**Harry Potter: Films, Books etc**

Harry Potter is the name of a series of fantasy novels by British writer J. K. <http://www.homeenglish.ru/Articles30.htm>Rowling. Six of seven planned books have been published to date, not including the two school books, Quidditch Through the Ages and Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them. These two are supposed to be two of the school books in the seven original books. The books depict a world of witches and wizards, the main character being a young wizard named Harry Potter. The first novel, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (retitled Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone in the United States), was released in 1997. The first four books have been made into films, and the fifth movie is due to start filming in February 2006, with an expected release in 2007.

As of 2005, Rowling has written the last chapter of the seventh book. Rowling has also mentioned that the last word of the book would be "scar," which remains to be seen. However, she is unsure whether that will be in the final draft in the book, as she was asked about it in an interview conducted by fan sites Mugglenet and The Leaky Cauldron.

The Harry Potter books have achieved a profile unparalleled by any other series of books, with worldwide sales exceeding 300 million copies. They have been praised for encouraging children and indeed even adults to read, while also drawing criticism from some quarters. The books are published by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc (original; distributed in the UK and other Commonwealth countries except Canada), Scholastic and Raincoast Books (original; distributed in Canada).

**Overview**

Publishing history The books have fans of all ages. J. K. Rowling says she did not have any particular age group in mind when she started to write the Harry Potter books; her publishers, however, initially targeted them at young readers aged 8 to 15. The books have more recently been released in two editions, one with the original "children's" cover artwork, and one with artwork more consciously aimed at adult readers. Additionally, as the series has developed, Rowling's writing has become more sophisticated and the content of the books has matured as the lead character, Harry Potter, has grown older. For instance, relationships are discussed as an issue for the teenage characters in later books. Accordingly, the reading age for the books, both in terms of content and style, is rising as the series goes on.

The first book was published in the United Kingdom by Bloomsbury, a fairly small independent publisher, in July 1997. Its initial success was based on some positive reviews and word of mouth. The first three books, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets and Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, all won the Nestle Smarties Book Prize for the 9 to 11 age group. By the time the fourth book, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, was published in 2000 the series had become very high-profile, and the launch received much wider publicity in the general media than was usual for a new book. At around the same time Warner Brothers began work on the series of films based on the books. The involvement of a global media conglomerate led to more concerted efforts to maximise the value of the Harry Potter franchise. The first film, based on the first book, was released in 2001, and was accompanied by video games and other branded merchandise.

The hype escalated with the publication of the next two books in the series, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix and Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, with midnight launch parties at hundreds of bookshops in the UK, simultaneous launch events around the English-speaking world, and intense media interest, leading to unprecedented first-day sales in the UK, US and elsewhere. The series is immensely popular around the world in its many translations. Such was the clamour to read the book around the world that the English-language edition of Order of the Phoenix became the first English-language book ever to top the bookseller list in France.

Cover of the United States edition of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, retitled Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone for release in the US. According to the author, the main character Harry Potter appeared in her head while she was on a train from Manchester to London in 1991. Her favourite place to write the first book was at an Edinburgh cafe table while drinking endless cups of coffee. Sales from the books as well as royalties from films and merchandise have made Rowling a billionaire and the 620th wealthiest person in the world [1]. Rowling is assumed to be richer than Queen Elizabeth II (see J.K. Rowling for an explanation).

Each book chronicles approximately one year in Harry's life at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, where he learns to use magic and brew potions. Harry also learns to overcome many obstacles — magical, social and emotional — as he struggles through his adolescence.

Rowling has announced that seven books are planned, each a little darker than its predecessor as Harry ages and his nemesis, Lord Voldemort, gains power. As of December 2005, six books have been published. The latest, Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, was published in its English-language version on 16 July 2005. Since the publication of book five, Rowling has revealed hints about the plot of future books on her personal website.

Content and writing style The books are written in third person limited omniscient mode, with Harry as the central character. The books are generally written from Harry's point of view, with short exceptions in Philosopher's Stone, Goblet of Fire and Half-Blood Prince. The telling of the story through Harry Potter's perspective is perhaps one of the reasons that many readers feel so close with the character.

