

# Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF J.K. ROWLING

Rowling was born outside of Bristol, England to Peter James Rowling, an aircraft engineer, and Anne Rowling, a science technician. As a child, Rowling often wrote fantasy stories and was very precocious. Rowling attended secondary school at Wyedean School and College, where her mother worked. Rowling then attended the University of Exeter, studying French and Classics. After that, Rowling worked as a researcher and bilingual secretary in London for Amnesty International. Rowling later moved to Portugal to teach English at night and write in the day. There, she met Portuguese journalist Jorge Arantes. They married two years later and their child Jessica was born a year after that. The couple separated a few months after Jessica's birth, and Rowling moved with her infant daughter to Edinburgh, Scotland. Rowling, who had gotten the idea for the *Harry Potter* series in 1990, wrote the first book while completing a teacher training course. Rowling then finished *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in 1995. Initially, only 1,000 copies were printed. Five months later, the book won its first award, and in early 1998, an auction was held in the United States for the rights to publish the novel, and the rights were won by Scholastic Inc. for \$105,000. Harry Potter became a sensation, growing larger with each book and shattering sales records. Harry Potter is now a global brand worth an estimated \$15 billion, and the books have been adapted into record-breaking films. In 2001, Rowling remarried and had a second child. She has also become a noted philanthropist, donating significant money to combat poverty, social inequality, and Multiple Sclerosis (from which her mother passed away). She continues to write and has written several crime novels under a pen name, Robert Galbraith.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* is the first of the books to touch on the harmful prejudice rampant in the wizarding world, which eventually allows the dark wizard Voldemort to return to power. The figure of Voldemort has been compared to historical figures like Hitler, who use racist ideologies in order to gain support and further their goals. Hitler viewed Jews as subhuman and persecuted them in order to take advantage of the anti-Semitism already rampant in Germany, and he elevated the Germans, who he viewed as having "racial purity," as the only true humans. For Voldemort (and Tom Riddle in this book), the parallel can be found in his discrimination against Muggle-borns or "Mudbloods," wizards with non-magic parents, whom

he views as inferior to the "pure-blood" wizards who come from families of all wizards. Voldemort uses the prejudice already latent in the wizarding community, like that of the Malfoy family, in order to gain support and power, just as Hitler and others like him have done.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* is the second in a series of seven books centering on protagonist Harry Potter, following *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and preceding *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. These seven books follow Harry's seven years at Hogwarts as well as the dark wizard Voldemort's return to power. Rowling also wrote a few companion books to the series, including *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* and *The Tales of Beadle the Bard*. Rowling also draws on a long tradition of British children's fantasies that have moral underpinnings: the works of Roald Dahl, including *James and the Giant Peach* (who loses his parents and has to live with a pair of unpleasant aunts) and *Matilda* (an otherwise regular child who discovers she has telekinetic powers), and the works of C.S. Lewis, such as *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (in which normal children are transported to a magical world). *Chamber of Secrets* in particular is often compared to the works of Lewis for its connection to Christian allegory, as some academics have noted that Harry's journey entails slaying a satanic snake-like figure and sacrificing himself, only to rise from death with the help of a phoenix.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets
- **When Written:** 1995-1998
- **Where Written:** Edinburgh, Scotland
- **When Published:** 1995
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Children's fantasy
- **Setting:** England; Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry
- **Climax:** Harry kills the basilisk and defeats Tom Riddle
- **Antagonist:** Tom Riddle/Voldemort
- **Point of View:** Third-person

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Borgin and Burke's Magical Items.** Three objects that Harry notices in Borgin and Burke's store in this book make important reappearances in the sixth book, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*: the Vanishing Cabinet, the Opal Necklace, and the Hand

of Glory.

**Pileup.** For the film, fourteen real Ford Anglias were destroyed to create the scene in which Harry and Ron crash into the Whomping Willow.



## PLOT SUMMARY

Harry Potter is back at his Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon's house for the summer following his first year at Hogwarts, and he is upset because he hasn't heard from any of his friends over the summer. On Harry's twelfth birthday, the Dursleys host a business dinner and Harry receives a visit from a house elf named Dobby in his room. Dobby warns that danger awaits Harry at Hogwarts this year and says that he should not go back—also revealing that he has been stopping Harry's friends' letters. When Harry refuses to promise that he will not return to Hogwarts, Dobby destroys Petunia's pudding and ruins the dinner. The Dursleys imprison Harry in his room for three days. Harry's friend Ron Weasley and his brothers Fred and George then rescue Harry using a flying car belonging to their father, Mr. Weasley. They take Harry and his luggage back to their home, the Burrow, where Harry spends the rest of the summer in bliss.

Harry and the Weasleys go to buy their schoolbooks for the year along with Hermione Granger and her parents, who are Muggles. At the bookstore Flourish and Blotts, they meet Gilderoy Lockhart, a famous wizard who announces that he will be the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts. Also at the store is Lucius Malfoy, who says that the Weasleys "disgrace the name of wizard" by associating themselves with Muggles.

At the end of the summer, the Weasleys drive to King's Cross Station with Harry to board the Hogwarts Express. But at the station, everyone is able to get through the barrier to platform nine and three quarters except for Harry and Ron. They decide to fly the car to Hogwarts, but on the way, they are seen by many Muggles. When they arrive at Hogwarts the car engine fails and they land right on the Whomping Willow, a giant tree that starts to hit back at them. Ron's wand breaks and the car drives away from them into the Forest. Harry and Ron get in major trouble for flying the car, and are warned by Dumbledore that if they break any more rules, they will be expelled.

After Harry's first week of class, Quidditch practice begins, but his first practice is interrupted by the Slytherins. Draco Malfoy has just joined the Slytherin team as Seeker, because his father bought the entire team new brooms. When Hermione points out that Draco bought his way onto the team, he calls her a "Mudblood." Ron later explains that this is a derogatory term for someone who is Muggle-born, but he also says that most wizards know that blood status doesn't mean anything about

magical ability.

That evening, Harry and Ron serve detention for their arrival by flying car. Ron is sent to polish trophies, while Harry helps Lockhart answer his fan mail. But in Lockhart's office, he hears a mysterious cold voice that it seems only he can hear, saying "Let me rip you...let me kill you." On Halloween, Harry again hears the voice and follows it down a corridor. He is unable to find what is causing it, but he does see a puddle of water and Mrs. Norris (Filch's cat) frozen stiff as a statue. On the wall next to her is a message: "The Chamber of Secrets has been opened. Enemies of the heir, beware." Filch immediately blames Harry for killing Mrs. Norris, but Dumbledore explains that a second-year would not have the magic required to do it. Furthermore, he says, Mrs. Norris is not dead—she is simply petrified, and once Professor Sprout's Mandrakes are matured, they can revive the cat.

Hermione tries to find out information about the Chamber of Secrets, and so she asks the History of Magic teacher, Professor Binns, about it. Professor Binns explains that when Hogwarts was founded, Salazar Slytherin (one of the four founders) did not want to allow Muggle-borns into the school, but the other three founders disagreed with him. Legend has it that he created a hidden Chamber that could be opened by his Heir, and that a **monster** lives inside that would then "purge the school" of Muggle-borns. Rumors start to circulate that Harry is Slytherin's heir, but he, Ron, and Hermione think that it is Draco Malfoy. Hermione proposes that they use Polyjuice Potion (which can transform a person's body into someone else's) to ask Draco about it—but they'll need to steal ingredients from Snape's store.

Meanwhile, Harry has his first Quidditch game of the year, but someone bewitches a Bludger to attack Harry. Harry is able to catch the Snitch and win the game, but the Bludger breaks his arm in the process. Lockhart tries to heal the arm but instead removes Harry's bones entirely. Harry spends the night in the hospital wing, where Dobby visits. Dobby reveals that he bewitched the platform barrier and the Bludger, because he doesn't want Harry to be in danger. Again, he insists that Harry has to go home. Then, Dumbledore and McGonagall enter carrying Colin Creevey (a first-year who idolizes Harry), who has also been petrified.

News about Colin spreads like wildfire, and the air is thick with "rumor and suspicion." Harry, Ron, and Hermione continue to work on the Polyjuice Potion, and during Potions class Hermione successfully steals some of the ingredients from Snape. Meanwhile, Lockhart starts a dueling club to help protect the students. At the first meeting, Harry and Draco are matched up to duel. Draco conjures a snake to try to attack Harry, but when it starts to go after a Muggle-born student named Justin Finch-Fletchley, Harry tells the snake to stop, and it does. However, he says it in snake language, and everyone thinks that he was egging on the snake. Hermione and Ron tell

Harry that this is not a common gift, and that Salazar Slytherin was known for talking to snakes. The whole school will think that Harry is the Heir of Slytherin—and for all anyone knows, he could be.

The next day, Harry goes to try and explain to Justin what happened, but he overhears some Hufflepuffs talking about how he must be the Heir of Slytherin. Then, in a corridor, he discovers Justin and the ghost Nearly Headless Nick, both petrified. When McGonagall discovers Harry with them, she takes Harry to Dumbledore's office. Harry sees the Sorting Hat and wonders whether the Hat put him in the right House, as it had thought about putting him in Slytherin the year prior. He also watches as **Fawkes**, Dumbledore's phoenix, is reborn. Dumbledore tells Harry that he does not think that he petrified the students, but wonders if Harry has anything he needs to tell him. Harry says no.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione put their Polyjuice Potion plan into action on Christmas. Harry and Ron transform into Crabbe and Goyle in order to question Draco about the attacks. They discover that Draco is not the Heir of Slytherin, but they also learn that the Chamber had been opened fifty years earlier.

Soon after, Harry finds a diary that had been thrown away in a bathroom near where the first attack had occurred, which is haunted by a ghost named Moaning Myrtle. Harry discovers that by writing in the diary, he can communicate with the memory of Tom Riddle, who was a student at the school fifty years prior when the Chamber was opened last. Riddle shows Harry a memory in which he caught the person who opened the Chamber after a girl was killed by the monster. This person turns out to be Hagrid, who was trying to protect a monster within the castle. When Harry tells Ron and Hermione about this, they decide not to confront Hagrid unless another student is attacked.

