He used this against his peers in revenge for their early rejection of him and perceived himself as the victim. These clear characteristics of victimization and externalization of negative emotions towards others were seen in Tom Riddle from a very early age. There is evidence in psychological research that the rejection by peers in early childhood can have detrimental consequences later in life.

Peer rejection can serve as a catalyst for aggression in children and cause them to see others as a threat or seek revenge for their own victimization (Grusse 363). Without proper bonds or friendships, children often become aggressive and easily provoked. Their emotions are not well-regulated and for this reason, they will likely live in an eternal cycle of their aggressive behaviors and their peers. The rejection by peers leads to their aggressive behavior, and they will not be accepted in the future on the premise of aggressive behavior. Doomed to the outer circles of social groups, these aggressive children often find a companion in other rejected peers, but this can lead to just as many future delinquencies as remaining

alone. Forming their own social group, these rejected children now have others with the same antisocial tendencies they developed as children. Hogwarts is no exception.

From what the reader knows about Tom Riddle's school years, it is probable that he still had no friends. Admirers and followers were plentiful, but he had no true friends. He had no affection for them, and many of them in turn only sought personal gain (HBP 338). Many also became the first Death Eaters, continuing their school social group into their adult lives. Tom Riddle learned to manipulate others and hide his true emotions when it came to getting his own way. His aggressive actions were never seen outwardly by authority figures, although they may have had suspicions, but the reader is still able to see his old habit of bullying others when he orders around his Death Eaters. He was more careful than most antisocial youth when controlling his emotions, but there were instances when he simply could not hide his true nature. Whenever he was overcome with rage, he would find something to break or someone to torture or even kill. He was also extremely patient and methodical when it came to getting revenge. He waited for the opportune moment to strike back, perhaps to get the best, or worst, effect. His antisocial behaviors were seen throughout his lifetime, and while he tries to suppress them, there is no denying that they are still there.

Harry Potter's case of peer rejection was slightly different than that of Tom Riddle. It seems that the peers at school were not friends with him only because Dudley and his gang had bullied them into it. "Everybody knew that Dudley's gang hated odd Harry Potter and his baggy old clothes and broken glasses, and nobody liked to disagree with Dudley's gang" (SS 37). They had nothing against him personally, other than the strange way he dressed, but they feared that Dudley's gang would bully them as much as they bullied Harry if they befriended him. These protective mechanisms gave him hope that there was something better somewhere in the world; he just had to survive until he could get there (Starr 133). He finally saw a glimmer of hope when he was going to be sent to a different school than Dudley, but a brilliant gleam of excitement when he learned that he was a wizard and would be going to a different world entirely, in a manner of speaking. At Hogwarts he was free to start over and found that he could actually make friends quite easily. He never lacked the ability or was not likeable; he was simply the

victim of a dominant bully who controlled the entire social hierarchy of the school. Once liberated of that, there was no way he would ever go back. By refusing friendship with Draco Malfoy, he did just that.

Harry Potter not only formed friendships with people he found forthcoming, but rejected invitations from those he identified as controllers. He did not want to become what Dudley had been to him, so he immediately rejected the solicitation of Draco Malfoy. To Harry, Draco represented everything about his childhood that he hated: people who thought themselves better than others and sought to control the social interactions of those around him. He did not want to be a part of this manipulative control, either causing it or once again succumbing to it, and chose instead to make true, genuine friendships of which he had been previously deprived.

Behaviorism: Reinforcement and Punishment

In the early twentieth century, B. F. Skinner developed a method to categorize and measure observable behavior known as *operant conditioning* (Grusse 188). He described an increase in the occurrence of a behavior as *reinforcement* and a decrease in the occurrence of a behavior as *punishment*. He also used the terms *positive* and *negative*, not in the popular sense indicating the nature of the action, but to indicate presentation of a stimuli or the removal of one, respectively. A related term based on Skinner's research, though he did not coin it himself, is *avoidance learning* which is used to describe a situation in which an individual has learned to avoid a painful stimuli altogether. All of these terms are used in close conjunction with parenting and teaching children acceptable behavior.

Much of Tom Riddle's behavior, such as stealing and bullying the other children, can likely be attributed to a lack of effective punishment. The immediate gratification of stealing comes from the positive reinforcement of possessing a desired item (Kuczynski 134). If no punishment is given, then the behavior is going to be repeated. Since his caretakers never actually witnessed him committing any rule-breaking, they never properly punished him for his wrong-doings. They knew it had been him, yet they could not punish him without proof in fear that they would be wrongfully punishing him. So instead they did nothing, and the behavior continued.

