

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

Presented by the

# Harry Potter

READING CLUB

## YEAR 3 HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN



### Introduction to the Harry Potter Books

In 1997 Joanne Rowling, a single parent living in Edinburgh, Scotland, published her first book. It was the fulfillment of a dream she'd had since she was a child. Her story about an eleven-year-old orphaned boy who discovers his heritage of wizardry took the world by storm. Published as a children's book, it was embraced by readers of all ages, who found the engaging humor and gentle parody of the real world to be enjoyable and thought provoking.

Rowling had planned, from the beginning, to tell the story in a series of seven books. The initial success of the first title (published in England as *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and in America as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*)

guaranteed that she would be able to continue the story as she wished. Fans camped out overnight and lined up at bookstores in record numbers as each new installment in the series appeared.

This discussion guide is designed to help readers explore some of the deeper meanings underlying Rowling's world of wizardry and magic. Incorporating elements of fantasy, mystery, humor, sports, and friendship, the series has wide appeal for readers of all ages. On the surface the books are great adventure tales, but like all great fantasy literature, they also deal with universal human values, longings, wishes, and choices.



YEAR 5  
**HARRY POTTER**  
AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN



The wizarding world is concerned for Harry Potter's safety when Sirius Black, an escapee from the prison of Azkaban, is believed to be hunting him. Dementors (Azkaban guards) are stationed around Hogwarts as the term begins, and Harry experiences an overwhelming sense of despair and blacks out whenever they are near him. The new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, Remus Lupin, takes a special interest in Harry, as does the Divination teacher, Sybill Trelawney, who seems determined to predict his early death.

Harry learns more about his father's career at Hogwarts, and many of his father's friends from that time come forward to help him: Lupin, who has a deep secret, and Sirius Black, who was wrongly imprisoned and is actually Harry's godfather, are the allies who save Harry from the real traitor, Peter Pettigrew. Hermione's secret Time-Turner, which has allowed her to attend more than the usual load of classes, becomes a key to helping Sirius escape capture, and Harry learns one of the most valuable spells of all: how to invoke the Patronus charm that allows him to banish Dementors, and his own deepest fears.

### **Discussion Questions for *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban***

1. What does Aunt Marge say that provokes Harry to risk using magic outside of school? Why does he react so hastily by leaving the house? How has Harry's attitude changed toward his relatives?
2. Why does the Minister of Magic take a personal interest in Harry's welfare when he arrives at the Leaky Cauldron, and why does this surprise Harry?
3. Why do the Dementors affect Harry so strongly? Discuss their method of controlling the prisoners in Azkaban. Why is Dumbledore opposed to the Ministry's use of Dementors? What is the effect of the Dementors' "kiss"?
4. Harry and his friends have three new teachers this year. Compare what they learn in Hagrid's Care of Magical Creatures class, Lupin's Defense Against the Dark Arts class, and Trelawney's Divination class. What are the skills that each teacher brings to his or her subject and what skills do the students learn best from each of them?



5. Sirius Black has been a prisoner in Azkaban for twelve years. Peter Pettigrew has spent those years hiding in the body of a rat. How have these years affected each of them? How did Sirius survive in Azkaban and how was he able to escape? What does this tell us about his character?
6. Why is Scabbers a good name for Ron's rat? Why is a rat a suitable animal form for Pettigrew to assume? Discuss how all the Animagus forms suit their characters: Prongs, Padfoot, and Wormtail. How does an Animagus differ from a werewolf?
7. What does Lupin's lesson on Boggarts teach about how to face our deepest fears? When Harry tells Lupin his Boggart would take the form of a Dementor, Lupin says, "That suggests that what you fear most of all is – fear. Very wise, Harry." (p. 155) What does he mean? Why is Lupin the only other person besides Dumbledore who will say Voldemort's name?