Rowling's main strengths as a writer include her ability to drive elaborate and largely seamless plots over a very wide canvas, the convincing internal logic of her fantasy world. However, while there is much moral subtlety in many scenes in the books, the central clash between good and evil is drawn in largely black-and-white terms. Nevertheless, as the series develops, several characters have faced a choice between doing what is right or what is easy (a central theme), and moral "shades of grey" have been presented. This is especially relevant to characters such as Dolores Umbridge, some Ministry of Magic employees and Severus Snape.

Rowling lets the ideas of racism, genocide, anti-establishment and prejudice find their way in; these are the trademark of Voldemort and his Death Eaters, but also occasionally shown in the relationship between wizards, the non-magical (or "Muggle") population, and magical creatures in the wizarding world who contain some prejudicial baggage, such as werewolves, giants and centaurs (branded 'half-breeds' by the more bigoted of the wizarding world).

The books have been compared to many well-known works, including C. S. Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia and J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings. They also fit into a British genre of novels about boarding school life (such as Thomas Hughes's Tom Brown's Schooldays), and sections involving the Dursleys, Harry's relatives, are reminiscent of the works of Roald Dahl. Echoes of Charles Dickens, particularly in the naming of characters, and Douglas Adams have been pointed out by other readers. At root, Harry's origin story is a mythical archetype known around the world: the destined hero sent away as a baby for safekeeping and raised by common folk until he is of an age where he can be told who he really is and what he must do (a motif most famously epitomised in the myth of Oedipus). Readers who are unfamiliar with traditional cultural myths will still recognise the theme; it is the basis for Star Wars and Superman, among others.

Aspects of the Harry Potter series have even entered the real world, such as Bertie Bott's Every Flavour Beans, which inspired an actual product of that name marketed by the Jelly Belly Company. The product, named "Bertie Bott's Beans", contains an assortment of twenty different kinds of jelly beans that have been developed to mimic flavours found in the assortment of similar name in the book series, including tooty-frooty, dirt, bubblegum, snot, grass, and the surprisingly realistic "vomit" flavour. Also, knitting patterns have been created for the Quidditch Sweater and elf socks.

**The series**

The books Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone in the United States) Story time: 1981, 1991 to 1992 Release: 26 June 1997 (UK); 1 September 1998 (US) US sales: 17 Million. Hardcover 6.1 million, Paperback 10.9 million Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets Story time: 1943, 1992 to 1993 Release: 2 July 1998 (UK); 2 June 1999 (US) US sales: 14.7 million. Hardcover 7.3 million, Paperback 7.5 million Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban Story time: 1993 to 1994 Release: 8 July 1999 (UK); 8 September 1999 (US) US sales: 12.8 million. Hardcover 7.6 million, Paperback 5.2 million Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire Story time: 1944, 1994 to 1995 Release: 8 July 2000 (UK/US) US sales: 12.3 million. Hardcover 8.9 million, Paperback 3.4 million Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix Story time: 1976, 1995 to 1996 Release: 21 June 2003 (UK/US) US sales: 13.7 million. Hardcover 12.2 million, Paperback 1.5 million. 5 million in first 24 hours, initial printing 8.5 million copies. Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince Story time:1926, 1960, 1970, 1996 to 1997 Release: 16 July 2005 (UK/US) US Sales: 20 million. 7 million in 24 hours, initial printing 10.8 million copies. Title unknown Story time: 1997 to ???? (possibly 1998) Release: unannounced date (probably worldwide) As of 1 January 2006, over three hundred million (300,000,000) copies of Harry Potter books have been sold worldwide.

The books have become popular enough that bookshops worldwide now hold simultaneous "release parties" on the day Harry Potter books are released, since the earliest time the books can be sold at retail is 12:01 a.m. GMT (or the equivalent local time at the point of sale).

The Harry Potter books have been translated into many languages. For the English language, there exists an adapted American English version of each book, with lexical changes like "football" to "soccer", "video recorder" to "VCR", "do his nut" to "go ballistic" and "rubbish bin" to "trash can" and spelling changes like "defence" to "defense".

In 2001, two slim spin-off volumes called Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them by Newt Scamander and Quidditch Through the Ages by Kennilworthy Whisp were published. These were supposedly reproductions of two Hogwarts textbooks owned by Harry, complete with notes scribbled in the margins by Harry and his friends. These were written by J. K. Rowling with proceeds going to Comic Relief.