Tom Riddle's temperament as a child could also play a role in how his caretakers treated him. The matron found him "odd" and knew that he was different from the other children (HBP 650). This oddness probably left his caretakers clueless on how to handle him, completely unprepared and unqualified to raise such a problematic child. They likely gave up any attempt to socialize him and seemed relieved when Dumbledore came to bring him to Hogwarts. His escalating pattern of behavior was clearly unnerving to the matron of the orphanage who seemed to know that there was no longer anything she could do to help the boy.

Harry Potter's behavior is based primarily on survival instinct. He did what he could to survive in an abusive home, and his mind was frequently in the fight-or-flight response state. Though he more often acted on the flight impulse, he found that avoidance learning worked in his favor in that he was faster than Dudley, who frequently tormented him (SS 24). Since Dudley was fat and slow, both physically and mentally, Harry could both outrun him and outsmart him. In short, he protected himself by finding ways that he could escape physical pain either by running away from Dudley or hiding where Dudley could not find him.

Harry Potter also got an escape whenever he was sent to his cupboard. Thinking they were giving him negative punishment, his aunt and uncle often sent him to his cupboard. In reality, this was a negative reinforcement for Harry since he no longer had to be in the presence of the people he did not want to be around anyway. Even when they did not let him out to eat, he admitted that he would sneak out at night for food (SS 36). As lonely as his cupboard was, being separated from his unpleasant relatives was simply not a punishment for him.

Secure Attachment

Possibly the biggest difference in Tom Riddle and Harry Potter lies in secure attachment, or the lack of it. Secure attachment refers to the bond between a child and the primary caregiver that consists of trust and love (Grusec 77). Insecure or anxious attachment is defined by the presence of attachment, but it appears to be less stable than a secure attachment. Caregivers in this situation are very loving but may be inconsistent or misinterpret the child's needs. Unattached children have no bond with any caregiver. This

could result from a multitude of reasons including an inattentive caregiver, lack of physical and emotional contact, or having multiple caregivers with not enough individual attention from or attachment to any one in particular. Dr. Foster Cline is a leading expert in unattached children and comprised a list of fourteen symptoms that are exhibited by unattached children: lack of ability to give and receive affection, self-destructive behavior, cruelty to others or to pets, phoniness, stealing or hoarding and gorging, speech pathology, extreme control problems, lack of long-term childhood friends, abnormalities in eye contact, unreasonably angry parents, preoccupation with blood or gore and fire, superficial attractiveness and friendliness with strangers, learning disorders, and crazy lying (Magid 80). At some point during his life, Tom Riddle displays all of these.

The first symptom, the lack of ability to give and receive affection, is fairly self-explanatory and was apparent from the first time the readers met Tom Riddle. He was not close with any of the caregivers or the other children. Through what readers learn along with Harry Potter, the discovery is made about Tom Riddle's inability to comprehend love, and they can clearly see that he had never had any concept of what it means to be loved. He failed to see why Lily Potter gave her life for her only son, why Severus Snape was never truly on his side, and why Harry Potter still lived after all the numerous times he had attempted to kill him. The reason for all of them, of course, was love. Something Tom Riddle never felt nor understood. The closest example of love he ever felt was towards his snake, Nagini. He seemed to genuinely care about her, but that could be due to the fact he made her into a Horcrux that housed a piece of his soul. Even before that however, since he could speak Parseltounge, he had a great deal of control over her, and it is quite possible that he only felt a connection with her because he could talk to snakes and being that she was an animal, she did not have the same complex emotions as humans that he felt were so bothersome. Even if his affection for Nagini was love, Tom Riddle lived for 70 years without ever knowing the love of another human being. He never felt it, nor received it. "[He] has never had a friend, nor I do believe that he has ever wanted one" (HBP 260).

Self-destructive behavior does not only refer to self-harm, but a general disregard for one's life or reckless behavior and risk-taking (Magid 82). Harry Potter learned that young Tom Riddle had taken two

children from the orphanage to a cave where he likely tortured them (HBP 251). When Harry visited the seaside cave himself, it seemed nearly impossible that anyone could have reached it even with advanced mountaineering skills and equipment, let alone three small children (HBP 520). The journey to get to such a dangerous place probably thrilled Tom as much as it terrorized the other children did. The more dangerous the task, the more fulfilling the reward would be. His merciless killing also portrays this side of him. He was not afraid to kill anyone who got in his way or possessed something he desired once he acquired the necessary skills to do so. Although his soul was torn apart by such Dark Magic, he was determined to overcome death, even if that meant slowly destroying the life he was currently living. Making his Horcruxes tore his soul into seven pieces (eight if the piece that still resided inside his body was counted), which was something so dark and evil that it had never been done before in magical history. He thought this made him completely invincible, which of course helped lead to his eventual downfall.

