


The Rowling Library
Magazine



The Birthday Misconception

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WELCOME

Welcome to another issue of The Rowling Library Magazine! This time, our cover article focuses on a big misconception among the Harry Potter fans: the Hogwarts Letter arrives on your 11th birthday, and even if J.K. Rowling is confused now too!

Oliver Horton joins us again with a profile on Percy Weasley, and Swarnim Agrawal asks if Harry Potter belongs to the Literary Canon (part one on this issue, next parts on upcoming magazines!). Alan Dell'Oso tells us all about the rare and unique wand that belongs to Skender, who is the owner and ringmaster of the Circus Arcanus (*Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*). Also in this issue, we ponder the question: where is Tina Goldstein?

We are just 60 days away from *Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore*, and when the next issue comes out we will be less than a month away. Hopefully we will have more material by then (new trailer anyone?).

Hope to see you next month!

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SECRET HISTORY OF THE WIZARDING PHENOMENON

Based on original research and exclusive interviews, this book tells the story of how the Harry Potter books, movies, theme parks, fandom and more were created. Including the creative processes, the marketing aspect, and the legal issues that arose, this publication aims to be a behind-the-scenes of the Harry Potter phenomenon.



Read an excerpt



Buy it now



This is an unofficial book and it has not been authorized by J.K. Rowling or Warner Bros.



BY OLIVER HORTON

PERCY WEASLEY

FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION

*"We've got it," Fred whispered.
"We've been improving it." [Percy's
Head Boy] badge now read Bighead
Boy.*

Harry forced a laugh.
– **Harry Potter and the Prisoner
of Azkaban**

Percy Weasley is mocked, pranked, insulted, belittled and laughed-at, including by his own father, in his last three years at Hogwarts. He works exceptionally hard: 12 OWLS and a flush of NEWTS, Prefect, Head



PERCY WEASLEY WITH STUDENTS AND PEEVES, BY J.K. ROWLING

Boy. This outstanding, high-flying student then joins the Ministry of Magic, the only Weasley kid to follow in Arthur's footsteps, where he is promoted twice within a year.

Percy is not dashing and daring like Bill, not a sportsman like Charlie. To secure recognition in the swelling family he commits to an idea: to be the good boy. He has swallowed box-and-all Molly's diktats on rules and propriety. Unlike the Twins that follow, he is never in trouble. Percy is his mother's favourite, which brings him into conflict with his more liberated brothers and sister. His mother shoves Percy's immaculate behaviour down her children's throats, inviting their animosity, making him a target. Percy succeeds and his parents reward his success: 12 OWLS = Screech Owl. But this arrangement has a flaw. Failure is not an option: Percy must be perfect or nothing.

Ambition is a strong streak in the Weasley children. Percy's Mirror of Erised reflection would not be dissimilar to his brother Ron's, just switch Quidditch Captain to Minister for Magic. Percy, like his brothers, wants to be a hero to his family. Bill and Charlie are sensible enough to pursue careers abroad. Percy, the fool, goes to the British Ministry. The boy who cannot make mistakes must make his blunders right under his family's nose.

BOOKS! AND CLEVERNESS!

There was Percy, jumping up and down like a maniac, all dignity forgotten.

– Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

Percy is not exactly who he appears to be. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, he delivers one of the slyest, driest jokes in the series when he advises Harry on new subjects: "It's never too early to think about the future, so I'd recommend Divination."

Pomposity is a shield against constant mocking. Given his advanced spellcraft, Percy is a saint not to flatten brother Fred during the Burrow years, or to murder him in his bed. Such is Percy's prestigious magical skill he later transfigures Pius Thicknesse into a sea urchin: "Hello Minister! [...] Did I mention I'm resigning?"

Percy is romantic. He does not crow about his awesome exam results, in *Chamber of Secrets*, when pierced by Cupid's arrow. He spends an entire summer writing letters to Penelope Clearwater. Not such a goody-two-shoes, and much likes his parents at the same age, Percy sneaks his Ravenclaw girlfriend into empty classrooms to learn about love. He carries her picture and is devastated when she gets iced by the Basilisk. In Book Three, he wins ten Galleons from her in a bet on the Gryffindor

v Ravenclaw Quidditch match. His unseen magnetism ensures they do not break up immediately.