One day when Harry hears the cold voice again, Hermione gets a spark of inspiration and heads off to the library to try and find out information. Later, McGonagall informs Harry and Ron that Hermione and another student were petrified. Harry and Ron decide to confront Hagrid by sneaking out to his hut at night. But before they can ask him about his involvement, Dumbledore and the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, visit Hagrid. Fudge says that with the attacks going on, he must appear to be doing something, and so he takes Hagrid away to Azkaban (the wizard prison). Then, Lucius Malfoy arrives, speaking on behalf of the school's governors, to inform Dumbledore that he is temporarily suspended. Before Hagrid leaves, he tells the boys to "follow the spiders."

A few days later, Harry and Ron find a trail of spiders leading into the Forbidden Forest and sneak out at night to follow it. In the forest, they meet an enormous spider named Aragog, who explains that he is not the monster that lives in the Chamber of Secrets, and that Hagrid did not open the Chamber fifty years prior. Aragog also tells them that the girl who was killed died in

a bathroom. When Harry and Ron escape the spiders, they realize that the girl must have been Moaning Myrtle.

Harry and Ron then visit Hermione's body and realize that in her frozen hand, there is a piece of paper explaining that the monster in the Chamber is a Basilisk. But before they can tell the teachers, McGonagall announces that the school is closing, because the monster has taken Ginny Weasley into the Chamber. The teachers decide to send Lockhart to face the monster. Lockhart tries to run away, but Harry and Ron threaten to reveal that he is a fraud, and so he goes along with them. They discover a secret tunnel in Myrtle's bathroom that leads them to the Chamber.

In the Chamber, Lockhart tries to perform a memory charm on Harry and Ron using Ron's broken wand, but it backfires, causing Lockhart to lose his memory and accidentally creating a rock barrier between Ron and Harry. Harry goes on to the Chamber and discovers Ginny's unconscious body and Tom Riddle. Riddle explains that he is actually Voldemort, and that he has been possessing Ginny through his diary and using her to carry out the attacks. Harry calls out to Dumbledore for help, and Fawkes arrives. Fawkes blinds the basilisk and delivers the **Sword of Gryffindor**, which Harry uses to kill the basilisk. Harry then uses the basilisk's fang to pierce Riddle's diary, destroying Riddle. Ginny regains consciousness, and Fawkes carries Harry, Ginny, Ron, and Lockhart out of the Chamber.

Dumbledore returns to the school, and Harry explains what happened. Harry expresses his insecurity that he and Riddle are very similar, but Dumbledore tells Harry that they make very different choices, and therefore are very different from each other. Then Lucius Malfoy arrives with Dobby to confront Dumbledore, and Harry realizes that Lucius gave Ginny the diary in Flourish and Blotts. Harry then tricks Lucius into freeing Dobby.

At the end of the book, the petrified students are cured, exams are cancelled, and Hagrid returns from Azkaban. Lockhart is fired now that he has no memory, and Harry returns to Privet Drive once more.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Harry Potter** – The protagonist of the series. This second book in the series follows Harry as he tries to solve the mystery of what is causing the attacks on Muggle-born students at Hogwarts. Harry also spends much of the book trying to come to terms with who he is and who he is growing to be. Harry often worries about his identity being out of his hands: many people in the wizarding world (for example, Ginny and Colin Creevey) treat Harry like a celebrity because he was almost killed as a baby by the dark wizard Voldemort. Meanwhile other

people, such as Gilderoy Lockhart and Draco Malfoy (Harry's nemesis) believe that Harry is only concerned with his fame, viewing him as bigheaded—even though Harry is actually humble and tries as much as possible to stay out of the spotlight. Harry also worries about his identity being left to fate, as the Sorting Hat thought about putting Harry in Slytherin House a year prior (a House notorious for the number of dark witches and wizards that have been in it). As the story goes on, Harry worries that he might somehow be connected with Salazar Slytherin because he discovers that he can speak to snakes just as Slytherin could. Additionally, he worries about being very similar to Tom Riddle (whom Rowling eventually reveals is a younger version of Voldemort). But over the course of the book Harry proves that he is unlike Slytherin and Riddle in many ways as well. While they choose to be prejudiced against Muggle-borns, Harry treats everyone around him with respect as long as they are kind as well. Harry is also deeply loyal, both to his best friends Ron and Hermione, and to mentors like Dumbledore and Hagrid. These relationships imbue Harry with courage as they support him on his quest to find information about the attacks, ultimately allowing him to kill the **basilisk** and destroy Riddle.

**Hermione Granger** – One of Harry's best friends, along with Ron Weasley. Hermione is Muggle-born (she has non-magic parents) and is known for her intelligence and magical abilities: she is the top of the class at Hogwarts. This disproves some of the prejudices and stereotypes that people like Lucius and Draco Malfoy have about Muggle-borns; they believe that Muggle-borns are inferior to "pure-blood" wizards, but both Hagrid and Ron assure Hermione that this prejudice is unfounded. When attacks begin on Muggle-born students, Hermione is understandably nervous, and she works to stave off her fear in two different ways. First, unlike many other students who spread rumors about the Chamber of Secrets and the Heir of Slytherin, Hermione seeks out concrete information in the library and from Professor Binns so that she can learn the truth about the attacks. Additionally, she comes up with a plan to brew Polyjuice Potion, which will allow herself, Harry, and Ron to transform into Slytherin students and interrogate Draco Malfoy about the Heir of Slytherin. Brewing the potion involves breaking many school rules and stealing from Snape's personal store. This is unlike Hermione, who is usually adamant about following the rules, but like Harry and Ron she understands the value of breaking the rules when she feels that what she is doing is morally right—and to her, preventing the attacks is paramount. Hermione eventually pieces together what is causing the attacks (the **basilisk**), but before she can tell Harry and Ron, she is attacked and is petrified. However, Harry and Ron's loyalty to Hermione spurs them to solve the mystery of the Chamber of Secrets so that they can make sure other students do not experience the same fate. At the end of the book, Hermione recovers from the attack and is delighted that her friends used the information

she found to finish solving the mystery.

**Ron Weasley** – One of Harry's best friends, along with Hermione Granger. Ron is a second-year student in Gryffindor and he has red hair and freckles. Ron is the youngest son in the Weasley family, and he has five older brothers (including Percy, Fred, and George) and a younger sister, Ginny. Ron and his family contrast sharply with Draco Malfoy and his family: both the Weasleys and the Malfoys are "pure-blood," but Ron understands that blood status has little to do with magical talent, and therefore he does not share the prejudice that pure-blood wizards are superior to others. Ron also experiences his own form of discrimination and prejudice because his family is quite poor. He worries that he will be judged for his lack of money, but Harry is always loyal to Ron. Ron, in turn, accompanies Harry on nearly all of his adventures, and often provides Harry with the support that enables him to succeed. For example, at the beginning of the book, Ron worries that he hasn't heard from Harry all summer and so he, Fred, and George, fly the car to Harry's house in order to free him from the clutches of the Dursleys' clutches. Ron also follows the spiders into the Forbidden Forest along with Harry to help him find information about the Chamber of Secrets, despite the fact that he is terrified of spiders. At the end of the book, Ron and Harry go to the Chamber of Secrets together in order to rescue Ginny from the clutches of Tom Riddle. Like Harry, Ron has a bit of a rule-breaking streak in him, but also like Harry, he usually only breaks the rules when he feels that doing so is the morally right thing to do.

**Tom Riddle/Voldemort** – Tom Riddle was a student at Hogwarts fifty years prior to Harry; his fifth-year memories are preserved in a diary that eventually makes its way into Harry's hands. Riddle bears some mysteriously resemblances to Harry: he is half-blood, an orphan, has jet-black hair, can speak Parseltongue, and considers Hogwarts to be his home. When Harry picks up his diary, Riddle shows him a memory of his time at school in which he catches Hagrid and gets him expelled for opening the Chamber of Secrets. But ultimately, several revelations about Tom Riddle come to light: he is in fact the Heir of Slytherin and he opened the Chamber of Secrets fifty years prior and framed Hagrid for doing it. In the present, Riddle's diary takes possession of Ginny and he uses her to control the **basilisk** to attack Muggle-borns. The second revelation is that Tom Riddle is the young version of the dark wizard Voldemort, who killed Harry's parents and tried to kill Harry as a baby. Tom's full name, Tom Marvolo Riddle, is also an anagram of "I am Lord Voldemort." Harry confronts Riddle in the Chamber, slays the basilisk with the help of **Fawkes the phoenix**, and destroys Riddle's diary (and thus the memory of Riddle himself). The revelation that Riddle is a young Voldemort causes Harry to worry that he might be too much like Tom Riddle, and that he, too, could be destined to become a dark wizard. However, Dumbledore emphasizes that Harry's choices

make him very different from Riddle, who always chooses self-interest and power where Harry chooses bravery and kindness.

#### **Professor Dumbledore** – The Headmaster at Hogwarts.

Dumbledore serves as a parental figure and a mentor for Harry; in the beginning of the book he reproaches Harry and Ron for the foolish action of flying the car to Hogwarts. Harry worries about disappointing Dumbledore, and so after the attacks begin, Harry chooses not to confide in Dumbledore about the mysterious voice that only he can hear because he worries that Dumbledore will not believe him. After the attacks continue over the span of several months, Lucius Malfoy and the other governors ask Dumbledore to step aside, despite Cornelius Fudge's protests. Yet even though Dumbledore is forced to step aside from his position, his final words before leaving imply to Harry that he is not alone. This proves true: when, in the Chamber of Secrets, Harry affirms his belief that Dumbledore is not truly gone from the, he is rewarded for this display of loyalty by the arrival of Dumbledore's phoenix,

**Fawkes**. Harry is heartened by Fawkes's arrival and regains his courage as a result. In addition, Fawkes blinds the **basilisk**, delivers the Sorting Hat (and the **Sword of Gryffindor**) and also heals Harry when he is poisoned by a venomous basilisk bite. At the end, when Harry finally confides in Dumbledore his insecurities about being similar to Tom Riddle, Dumbledore explains that Harry is very different from Tom Riddle simply because he makes different choices—a lesson that reaffirms Harry's control over his own identity in this and future books.