Regarding the existence of Harry Potter novels beyond the seventh, Rowling has said that she might write an eighth book some day. If she does, she intends it to be a sort of encyclopaedia of the wizarding world, containing concepts and snippets of information that were not relevant enough to the novels' plots to be included in them. She has also said that she will not write any sort of "prequel" to the novels, since by the time the series ends all the necessary back story will have been revealed. It is currently unknown, despite rumours, if Rowling will allow other authors to write novels set in the Harry Potter Universe not concerning Harry.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

The films Movie Poster for Goblet of Fire Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone in the United States) Release: 16 November 2001 Director: Chris Columbus Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets Release: 15 November 2002 Director: Chris Columbus Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban Release: UK: 31 May 2004, USA: 4 June Director: Alfonso Cuaron Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire Release: 2005; Philippines and Indonesia: 16 November; Singapore, Malaysia, Sweden: 17 November; UK, USA, and other countries: 18 November; Australia: 1 December; Hong Kong: 22 December; Russia: 23 December Director: Mike Newell Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix Release: Expected 1 June 2007 Director: David Yates Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince Release: Unknown Director: Unknown Harry Potter 7 (title unknown) Release: Unknown Director: Unknown The first three films ranked 1st [2], 2nd [3], and 2nd [4] respectively in worldwide box office grosses for their years of release. They grossed a total of over $2.6 billion worldwide. [5]

Controversy The books have provoked various kinds of controversy.

Accusations of promoting the occult Some religious groups have attacked the books for allegedly promoting witchcraft or undermining Islam and Christianity. Most of this controversy has occurred in the parts of the United States where religion plays a prominent role in public life. Some claim that children who read the books may begin to view the miracles of God as simply another form of magic. In the United Kingdom, Harry Potter's country of origin, the controversy has been minor.

According to the American Library Association, the Harry Potter novels have been among the 100 most frequently challenged in United States libraries between 1990-2000. The complaints allege that the books have occult or Satanic themes, are violent, and are anti-family.

Some highly conservative Christian groups in the United States have denounced the series for promoting witchcraft and Satanism. "It contains some powerful and valuable lessons about love and courage and the ultimate victory of good over evil," said Paul Hetrick, spokesman for Focus on the Family, a national Christian group based in Colorado Springs. "However, the positive messages are packaged in a medium — witchcraft — that is directly denounced in Scripture." [6]. The official exorcist of Rome, Father Gabriele Amorth, believes that the Harry Potter books can be a bad influence on some children by getting them interested in the occult of witchcraft (see Christian views on witchcraft).

Chick Publications produced a comic book tract called "The Nervous Witch" about two teenaged girls who get seriously involved in occult witchcraft and become demonically possessed as a direct result of reading Harry Potter books.[7]

It has been argued that when Pope Benedict XVI was Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith he also condemned the books in a letter expressing gratitude for the receipt of a book on the subject, stating they are "a subtle seduction, which has deeply unnoticed and direct effects in undermining the soul of Christianity before it can really grow properly." [8] (It can be noted here Pope John Paul II was reputed to like Harry Potter and also promoted it; see further down.) However, no evidence is provided that those "they" which are "a subtle seduction" actually refer to the Harry Potter books, nor is this at all clear from the original German text of the Cardinal's letter, which in any case shows signs of being dashed off in rather a hurry. Monsignor Peter Fleetwood, a Vatican priest, wrote that these remarks were misinterpreted, and that the letter was likely to have been written by an assistant of the then-cardinal. [9]. Indeed, the letter appears to have been written by an underling, but was issued under the Cardinal's signature. This letter and a second that allowed publication of the first have been posted to the Internet by Gabriele Kuby, who had sent her book, Harry Potter - Good or Evil, attacking J.K. Rowling's best-selling series about the boy wizard, to the Cardinal.

However, other Christian readers have pointed out themes in the Harry Potter books which reflect values exemplified or preached by Jesus. Lily Potter sacrificed her own life to save her child (John 15:13). Harry's Muggle guardians attempt to keep him from knowing of his gifts, yet he is taken away and sent to learn to use his powers responsibly (Matt. 5:13–16). Harry comes close to death in several stories, yet is more determined than ever to fight evil. It is also said in the books that love is the strongest magic (1 Cor 13:13). Some Christian bookstores even sell the Harry Potter series. J.K. Rowling is on record saying she did not emphasise Christian ideals in the book because her goal was never to preach or dictate a philosophy of life, but to tell a story; besides, if she had, intelligent readers would be able to guess important plot details.