Percy loves his family. He is kind and protective. He is proud of Ron for his giant chess game in Book One, and rushes to his brother's side when Ron is fished out of the Great Lake in 'Goblet of Fire'. Percy is about as cool as Professor Binns, but he takes care of his younger siblings and Harry Potter and all the Gryffindors, despite their

general lack of appreciation. In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, with Harry in danger, Percy follows him around: like a pompous guard dog. Later, when the teachers search the school for knife-wielding maniac Sirius Black, Dumbledore makes Percy responsible for the safety of every child at Hogwarts.

During the intermission in the Battle of Hogwarts, with the Trio indisposed, Percy must carry Fred's body to the Great Hall. He



bears the bad news, physically, literally, to his parents.

PREFECTS WHO GAINED POWER*

“Percy wouldn’t recognise a joke if it danced naked in front of him wearing Dobby’s tea cosy.”

– Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

Having earned top-grade NEWTS, Percy goes straight from school to the Ministry of Magic. His younger, twin brothers send him dragon dung. Initially a clerk, he is quickly promoted: personal assistant to Bartemius Crouch Sr, head of the Department of International Magical Cooperation.

Barty Crouch is a dominant personality who sends wizards to Azkaban without trial and has ruined his only child. Percy is eager to please: his blind obedience to

the job reveals another Weasley with a weak sense of self. When Mr Crouch dismisses Winky, the overenthusiastic “Weatherby” effectively becomes his House-elf. And when Mr Crouch goes off sick, Percy-elf becomes the de facto chief. As drunk on ambition as Winky is on Butterbeer, and utterly beholden to the rules, Percy misses the family drama playing out chez Crouch. The situation deteriorates, but Percy does not ask for help: perfect or nothing.

Nineteen-year-old Percy Weasley is forgiven. The Ministry promotes him: Junior Assistant to Cornelius Fudge, Minister for Magic. Percy’s run of success continues. Except this time, breaking the unspoken deal, his parents do not reward his achievement, but chide him. They assume that Percy’s elevation is about them, their connection to Dumbledore and to Harry Potter. Percy is insulted and infuriated.



PERCY WEASLEY PLAYED BY CHRIS RANKIN,
IN HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX (WARNER BROS., 2007)

The dutiful son has done everything asked of him six ways to Sunday, but that is not good enough. What the Fudge!

Percy hits the Ministry like he has found religion. Crouch and Fudge present the pathway to and possibility of power, which is Percy's goal. He now views his father's modest career with Malfoy-like snobbery. His jealousy towards another skinny bespectacled boy, Harry Potter, is already obvious in *Goblet of Fire* when Fudge warmly greets the Boy Who Lived. But when Arthur escorts Harry to a Ministry hearing in *Order of the Phoenix*, Percy seethes with resentment. Harry Potter, yet another attention-seeker, has stolen Percy's place in the Weasley clan.

ANGER MANAGEMENT

"I was a fool!" Percy roared [...] "I'm sorry, Dad."

– Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Percy breaks his mother's heart. He insults Arthur, the nicest man in wizardry. He upsets Hermione, his biggest supporter, by taking sides against a helpless House-elf. He disgusts Ron with his squeaky-clean self-importance, and infuriates him with an ignorant, self-serving letter. He offends Harry, by swallowing the Daily Prophet's lies about him. Percy becomes a blood traitor to the

wizard world's biggest family of blood traitors. He hacks off pretty much everyone we care about. And then he stopped. And then he thought.

Pride prevents Percy from an immediate apology when Voldemort's return is confirmed. But something else stays his hand: Fudge never asks Percy to spy on his family. Mr and Mrs Weasley were wrong. Fudge, a bungler, simply recognised a likemind.

At home, the stakes have been raised: Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes is a phenomenon. Percy, who worships the rules, is outshone by his lackadaisical, rule-breaking brothers. The Twins of all people have the hottest business in town. When Fudge is replaced by Rufus Scrimgeour at the start of Book Six, Percy gets another fresh chance to be a hero. He badly needs a win. Instead, humiliation, the new Minister exploits Percy's family connections. Percy, pelted with parsnip, now knows that his parents' worries had substance. The Christmas visit to The Burrow starts the countdown on Percy's abandonment of the Ministry, and blunts his ambition for good.

RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

"I had to find a way out and it's not so easy at the Ministry, they're imprisoning traitors all the time."

– Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Percy dithers, and the Death Eaters insinuate themselves at the Ministry. The Weasleys are being watched. Dumbledore dies. Scrimgeour dies. Percy is stuck.

His position is perilous. From the new regime's perspective, Percy is the one good Pureblood. He dare not act. He is holding back the tide that threatens to overwhelm his family. And then the Weasleys disappear.

Ron Weasley, Percy's youngest brother, had Dumbledore's Deluminator to bring him back to the loved ones he abandoned. Percy requires Aberforth. Did Percy enjoy trysts with Penelope Clearwater in the Hog's Head Inn at the height of their passion? Albus Dumbledore's brother supplies the conduit for the Trio to enter Hogwarts and is the conduit for Percy's return to the family fold.

Percy crashes into his family in the Room of Requirement. Where else! He apologises hard. He fights well. He loses a brother and helps win the war. He returns to the Ministry, more modestly, and becomes Head of the Department of Magical Transportation. Unlike Regulus Black and unlike Barty Crouch Jr, Percy comes all the way back to his family. And that is an encouraging thought. His first child, a daughter, is named after his mother: Molly.

*"Prefects Who Gained Power" is a "deeply boring" book that Percy finds in a junk shop in Diagon Alley. The most prominent Prefect who gained power is Voldemort.



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And all our patrons also receives The Daily Prophet two times a week in their email inbox, with the latest Harry Potter news and commentary, which means that you are paying less than £30 per Daily Prophet edition.


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BECOME A PATRON

February, from the Twitter archive



J.K. Rowling 
@jk_rowling



These words have often helped me: 'The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving.'

3:26 PM · 25 Feb, 2015

150 replies 4.5K shares 5.7K likes



WHERE IS TINA?

Just as in the time of the Harry Potter books one of the most popular ships was Romione (the ship between Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger), in the *Fantastic Beasts* saga the ship that is most present among the fandom is Newtina, due to the pairing of Newt Scamander and Porpentina Goldstein. Although this ship is canon since the publication of the textbook *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* in 2001, Newtina wasn't popular until the film of the same title released in 2016.

The difference with the previous ships in the saga is that in this one we already know the outcome: Newt and Tina will end up together and married, and even their grandson will marry Luna Lovegood. Perhaps this, the happy fate for both of them, is what has made these characters so popular.

However, a few months ago, rumours began to surface about Tina Goldstein's "current" whereabouts. These reports claimed that Tina would appear briefly in *Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore* (the third part of the saga), in just a handful of scenes that can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

These rumours were almost confirmed when we finally saw the first trailer for the film: Tina



KATHERINE WATERSTONE AS TINA GOLDSTEIN,
IN THE SET OF FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM (WARNER BROS, 2016)

is conspicuous by her absence. The character played by Katherine Waterston is not mentioned in any scene, let alone seen as such. This generated a lot of questions among fans, and the most important one, where is Tina?

Dumbledore's Plan?

We know that one of the central themes of the film is Dumbledore's plan, which is presented even in the same trailer where we see how he gathers a team of wizards and witches, and also a non-maj. Will Tina's absence on screen be one of Dumbledore's secrets? As readers, we know how Dumbledore acts, and it wouldn't be the first time that the future headmaster of Hogwarts has used such a manoeuvre. A similar example occurs in the fifth book of the original saga, when Hagrid and Olympe Maxime are acting

secretly for Dumbledore and as readers we don't know where they are.

In that case, Tina could be acting for Dumbledore in a hidden way, without anyone knowing. Neither does Newt, sadly.

Is she looking for Queenie?

The end of *Crimes of Grindelwald* showed us Queenie going over to Grindelwald's side, and Tina witnessing that. We know the sisters are very close, and it wouldn't be strange if Tina is on her own mission trying to get information from her sister to rescue her or at least know that she's safe and sound.

Still worried about Credence?

