

# Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

by J. K. Rowling

All Harry Potter has known is a miserable life with the Dursleys, his cruel aunt and uncle and their abominable son, Dudley. But all that changes when no less than twenty-four missives arrive telling Harry he has been accepted at Hogwarts, the renowned school of wizardry and sorcery.

## THEMES

magic, fantasy, secrets, problem-solving, family, friendship, responsibility

## I. PRE-TEACHING

### A. Have the class define and discuss these terms:

tawny, chortled, flinched, gingerly, shrill, rasping, trodden, cowering, quailed, ashen-faced, gargoyles, clouted, clambered, transfiguration, potions, swarthy, maze, infernal, mauve, befuddle, apothecary, minuscule, spindly, mahogany, pliable, ebony, supple, alchemy, astonishment, sidled, mutely, queasy, gaunt, ensnaring, infusion, quaver, askew, stench, brandished, luminous, elixir, scudding, hoisted, steeling, omen, skulking, treble, spasm, confiscated, abysmal

### B. Before beginning the story, discuss with the class the following questions:

1. Do you have brothers or sisters? What is your place in the family—the oldest, youngest, or in between? Do you think your parents treat you and your siblings the same?
2. Do you like school? Why or why not? What would you change about school if you had a chance?
3. Would you like to go to a school where you'd learn magic? What do you think would be the most fun to learn to do?

## II. PRESENTATION

### A. Understanding the Story:

1. Begin with Chapters 1-5: What caused Voldemort to lose his power? How do the Dursley's treat Harry? Why is Harry looking forward to the end of summer vacation? What does Uncle Vernon do to keep Harry from getting his letters? What does Hagrid tell Harry about his parents? What are some of the possibilities for what happened to Voldemort? What is needed for Harry's school supplies? What does Hagrid give him for his birthday? What shocks Mr. Ollivander about the wand that chooses Harry?
2. Advance to Chapters 6-11: Describe the Hogwarts Express. What is Dumbledore famous for? What does Hermione Ganger brag about? Why doesn't Ron want to be in Slytherin? What has happened at Gringotts? What does Draco Malfoy say about Harry's parents? What does Ron tell Harry about Malfoy? How are the boys

assigned to their various houses? What are some of the rules Dumbledore lays out? How does Snape treat Harry? Why does Professor McGonagall take Harry to meet Wood? What does Harry realize about the trapdoor the three-headed dog is guarding? What do the owls bring Harry? What happens to Harry during the game?

3. Complete the story with Chapters 12-17: Why are Ron, Hermione, and Harry spending time in the library? What does the mirror show? What does the Sorcerer's Stone do? Who does Snape meet when Harry follows him? What do Harry and his friends decide to do about Hagrid's baby dragon? What is their mission in the forest? What is unicorn blood used for? Why does Harry think Snape wants the Sorcerer's Stone? How do Harry, Hermione, and Ron get past Fluffy? Describe the challenges they face reaching the Sorcerer's Stone. Where does Voldemort live? What happens when Quirrel tries to grab Harry? How does Dumbledore reward them?

### B. For Discussion:

1. Why do the Dursley's treat Harry so badly?
2. What does the sorting hat say about each house? How do its predictions come true?
3. How do Harry's prophetic dreams help him in his quest?
4. Why do Harry and his friends break the rules? Do you feel they are justified? Why or why not?
5. In what ways do the characters' names reflect their personalities? How does the name of each house at Hogwarts reflect the kind of students who live there?

## III. EXTENDING THE LESSON

Give wide leeway in working with partners, groups, the whole class, or alone.

### INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS:

#### A. Language Arts:

1. Have students read other stories involving wizards, such as J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, *Wizard's Hall* by Jane Yolen or *The Lost Years of Merlin* by T. A. Barron and discuss what traits a wizard must possess. Who are some famous wizards?

2. Have students select a mythical creature, such as a centaur, vampire, dragon, goblin, unicorn, troll, the phoenix, or the three-headed dog, to find out more about. They might create a bestiary of these creatures.
3. Have students create a book like those found at Hogwarts. It might be a book of spells, a history of dragons, or a textbook the students need for their classes.

## B. Art and Music:

1. Have students select background music that might be appropriate to some of the scenes. They might use the theme music from the *Harry Potter* movies or the Tolkien films, Saint-Saens' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, or music from Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta, *The Sorcerer*.
2. Have students make a bulletin board about the story. They might cut Hogwarts out of black paper and show it against a gray sky, show Hagrid bringing Harry and the others to the school, include magical creatures, the masters, the other students. They might include a magic wand, a wizard's hat, the twenty-four letters sent to Harry with their addresses, the wax seal of Hogwarts, and other items mentioned in the story.
3. Have students create cards like those found in the Chocolate Frogs, showing the masters and other characters in the story.

## C. Social Studies:

1. Have students make up a lesson plan for one of the courses at Hogwarts, such as "Potions" or "Transfiguration."
2. From the moment he gets on the train, everyone is whispering about "Harry Potter" being there. Have students research fame. What are some problems with being famous? Ask students if they think they'd like to be famous and have people talk about them wherever they go. Why or why not?
3. Dudley Dursley is a bully. Bullying in school is becoming more and more a recognized problem. Have students find out more about bullying, what causes it and what is being done to control it. They might talk about their own experience with bullies and come up with some ideas on how to deal with a bully.

4. Stars and planets play an important role in magic, especially astrology. Have students learn more about astrology. What do people believe about the stars and planets affecting people's lives? How is astrology different from astronomy?

## D. Science and Math:

1. When Mr. Dursley sees a cat reading a map and later people in different colored cloaks, he thinks he's imagining things. Have students find out about delusions people have when their brains are not working right. What are some mental illnesses that affect people and how do they manifest themselves?
2. Have students learn more about different kinds of owls, especially the snowy owl like Hedwig. How are they able to hunt their prey at night?
3. Have students learn more about reptiles such as those Harry and the Dursley's visit at the zoo, especially the Boa Constrictor that Harry allows to escape.
4. Hagrid takes Harry to Gringotts, the sorcerer's bank, and they are led into the vaults. Have students find out about bank vaults. What is kept in them? How do people gain access to them?
5. At the bank, Hagrid explains how the money works. Have students listen to this and make up a math quiz. For example, how many Knuts would be in a Galleon?

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