**Gilderoy Lockhart** – The new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts. Lockhart is known for many great deeds, which he writes about at length in his many memoirs. However, over the course of the book he is shown to be more and more inept at magic, until it becomes clear that Lockhart is a fraud. He is extremely self-centered and often assumes Harry is after the same fame and fortune that Lockhart himself enjoys, despite the fact that Harry has no real interest in being in the spotlight. At the end of the book, Lockhart confirms the fact that he is a fraud when the teachers try to send him into the Chamber of Secrets to rescue Ginny and instead he tries to run away. Harry and Ron confront him as he packs, and Lockhart reveals that he never did any of the things in his books; he merely found the people who had accomplished these feats, asked them to recount their experiences in detail, and then wiped their memories with Memory Charms. Harry and Ron then disarm him and force him to go to the Chamber with them; when he grabs Ron's broken wand and tries to wipe his memory, Ron's wand backfires and Lockhart's memory is wiped instead. At the end of the book, Dumbledore announces that Lockhart will not be teaching again next year.

**Rubeus Hagrid** – The groundskeeper at Hogwarts, who also serves as a mentor and friend to Harry. Hagrid has a weakness for taking care of large and sometimes dangerous creatures. It is revealed later in the book that Hagrid was expelled from

Hogwarts fifty years earlier for opening the Chamber of Secrets, because Riddle found him taking care of a giant monster (which turns out to be the spider Aragog, and not the **basilisk**). Harry, Ron, and Hermione's loyalty to Hagrid prevents them from confronting him after this discovery, but when Hermione herself is attacked, Harry and Ron try to talk to Hagrid about these events. They are interrupted, however, when Cornelius Fudge arrives to take Hagrid to Azkaban prison because the Chamber has been opened again. Hagrid then tells Harry and Ron to "follow the spiders," which allows them to discover that Hagrid was actually innocent and that Aragog was not the monster who attacked and killed a student. In the end, when it is discovered that Riddle actually framed Hagrid for this crime, he is exonerated and brought back to the school. Hagrid is incredibly kind and loyal both to Harry and to Dumbledore.

**Draco Malfoy** – A second-year student in Slytherin and Harry's rival at Hogwarts. Draco can usually be seen flanked by his two friends Crabbe and Goyle. Draco and his father Lucius become in many ways the antithesis of the Weasley family and Harry. Draco constantly uses hateful words to discriminate against others who are not like him. He makes fun of Ron for being poor and calls Hermione a "Mudblood," a slur implying that she's inferior because she has two Muggle parents. He also despises Harry and often taunts him when other people treat him like a celebrity. This prejudice leads Harry, Ron, and Hermione to believe that Draco is the Heir of Slytherin and that he is the one causing the attacks, and so they conjure up a potion to turn Harry and Ron into Crabbe and Goyle in order to ask Draco about the Chamber of Secrets. Draco reveals to them that he is not the Heir of Slytherin, but that he wishes he knew who it was so that he could help them attack Muggle-borns, again showing his deep hatred and prejudice.

**Lucius Malfoy** – The father of Draco Malfoy. It is revealed that Lucius was a big supporter of Voldemort, but after Voldemort's fall, he claimed that he was bewitched while Voldemort was in power. Lucius is incredibly prejudiced against Muggles, Muggle-borns, and anyone sympathetic to Muggles, and he instills this prejudice in Draco as well. Lucius particularly dislikes Mr. Weasley because part of his work at the Ministry involves protecting Muggles. Lucius plants Tom Riddle's diary in Ginny's books at Flourish and Blotts, knowing that if Ginny is caught opening the Chamber of Secrets and sending the **basilisk** to attack Muggle-borns, it could endanger Mr. Weasley's Muggle Protection Act. Throughout the book Lucius uses his position of power as a school governor to manipulate the rules, first putting pressure on Fudge to take Hagrid to Azkaban, and then threatening the other governors to support him in removing Dumbledore from his post. At the end of the book, Harry tricks Lucius into freeing his house-elf Dobby, which infuriates Lucius.

**Dobby** – A house-elf who works for the Malfoys. Dobby is

abused by Lucius and Draco and has heard of Harry's greatness, and so when he realizes that Lucius is plotting against Harry, Dobby goes to warn Harry that he should not return to Hogwarts this year. He also tries several schemes to prevent Harry from staying at the school: during the summer he stops Harry's letters to make Harry think that he has no friends; he destroys Aunt Petunia's pudding with a Hover Charm to try and get Harry expelled for using magic outside of school; he closes the barrier at platform nine and three quarters to prevent Harry and Ron from passing through it; and finally he enchant a Bludger to try and injure Harry enough to send him home. Even though these events cause Harry a great deal of trouble, Harry understands that Dobby is causing them to try to protect Harry. At the end of the book, Harry repays Dobby's kindness by tricking Lucius into freeing Dobby.

**Ginny Weasley** – Ron's younger sister, who is in her first year at Hogwarts. Ginny idolizes Harry and gets nervous around him at the start of the book. When the Weasleys are buying books in Flourish and Blotts, Lucius covertly hides Tom Riddle's diary within one of Ginny's books. Ginny then pours her heart and soul into the diary's pages, which allows Riddle to possess her. Ginny then (unknowingly to her) opens the Chamber of Secrets and controls the **basilisk**, using it to attack Muggle-born students. She starts to suspect that she may be involved in the attacks, and throws the book away. But when she sees that Harry has found the diary, she steals it back to prevent Riddle from possessing Harry. At the end of the book, Riddle forces Ginny to enter the Chamber of Secrets in order to lure Harry and Ron there, but Harry is able to rescue her and destroy Riddle.

**Cornelius Fudge** – The Minister of Magic, and Mr. Weasley's boss. After the attacks on Muggle-borns continues at Hogwarts, Fudge is pressured by the school governors (primarily Lucius Malfoy) to "do something," as he puts it. But instead of trying to figure out who actually opened the Chamber, he simply takes Hagrid away to Azkaban because Hagrid had been expelled for the same crime fifty years earlier, despite the fact that there is no evidence to indicate that Hagrid is the perpetrator this time. Thus, Fudge demonstrates the way in which leaders are more concerned with appearing to do the right thing rather than actually doing it. This is a sharp contrast to Harry, who is more concerned with doing the right thing than with trying to follow the rules and simply appearing to do the right thing.

**Aragog** – An elephant-sized spider who lives in the Forbidden Forest. Fifty years prior to Harry's time at Hogwarts, Hagrid took raised Aragog, and Tom Riddle framed Hagrid for opening the Chamber of Secrets by making the teachers believe that Aragog was the **monster** that attacked several students and killed Myrtle. When Hagrid is taken off to Azkaban for the same crime in the present, he gives Harry and Ron a clue to find Aragog. Aragog then tells them that he is not the monster from

the Chamber, and provides the crucial hint that the student who died fifty years earlier died in a bathroom.

**Professor Binns** – The History of Magic teacher at Hogwarts. Professor Binns is a ghost, and usually his classes are very dry and boring lectures. However, after the attack on Mrs. Norris, Hermione asks Professor Binns for information on the Chamber of Secrets, and Binns tells the students about the origin of the Chamber of Secrets and the prejudice against Muggle-borns. He also informs the students that there is said to be a **monster** within the Chamber, and that only the Heir of Slytherin would be able to open the Chamber and control the monster. However, Professor Binns also maintains that the Chamber is only a myth.

**Professor McGonagall** – The Transfiguration teacher at Hogwarts and the Head of Gryffindor House. Professor McGonagall is a strict rule-enforcer and doles out detention to Harry and Ron when they arrive via flying car. However, she also cares deeply for the students and is extremely anxious about the attacks going on at the school. When Dumbledore is suspended from the school at the end of the book, she takes over as the temporary Headmistress.

**Professor Snape** – The Potions teacher at Hogwarts and Head of Slytherin House. Snape detests Harry, believing that Harry is very arrogant (an attitude that is only reinforced by Harry and Ron's arrival via flying car). This dislike carries over to the rest of the Gryffindors, while he favors the Slytherin students like Draco Malfoy. He also takes an instant dislike to Gilderoy Lockhart, whom he believes to be a pompous fraud, and takes great relish in disarming Lockhart during their demonstrations at the dueling club.

**Justin Finch-Fletchley** – A second-year Hufflepuff student at Hogwarts. Justin is Muggle-born, and so when rumors begin to spread that Harry is the heir of Slytherin, he starts to avoid Harry. This fear is only made worse when, during a meeting of the dueling club, it seems like Harry sets a snake on Justin when really Harry is trying to prevent the snake from attacking Justin. Justin is later petrified by the **basilisk** along with Nearly Headless Nick, but he is revived at the end of the book.

**Moaning Myrtle** – A ghost who haunts one of the girls' restrooms on the second floor, where Harry, Ron, and Hermione often meet to discuss and carry out their plans because it is usually empty. Most of the students make fun of Myrtle and her constant complaining, but Harry and his friends learn to tolerate her and treat her respectfully. At the end of the book, it is revealed that Myrtle is the student who was killed by the **basilisk** when the Chamber was opened fifty years earlier, and that the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets is in her bathroom.

**Nearly Headless Nick** – One of the ghosts at Hogwarts, who earns this nickname because someone tried to behead him and didn't cut his head off all the way. This is particularly upsetting

to Nick because it prevents him from joining a ghost club called the Headless Hunt. Nick helps Harry escape detention from Filch, and in return Harry, Ron, and Hermione attend his five hundredth deathday party on Halloween. Nick is also attacked by the **basilisk** along with Justin Finch-Fletchley.

**Mr. Weasley** – The father of Ron, Ginny, and the rest of the Weasley boys (including Percy, Fred, and George). Mr. Weasley works for the Ministry of Magic in the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts department. Mr. Weasley's love of and interest in Muggles puts him in stark contrast with Lucius Malfoy, who believes that his interactions with Muggles are a "disgrace to the name of wizard." But Mr. Weasley knows that this prejudice is misguided, and this respectful treatment of others carries down to his children.

**Mrs. Weasley** – The mother of Ron, Ginny, and the rest of the Weasley boys (including Percy, Fred, and George). Mrs. Weasley reprimands Fred, George, and Ron for stealing and flying the car to rescue Harry and then also reprimands Ron for flying the car to Hogwarts. She does have a soft spot for Harry, however, and is happy to have him stay at the Burrow through the end of the summer so that he doesn't have to stay with the Dursleys.

**Argus Filch** – The caretaker at Hogwarts, who takes a lot of pleasure in catching students making any trouble. He also has a cat, Mrs. Norris, who helps patrol the halls, and who becomes the first victim of the **basilisk's** attacks. It is revealed that Filch is hiding what he sees as an embarrassing secret: he is a Squib—a person with two wizard parents but who has no magical abilities. Ron speculates that this is why Filch is so mean to students, because he is bitter.