Tom Riddle's cruelty to others was absolutely ruthless. He terrorized and bullied the other children in the orphanage, and he continued with these vicious acts for the rest of his life. He tortured or killed those who disobeyed him, betrayed him, refused to join him, interfered with his plans, and annoyed him. Most horribly though, he tortured and killed some purely because he could or for his enjoyment without remorse.

The symptom of "phoniness" refers to having a flat affect or not knowing how to respond to other people (Magid 84). These people often seem unreal, "not right," or simply "off." They have no internalized social constructs, so they simply copy what they see. It may appear that they feel emotion, but that is only because they know how to manipulate others into thinking they feel a certain way. Tom Riddle expressed this toward Dumbledore on their first meeting at the orphanage. He attempted to flatter Dumbledore and charm his way into getting Dumbledore to like him. He was highly eager to impress, but Dumbledore was able to see straight through his act of manipulation. As he perfected his art however, others were less fortunate and fell straight into his ploy. He charmed his teachers, his peers, his Death

Eaters, the Grey Lady, nearly everyone with whom he came into contact (HBP 337). Few saw past his act, and fewer realized that he never felt half of the emotions he let show.

Stealing and hoarding both refer to gaining possession of desired objects. It often seems that children of this nature are trying to fill the emptiness inside with material objects (Magid 85). They also get a thrill knowing that they have gotten away with something they ought not to have done. These children, Tom Riddle included, like to steal or hoard simply for the sake of doing it, not necessarily based on desire of the object in question. Tom Riddle had a box of toys that he stole from the other children in the orphanage and hoarded them in his wardrobe (HBP 255). Though it is possible that he took them for the sake of not having many personal possessions, it is more likely that he only took them so that the other children would not have them.

Speech pathology refers to both an impairment of speech and a lack of speech in general (Magid 87). These children often pretend that they have a speech impairment to deceive others of their true intelligence or simply annoy them. The other half of the symptom is based on the fact that unattached children often do not speak unless it is absolutely necessary. Tom Riddle displayed this more so than the former. The matron of the orphanage described him as being a quiet baby and even as a boy, he did not seem to want to speak unless someone else spoke to him first (HBP 250). It is unclear whether his quiet temperament could have led to him being unattached or vice versa, but no matter which started it, it continued in a vicious cycle for most of his life. Even as a teenager and in his adult years, he really only spoke when it was necessary.

The lack of childhood friends in Tom Riddle's case is obvious. He was a bully to the children at the orphanage, and he only had admirers and followers during his school years. This made tracing his past extremely difficult since people who knew him were scarce and those willing to talk about him were even slimmer. Most who knew him grew to fear him and what he would do to them if they gave out any information, showing that their "friendship" was out of fear or youthful ambition.

Abnormalities in eye contact were harder to distinguish when examining Tom Riddle. At first, his mannerisms seemed normal but upon closer inspection, there were breeches in his social code of conduct.

When he wanted something or was manipulating someone, he never broke eye contact. He always looked them straight in the eyes to feign sincerity or induce flattery. Whenever he was trying to hide something, be deceitful, or wanted to seem inconspicuous he often looked away and avoided eye contact. Although these mannerisms can be typical of some liars, Tom Riddle had them perfected to an art. He was a master manipulator with a complete disregard for how it could affect others. He wanted as little contact with others as he could manage including when he had to be face-to-face with them.

Since Tom Riddle had no living parents, his caretakers at the orphanage were the ones who grew angry with him. They expressed more feelings of hopelessness than anger, but to the same effect. They did not know what to do with Tom Riddle; nothing they tried had worked. The fact that they did not have the any training in child development or behavioral therapies, which were just starting to be researched at the time anyway, certainly did not help them. They had no idea how to help him and were probably quite glad to be rid of him.

Tom Riddle was not so much preoccupied with blood, gore, or fire as he was with death. He could not understand why his mother died, especially after he learned she had been a witch, and he became obsessed with avoiding death himself. Through his school years, he became further engrossed in the idea of immortality and that it might actually be possible. He feared death so much that he would go to any length or cost to avoid it. His whole life became devoted to trying to elude death. This obsession ironically probably contributed significantly to his demise. In his conquest to escape death, he overlooked the consequences of his actions. For instance, he thought taking Harry Potter's blood would give him the power it somehow gave Harry when it actually helped prevent him from killing Harry.