Towards the end of the first film (*Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*) we could see that

Tina really cared about Credence Barebone, and this was proven when in the second film she followed him to Paris. Could it be that this almost maternal instinct to care for Credence is still present in Tina, and is her priority at the moment? It's a possibility, and although Dumbledore is also after Credence, Tina doesn't know it, so it wouldn't be possible for them to be working together to find the character played by Ezra Miller. If that were the case, Tina would be alone by herself looking for the teenager.

Back to the USA

A final possibility is that Tina has given up on all this stuff she's been involved in since the first film and has returned to her position as Auror at MACUSA, taking on problems unrelated to Grindelwald, Dumbledore and any

of the wizards and witches she met in her last adventures.

Removing her from the plot in this way would be smart, and the reason is simple. We know that Newt and Tina end up together, and developing the relationship over five films can be a bit slow and boring. Distancing Tina and having her "disappear" in one of the films in a natural way might give air to this unconsummated relationship, and generate more interest in the last two films.

So we don't know where Tina is, and if the rumours are true about her absence in the third film, there's a chance we won't know until the fourth film comes out either. Let's hope that's not the case, and that Newt can be reunited with his Tina sooner rather than later.



KATERINE WATERSTONE AS TINA GOLDSTEIN, EDDIE REDMAYNE AS NEWT SCAMANDER, IN THE FIRST PROMOTIONAL POSTER FOR FANTASTIC BEASTS: THE CRIMES OF GRINDELWALD (WARNER BROS., 2018)



THE BIRTHDAY MISCONCEPTION

Ever since social media such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook allowed images and facts to be shared without much verification, misinformation about the Harry Potter canon has gone viral in an unprecedented way. It is common today for the majority of the fandom to believe a fact as true and it was never part of the canon. Examples abound, and one of the most popular is the one that says George sees his brother Fred when he looks into the Mirror of Erised.

There are also those honest fans who know that some of these facts are not actually true, and while they choose to share them anyway, they are aware that they are not part of the canon and label them as head canon: a type of canon that only lives in your head. While it is still “dangerous”, as most people can’t tell the difference, at least their intention is not to generate false knowledge among fans.

However, even the most obsessive fan can be wrong, and that is why one of the most popular misconceptions of the Harry Potter series is believed by almost the entire fandom. It has even reached the author herself, as we shall examine below. We are referring to the fact that the Hogwarts letter arrives on your 11th birthday.

It’s hard to understand the origin of this, as it doesn’t even happen in the first book: Harry Potter’s Hogwarts letters arrive before his birthday (July 24th to be exact, according to *The Harry Potter Lexicon*). It is on his birthday that he is rescued by the half-giant Rubeus Hagrid, and Harry finally gets hold of his letter, but these had already started arriving much earlier. In fact, if one goes into detail, it is not an owl that brings Harry a letter on his birthday, but Hagrid who appears in person and delivers one himself.

Leaving aside the origin of this idea that your Hogwarts letter arrives on your birthday, it doesn't seem to make much sense either. It would be a very complicated process if we assume that the cut-off dates for deciding when a student goes to Hogwarts would be the same as the UK Muggle system, in which children must have their birthday by 31 August. Following what's commonly believed about the Hogwarts letter, a child with a birthday on the last day of August would receive their letter and be on the train to school the very next day. To top it all, It would be even more complicated if they were the child of Muggle parents, who would have to make the decision to let their child go to a strange and alien school in less than 24 hours.

What actually makes the most sense, and also suits the events of the books, is for letters to be sent out the summer before the first year of Hogwarts begins, so that prospective students have enough time to prepare themselves and make the necessary purchases. Also, by giving everyone the same amount of time, it creates a fairer situation where everyone, wizarding and muggle families alike, has the same number of days to do what they need to do before going to King's Cross.

This more logical idea of the letter being sent at the same time to everyone is reinforced in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* when Harry and Hermione stay with the Weasleys and all children receive their letters at the same time.



HARRY RECEIVES HIS FIRST LETTER FROM HOGWARTS, *HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE* (WARNER BROS., 2001)

"Letters from school," said Mr. Weasley, passing Harry and Ron identical envelopes of yellowish parchment, addressed in green ink.