**Fred Weasley** – One of Ron and Ginny's older brothers. Fred is the twin of George Weasley, and they are two years older than Harry and Ron. They have a reputation for being tricksters in school and they help Ron rescue Harry from the Dursleys in the flying car. Fred and George are also both Beaters on the Quidditch team with Harry.

**George Weasley** – One of Ron and Ginny's older brothers. George is the twin of Fred Weasley, and they are two years older than Harry and Ron. They have a reputation for being tricksters in school and they help Ron rescue Harry from the Dursleys in the flying car. Fred and George are also both Beaters on the Quidditch team with Harry.

**Vernon Dursley** – Harry's uncle, Petunia's husband, and Dudley's father. Vernon and Petunia treat Harry horribly but are also afraid of Harry because they worry that he will use magic on them. When Vernon realizes that Harry is not allowed to do magic outside of school, Vernon cruelly imprisons him in his room and nearly starves him.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Petunia Dursley** – Harry's aunt, Vernon's husband, and

Dudley's mother. Petunia and Vernon treat Harry horribly but are also afraid of Harry because they worry that he will use magic on them.

**Dudley Dursley** – Harry's cousin and Vernon and Petunia's son. Dudley is slightly older than Harry and is completely spoiled by his parents. Like his parents, he is terrified that Harry will use magic to hurt him.

**Professor Sprout** – The Herbology teacher at Hogwarts and the Head of Hufflepuff House. Professor Sprout helps to cure the petrified students using the Mandrakes that she is growing, which have restorative powers.

**Crabbe** – One of Draco Malfoy's best friends and henchmen, along with Goyle. Ron transforms into Crabbe using Polyjuice Potion in order to interrogate Draco about the Heir of Slytherin.

**Goyle** – One of Draco Malfoy's best friends and henchmen, along with Crabbe. Harry transforms into Goyle using Polyjuice Potion in order to interrogate Draco about the Heir of Slytherin.

**Neville Longbottom** – A classmate of Harry's and another first-year student in Gryffindor. Neville is often portrayed as nervous and somewhat inept, like when the Cornish pixies haul him into the air by the ears during Lockhart's class.

**Colin Creevey** – A Muggle-born first-year student in Gryffindor who treats Harry like a celebrity and constantly takes pictures of him. Colin is the first student petrified by the **basilisk**, though he is revived at the end of the book.

**Ernie MacMillan** – A second-year Hufflepuff student who is friends with Justin Finch-Fletchley. After seeing Harry talk to the snake during the dueling club, he spreads the rumor that Harry is the Heir of Slytherin and accuses Harry of hating Muggle-born students.

**Oliver Wood** – A sixth-year Gryffindor student and the captain of the Gryffindor Quidditch team.

**Percy Weasley** – Ron's older brother who is a sixth-year student at Hogwarts. Percy is also a prefect in Gryffindor.

**Peeves** – A poltergeist who likes to make trouble in the hallways at Hogwarts.

**Seamus Finnigan** – A classmate of Harry's, who is also a first-year in Gryffindor.

**Dean Thomas** – A classmate of Harry's, who is also a first-year in Gryffindor.



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in

black and white.



## INFORMATION, RUMORS, AND FEAR

Harry Potter's second year at the wizarding school of Hogwarts is dominated by attacks on Muggle-born students by an unknown attacker. When students are attacked, they become completely petrified (literally, frozen like statues and almost impossible to revive), and thus are unable to provide information on who or what might have attacked them. This lack of information causes fear and doubt to fly throughout the castle. As a result, theories and rumors begin to spread about who could be carrying out these attacks and why; some focus on Harry, while others center on Draco Malfoy or Hagrid—none of whom are the real source of the attacks. Using this mystery as the center of the plot, Rowling demonstrates how a lack of information in a frightening situation spurs people to fear the unknown and spread rumors to fill those anxiety-inducing gaps in information. However, as Rowling points out, this impulse is harmful, unproductive, and distracting, and the best thing to do in a case like this is to actively and clear-mindedly seek out facts, like Hermione does.

When the attacks first occur, the lack of understanding among the students and teachers begins as uneasiness and quickly escalates to outright panic. In the first attack, Mrs. Norris (the cat belonging to Hogwarts's caretaker, Mr. Filch), is petrified alongside the message: "The Chamber of Secrets has been opened. Enemies of the heir, beware." Dumbledore reveals that he does not know what could have petrified her, nor does anyone understand what the message means. The fact that Dumbledore, one of the most knowledgeable wizards alive, does not know something sends the students into a nervous frenzy. Rowling describes how "for a few days, the school could talk of little else but the attack," proving how a lack of information quickly translates into fear. The second attack is on a first-year Gryffindor student named Colin Creevey. When Colin is brought into the hospital, Harry is there recovering from a broken arm and is able to eavesdrop on Professor Dumbledore and Professor McGonagall, who are as worried as Harry is about the implications of this attack. Rowling notes that "from what Harry could see of Professor McGonagall's shadowy face, she didn't understand any of this better than he did." The professors' lack of information about what's happening, along with their inability to prevent what has now become a series of attacks, sparks fear in the rest of the student body as well. Rowling describes how the air was "suddenly thick with rumor and suspicion," and that first-years moved around the castle in groups, too afraid to venture out alone. Another attack, this time on a second-year student named Justin Finch-Fletchley and the ghost Nearly Headless Nick, turns "what had hitherto been nervousness into real panic." These escalating descriptions of the mood in the castle

demonstrate how fear of the unknown, perhaps even more than the monster itself, is what ultimately instills panic within the student body.

In the midst of this lack of information and the fear that it sparks, rumors start to spread in order to try to fill in the gaps. Yet the rumors are often baseless, simply blaming the most obvious candidates in order to relieve the accusers' anxiety, rather than examining real evidence. Rumors start to spread that Harry himself is the heir of Slytherin and that he opened the Chamber of Secrets, despite the fact that after Mrs. Norris's attack, Dumbledore assured Filch that Harry could not have accomplished this kind of advanced spell. Still, many students try to avoid Harry. One Hufflepuff boy, Ernie, says that Harry is trying to petrify anyone who interferes with him, and that Voldemort wanted to kill him as a baby because he didn't want to compete with another dark wizard. These rumors are not only incredibly hurtful to Harry, but they also distract the students from the real heir of Slytherin, who is hiding within the castle. Harry, for his own part, starts to believe that Draco Malfoy is the heir of Slytherin, despite the fact that he has no evidence for this theory except for the fact that Malfoy is prejudiced against Muggle-born students. Just as many students are using limited information in deciding that Harry is the heir of Slytherin, so too does Harry fall victim to his lack of knowledge and simply try to confirm what he hopes to be true.

In contrast to the students who simply discuss rumors and give in to this lack of information, Hermione tries to find out information in order to combat the attacks and the fear surrounding them. After the first attack and the writing on the wall that "the Chamber of Secrets has been opened," Rowling describes how Hermione tries to read as many books as she can, looking for information on the Chamber of Secrets. Hermione then asks Professor Binns, the History of Magic professor, what the Chamber is and what **monster** might be lurking inside. She is the only one who seems to be able to get reliable information, which helps Harry and Ron understand what might be happening beyond the level of rumor. When Hermione comes to a sudden realization about a mysterious voice that Harry has been hearing, she once again goes to the library to find out information on monstrous snakes—putting together the fact that Harry is the only one who hears the voice and the fact that he is the only one at school who can talk to snakes. Sadly her discovery that the monster is a basilisk comes too late, and she is petrified before she can reveal the information. But her hesitation to rely on any information of which she doesn't know the source allows Hermione to discover the right answer rather than give in to rumors and fear.

In the sixth book, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Dumbledore will tell Harry: "It is the unknown we fear when we look upon death and darkness, nothing more." Rowling

implicitly makes that same argument in the pages of *The Chamber of Secrets*. Without information or knowledge, fear spreads quickly and insidiously, while the only way to fight that fear—as Harry, Ron, and Hermione discover—is to find out as much information as they can and use it to come to more accurate conclusions.



## PREJUDICE VS. RESPECT

The wizarding world, though certainly magical, is not flawless. Just as in the Muggle world, prejudice is rampant throughout the wizarding community.

Many wizards exhibit prejudice against a variety of groups for two main reasons: they do not like those who are different from themselves, and they feel that people within those other groups are inferior. Rowling thus demonstrates that prejudice is based on unfounded and often dangerous assumptions about groups of people, whereas the respect that Harry, Ron, and Hermione show towards others is based on their ability to see people as individuals: they understand that being different is not the same thing as being inferior.

The primary prejudice explored within *The Chamber of Secrets* is the idea that Muggles and Muggle-borns (wizards who have two Muggle, or non-magical, parents) are inferior to wizards who come from “pure-blood” wizard families (where both parents possess magical abilities). This assumption becomes incredibly harmful and Rowling shows it to be deeply misguided. Partway through the book, the History of Magic professor, Professor Binns, gives some of the background on this prejudice, detailing how Salazar Slytherin, one of the four founding members of Hogwarts, wanted to be more exclusive about the students who were admitted to the school. He did not want to allow Muggle-born students in, believing them “untrustworthy,” an enormous generalization. When the other Hogwarts founders disagreed with this idea, Slytherin created a secret chamber within the school that only his heir would be able to open, releasing the monster within (which turns out to be a **basilisk**). That monster would then be able to “purge the school of all who were unworthy to study magic.” Thus, Slytherin’s deep bias escalated into a desire to kill Muggle-borns, an action akin to genocide. Later generations of wizards pick up on the generalizations and biases stemming from Slytherin’s idea, believing that they are superior to Muggle-born wizards and Muggles. Tom Riddle, a Hogwarts student from fifty years before Harry’s time who is revealed to be the heir of Slytherin, also carries these beliefs. He unleashes the basilisk during his time at Hogwarts, which ultimately kills a Muggle-born student named Myrtle. Lucius Malfoy and his son Draco also share this prejudice. Lucius derides Hermione for being “of no wizard family,” and Draco later picks up on this. He calls Hermione a “Mudblood”—an extremely derogatory term for wizards who are Muggle-born. Lucius and Draco behave this way toward Hermione because they believe, as Ron

explains later, that they’re better than everyone else. Their prejudice is so fierce that Lucius sneaks Tom Riddle’s diary, which holds his memories and can communicate with anyone who writes in it, to Ron’s sister Ginny. Riddle then possesses Ginny, getting her to open the Chamber of Secrets once more. The attacks resume on those who are Muggle-born, and though fortunately no one is killed this time, the prejudice behind Lucius’s actions is both palpable and nearly lethal.