Tom Riddle's superficial attractiveness and friendliness was clear from the first time Dumbledore met him. He was determined to impress him with his polite manner of speaking and intrigue about why he had come. He broke this façade when he became excited that he was indeed "special," a wizard. He used a commanding tone with Dumbledore, and his affect changed completely (HBP 254). When he realized that he might have offended him, he quickly changed back to being polite and addressing him properly. He manipulates Horace Slughorn in the same way, although Slughorn does not fully realize that he is

being manipulated. Tom Riddle was extremely careful with his flattery and casual tone but started to lose his calm approach when he became excited about the topic of Horcruxes (465). He could always be charming when he wanted to be, but he always had ulterior motives.

Unattached children do not have learning disabilities in the sense that they are incapable of learning or have a hindered ability to learn, but in the sense that they do not want others to know how smart they really are (Magid 96). Tom Riddle showed this when he saved his most prized magical ability to mention last (HBP 258). He did not let on how powerful he really was at all, since he did not trust Dumbledore to be supportive of what he had been doing and probably got the feeling that Dumbledore already had an idea of what he had done and did not approve. He would never ruin his chance to go away to a magical school where he could be “special.” There he could truly learn to master his talents, though much in secret as what he would become most curious about was not going to be taught at school.

Nearly everyone lies at some point in life, but “crazy lying” refers to the tendency of unattached children to lie when it does not make sense to lie (Magid 98). For example, they could be caught in the act of stealing and still deny that they did it. Some experts suggest that they occasionally confuse what they wish to be true with what is actually true. Some of these crazy lies have no sense to them at all. Unattached children will lie about what they had for dinner or what color socks they are wearing (98). Lying is so common for these children, it ceases to phase them after a period of time. Lying becomes routine, and they do it constantly. Tom Riddle lied to everyone, because he cared about no one. He told several Death Eaters that they were closer to him than any other and they alone knew him best (HBP 260). However, they were all merely part of his strategy to keep them loyal to him.

The deprivation of secure attachment has detrimental effects on developing children. They grow up without morals, many emotions, and love. The fact that Tom Riddle displayed all fourteen symptoms of unattached children is clear evidence that he was not loved enough as an infant. Therapy for these children only works if they are quite young; more cases become unsuccessful once the child reaches school age, and few are successful in adolescence (Magid 216). None have been successful in treating adults. By the time Tom Riddle reached Hogwarts, it was too late to reverse the psychological damage

that had been done. He had already become too powerful and had the means to achieve even more power. Even if he could change, he would not change. He liked that he could manipulate others into doing his bidding and that he lacked any real emotion. He used these to his full advantage, making him the most feared wizard of all time. It was not only his power that frightened people, but how cunning and ruthless he could be with it. This created terror among the masses since they could not predict his behavior and did not know whom to trust. Tom Riddle was terrifying because he could not love. He could not love because he had never known love.

Harry Potter had known love. For the first year of his life, he had parents who loved him dearly with whom he shared a deep bond. The reader got a glimpse of this when Harry found a letter his mother had written to Sirius Black in Sirius's house. Lily's affection for her son was clear from the letter as she described how he flew around on his toy broomstick (DH 149). The photograph that came with it showed young Harry zooming about on his new toy having the time of his life. The legs of his father could also be seen in the picture, chasing him about playing along with him and probably trying to prevent Harry from breaking anything too. Children learn substantially through play, especially when it involves social interaction (Kuczynski 135). Harry's parents likely played with him like this often, giving him the social stimulation that he needed to develop his own social and emotional competency. Despite being torn from this attachment so young, Harry retained what it taught him: that there was love in the world and he was capable of feeling it. He longed to be rescued during the dreadful decade of his life that he endured with the Dursleys, but no one ever came; he had no other family members (SS 37). He knew there was something better in the world; he only needed to find it.

How much Harry desired love and a family was shown in the Mirror of Erised when he saw himself surrounded by his family members (257). Dumbledore later explained to Harry the true importance of what he saw in the Mirror. Where other wizards would have seen riches or fame, Harry only saw his family (HBP 278). His ability to love and his desire for a loving family gave him what he needed to protect himself from the terrible suffering he endured in his life. He remained pure of heart and was never once tempted by the Dark Arts, all due to the love his parents gave him.

