

## ***Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone Book Reviews***

Gr 4-7-Harry Potter has spent 11 long years living with his aunt, uncle, and cousin, surely the vilest household in children's literature since the family Roald Dahl created for Matilda (Viking, 1988). But like Matilda, Harry is a very special child; in fact, he is the only surviving member of a powerful magical family. His parents were killed by the evil Voldemort, who then mysteriously vanished, and the boy grew up completely ignorant of his own powers, until he received notification of his acceptance at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Once there, Harry's life changes dramatically. Hogwarts is exactly like a traditional British boarding school, except that the professors are all wizards and witches, ghosts roam the halls, and the surrounding woods are inhabited by unicorns and centaurs. There he makes good friends and terrible enemies. However, evil is lurking at the very heart of Hogwarts, and Harry and his friends must finally face the malevolent and powerful Voldemort, who is intent on taking over the world. The delight of this book lies in the juxtaposition of the world of Muggles (ordinary humans) with the world of magic. A whole host of unique characters inhabits this world, from the absentminded Head Wizard Dumbledore to the sly and supercilious student Draco Malfoy to the loyal but not too bright Hagrid. Harry himself is the perfect confused and unassuming hero, whom trouble follows like a wizard's familiar. After reading this entrancing fantasy, readers will be convinced that they, too, could take the train to Hogwarts School, if only they could find Platform Nine and Three Quarters at the King's Cross Station.

Harry Potter, who believes that his parents were killed in a car accident when he was a baby, lives with his dreadful relatives, the Dursleys. Imagine his surprise when, on his eleventh birthday, he is invited to attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Harry learns that he is a wizard, just as his parents had been, and that he survived the attack in which they were killed battling the evil Voldemort. At Hogwarts, Harry discovers his natural skill at Quidditch, a type of three-dimensional rugby played on flying brooms; he tastes new treats such as "Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans," which truly do come in every flavor from strawberry and coffee to sardine and ear wax; and he learns that there is evil afoot at the school. Harry and his friends, Ron and Hermione, discover that someone at the school is trying to steal a priceless stone with the power to make a person immortal. In a breathtaking final showdown, Harry faces Voldemort and saves the stone, but not before he nearly loses his life. Rowling's style is a cross between Roald Dahl and Patricia Wrede. First published in Britain, where it won the British National Book Award for Children's Book of the Year as well as the Smarties Prize, this hilarious and suspenseful book will delight American audiences as well. And since Voldemort lives on, we can hope that a sequel will be available soon. ?Libby Bergstrom. [Editor's Note: American readers could soon be getting their wish. According to Publisher's Weekly, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets was published last month in the U.K. where it has already hit the bestseller list.

Gr. 4<sup>+</sup>-7. Orphaned in infancy, Harry Potter is raised by reluctant parents, Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon, an odious couple who would be right at home in a Roald Dahl novel. Things go from awful to hideous for Harry until, with the approach of his eleventh birthday, mysterious letters begin arriving addressed to him! His aunt and uncle manage to intercept these until a giant named Hagrid delivers one in person, and to his astonishment, Harry learns that he is a wizard and has been accepted (without even applying) as a student at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. There's even more startling news: it turns out that his parents were killed by an evil wizard so powerful that everyone is afraid to so much as utter his name, Voldemort. Somehow, though, Harry survived Voldemort's attempt to kill him, too, though it has left him with a lightning-shaped scar on his forehead and enormous celebrity in the world of magic, because Voldemort vanished following his failure. But is he gone for good? What is hidden on the third floor of Hogwarts Castle? And who is the Man with Two Faces? Rowling's first novel, which has won numerous prizes in England, is a brilliantly imagined and beautifully written fantasy that incorporates elements of traditional British school stories without once violating the magical underpinnings of the plot. In fact, Rowling's wonderful ability to put a fantastic spin on sports, student rivalry, and eccentric faculty contributes to the humor, charm, and, well, delight of her utterly captivating story.