Other members of the Catholic Church gave the series their approval, saying that it is imbued with Christian morals, and that the good versus evil plot is very clear. The late Pope, Pope John Paul II, praised the books for their message about the evils of racism and genocide. Christian Congregationalist minister John Killinger also argued that rather than corrupting children's minds, the novels encourage young readers to follow the teachings of Jesus. The book The Hidden Key to Harry Potter: Understanding the Meaning, Genius, and Popularity of Joanne Rowling's Harry Potter Novels, written by John Granger, a Reader in the Orthodox Church, claims to uncover Christian themes in its analysis of the story. Granger also cites the fact that Rowling is a professed member of the presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The controversy was spoofed on the television show The Simpsons. In one episode, ultra-Christian Ned Flanders "reads" Harry Potter to his sons and says, "...and Harry Potter and all his wizard friends... went straight to Hell for practising witchcraft." His sons cheer and Ned throws the book into the fireplace. Harry Potter was also parodied in The Onion, when an article titled "Harry Potter Books Spark Rise in Satanism Among Children" satirically reported the thousands of children attracted to the dark arts and denying religion due to the books. As reported on Urban Legends Reference Pages, some who were unaware that the article was a pastiche employed it as evidence in the demonisation of the books. The entire action and reaction is recorded on this page.

Accusations of plagiarism Rowling prevailed in a lawsuit alleging copyright infringement, filed by Nancy Stouffer, writer of The Legend of Rah and the Muggles and allegedly of Larry Potter and His Best Friend Lilly. "Muggle" is wizarding jargon for non-magical people. US District Judge Allen G. Schwartz rejected Nancy Stouffer's claims that she was plagiarised, and fined Stouffer $50,000 for "submission of fraudulent documents" and "untruthful testimony", but stopped short of having Stouffer criminally charged with perjury. Stouffer was required to pay a portion of the attorney's fees incurred by Rowling, her US publisher Scholastic Press, and Warner Bros. Films.

While no known legal action has been taken, a Bollywood (Indian) film called Aabra Ka Daabra: School of Magic, was released in 2005 and was claimed to have been "inspired" by Harry Potter. The film follows very closely to Rowling's story, as it too follows a young wizard as he enters magic school following the apparent death of his wizard father. Additionally, many of the sets and costumes are strikingly similar to those of the Potter series.

The American television programme, "UBOS", could also be said to have taken many of its ideas from the Harry Potter series. Its strict Headmistress is remarkably similar to the strict Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts, Professor McGonagall, and it just so happens that both teachers can transform themselves into cats. The combination of two boys, one witty, the other not, and a girl with remarkable talent for magic, is the same in both Harry Potter and UBOS. There are also strong similarities between the old, wise guardian of Professor Dumbledore in Harry Potter, and the old, wise guardian of UBOS in "UBOS", and rather than "Muggles", "UBOS" has "Morties".

Injunction against purchasers of early copies A grocery store in Canada accidentally sold several copies of the sixth Harry Potter book before the authorised release date. The Canadian publisher, Raincoast Books, obtained an injunction (PDF copy) from the Supreme Court of British Columbia prohibiting the purchasers from reading the books in their possession. This sparked a number of news articles questioning the injunction's restriction on fundamental rights [10] [11]. Canadian law professor Michael Geist has posted commentary on his weblog [12]. Richard Stallman has posted commentary on his weblog calling for a boycott until the publisher issues an apology [13]. Some versions of this creed have been circulated by email including a spoiler for one of the major plot points in the novel; whether this was actually the original posted version and was modified by Stallman is as yet unclear, though the tone of the sentence is substantially the same as that of the rest of the message.

Other analogous works Cover of Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, US Scholastic Deluxe Edition Comic book fans have noted that a comic book series first published in 1990 by DC Comics called The Books of Magic, by Neil Gaiman, shares many similarities to Rowling's books. These include a dark haired young boy with glasses, named Tim Hunter, who discovers his own potential as the most powerful wizard of his age after being approached by magic-wielding individuals, the first of whom makes him a gift of a pet owl. Rowling officially denies being aware of this series, and Gaiman has gone on record stating that he believes similarities to be either coincidence, or drawn from the same fantasy archetypes.