By contrast, Harry, Ron, and Hermione respect everyone around them who behaves with kindness and decency, even if they are different from themselves, because they understand the value of not making generalizations about a group from any one individual. Hermione, herself a Muggle-born student, completely defies any stereotypes that Muggle-borns are not as talented with magic as so-called “pure-blood” students. Despite the fact that others like Draco look down on her, she gets the best grades in the class, and as Hagrid mentions, “they haven’t invented a spell that Hermione can’t do.” Harry grows up with Muggles, and even though he hates living with the Dursleys (as some students point out), he knows his judgement about Muggles as a whole should not be based on his experiences with his horrible family. He and Hermione are also best friends, demonstrating that Harry knows that biases against Muggle-borns are unfounded. Ron, for his part, understands that Muggles are very different from wizards, since he is from an all-wizard family. But Ron’s father Mr. Weasley, unlike Draco’s father, is amazed at the inventive things Muggles have come up with in order to live without magic. Thus, the Weasleys see difference not as something that makes Muggles inferior, but rather as something that simply allows them to have different strengths than wizards do.

In addition to Muggles and Muggle-born students, Harry and his friends also treat members of several other mistreated groups with respect. While the Malfoys deeply abuse their house elf, Dobby, who is essentially a slave, Harry is extremely polite to him, making Dobby cry with gratitude. Harry helps trick Lucius in order to free Dobby at the end of the book. Likewise, while other students are indifferent to ghosts or even make fun of them, Harry accepts a party invitation from a ghost named Nearly Headless Nick because he knows that accepting will make Nick happy.

By illustrating prejudices within the wizarding world, Rowling implies a connection to the dangers of racism and other forms of prejudice in the real world. She regards prejudice as unequivocally evil and also baseless throughout the Harry Potter series: not only is it typical of the “bad” characters in the books, but it is also what allows Voldemort to rise to power, as he gains followers by espousing these harmful prejudices. In contrast, Harry understands the value of being kind and showing respect to any individual he comes across—as long as that person values kindness as he does. And because he is the protagonist of the book, his values exemplify the ideals that

Rowling suggests people in the real world should also aspire to.

### FRIENDSHIP, LOYALTY, AND BRAVERY

Though Harry is the hero of *The Chamber of Secrets*, as well as the series as a whole, he rarely accomplishes anything completely alone. He is

aided by his best friends Ron and Hermione as well as several other mentors like Dumbledore and Hagrid. At times, mostly when Harry feels abandoned by those around him, he becomes quite paralyzed and seemingly unable to act. But when he remembers the loyalty of those friends, and when he shows them loyalty himself, he rediscovers his bravery and is ultimately able to kill the monster within the Chamber of Secrets. In *The Chamber of Secrets* and beyond, loyalty and friendship are what give Harry the confidence and courage that he needs to defeat the forces of evil. Through Harry's experience, Rowling suggests that true bravery stems from camaraderie and loyalty to others, rather than individual action.

Whenever Harry is in trouble or needs to find strength, Ron and Hermione are always there to help him. When Harry is imprisoned in his room by the Dursleys at the beginning of the book, Ron and his brothers, Fred and George, borrow their father's flying car and break Harry out of his room.

Subsequently, Harry spends the rest of the summer with the Weasleys, incredibly glad to be with a supportive family. After the attacks begin at Hogwarts, Ron, Hermione, and Harry work together to find out information about the Chamber of Secrets and to try and discover whether Draco Malfoy has opened it. Harry's friends prove instrumental in gleaning more information from Draco: Hermione makes Polyjuice Potion, which can disguise them as other students in Slytherin, while Harry and Ron impersonate Crabbe and Goyle in order to get truthful answers from Malfoy. Without Ron by his side, Harry would have made a very unconvincing Goyle (as Crabbe and Goyle always seem to be together), and without Hermione, Harry wouldn't have been able to put the plan into action at all. After Hermione is attacked by the mysterious **monster**, Ron and Harry become even determined to find out who opened the Chamber of Secrets. When Ron and Harry go into the Forbidden Forest to "follow the spiders," they do so despite the facts that Ron is terrified of spiders and that Harry's first experience in the Forbidden Forest a year prior was terrifying. Ron and Harry's friendship buoys them, but their love and concern for Hermione is what really pushes them to face their fears, once again revealing how instrumental Harry's friends are in creating his own courage.

But having friends to back him up is not the only thing that inspires Harry's bravery. Harry also demonstrates immense loyalty to mentors like Hagrid and Dumbledore. This loyalty allows Harry to call up his bravery even when his mentors are absent, because he wants to prove his support for them. When Harry discovers in Tom Riddle's diary that Hagrid is the one

who was expelled fifty years earlier for opening the Chamber of Secrets, instead of immediately reporting Hagrid, Harry and Ron go to Hagrid find out the truth. Additionally, once they learn that he was not in fact the one who opened the Chamber, they work hard to exonerate Hagrid despite the fact that this entails going into the Forbidden Forest at great personal risk. Dumbledore, too, is removed from Hogwarts because of the attacks on the students and his inability to catch the culprit. But before he leaves, he says that he will "only truly have left this school when none here are loyal to [him]," looking pointedly towards Harry. When Harry eventually goes down into the Chamber and Tom Riddle remarks that Dumbledore isn't there to protect Harry, Harry says that Dumbledore isn't as absent as Riddle might think. This act of loyalty summons Dumbledore's phoenix, **Fawkes**, who helps Harry by blinding the **basilisk**. Fawkes also brings with him the Sorting Hat, which produces the **Sword of Gryffindor** and allows Harry to kill the basilisk. As Dumbledore explains later, Harry demonstrated incredible loyalty in the Chamber, and in return, that loyalty was reciprocated and enabled him to be brave.

Rowling also demonstrates the opposite: when Harry feels like his best friends, Ron and Hermione, have deserted him, this feeling of isolation completely inhibits his sense of confidence or bravery. At the beginning of the novel, a house elf named Dobby intercepts Harry's letters over the summer, making Harry believe that his friends have not written to him at all. As a result, Harry feels "cut off from the magical world" and worries that "he didn't have any friends at Hogwarts." Thus, the simple question of their loyalty makes Harry feel vulnerable and alone. Similarly, when it is revealed that Harry can speak Parseltongue (snake language), Hermione and Ron become concerned about him, unsure whether he might actually be the heir of Slytherin. As the only person at school who can speak Parseltongue, Harry feels set apart from his peers, including his two best friends. This experience saps Harry's courage, making him feel suspected and isolated from those around him.

Despite these few moments, Hermione and Ron are exceptionally faithful to Harry, as they so often demonstrate. Their friendship is the backbone of the series, and its consistent value to Harry proves one of the central ideas of the series: loyalty and support from friends enable people to have confidence in themselves, which in turn allows them to accomplish extraordinary things.

### FATE, CHOICE, AND IDENTITY

As Harry grows up, both he and his peers struggle to understand his true identity: is Harry a real hero, destined to defeat Voldemort and the forces of evil? Is he the long-awaited Heir of Slytherin, fated to become a dark wizard? Or is he just a normal boy who was thrust into an extraordinary situation? In this book, Harry's identity is primarily shaped through two aspects of his experience: his

growing fame at school and his growing understanding of the connection he bears with Voldemort. To Harry, it often seems that his identity is fated. But Dumbledore's final discussion with Harry at the end of the book emphasizes a key revelation about identity: one's identity is not based solely on fate; it is also deeply reliant on one's own choices and actions.

During Harry's second year at Hogwarts, he finds that his identity is still largely shaped by the fact that Voldemort lost his powers after trying to kill Harry as a baby. Even as Harry longs to prove his worth in other ways, his identity is still that of a celebrity, and he is acknowledged more for his fame than for his accomplishments. Colin Creevey, a first-year in Gryffindor, becomes obsessed with the famous Harry Potter and constantly asks him to pose for pictures and sign them. Harry tries to be polite and obliges Colin, but Draco quickly picks up on this and makes fun of Harry for giving out signed photos. Despite the fact that Harry is incredibly humble at heart, he has to contend with the image that others build around him and feels that he has no control over his identity. The same thing happens with Gilderoy Lockhart, the new Defense Against the Dark Arts professor who continually assumes that Harry is looking for attention. When Lockhart sees Harry at the bookstore prior to the beginning of the school year, he pulls Harry in for a photo opportunity. When Harry arrives at school in a flying car (because he and Ron cannot get through the barrier at platform nine and three quarters), Lockhart assumes that he did so in order to be noticed, and to taste the same kind of fame that Lockhart himself enjoys. Harry, of course, sees Lockhart's own fame and falseness as the antithesis of who he, Harry, wants to be. These moments make Harry realize that he wants to be able to define his own identity, rather than being thought of as simply famous and arrogant.

Even more troubling to Harry is the way that he and Tom Riddle (the young version of Voldemort) share many qualities, seeming to imply that they could share similar fates. But ultimately Dumbledore assures Harry that it is his choices that define him, not just his inherent qualities. Harry sees a lot of similarities between himself and Tom Riddle. Riddle and Harry are both half-bloods (one parent from a wizarding family and one parent from a Muggle family), and they both are raised by Muggles in places they hate (Harry with the Dursleys, and Tom Riddle in an orphanage). They both love Hogwarts and would rather remain there than go home; Harry acknowledges, when there are discussions about closing Hogwarts, that he understands how Riddle felt at the prospect of going back to a Muggle orphanage. They both even have "jet-black hair," and they both speak Parseltongue. When Riddle and Harry meet in the Chamber of Secrets, Riddle even acknowledges these similarities. The similarities cause Harry to worry that he is too much like Riddle, even though he doesn't want to be. He expresses concern several times over the course of the novel that maybe he was meant to be in Slytherin because he can

speak to snakes (like Slytherin's founder), and because the Sorting Hat originally wanted to put him in that house. Harry is afraid that he will end up being very similar to Tom, once again believing that his own identity is out of his hands.