The same happens in the fourth book, when they receive all the instructions for the Triwizard Tournament, and Mrs. Weasley does their school shopping for them, including the boys' dress robes. So it seems Hogwarts letters go out around the end of July, which is close to Harry's birthday. It makes sense, as well, since the professors are the ones who assign the texts that will be used that year, and Dumbledore usually picks a new DADA teacher around that time.

But even so, with the evidence in the books that leaves no room for doubt, a great many people seem to be convinced that the Hogwarts letter arrives on one's 11th birthday. There is no shortage of parents who say their children were disappointed on their birthday when there were no owls bringing mail, or businesses selling Hogwarts birthday kits to give to children on that day.

It's a strange misconception anyway, because it's not serious and it doesn't even affect the plot of the books or change the personality of any character, but it's still a curious collective mistake. A mistake so big that it

has affected the author herself.

J.K. Rowling has included this idea in one of her writings for Pottermore. In McGonagall's biography, which has been controversial for other reasons, one can read:

"Minerva never forgot how much her mother cried, when the letter of admittance into Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry arrived on Minerva's eleventh birthday; she knew that Isobel was sobbing, not only out of pride, but also of envy."

It is very odd that McGonagall should receive the letter on her eleventh birthday, even more so knowing that her birth is in the month of October: Minerva received the letter eleven months before she attended Hogwarts. Why this detail was added by Rowling in the Hogwarts professor's biography, we quite can't grasp it. Was it always like this in Rowling's mind? Was she carried away by the collective unconsciousness that this is how Hogwarts letters work?

However, in the text published in Pottermore "Vernon and Petunia Dursley", Rowling contradicts herself from what she originally conceived:

"She and Vernon share a confused idea that they will somehow be able to squash the

magic out of Harry, and in an attempt to throw off the letters that arrive from Hogwarts on Harry's eleventh birthday, she and Vernon fall back on the old superstition that witches cannot cross water."

But that's not how it happens in the books. Harry had already received his letters before his birthday. And the text refers to the fact that Vernon and Petunia decided to go to The Hut in the Rock because of the letters, so she is not talking about the one that Hagrid delivered. The only thing that we can do as fans is to just ignore this, considering the book canon is more important in hierarchy than the Pottermore

canon, and take the book's events as the correct ones. Or, just imagine that J.K. Rowling meant "that arrived around the time of Harry's eleventh birthday", which would not contradict what happened in the books and films.

One possible explanation that might make everyone happy, or at least those who want all the canonical events to fit together perfectly, is that Hogwarts letters are sent out at random during the 12 months prior to the start of the school year. By pure chance or coincidence, McGonagall received hers on her birthday, while Harry received his a week before his. This theory

Back

Professor McGonagall

★ Favourite

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Minerva McGonagall is the deputy headmistress, head of Gryffindor house and Transfiguration professor at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. A tall, stern-looking witch with black hair usually drawn into a tight bun, few students dare cross her; she is an imposing figure who can quickly spot trouble. Professor McGonagall can also transform at will into a tabby cat, distinguishable by spectacle markings around the eyes.

New from J.K. Rowling

PROFESSOR MCGONAGALL ARTICLE IN POTTERMORE



or explanation would somehow fit the philosophy of Hogwarts: a school that has a bit of chaos in its organization.

Whatever the explanation is for the dates on which letters are sent out to become a Hogwarts student, it is certain that none guarantees to receive a letter on their 11th birthday. The origin of

such misconception is unclear and difficult to pinpoint, but next time a Harry Potter friend brings it up, you can explain that the letters don't arrive on a specific date. And if it's a little child, you can offer some sort of consolation by explaining that they can still get the letter, as long as it's not too close to September.



Watch our interview with
Evanna Lynch, where we discuss her
new book, Harry Potter, J.K. Rowling
and more!



“Jo had told me that Rolf Scamander was originally in the [seventh] book, [...] he was supposed to have delivered them the information that Xenophilius ended up giving in the book.”



WAVE A WAND

BY ALAN DELL'OSO

SKENDER

“Over time, she will not be able to transform back. She will be forever trapped in the body of a snake.”