The “What if” Factor

There are a few loose ends to be tied up if a valid argument is to be made about why Harry Potter and Tom Riddle turned out the way they did. There are still several questions that arise, most of them starting with “What if?”

First, *what if one of the other children in the orphanage became a mass murderer?* The answer to this question remains that no one can be sure. Virtually nothing is known about the other children in the orphanage and their backgrounds. Wizards were notorious for not caring about what went on in the Muggle world, so perhaps one of them could have turned out to be a serial killer, but no reader would ever know about it. This is an unlikely possibility however, since every child’s back story is unique. It is probable that most of the other children were not born in the orphanage, but left or brought there when their parents died or were unable to care for them. Therefore, there is a strong possibility that they had secure attachment already and only viewed the orphanage as a temporary home. The orphanage was Tom Riddle’s only home, and the sole environmental influence on his early development. He also had less than ideal genetic predispositions for such an environment, which is also something that is not known about the other children. Readers have no knowledge of the family histories of the other children, but it is probably safe to assume that they did not come from a limited gene pool with narcissistic and violent tendencies. Tom Riddle did have these predispositions and that set him back even further when put in an environment that could stimulate the worst of him. Assuming that the orphanage was the sole cause of how he turned out is made invalid from what we know and do not know of the other children. There simply is not enough evidence to categorize it as a creator of mass murderers and sociopaths.

What if someone had recognized Tom Riddle’s symptoms and he had received intervention and therapy? The answer to this question relies heavily on the time period in which Tom Riddle was born. In the 1920s, no such treatment existed and Tom Riddle’s doctors were clearly baffled by him. They had no explanation for his concerned caregivers because no research had yet been done on the topic. The only solution for people with mental illness was for them to live their lives isolated in an asylum. Tom Riddle fears this as he accuses Dumbledore of being sent from one to bring him there (HBP 253). There was no

hope for treatment in this time period, but perhaps another time period would have produced different results

If Tom Riddle had been born into modern times, at least within the last 30 years, it is possible that intervention could have helped. Now that the early signs of future personality disorders have been established, it would have been much easier to diagnose Tom Riddle. He likely would have been diagnosed with conduct disorder, defined by a lack of social skills and delinquent tendencies, and treated with intense behavioral therapy (Quinsey 99). To deal with his attachment issues, much more complex therapy would be needed. He would have to be forced to express his emotions including his internal rage (Magid 205). This type of therapy can take several long, expensive sessions that an orphanage could not afford, so even if Tom Riddle could be “cured” he may not have been able to receive this treatment. He would be another victim of the mental healthcare system both in the Muggle world and Wizarding world.

The wizarding world does not appear to have any system for mental healthcare at all. All they can do is lock them up in the St. Mungo’s equivalent of a psych ward and hope for the best. There is little communication between the magical medical community and the non-magical medical community, so they also have limited knowledge of what techniques Muggles use to treat mental illness. If the wizarding world had some sort of system for treating mental illness in magical children, perhaps this would have helped Tom Riddle even more than non-magical treatments. He could have been taught not to use his magic in aggression, how to develop positive relationships with peers, and learn the rules and boundaries of magic, like that being magical does not make one invincible to death. The Wizarding world could have intervened had they not waited until it was time for him to come to Hogwarts, when it was already too late.

A Recipe for Disaster

All of the factors that had a function in the development of Tom Riddle determined who he ultimately became. If one were to take the metaphorical cauldron containing the potion of his biological predispositions, such as narcissism and violence, add the ingredients of his environment, like peer rejection and lack of punishment and psychological treatment, and put it under the blazing fire that was a

lack of secure attachment, the catastrophic result would almost guarantee that Tom Riddle would turn out the way he did. As a child, he was doomed by the situation, biological and environmental, that had been set upon him by fate. What matters however, is what he chose to do with that situation. Tom Riddle clearly had the intelligence to know that something was wrong about him, and he could have chosen to get help at any time. Granted, help would have still been limited due to the time period, but his personal choice to want to change would have made all the difference. He knew what he was doing was wrong; he just lacked the capacity to care. When Harry Potter gives him one last chance at remorse, Riddle acts as if he cannot even comprehend what Harry has asked of him (DH 594). It is quite likely that he could not. By that point in his life, Riddle had lived for so long without emotions like remorse or love, was so far from intervention having any effect at all, and had distorted his soul so much, it was not possible for him to feel remorse at that point. This led to his downfall and Harry Potter's triumph. What a difference love had made in Harry's life. It had protected him from the cruelty of the world both with magic and without it.

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