But despite the fact that Harry feels that his identity has been left to fate, Dumbledore assures him that he is "very different from Tom Riddle" because of the choices that he makes. Harry is concerned that he was supposed to be placed in Slytherin, but Dumbledore points out that he *asked* the Sorting Hat not to be in Slytherin, and that is why he was placed in Gryffindor. Thus, he chose to be in Gryffindor over Slytherin on his first day at Hogwarts, which demonstrated his values and in turn determined whom he became friends with and what experiences he had. Additionally, Harry actively chooses to protect and accept Muggle-born students. He becomes friends with Hermione in the first book, and in this book he tries to solve the mystery of the attacks in order to prevent more Muggle-born students from being harmed. This contrasts with Tom Riddle's own choices, as Riddle decided to actively persecute Muggle-born students both during his own time at Hogwarts and in the present. Harry also chooses to be humble and self-sacrificing rather than power-hungry. While people try to build up his celebrity throughout the book, Harry is obstinate that he doesn't want to be thought of as arrogant or needing attention. He also chooses to put his own life at risk in order to protect those around him. Voldemort, on the other hand, kills anyone who stands in the way of his quest to gain power and eternal life. It is these choices, Dumbledore affirms for Harry, that "show what we truly are, far more than our abilities." Rowling illustrates that while identity may be shaped by many factors, individuals' choices are ultimately what truly define them.



## RULES, REBELLION, AND DOING THE RIGHT THING

In *The Chamber of Secrets*, Harry is subject not only to the rules at Hogwarts, but also the rules of the wizarding world as a whole. Just like in his first year, Harry has no hesitation breaking rules when he believes that following them is in conflict with doing what is right. In his second year, Harry understands further that some of the rules at Hogwarts, as well as some of those laid down by the Ministry of Magic (the wizarding world's governing body), are not always in line with morality. Rather, those in positions of authority care more about giving the appearance of maintaining order and justice than actually doing so. In contrast, Rowling shows that Harry cares little for appearances and is far more interested in actually doing the right thing. Throughout, Rowling indicates that it is more effective to prioritize morality—like Harry does—than it is to follow rules and keep up appearances.

As quickly as Harry and his friends are introduced to rules in the wizarding world, they break them when they feel that it is

necessary to help others. They don't bother with appearing to do the right thing by following the rules; instead they focus on actually doing the right thing, regardless of what it entails. After the attacks begin on Muggle-borns at Hogwarts, Harry, Ron, and Hermione want to discover whether Draco is the person responsible. Hermione presents a solution: they should use Polyjuice Potion, which can transform them into other students in Slytherin so they can talk to Malfoy and get information about the attacks. This entails sneaking into the Restricted Section of the library, stealing ingredients from Snape's store, and breaking into the Slytherin common room. That even rule-loving Hermione is willing to take these risks shows how important it can be to set aside rules in favor of pursuing truth and justice. After Hermione herself is petrified, Harry and Ron continue to break rules in order to do what they believe is right. First, sneak out after dark to Hagrid's hut, as Riddle's diary has led them to believe that he is in fact the person who had opened the Chamber of Secrets fifty years earlier. In order to avoid detection, they use the Invisibility Cloak, which allows them to break the rules without getting caught. Then, they use the Cloak again to sneak out to the fittingly named Forbidden Forest in order to find more information about the Chamber monster, knowing that it is imperative to break the rules and do what is "forbidden" in order to prevent more attacks. Lastly, at the end of the novel, when Professor McGonagall announces that all students should go back to their dormitories because Ginny has been taken into the Chamber of Secrets, Harry and Ron skirt the rules by hiding within a wardrobe in the staff room in order to find out what's happened. When it becomes clear that Gilderoy Lockhart, who has been selected to go to the Chamber, plans to run away in fear, Harry and Ron take charge of the mission and break into the Chamber of Secrets themselves. In the process, Harry and Ron break about "a hundred school rules," as McGonagall says, but if they had not done so, they would not have defeated Riddle, slain the **basilisk**, saved Ginny, and protected the rest of the students.

In addition to demonstrating that sometimes breaking rules is necessary, Rowling also demonstrates that often people or institutions create nonsensical rules, enforce them in unfair ways, or simply try to give the appearance of maintaining order because it is easier than trying to do what is right. Harry is not supposed to use magic at home, and so when Dobby uses magic at his house, Harry receives a letter from the Ministry notifying him that if he performs any more spells outside of school, he could be expelled from Hogwarts. But their inability to detect that Dobby, and not Harry, actually conjured the spell (in order to frame Harry and prevent him from going back to Hogwarts), immediately sets up the Ministry as either unjust or simply ignorant. Perhaps the largest misuse of power by the Ministry and other authorities is near the end of the book. After Hogwarts has been subjected to several attacks on Muggle-born students, the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, arrives in order to take Hagrid away, because Hagrid had been expelled

for opening the Chamber of Secrets fifty years prior. Fudge reveals that he's "under a lot of pressure" from the school governors; even if Hagrid didn't do it, Fudge argues, the Ministry has "got to be seen to be doing something." Fudge thus seems less interested in finding the true culprit than in giving the appearance of trying to find a solution. Similarly, on the same night that Fudge takes Hagrid off to the wizard prison of Azkaban, Lucius Malfoy (one of the governors of Hogwarts) comes to suspend Dumbledore because of the attacks—even against Fudge's alarm that Dumbledore's suspension is the last thing that the school needs. But just like Fudge, the governors want to appear to be taking actions to stop the attacks, in this case by removing Dumbledore, even though Lucius knows that this is not actually the most effective action to take (particularly because Lucius himself knows what's really causing the attacks).

Rowling demonstrates again and again that it's unproductive and unhelpful to merely keep up the appearance of doing the right thing. This idea is best embodied by Fudge, who is just bumbling around and trying to look busy while avoiding the real problem at hand. Through Harry's arc in the book, she also demonstrates that it's far more difficult—and sometimes even dangerous—to actually *do* the right thing and take meaningful action, as Harry does by trying to solve the mystery of the Chamber of Secrets and stop the attacks.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



### THE MONSTER/BASILISK

The basilisk (which for most of the novel is referred to simply as "the monster" because people do not know what it is) embodies two ideas: first, the harmful nature of prejudice, and second, the fear of the unknown. The basilisk, as Professor Binns explains to Hermione and the rest of the Gryffindors, is a monster imprisoned in the Chamber of Secrets by Salazar Slytherin that is meant to "purge the school of all who were unworthy to study magic." By its very nature, it is a tool of hatred, and it carries out that goal in its attacks: Mrs. Norris is the cat of a Squib (Filch), and Colin, Justin, Hermione, and Myrtle are all Muggle-born students. Rowling uses the basilisk to demonstrate how easily prejudice can escalate into true hatred and even a desire to murder. For example, Draco (who begins the novel simply disliking Muggle-born students) confesses that he wishes he knew who the Heir of Slytherin is so that he could help that person kill Muggle-borns.

Additionally, because so little information is known about what the basilisk is, it also serves as a mechanism that spreads fear. Because it petrifies students it attacks, the victims can't reveal

any information about it and the students create rumors to fill in the gaps in their knowledge. Like the basilisk itself, misinformation and fear circulate under cover around the castle, to the point at which students are afraid not of the basilisk itself, but of what they do not know (i.e., a nameless monster).



## FAWKES

Fawkes, Dumbledore's phoenix, becomes a symbol of Harry and Dumbledore's shared loyalty, and of how Dumbledore's support of Harry inspires Harry's bravery. After several mysterious attacks on students, Dumbledore is forced to leave his post by the school governors. Then, in the Chamber of Secrets when Harry confronts Tom Riddle, he tells Riddle that Dumbledore isn't as absent from Hogwarts as Riddle thinks. These words of loyalty to Dumbledore call Fawkes to Harry. In turn, Fawkes does several key things: first, he blinds the **basilisk**, which is what enables Harry to fight the monster without being killed by looking into its eyes. Second, Fawkes brings the Sorting Hat, which delivers to Harry the **Sword of Gryffindor**. Both of these acts make Harry feel as though he is not alone in fighting the basilisk, and they enable him to have the courage (and the practical tools) necessary to defeat both Riddle and the basilisk. Fawkes also helps heal Harry when he is stabbed by a basilisk fang, and he allows Harry, Ron, Ginny, and Lockhart to escape the Chamber once the basilisk is dead. All of these moments serve to emphasize how Harry could not defeat the snake or Tom Riddle alone; it is only with Dumbledore's support that he is able to find the strength within himself to do so.



## THE SWORD OF GRYFFINDOR

The Sword of Gryffindor represents Harry's ability to choose his own identity. Throughout much of the book, Harry worries that he does not actually belong in Gryffindor because the Sorting Hat tried to put him in Slytherin. However, at the end of the book, the Sword of Gryffindor appears out of the Sorting Hat, which in turn allows Harry to conquer the **basilisk**. This demonstrates that even though Harry has many qualities that make him similar to Slytherin's heir Tom Riddle, Harry chooses to oppose the values that Riddle and other dark wizards uphold. In using the Sword of Gryffindor to slay the basilisk, Harry chooses courage over cowardice, respect over prejudice, and loyalty and friendship over hatred and isolation—all choices that allow him to forge his own identity.

Scholastic edition of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* published in 2000.

## Chapter 1 Quotes

More than anything else at Hogwarts, more even than playing Quidditch, Harry missed his best friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. They, however, didn't seem to be missing him at all. Neither of them had written to him all summer, even though Ron had said he was going to ask Harry to come and stay.

**Related Characters:** Dobby, Hermione Granger, Ron Weasley, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:** Loyalty

**Page Number:** 7

### Explanation and Analysis

At the beginning of the book, Harry is back with the Dursleys for his summer break. He has just spent a magical first year at Hogwarts, but he is upset when by the middle of the summer he hasn't heard from any of his friends—a feeling that is made even worse on his birthday. The feelings of isolation and vulnerability that Harry experiences as a result of not hearing from his friends prove how important they are to him, and how much he needs them in order to feel confident in himself and his sense of belonging. This becomes even clearer when it is revealed that Dobby is actually the person who has been stopping Harry's letters from getting to him, because he believes that if Harry thinks he has no friends, he will not return to Hogwarts. Even though Dobby doesn't know Harry very well, from what he has heard of Harry, he understands how crucial friendship is to him. Dobby suspects that if Harry believes he has no friends, he will not return to school, and Dobby's strategy highlights how important friendship is to Harry.