Skender – *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*

Skender is the ringmaster and owner of Circus Arcanus, introduced in the film *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*. Circus Arcanus is a circus dominated by rare and unique creatures and some cruelly caged fantastical animals that audiences come to see because of their rarity. Skender crosses our path by giving Credence the chance to join the circus as an assistant after he recovered from the battle in the New York underground.

Every good ringmaster has a

conductor's baton, but in this case Skender's baton is rather particular because it transforms into his wand. This is the first time we are introduced to a wand that changes size and function in the magical world.

Until this film, our knowledge of wands was that they were items purchased from a specialist wandmaker's shop, and they always maintained the size and function for which they were intended. However, Skender's great cane transforms into a simple wand reduced in size (although it maintains its original shape). It is important to note that this size change only happens in the film, but is not part of



the script, so it must have been devised by the creative team behind the scenes and not by J.K. Rowling. It is possible that the effect is parallel to the behavior of the circus tent, which shrinks to such an insignificant size that it can fit comfortably in a pocket, like a handkerchief. Note that this shrinking action is indeed detailed in the film's commercial script.

This wand has one of the simplest designs of the entire second Fantastic Beasts installment and perhaps the most shocking at the same time due to the colour scheme used. We can say that, instead of a handle, it has a large knob, a red sphere at the bottom end. This is followed by a wide brass ring that gives way to the beginning of the shaft, which is a thick one that starts at the base with a black spike pattern and then fades to a light brown shade with a predominant yellowish-green tone.



SKENDER WITH HIS MAGICAL ODDITIES AND CREATURES
FANTASTIC BEASTS: THE CRIMES OF GRINDELWALD (WARNER BROS, 2018)



Mrs Dursley sipped her tea through pursed lips. Mr Dursley wondered whether he dared tell her he'd heard the name 'Potter'. He decided he didn't dare. Instead he said, as casually as he could, 'Their son – he'd be about Dudley's age now, wouldn't he?'

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone
J.K. Rowling



HARRY POTTER A LITERARY CANON

By Swarnim Agrawal

PART 1

*(Read Part 2 and 3 in the next issues of
The Rowling Library Magazine)*

Towards the end of the twentieth century, there was a sudden rise in the number of readers all around the world. A novel series by a debut author was transforming publishing history for the better. Book sales were surging, people of all ages were picking up novels, devouring each and every word and letting out a burp of 'love for reading'. The New York Times was forced to split its list of best-selling fiction into children's and adult's sections, just because the novels in the newly published *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling had occupied the top spots on the list for many consecutive years and adult fiction publishers were getting anxious to see their books atop the list. Giving away a spoiler from the plot started being considered as a sacrilege. The divisions between age groups blended and gave way to an all-age-encompassing readership. It

no longer mattered if there were seven books in the series including those which ran up to 500 and 600 pages – if a person, no matter how young, wanted to read it, she would read it. Literary culture and book culture were changed into pop culture with midnight-release parties, cosplays, fan festivals, and a whole lot of events celebrating the legacy of a story as magical as *Harry Potter* on a global level. There was an eruption in the field of fan fiction writing which produced a horde of young-adult fiction writers including Cassandra Clare of the *Shadowhunters Chronicles*, and also provided a platform akin to a writers' workshop for writing enthusiasts to hone their skills.

The publication and subsequent popularity of the *Harry Potter* series was not just a 'fairy-tale' but also a publishing milestone that was much needed in those times. Throughout the world, adolescents

were drifted towards various forms of nefarious activities such as violence, online harassment, racial, sexual and gender discrimination. A major cause of this shift towards negativity was the introduction and spread of the 'video game culture'. Reports of teenagers and adolescents adopting violence across the US, UK, China, Spain, and other countries, became an everyday phenomenon. One of such unfortunate events was the Columbine High School massacre which took place on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Columbine, Colorado, United States. The culprits were two twelfth grade students who murdered twelve students and a teacher, before committing suicide. One of the main factors that led to this heinous event was the immersion of the perpetrators in the virtual world of violence-ridden video games like Doom. Such ruthless events were happening all around the world and there seemed to be no escape from this age of aggression and addiction. ("Columbine")

There was an exigency for literature that could revive the spirit of life and humanity among the spoiled brains of the youth. This was the time when Japan-originated anime and manga gained increased acceptance and rose in popularity globally. The genre of young-adult literature was a new one and was looking for a trigger to find its place among

other literary stalwarts.