Many people, notably Harry Potter narrator Stephen Fry, have commented on the similarities between the series and Tom Brown's Schooldays by Thomas Hughes. Both stories involve an average boy sent off to boarding school at eleven, who is better at sport than he is at academics. Tom gains a best friend upon arrival, named East, who helps him adjust to the new environment (an analogue to Ron Weasley). They are soon set upon by an arrogant bully named Flashman (an analogue to Draco Malfoy). Eventually Tom becomes the guardian of a shy and sensitive boy, named Arthur, whom he is ultimately willing to fight for (similar to Neville Longbottom).

Recent viewers of the 1985 film Young Sherlock Holmes, scripted by Chris Columbus, director of the first two Harry Potter movies, have noticed similarities between its characters, setting, events and tone, and those of the Harry Potter series.

Readers of classic fantasy fiction have noted a very strong resemblance between the premise of Harry Potter and Ursula K. LeGuin's A Wizard of Earthsea (1968), in which a boy with unusual gifts of magic is recognised and sent to a special school for wizards. A school rival in the book is almost a dead ringer for Draco Malfoy.

LeGuin was not the first to propose a special school for witches and wizards. Eleanor Estes was apparently the first, in her book The Witch Family (1960), and The Worst Witch series follows the same line. A young adult book by Jane Yolen entitled Wizard's Hall, which takes place in a more overtly fairy-tale-esque world, also predates Harry Potter and has as its basic premise a school of wizardry and a boy protagonist with magical talents. By analogy, the mutants of the X-Men world, with their seemingly magical powers attend Professor Xavier's School for Gifted Children, with Xavier serving a Dumbledore-like role. In the long-running 1960s TV series Bewitched, several of the older witches are very like those described in the Potter books, and Samantha Stephens's Aunts Hagatha and Enchantra are explicitly described as running a school for witches. Hogwarts-like witches — one of whom is played by stage actress Hermione Gingold — also appear in the 1958 film Bell, Book and Candle.

John Bellairs's Lewis Barnavelt books have many points in common with the Harry Potter series. They concern a young boy, orphaned when his parents die in a car crash, who is sent to live with his peculiar uncle Jonathan and his housekeeper Mrs Zimmermann. Both are actually wizards and their house is a Hogwarts-like construction of moving pictures and secret passageways. Big, bearded Uncle Jonathan is only somewhat magical, while the shrewder, stricter Mrs Zimmermann is actually a powerful sorceress. Like the Harry Potter world, the series parallels the fantastic and the mundane; combining the trevails of growing up in small town USA with a hidden realm of magic. There are a number of surprising points of concordance between the two series, including a wand disguised as a purple umbrella.

There are also echoes of Rudyard Kipling's classic The Jungle Book, which opens with an attack by villain Shere Khan on year-old baby Mowgli and his parents. Shere Khan is unable to kill Mowgli because Mother Wolf, the novel's mother figure, is willing to die to protect him. Mowgli grows up a virtual orphan until he is eleven, when he learns that either he must kill Shere Khan or Shere Khan will kill him. Other tenuous similarities include Bagheera, a black panther, who, like Sirius Black, is an escaped prisoner and acts as an uncle figure to Mowgli.

Harry Potter as a brand The Harry Potter brand is very strong due to its devoted fan base. In addition to the aforementioned adjunct books, Harry Potter merchandise related to the books and movies is abundant.

On 7 September 2005, Apple Computer announced that it would release a limited edition iPod with the Hogwarts logo engraved on the back. This limited edition iPod would be dubbed the Harry Potter Collector's iPod [14]. This iPod would also come preloaded with all of the Harry Potter audiobooks to date as well as J. K. Rowling's biography. On 12 October 2005 Apple Computer reintroduced the Harry Potter Collector's iPod [15] which comes with all the books and the engraving on the back like the original Harry Potter Collector's iPod but just updated, with the iPod line to match the look of the 5G iPod. The Harry Potter Fifth-Generation Collector's iPod [16] comes with all the features as the other 5G iPods including the feature to watch videos. No word yet if Apple Computer is going to strike a deal with Warner Brothers to preload the Harry Potter films in the future.