## Chapter 2 Quotes

"Offend Dobby!" choked the elf. "Dobby has never been asked to sit down by a wizard — like an equal—"

**Related Characters:** Dobby (speaker), Draco Malfoy, Lucius Malfoy, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:** Loyalty

**Page Number:** 13



## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the

## Explanation and Analysis

On Harry's twelfth birthday, a house-elf named Dobby appears in Harry's bedroom to warn him not to return to Hogwarts that year, as a terrible danger awaits him there. But before he can launch into his warning, Harry invites Dobby to sit down, and Dobby is flabbergasted by Harry's offer. Dobby's situation highlights one of the first examples of prejudice that the book presents. House-elves are enslaved and abused by their families (in Dobby's case, by Lucius and Draco Malfoy) because wizards believe them to be inferior.

Harry, on the other hand, immediately treats Dobby with respect and kindness. This is in some ways because he doesn't know any better; he did not grow up in a wizarding household with one of these creatures, and so he doesn't understand how they are usually treated. But even so, treating others with kindness and respect is a key quality of Harry's regardless of who he is interacting with—as long as the person is kind in return. Thus Harry, confronted with this creature who is trying to protect him, also wants to be polite in return. Here Harry immediately sets himself apart from the characters in this book who make harmful generalizations about groups of individuals and maintain harmful prejudices in the wizarding world.

“Harry Potter is valiant and bold! He has braved so many dangers already! But Dobby has come to protect Harry Potter, to warn him, even if he does have to shut his ears in the oven door later...Harry Potter must not go back to Hogwarts.”

**Related Characters:** Dobby (speaker), Harry Potter

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 16

## Explanation and Analysis

When Dobby appears in Harry's bedroom the night of his twelfth birthday, he explains that he is there to warn Harry not to return to Hogwarts, because a great danger awaits him there this year. Dobby explains why he wants to warn Harry: he has heard of his kindness, respect, and bravery in the face of immense evil. Additionally, after Harry defeated Voldemort, the house-elves were treated less poorly. Dobby shows how Harry's kindness, bravery, and loyalty to his friends—in essence, the actions he takes to be kind and to protect others over himself—have become a part of his fame and his identity, even for those who have yet to meet him. Dobby's words are thus an early indication of how

choices can determine one's identity.

Dobby's warning also becomes key to the rest of the plot. Dobby says that he cannot name the danger that awaits Harry because it would be a betrayal of the family that he works for. But the lack of information that he provides to Harry only adds the confusion later on when the Chamber is opened and the attacks on Muggle-borns start to occur. This confusion in turn contributes to the spread of fear and rumors.

## Chapter 3 Quotes

“It’s a bit small,” said Ron quickly. “Not like that room you had with the Muggles. And I’m right underneath the ghoul in the attic; he’s always banging on the pipes and groaning....”

But Harry, grinning widely, said, “This is the best house I’ve ever been in.”

**Related Characters:** Harry Potter, Ron Weasley (speaker), Draco Malfoy, George Weasley, Fred Weasley

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 41

## Explanation and Analysis

After Harry is imprisoned in his room by the Dursleys, Ron, Fred, and George spring him from this imprisonment via flying car. The boys then return to the Weasleys' home, the Burrow. When Ron takes Harry up to his room, he immediately makes excuses for the fact that his room is small. This is a major insecurity for Ron, and it stands in for his larger insecurity that his family, even though they are a well-known wizarding family, are quite poor. Ron's excuses indicate that he and his family often face prejudice for their lack of wealth, particularly from wealthier families like the Malfoys.

But Harry's reaction, once again, reveals key qualities of his character. First and foremost, it shows how he values friendship more than almost anything. He would much rather have Ron's kindness and friendship than be friends with a person who is unkind and wealthy, like Draco Malfoy. Secondly, it again shows Harry's deep aversion to any kind of prejudice, and particularly to classism in this case. Harry himself had no money, owned barely any possessions, and lived in a cupboard until his eleventh birthday. Thus, money is completely unimportant to him, and through his actions Rowling implies that it's wrong to discriminate against someone due to their lack of wealth.

## Chapter 4 Quotes

“It’s not my fault,” retorted Draco. “The teachers all have favorites, that Hermione Granger —”

“I would have thought you’d be ashamed that a girl of no wizard family beat you in every exam,” snapped Mr. Malfoy.

**Related Characters:** Lucius Malfoy, Draco Malfoy (speaker), Hermione Granger, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 52

### Explanation and Analysis

When Harry accidentally ends up in a seedy shop in Knockturn Alley, he eavesdrops on a conversation between Draco and his father Lucius. Over the course of the conversation, they both reveal their deep prejudice against Muggles as well as Muggle-born students (i.e. students with non-magic parents). What is particularly noteworthy about this exchange is that it shows the hypocrisy of the prejudice that Lucius and Draco bear. They believe that Muggles (and therefore Muggle-borns) are inferior to so-called “pure-blood” wizards. And yet, when faced with an individual like Hermione who challenges that worldview, they only denigrate her even more. Even though Hermione is the most talented witch in the class, the Malfoys still see her as being lesser than them. But for people like the Weasleys and Harry, blood status doesn’t make any difference as to how other people should be treated. The bias displayed here is also one of the reasons why Harry and Ron don’t treat Draco with respect, because they see how intolerant and indecent he is to people he feels are inferior to himself.

“Obviously not,” Mr. Malfoy said. “Dear me, what’s the use of being a disgrace to the name of wizard if they don’t even pay you well for it?”

Mr. Weasley flushed darker than either Ron or Ginny.

“We have a very different idea of what disgraces the name of wizard, Malfoy,” he said.

**Related Characters:** Mr. Weasley, Lucius Malfoy (speaker), Ginny Weasley, Ron Weasley, Draco Malfoy, Hermione Granger, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 62

### Explanation and Analysis

When Harry, Hermione, and the Weasleys are all in Flourish and Blotts buying their school books, they are confronted by Lucius and Draco Malfoy. Lucius notes the state of Ginny’s second-hand books, commenting that clearly the Ministry isn’t paying Mr. Weasley very well for his overtime hours. This exchange really gets to the heart of two major prejudices in the wizarding world. Even though the Malfoys and the Weasleys are both “pure-blood” and established wizarding families, there is a large divide between them. The Weasleys are poor, while the Malfoys are very wealthy. Additionally, the Weasleys interact with and appreciate Muggles and Muggle-borns, while the Malfoys are extremely prejudiced against them. In associating prejudice with the antagonists, Rowling shows that it is paramount to treat others with respect. However, with Mr. Weasley’s statement, she also demonstrates that there are times when it is necessary not to respect others: when they are being intolerant and hateful to other people.

## Chapter 5 Quotes

Harry well remembered putting it on, exactly one year ago, and waiting, petrified, for its decision as it muttered aloud in his ear. For a few horrible seconds he had feared that the hat was going to put him in Slytherin, the House that had turned out more Dark witches and wizards than any other — but he had ended up in Gryffindor, along with Ron, Hermione, and the rest of the Weasleys.

**Related Characters:** Professor Dumbledore, Hermione Granger, Ron Weasley, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 77

### Explanation and Analysis

After Harry and Ron arrive by flying car, they peek into the front window and realize that the Sorting ceremony has already started, and Harry remembers his own Sorting a year prior. The fact that the Sorting Hat was going to put Harry in Slytherin becomes a source of great concern for Harry, particularly later in the story as rumors mount that he might somehow be connected to Salazar Slytherin. But at its heart, Harry’s insecurity stems from the idea that he was actually fated to be in Slytherin. Harry’s description here downplays his agency in the decision, as he asked the hat not to put him in Slytherin and it obliged. But at the end of the novel, when Harry reveals his thoughts to Dumbledore, Dumbledore seizes on this crucial decision. Harry is, in fact, not meant to be in Slytherin because he chose not to be in

Slytherin. Dumbledore emphasizes how choices can define people just as much as their inherent qualities or abilities do. Yet at this point in the story, Harry still worries that he is not in control of his own fate, or in control of how other people view him.

## Chapter 6 Quotes

“Let me just say that handing out signed pictures at this stage of your career isn’t sensible — looks a tad bigheaded, Harry, to be frank. There may well come a time when, like me, you’ll need to keep a stack handy wherever you go, but” — he gave a little chortle — “I don’t think you’re quite there yet.”

**Related Characters:** Gilderoy Lockhart (speaker), Colin Creevey, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 98

### Explanation and Analysis

When classes begin at Hogwarts, Harry meets a first-year Muggle-born student named Colin Creevey, who is very excited to meet Harry and asks if Harry can sign a photo of himself for Colin. When Draco makes fun of Harry for handing out signed photos, Gilderoy Lockhart offers to take the photo with Harry and afterward advises him that handing out signed photos looks egotistical. Of course, the massive irony of this entire exchange is that Lockhart himself is exceptionally conceited, whereas Harry is quite humble and tends to want to avoid the spotlight.

Harry’s various interactions with Colin and with Lockhart force him to reckon with the idea that how people view him is somewhat out of his control. He has to contend with the celebrity image that people have built up around him and actively work to counteract that image. He wants to be able to define his own identity, rather than simply letting other people view him as famous and arrogant, and his struggle with his fame is a key way in which he learns how to do so.

## Chapter 7 Quotes

“There are some wizards — like Malfoy’s family — who think they’re better than everyone else because they’re what people call pure-blood.” He gave a small burp, and a single slug fell into his outstretched hand. He threw it into the basin and continued, “I mean, the rest of us know it doesn’t make any difference at all. Look at Neville Longbottom — he’s pure-blood and he can hardly stand a cauldron the right way up.”

**Related Characters:** Ron Weasley (speaker), Rubeus Hagrid, Neville Longbottom, Draco Malfoy, Hermione Granger, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 116

### Explanation and Analysis

After Draco calls Hermione a “Mudblood” on the Quidditch field and Ron’s attempt to curse him backfires, Harry and Hermione take Ron to Hagrid’s hut to recover, as he is belching slugs all over the field. Once there, Ron explains what “Mudblood” means, as well as the prejudice behind the slur. He also demonstrates with counterexamples why this prejudice is ridiculous, and Hagrid chimed in to say that Hermione is the most talented witch in her class, again disproving the idea that Muggle-borns are inferior.