During the publication process of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the first novel in the series, Joanne Rowling had to take up the seemingly gender-neutral name J. K. Rowling (Joanne Kathleen Rowling), using her grandmother's name as her second name, just because the publishers feared that male adolescent readers would not prefer to read a novel written by a woman. This, too, highlighted the gender-biased thought process of the adolescents prevalent at that time.

The publication of the *Harry Potter* series was not just a beneficiary process for the publishing industry, but primarily it was a 'literary and cultural spectacle'. From children to adults, people of all ages queued up outside bookshops to get their copies of the novels at the stroke of the midnight hour. Books had been around for a long time before the *Harry Potter* series, but J.K. Rowling transmuted reading into something akin to positive addiction. According to a report by BBC News, "The UK release of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* in 1999 was timed at 3.45 pm to prevent children in England and Wales from skipping school to get their copy." Everyone was hooked up to reading the novels, despite the expanding thickness of the books. (Masters)

The *Harry Potter* series was also

instrumental in the reintroduction of the concept of heroism in literature.

In the Post-War era, the world was still recovering from the consequences and analyzing the barbaric futility of war. There was nothing but widespread destruction and sorrow on both sides involved in the War. People began to question the whole concept of glorifying bravery and heroism when all it brought was ruination. There was a rise of uncertainties among the people about their traditional and cultural values. According to Shadi Neimneh, an Assistant Professor of Literary and Cultural Studies at the Hashemite University, Jordan, "People no longer believed in traditional heroism as a declining society was inadequate for it and as

man had a sense of 'powerlessness in the face of a blind technology.'" Moreover, "Literary genres such as classical epics, tragedies, and romances were no longer there for the display of extraordinary heroism, and the modern anti-hero became the novelistic 'everyman'" as in the case of Willy Loman from the play "The Death of a Salesman" written by Arthur Miller. (Neimneh) The characters in the modern literature were "worse than normal...weak, disaffected and passive, undone by circumstance, and lucky to make it through at all." (Matz)

Through the character of Harry Potter, J.K. Rowling was successful in bringing back the classical concept of heroism. According to the European tradition, "to be a hero you have to have a



HARRY POTTER LINES OUTSIDE BORDERS BOOKS & MUSIC FOR THE RELEASE OF THE SIXTH BOOK. PHOTO BY RAUL 654, LICENSED UNDER CC BY-ND 2.0.

tremendous sense of self, self-respect, have to stand up for what you believe despite everything else, and prevent any self-doubt”, and that is exactly what is envisioned in the character of Harry Potter. In Homer’s epic *Iliad* it was essential “in the classical Greek world to honor the citizen-soldiers who had died for the city, it was also considered important, indeed commanded by the customs of war, to bury the bodies of enemy soldiers who had died in combat, or at least to permit the enemy recover and bury them himself.” (Delahunty) The following incident in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* also gives a verisimilitude which also establishes Harry’s identity as a hero:

“Harry Potter managed to escape Lord Voldemort,” said Dumbledore. “He risked his own life to return Cedric’s body to Hogwarts. He showed, in every respect, the sort of bravery that few wizards have ever shown in facing Lord Voldemort, and for this, I honour him.”

A hero is one who ‘grows’ throughout the story. Harry develops through his adolescence - he learns to overcome the problems that face him: magical, social and emotional, and the greater test of preparing himself for the confrontation that lies ahead, in fighting the increasingly-violent Second Wizarding War, and eventually emerges as the victor in the fight of ‘good versus evil’.

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A QUOTE BY JO



“As his mentor, Albus Dumbledore, has tried to make clear to Harry, he could have refused to follow the path marked out for him. In spite of the weight of opinion and expectation that singles him out as the "Chosen One", it is Harry's own will that takes him into the Forest to meet Voldemort, prepared to suffer the fate that he escaped sixteen years before.”

Introduction to ‘Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows’ extract, featured in ‘The Birthday Book’, 2008



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Erik (@knockturnerik on Instagram) plays with original artwork from the Harry Potter books!

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ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATION BY MARY GRANDPRÉ FOR
HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE
(SCHOLASTIC, 2005)



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