
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

Written by J. K. Rowling

STORY SUMMARY

Ever since the death of his parents, Harry has been forced to live an unhappy existence with his mean Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon and their spoiled son Dudley. Harry's bedroom is a small, dark, spidery cupboard located under the stairs. To make matters worse, Harry has never been allowed to celebrate a birthday.

Precisely on his eleventh birthday, a giant named Hagrid informs Harry that he is a wizard and that he has been accepted at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. In many ways it is like a typical British boarding school. Of course, in most boarding schools the students don't take courses in potions, and poltergeists don't roam the halls. The boy also learns that his parents, too, were wizards and that they had been murdered by the evil Voldemort.

Although his aunt and uncle object, Harry enrolls at the school and sets out to fulfil his destiny as a wizard. At Hogwarts, Harry meets a variety of unusual characters, including professors with mystical powers and ghost-like creatures who appear unannounced in the corridors of the school. Harry makes some good friends, such as Ron and Hermione, who help him in his fight against evil. He also encounters several nasty enemies who try to hinder his life at Hogwarts. Harry learns the challenging game of Quidditch, an aerial, soccer-like sport played on broomsticks.

In this episode, Harry and his friends attempt to retrieve the Philosopher's stone. The Philosopher's Stone has the power to turn any metal into gold; it also produces the Elixir of Life, a substance that makes the drinker immortal. The Stone is being guarded by a three-headed dog named Fluffy. The challenge is to find the stone before the evil Voldemort gets hold of it—and to stay alive while doing it!



Meet the Author

J. K. Rowling



Joanne K. Rowling knew she wanted to become an author since she began writing stories as a small child. As a child, she wrote for herself and her younger sister. As you might expect, the stories were usually about imaginary animals. The girls and their parents lived near Bristol, England. Joanne enjoyed reading very much. Her favourite authors were E. Nesbitt and Elizabeth Goudge. When Joanne was nine years old, her family moved to the countryside near Chepstow, in the Dean Forest. The sisters enjoyed exploring the woods, fields and streams in the area.

After graduating from Exeter University, Ms Rowling was employed for a while as a secretary. She liked this work because it allowed her to use the word processor to create stories in her spare time. She also held several teaching jobs.

While on a long train ride in the summer of 1990, the inspiration for *Harry Potter* came to her. She began writing the framework and developing the plot. Ms Rowling has always taken notice of names, the stranger the better. She actually keeps lists of them. Some of the names in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* are from her lists. Ms Rowling has lived in England, France and Portugal and visited many other countries. While living in Portugal, she taught English. She spent her free time writing, especially short stories. It was during her stay in Portugal that she met and married a journalist, but the marriage didn't work out. She left with her 4-month-old baby and went to Edinburgh, Scotland.

Living in Edinburgh as a single mother, she found it difficult to finish *Harry Potter*. She was able to accomplish her writing by taking baby Jessica to a nearby café. Usually the baby would sleep while Jo did her writing. An award from the Scottish Arts Council enabled her to finish the work. It was finally published in 1997. She was well rewarded for her hard work. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* won Britain's Smartie Prize and was named the U.K.'s Children's Book of the Year.

The seven books in the *Harry Potter* series have sold more than 400 million copies, with the release of each being a huge event worldwide. As of 2008, Rowling was the twelfth-richest person in Britain.

Pre-Reading Information

Boarding Schools

In England, as in some other countries, it is common for students to attend boarding schools. In boarding schools, the children live in dormitories. They have their meals at the school too. Very often, school uniforms are required. Most boarding schools have entrance requirements. Some schools' entrance examinations are very difficult, and the competition is fierce. Boarding schools are usually private institutions to which the students' parents must pay fees in order for them to attend. If the school is far away from home, the students may see their families only on school holidays. Each boarding school usually has its own motto, school song, coat of arms, style and colours of uniform, etc.

English Expressions

While we speak the same language, there are some expressions used by the English that we don't use here in Australia, and vice versa. Some expressions and phrases have meanings that are different to what they mean here, others are simply uncommon. The following are some expressions you'll encounter in this story:

cheek	to speak in a rude or disrespectful manner
codswallop	nonsense
the underground	the train system
tea cosy	a padded covering for a teapot to hold in the heat
humbug	a type of hard candy

Magical Creatures

There are many types of magical creatures mentioned in fantasy stories, including the following:

Brownie: a small sprite who performs helpful services at night

Ghoul: an evil being who robs graves and performs other loathsome acts

Goblin: an ugly elf who likes to cause mischief or evil

Poltergeist: a ghost that makes noises and moves objects to show its presence

Sprite: a small or elusive elf or fairy

Troll: a mischievous creature, portrayed as a dwarf or a giant



Vocabulary

Chapter Seventeen: The Man with Two Faces

Match the vocabulary words on the left to the definitions on the right. Place the correct letter on each line.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| ___ 1. abysmal | A. business matters; transactions |
| ___ 2. affairs | B. seized |
| ___ 3. agony | C. to hurry busily |
| ___ 4. bewildered | D. desire to have more than one needs or deserves |
| ___ 5. bustle | E. tending to preserve or promote health |
| ___ 6. confiscated | F. exactly; definitely |
| ___ 7. detest | G. an inborn aspect of behaviour |
| ___ 8. erupt | H. unverified information; hearsay |
| ___ 9. greed | I. confused |
| ___ 10. hygienic | J. steps made in walking |
| ___ 11. instinct | K. involuntary muscle contraction |
| ___ 12. paces | L. bottomless, unfathomable |
| ___ 13. precisely | M. barely visible or cloudy matter in the air |
| ___ 14. rumour | N. to burst forth; to emerge violently |
| ___ 15. spasm | O. hate |
| ___ 16. vapor | P. suffering |



Making Conversation

Create an original conversation between two story characters who appeared in this chapter. Use some of the above vocabulary words in your dialogue.

— Cooperative-Learning Activity —

Problem Solving

In this story, the characters encounter many problems. Choose two of the problems. Describe each problem and how it was solved. Then tell how it might have been solved differently. Be sure to give reasons for your choices.

Problem No. 1: _____

Solution: _____

New Solution: _____

Reasoning: _____

Problem No. 2: _____

Solution: _____

New Solution: _____

Reasoning: _____

Present your solutions to the entire class. Compare your results!