8. What does the word Patronus suggest? Why does the Patronus only appear if you are concentrating very hard on a happy thought? Why is each one "unique to the wizard who conjures it"? (p. 237) For Harry to summon his Patronus, he tries several memories. What do we learn about Harry's character during this process? Which memory from your own life could you use to summon a Patronus?
9. What is the most important thing that Harry learns about his father from Lupin? What does Lupin mean when he tells Harry, "James would have been highly disappointed if his son had never found any of the secret passages out of the castle." (pp. 424-425)

10. Discuss the feelings that Harry has when he discovers the truth about Sirius Black. Why does Harry stop Sirius and Lupin from killing Pettigrew? Why did Harry's feelings change from his earlier wish to hunt down Sirius Black for revenge?
11. Why is Snape so unwilling to hear anything good about Sirius Black or Lupin? Why does he continue to be mean to Harry, Ron, and Hermione?
12. Discuss Hermione's role in saving Sirius and Buckbeak. Why is the Time-Turner necessary in helping Sirius escape? Why is it so important that Harry and Hermione not be seen when they go back in time?
13. What does Dumbledore mean when he says to Harry: "You think the dead we loved ever truly leave us? You think that we don't recall them more clearly than ever in times of great trouble?" (p. 427) What is the importance of Harry learning to produce the Patronus?
14. Consider some of the new names in this book and discuss what the names suggest about the characters:
  - Cornelius Fudge
  - Sirius Black
  - Remus Lupin
  - Wormtail (Peter Pettigrew)
  - Sybill Trelawney



## Talking About the Books

1. Discuss the idea that appears throughout the series of the power of a name. Dumbledore teaches Harry that fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself. Why are so many wizards afraid to say the name Voldemort, and why does Harry insist on using it? When Dumbledore faces Voldemort at the end of *Order of the Phoenix*, and when Harry faces him in the final battle in, *Deathly Hallows*, why do they both call him by his given name, Tom Riddle?
2. Describe the growth and maturation of major characters throughout their seven years at Hogwarts. Who do you think has changed the most? What experiences and insights contribute to their growth? Which characters – students and/or adults – remind you of people you have known in your own life?
3. Comparing the six Defense Against the Dark Arts teachers Harry encounters, which one do you think was most effective and why? Which classes at Hogwarts prepare the students with skills for their future lives? In *Order of the Phoenix*, Dolores Umbridge tells her class: “I am here to teach you using a Ministry-approved method that does not include inviting students to give their opinions on matters about which they understand very little.” (p. 317) Discuss this point of view in relation to teaching methods of the other professors at Hogwarts and those that you have experienced in your own schooling.
4. Author Philip Pullman, in his 1996 Carnegie Medal acceptance speech, said: “There are some themes, some subjects, too large for adult fiction; they can only be dealt with adequately in a children’s book.” (<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/pullman/author/carnegie.php>) Discuss this quote in relation to the Harry Potter series. What do you identify as the major themes, that you can identify, and why are they best illuminated in a coming-of-age saga?
5. Susan Cooper, author of *The Dark Is Rising* sequence, has written: “Fantasy goes one stage beyond realism; requiring complete intellectual surrender, it asks more of the reader, and at its best may offer more . . . Fantasy is the metaphor through which we discover ourselves.” (Susan Cooper, *Dreams and Wishes: Essays on Writing for Children*, McElderry Books, 1996, pp. 44-45) How does the fantasy element of the Harry Potter series help readers discover more about themselves and others? What insights have you gained from reading these volumes?
6. In Harry Potter’s world, the magic community exists alongside our “real” world and provides a contrast to the institutions that are familiar to us: educational, governmental, medical, and sporting. Compare the Ministry, Hogwarts, St. Mungo’s, Azkaban, the Tri-Wizard Tournament, and the Quidditch World Cup to similar organizations and events in our own world. How do these parallel existences compare to the similar constructions in other books of fantasy?
7. Dumbledore tells Harry: “That which Voldemort does not value, he takes no trouble to comprehend. Of house-elves and children’s tales, of love, loyalty, and innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing . . . That they all have a power beyond his own, a power beyond the reach of any magic, is a truth he has never grasped.” (*Deathly Hallows*, p. 709) Discuss this idea in relation to the truths of your own life. What are the important elements that have shaped your own character?



## Also Available from J.K. Rowling

*Quidditch Through the Ages*, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, and *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*.

Discussion guide prepared  
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Junior Authors and Illustrators.



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