

***Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* Reading Guide**

Pace Academy 10th Grade Summer Reading Assignment (For both 10th Grade CP and 10th Grade Honors)

Contact: Bailey Player (bailey.player@paceacademy.org)

Published originally as *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in England in 1997, and then as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in America a year later, this is the book that established the phenomenon that ignited imaginations and has fascinated generations of readers. The book topped the *New York Times* bestseller list for nearly two years and to date, *Harry Potter* titles have sold almost 500 million copies.

Yet, despite its popularity and Rowling's employment of archetype, Latin etymology, mythology, and allegory, the books are rarely deemed "serious" literature. Your summer reading assignment is an attempt to change that perception. For, in addition to reading *Sorcerer's Stone*, you are also being asked to read two chapters from Thomas C. Foster's *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* -- "Is that a Symbol?" and "It's All Political" -- and apply these lessons to Rowling's work. You can expect to read more of Foster's book as you make your way into the first semester of your Literary Heroes class and your teacher may also assign related writing projects or presentations.

Below you will find some chapter-by-chapter comprehension questions to help guide your reading of the novel. ***Please note that answering these questions is not mandatory.*** However, reading the novel with these questions in mind will help to deepen your understanding of the narrative. In addition, should you choose to answer these questions, you will create a study guide for your summer reading test. Also, once you finish reading the novel, you can engage in some creative analysis by considering Section 2 of this guide: Thinking Deeper about *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*.

At the bottom of this document, you will also find two exercises regarding *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*. These questions are designed to help you begin to apply the techniques outlined in Foster's book to *Harry Potter*. As with reading questions for *Harry Potter*, completing the exercises for *How to Read like a Professor* **is not mandatory**, but working with them will allow you to better understand the assigned chapters in Foster's book and how these chapters can be used in analyzing Rowling's work. Your teacher may also require you to complete these exercises in the first week or two of school, so doing them over the summer could be to your advantage.

Summer Reading Guide

Section 1: Reading Comprehension Questions for *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Chapter 1: The Boy Who Lived

1. When describing the Potters, Rowling coins the term “UnDursleyish.” From what you know so far of the Dursleys, how would you define “UnDursleyish”/“Dursleyish”?
2. On the day Harry’s parents died, what were some of the strange things happening that Mr. Dursley noticed?
3. If McGonagall is right that Dumbledore is the only wizard that Voldemort “was ever afraid of” why does Dumbledore say that “Voldemort has powers that I will never have”? What do you think he means by this?
4. How are we first introduced to Harry Potter?

Chapter 2: The Vanishing Glass

1. 10 years after having Harry left on their front porch, how have the Dursleys brought Harry into the family?
2. What is Dudley like? How does he treat Harry?
3. Where do the Dursleys take Dudley for his birthday? Why does Harry end up going too?
4. What magical moment do Harry and the snake in the reptile house share at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 3: The Letters from No One

1. What are the letters that keep coming for Harry? What steps does Mr. Dursley take to keep Harry from receiving these letters?
2. Where does Mr. Dursley take the family and why?
3. What is Harry counting down to at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 4: The Keeper of the Keys

1. How are we (re)introduced to Hagrid in this chapter? What are his identifying qualities?
2. What does Hagrid reveal to Harry about his identity and his real family?
3. What happened to Hagrid’s wand?

Chapter 5: Diagon Alley

1. Why does Hagrid take Harry to Diagon Alley? How do they get there?
2. Why do Harry and Hagrid go to Gringotts?
3. Harry encounters Draco for the first time in Madam Malkin's -- how is he introduced?
4. What does Hagrid buy for Harry?
5. What does Harry purchase at Ollivander's? What does Ollivander say is "curious" about this object?

Chapter 6: The Journey from Platform Nine-and-Three-Quarters

1. How does Harry get to Platform Nine-and-Three-Quarters at King's Cross Station? What is it like there?
2. How are Hermione, Neville, and the Weasley's (especially Ron) introduced in this chapter? What are their identifying features?
3. How are the first year students brought from the train to Hogwarts?

Chapter 7: The Sorting Hat

1. What is the Sorting Ceremony? Why is Harry so nervous about this Ceremony?
2. Why does the Sorting Hat say that Harry is "difficult"? Into which house is Harry sorted?
3. What is Harry's "strange dream" at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 8: The Potions Master

1. How is Hogwarts described?
2. Who is "The Potions Master"? How is he described?
3. What article from *The Daily Prophet* does Harry come across in Hagrid's hut?

Chapter Nine: The Midnight Duel

1. How do the first-year Hogwarts students do with their first flying lesson?
2. Why does McGonagall introduce Harry to Oliver Wood?
3. Who challenges Harry to the "Midnight Duel"? What happens at this duel?
4. What do Harry, Ron, and Hermione encounter on the forbidden corridor of the third floor?

Chapter Ten: Halloween

1. What does Harry receive from Professor McGonagall?
2. What are the rules of quidditch? What position will Harry play?
3. Why do Harry and Ron go down to the dungeons? What do they encounter there?
4. What lie does Hermione tell?

