

SECRET HISTORY
OF THE
WIZARDING
PHENOMENON

HOW THE HARRY POTTER BOOKS,
MOVIES, FANDOM AND MORE
CAME TO LIFE

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CHAPTER ONE



Before Harry

*“I have no nostalgia, whatsoever... Childhood...
I mean, I wouldn't go back if you paid me. Ever.”*

J.K. Rowling (Stahl, 2002)

It's impossible to talk about the Harry Potter story without knowing the story of its author. Different events and circumstances occurred that have made her life an obvious comparison to a fairy tale. In fact, this comparison is as old as the publication of her first book, the one that introduced the Harry Potter series—which has revolutionized the literary world more than any other series has done in history. It turned its author into the first female multi-millionaire writer, broke both sales and printing records across the different launches; and has not only changed the book industry, but also the film industry, influencing the market and the treatment of other series. The phenomenon has generated countless merchandise, theme parks on different continents, museums, tours, and auctions of valuable items associated with the brand. The Harry

Potter series also took the world of theater by storm with a new story taking place after the Harry Potter book series.

The main character begins his journey to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry by way of the Hogwarts Express, a scarlet train which takes him from London into the Wizarding World. This train, stationed at King's Cross station in London, England, is where the adventure begins, and it takes Harry to the place where he finally feels comfortable with those who appreciate and love him. Just like the adventures of Harry, the story of Peter Rowling and Anne Volant also starts at King's Cross station.

It was 1963 when eighteen-year-old Peter Rowling and Anne Volant served their country. Peter was part of the British Royal Navy and Anne served with the Women's Royal Naval Service, a group of women who provided administrative support to the British Royal Navy. They saw each other for the first time at the station in London, on one trip that was headed 800 km to the north towards Arbroath, Scotland. The nine-hour journey was enough time for them to get to know each other.

The meetings between Peter and Anne continued throughout the following months. The couple continued to grow together, and Anne became pregnant. The expectation of a child made them realize that they didn't want to return to the city, but to a rural area where their future children could grow close to nature. Peter got a job as an apprentice at the Bristol Siddeley factory near Bristol, the largest city in the English West Country. However, before moving and starting a new family life, the couple had to follow the social norms of the time and get married since they were expecting a child.

CHAPTER THREE



Breaking Records

*“I was just a little way away from actually thinking,
‘How can I break my arm so I can tell
my publishers that I can’t physically do it?’.”*

J.K. Rowling (Paxman, 2003)

In the year 2000, the Harry Potter series was no longer simply J.K. Rowling's trilogy of books. The phenomenon had crossed unimaginable barriers. The novels were banned in some religious schools which believed that the books promoted the occult. On the other hand, however, the phenomenon did not stop gaining followers. Harry Potter books had been translated into more than 35 languages and countries around the world, including China, which published a box set of the first three books in a circulation of 600,000 copies, the largest circulation of any book there since Communism had come to power in 1942. Eight million copies had been sold in the United Kingdom and almost 25 million in the United States; but Harry Potter was not just paper and ink. Hollywood coveted it too, and Warner

Bros. had already claimed the rights to film adaptations. Despite all that was going on, the highlight of the year 2000 was the publication of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*.

Rowling had started working on *The Goblet of Fire* in 1993 when she was pregnant with her daughter, Jessica. At that time, she was defining the overall plot. During those years she had thought about the book in a different way—originally, the name of Pettigrew belonged to a different character called Enid Pettigrew. On a handwriting note by Rowling, Enid Pettigrew is in a list with the names of other *Defense against the Dark Arts* professors, so it would not be too crazy to assume he was going to be the teacher for that subject in the fourth book. In the same notes where Rowling wrote this, so we can also see that her plans was for Gilderoy Lockhart to re-appear in the sixth book (he finally did it on the fifth book, although briefly), and Remus Lupin in the seventh (which ended up happening).

The writing process for the fourth book began in early 1999, after Rowling turned in the finished manuscript of *Prisoner of Azkaban*. Writing *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* was not easy. With the first three novels, Rowling's plot planning had worked perfectly, but now it had failed. She was halfway through the book when she realized that there were two holes in the plot, and she had to go back to fix them. The first problem occurred in the chapter "The Dark Mark," where she had to write thirteen different versions. "I hated that chapter so much; at one point, I thought of leaving it out altogether and just putting in a page saying 'Chapter Nine was too difficult' and going straight to Chapter Ten" (J. K. Rowling chat, 2001d). The specific problem in the plot was never clarified, but the solution involved removing a character. Mafalda was a cousin of the Weasleys, in Slytherin house, who gave the golden trio

CHAPTER SIX



From Shelves to Cinemas

“The greatest power you have as a writer or novelist is to sell the rights to the people you believe will make the best film, and I believe I have done that.”

J.K. Rowling (JK Rowling chat, 1999a)

David Heyman, the son of film producer, John Heyman, and Oscar-nominated actress (and producer) Norma Heyman, was born in London in 1961. He obtained a degree in Art History at Harvard, and following the line of his parents, became a part of the film industry. He worked as a production assistant, and in 1986, he joined the production team at Warner Brothers. In the 1990s, he decided to embark on the production of independent films and produced *Juice* (1992) and *The Stoned Age* (1994), which became a cult film. In 1996, he returned to London where he opened Heyday Films, a small, independent production company that was funded by Warner Bros. Heyman struck a

first-look deal. Warner Bros. took care of the company's expenses and was first to see anything Heyman selected.

Heyman hired Tanya Seghatchian and Nisha Parti, and the three began searching for material that could be adapted for the big screen. Heyman had the idea to work on book adaptations, so the company was very attentive to upcoming releases, and that is why in early 1997, they received a proof copy produced by Bloomsbury of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. "The book arrived via J.K. Rowling's agent Christopher Little. It was sent to us at the same time it was sent to a handful of other production companies in London," Parti recalls. However, the text ended up in a pile of similar material. It stayed there for three weeks until, one Friday, Nisha Parti took it and read it over the weekend, as she used to do. She hoped to arrive on Monday and say it wasn't worth it, "But on this occasion I remember reading it at home and was totally gripped from the get go." On Monday, at the meeting with Heyman and Seghatchian, Parti said she loved the book and that they should consider it. Heyman was skeptical—the title was not eye-catching, and the idea of a boy going to a magic school seemed unusual, but, "he was taken aback because I never liked much and it was the first time I really felt strongly about something." Heyman took the proof copy from her to discard it after reading the first pages, but he could not put it down. It reminded him of his childhood, teachers, and classmates, especially because he attended a British school like Hogwarts where students lived at the institute during the school year. But at the same time, he thought that, at best, the book could become a modest British film, no more than that. Seghatchian would work as an executive producer on the first four films in the series, but Parti would separate after the first, to open her own production company. Today, she continues to have a good relationship with