Chapter Eleven: Quidditch

1. What does Harry overhear in the interaction between Snape and Filch?
2. What does Hermione do to Snape during the quidditch game? Why?
3. How does Harry catch the snitch?
4. Who is Fluffy?

Chapter Twelve: The Mirror of Erised

1. Who is Nicholas Flamel and why are Harry, Ron, and Hermione trying to find out information about him?
2. What game does Ron start to try to teach Harry about?
3. What Christmas gifts does Harry get? What does he receive that used to belong to his father?
4. What is “The Mirror of Erised”? Why does Dumbledore say that men “have wasted away before it”?

Chapter Thirteen: Nicholas Flamel

1. What does Harry give to Neville? Why? What does Neville give Harry in return? What does Harry learn as a result?
2. What is the Sorcerer’s Stone? Why does the trio think that Snape might want it?
3. What conversation does Harry overhear in the Forbidden Forest?

Chapter Fourteen: Norbert the Norwegian Ridgeback

1. Why do the trio visit Hagrid’s hut? What information do they find out from him?
2. What creature is Hagrid keeping in his hut? Why do the trio suddenly need to come up with a plan to get rid of it? What is their plan?
3. What does Harry leave on top of the observation tower?

Chapter Fifteen: The Forbidden Forest

1. Why are Draco, Neville, Hermione, and Harry being punished and what is their punishment?
2. What does Harry overhear Quirrell saying?
3. Who is Ronan? What does he tell Hagrid?
4. What do Harry and Malfoy see out in the Forbidden Forest?
5. What does Firenze tell Harry about unicorns?
6. What does Harry find waiting for him in his bed?

Chapter Sixteen: Through the Trap Door

1. Why does Hermione put Neville in a “Body-Bind”?
2. How do the trio get Fluffy to fall asleep? What happens once that get through the trap door?
3. What is Devil’s Snare and how to the trio survive it?
4. How do the trio pass the test of the flying keys?
5. How does Ron guide the Harry and Hermione to victory in Wizard Chess?
6. What is the riddle of the seven bottles and how does Hermione solve it?

Chapter Seventeen: The Man with Two Faces

1. What does Professor Quirrell reveal about himself to Harry?
2. What does Harry see when he looks into the Mirror of Erised?
3. What happens when Harry touches Professor Quirrell?
4. What does Harry learn about Snape from Dumbledore?
5. What is the final result of the House Cup?

Section 2: Thinking Deeper about *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*

1. The novel does not introduce the titular character, Harry Potter, until the end of the first chapter, and even then, only as a baby. Why do you think we are introduced to the Dursleys, Dumbledore, McGonagall, and Hagrid before Harry? Why does it take us five chapters to get to Hogwarts?
2. Why do you think Ron and Harry become such fast friends? Why do they also become such close friends with Hermione? What is the dynamic of these friendships?
3. What is Harry's relationship to Hogwarts? How does Hogwarts function as a character in the novel?
4. What relationship do muggles have with the magical world? Could a muggle, for instance, make his/her way onto Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ without assistance from a witch or wizard? Could a muggle be given a wand and cast a spell?
5. Do you think you would be able to anticipate what you would see in The Mirror of Erised? If so, what would it be? If not, what does that say about desire? Do you think what one sees in the mirror changes over time?
6. If you could "audit" one Hogwarts class (i.e. attend for no academic credit), what would it be and why?
7. Do you think the characters are sorted into the correct house? What house do you think you would be sorted into? Do you think students are sorted into houses based on attributes they *currently* possess or attributes they *will* or *could* possess?
8. What is the point of the House Cup? Why do you think students are sorted in the first place? Do you think it is fair that Gryffindor wins the cup in the end of *The Sorcerer's Stone*?
9. Different animal groups are often identified by what are called different "animal collectives." So, for instance, a group of bison is called a "herd" while a group of dogs is called a "pack." More curious collectives would be a murder of crows, a memory of elephants, and an intrigue of kittens. What would a group of Gryffindors, Hufflepuffs, Ravenclaws, and Slytherins be called?
10. Would you rather have a broom or an invisibility cloak? Which of the two magical objects is more powerful?

Section 3: Applying "Is that a Symbol" and "It's All Political" from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

- **Exercise for “Is It a Symbol”:** We literature teachers discourage you from using SparkNotes because the analysis work it contains is often oversimplified, reductionist, and keeps you, the reader, from bringing your own wealth of knowledge and skill to the meaning-making process. Using Foster's useful advice in the "Is that a Symbol?" chapter of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, choose an aspect of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* that you feel is symbolic. Make sure it is NOT one of the symbols listed on the SparkNotes page (found here: <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/harrypotter/symbols/>) -- it should be an element you've identified for yourself. Explain 1) what you believe this symbol represents, and 2) what instincts, outside context, and textual evidence led you to this conclusion.
- **Exercise for “It’s All Political”:** In the "It's All Political" chapter from *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, Foster defines political text as "writing that engages the realities of its world - that thinks about human problems, including those in the social and political realm, that addresses the rights of persons and the wrongs of those in power" (110). In what ways is *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* a political text -- what "rights of persons" are promoted or threatened, and what "wrongs of those in power" are depicted? What parallels do you see between the social issues addressed in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and those of our modern society, past or present?