In creating this fictional prejudice in the wizarding world, Rowling allows readers to connect such prejudices to real-world racism, and to see how racial biases are baseless and needless. In the wizarding world, this bias was simply created as a self-serving tool for those people who believe they are superior to others. In contrast, Harry, Ron, and Hermione understand how ridiculous this kind of thinking is. In making the three protagonists exceptionally tolerant of and respectful towards others who are different from themselves, Rowling holds these values up as examples of what others should aspire to.

## Chapter 9 Quotes

“D’you think I should have told them about that voice I heard?”

“No,” said Ron, without hesitation. “Hearing voices no one else can hear isn’t a good sign, even in the Wizarding world.”

Something in Ron’s voice made Harry ask, “You do believe me, don’t you?”

“Course I do,” said Ron quickly. “But — you must admit it’s weird....”

**Related Characters:** Ron Weasley, Harry Potter (speaker), Professor Dumbledore, Argus Filch

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 145

## Explanation and Analysis

After the first attack on Mrs. Norris, Harry has a difficult time explaining to Filch and Dumbledore why he was in the corridor where she was attacked. The truth is that he was following a disembodied voice that no one else can hear. Ultimately it is revealed that this voice belongs to the basilisk, and that Harry is the only one who can hear it because he can speak to snakes. But without having information about where the voice is coming from, Harry becomes afraid to reveal what he has heard to the teachers; he worries that they will think he is lying to cover up the fact that he was a part of the attacks. Thus, not having all of the information ends up increasing the fear and rumors surrounding Harry.

Additionally, this moment is one of the rare instances in which Harry feels like his friends' loyalty falters. Ron's words here make Harry doubt that Ron believes him, and due to this, Harry feels even less confident about what he should do in this situation.

“Well – it’s not funny really – but as it’s Filch,” he said. “A Squib is someone who was born into a Wizarding family but hasn’t got any magic powers. Kind of the opposite of Muggle-born wizards, but Squibs are quite unusual. If Filch’s trying to learn magic from a Kwikspell course, I reckon he must be a Squib. It would explain a lot. Like why he hates students so much.” Ron gave a satisfied smile. “He’s bitter.”

**Related Characters:** Ron Weasley (speaker), Argus Filch, Hermione Granger, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 145

## Explanation and Analysis

When Harry discovers Mrs. Norris has been attacked, Filch accuses Harry of the crime because Harry recently discovered that Filch is a Squib. However, Harry doesn't know what that is, and Ron explains the term to him here. Ron's statement reveals the complicated nature of prejudice, and how it can make its victims hateful towards others because they feel like they are being discriminated against or targeted. Filch is a Squib and feels like Harry and the other students detest him because of it, but in fact the only reason Harry dislikes him is because Filch is so spiteful towards the students. The irony, of course, is that Harry is usually respectful of those who are kind in return, and he is

only now being introduced to the stereotypes of the wizarding world. It is rare for Ron, as well, to make fun of someone for their magical ability, and he does so only because Filch has been so nasty toward him in the past—he even notes that it's not “funny really” to mock Squibs.

 A rift began to grow between Slytherin and the others.

Slytherin wished to be more selective about the students admitted to Hogwarts. He believed that magical learning should be kept within all-magic families. He disliked taking students of Muggle parentage, believing them to be untrustworthy.

**Related Characters:** Professor Binns (speaker), Tom Riddle/Voldemort, Ron Weasley, Harry Potter, Hermione Granger

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 150

## Explanation and Analysis

Following the first attack on Mrs. Norris and the message that the Chamber of Secrets has been opened, the entire school talks about what it could possibly mean or who could have carried out the attack. Hermione, true to form, sets out to find more information about the Chamber, and so she asks the History of Magic teacher, Professor Binns. Binns explains the fraught history of one of the largest prejudices that exists in the wizarding world, and how it stems from generalizations about groups of people. The belief that Muggle-borns, as Binns explains here, are “untrustworthy,” is the result of harmful assumptions, rather than evaluation based on people's individual merit.

But perhaps the most astounding thing about Binns's story is the revelation that this prejudice has lasted so long, and is even flourishing now. In many ways, Voldemort's rise to power is built on this prejudice. Voldemort espoused this prejudice and used it to gain followers. By associating prejudice with Voldemort and putting Harry, Ron, and Hermione firmly on the side opposing it, Rowling makes clear that having prejudice is a form of evil.

“Sir – what exactly do you mean by the ‘horror within’ the Chamber?”

“That is believed to be some sort of monster, which the Heir of Slytherin alone can control,” said Professor Binns in his dry, reedy voice.

The class exchanged nervous looks.

“I tell you, the thing does not exist,” said Professor Binns, shuffling his notes. “There is no Chamber and no monster.”

**Related Characters:** Professor Binns, Hermione Granger (speaker), Harry Potter

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 151

### Explanation and Analysis

Following Professor Binns’s explanation to the History of Magic class, Hermione presses him about the Heir of Slytherin and the monster that lives within the Chamber. However, Binns insists that most of what is known about the Chamber that is based on only legend—which is, in and of itself, a kind of unauthenticated rumor that takes on more of a mythical quality over time. Thus, even though Binns answers some of Hermione’s questions, he raises causes even more confusion for the students, and it is telling that Rowling describes them as exchanging “nervous looks.” Their lack of information sparks fear, and that in turn sparks even more rumor as the students try to make sense of what is happening. It is no coincidence that after this conversation, the school starts to believe that Harry is the Heir of Slytherin and many students quickly become afraid of him. Thus, lack of reliable information feeds rumors and fear, a vicious cycle that intensifies as the attacks continue and the students grow more and more frenzied.

## Chapter 10 Quotes

“Well, if you two are going to chicken out, fine,” she said. There were bright pink patches on her cheeks and her eyes were brighter than usual. “I don’t want to break rules, you know, I think threatening Muggle-borns is far worse than brewing up a difficult potion. But if you don’t want to find out if it’s Malfoy, I’ll go straight to Madam Pince now and hand the book back in —”

**Related Characters:** Hermione Granger (speaker), Draco Malfoy, Ron Weasley, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 165

### Explanation and Analysis

After the attacks begin, Harry, Ron, and Hermione start to suspect that Draco Malfoy has something to do with the attacks and might even be the Heir of Slytherin himself. Hermione concocts a plan to brew Polyjuice Potion, which will help them interrogate Draco without him knowing that it is them—but they will break many school rules in the process of brewing it. This is a big moment for Hermione, who of the three protagonists is usually the one on the side of following the rules. But her insistence that they carry out this plan, even at great personal cost, proves how she is willing to break the rules in order to do what she believes to be the right thing. And it is hard to argue with her logic: while breaking the rules to brew a potion might be bad, threatening, attacking, and potentially killing Muggle-born students has to be considered worse.

Additionally, Hermione has a vested interest in what is happening. As a Muggle-born student, she knows that she is a target. She is relying on her friends to support her and to muster their courage, in the hopes that they can work together to prevent the attacks. And, true to their nature, Ron and Harry agree to her plan because they are loyal to her.

## Chapter 11 Quotes

“The news that Colin Creevey had been attacked and was now lying as though dead in the hospital wing had spread through the entire school by Monday morning. The air was suddenly thick with rumor and suspicion. The first years were now moving around the castle in tight-knit groups, as though scared they would be attacked if they ventured forth alone.”

**Related Characters:** Colin Creevey

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 185

### Explanation and Analysis

After Colin Creevey is attacked, news of his attack travels quickly around the school. This description gives a clear demonstration of how with each attack, students are becoming more and more troubled by what is happening. Mrs. Norris’s petrification had also spread anxiety

throughout the castle, but after Colin, anxiety becomes full-on fear. Rowling makes clear not only that students are afraid of being attacked, but they are also afraid because they don't know who or what is causing the attacks on the school. Due to this lack of information, "rumor and suspicion" grow throughout the school as students try to speculate about what they do not know. In fact, the thing that is most detrimental to the students at this point is their own fear. Because the students are afraid, some of them try to stick together to prevent attacks, but they also turn on each other. It is at this point that people start to speculate that Harry might be the person causing the attacks, even though it couldn't possibly be Harry because he was in the hospital wing when Colin was attacked. But rumor and suspicion become uncontrollable beasts in and of themselves, showing how a combination of misinformation and fear can have dire consequences.

"Exactly," said Ron. "And now the whole school's going to think you're his great-great-great-grandson or something —"

"But I'm not," said Harry, with a panic he couldn't quite explain. "You'll find that hard to prove," said Hermione. "He lived about a thousand years ago; for all we know, you could be."

**Related Characters:** Hermione Granger, Harry Potter, Ron Weasley (speaker), Tom Riddle/Voldemort, Justin Finch-Fletchley, Draco Malfoy

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 196

### Explanation and Analysis

During the first meeting of the dueling club, Harry and Draco duel in front of the entire club. Draco conjures a snake, which starts to go after Justin Finch-Fletchley until Harry tells it to stop. The issue is that Harry says this in snake language, so to everyone else it appears that he was egging the snake on. Hermione and Ron warn him that people will think he is related to Salazar Slytherin, who also had this ability. This exchange hits at the heart of Harry's insecurities regarding his identity, which more and more he feels is out of his own hands. He realizes that he doesn't know his history, and therefore could very well be related to Slytherin. This insecurity will only be amplified when he remembers that the Sorting Hat wanted to put him into Slytherin, and again when he starts to realize how similar he and Tom Riddle (Voldemort) are. Rowling shows, with the

choice of the word "panic" here, that not having control over his own fate genuinely scares Harry. Without information about his own family and his own past, he cannot quell the rumors surrounding him, and thus he starts to become afraid that they may, in fact, be true.

## Chapter 12 Quotes

 Harry didn't know what to say. He thought of Malfoy shouting, "You'll be next, Mudbloods!" and of the Polyjuice Potion simmering away in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom. Then he thought of the disembodied voice he had heard twice and remembered what Ron had said: "*Hearing voices no one else can hear isn't a good sign, even in the Wizarding world.*" He thought, too, about what everyone was saying about him, and his growing dread that he was somehow connected with Salazar Slytherin....

**Related Characters:** Ron Weasley, Draco Malfoy, Nearly Headless Nick, Justin Finch-Fletchley, Moaning Myrtle, Professor Dumbledore, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:**     

**Page Number:** 209

### Explanation and Analysis

After Justin Finch-Fletchley and Nearly Headless Nick are found petrified with Harry standing over them, Harry is brought to Dumbledore's office, where Dumbledore asks him if he has anything that he needs to tell him. This section of narration boils down the essence of all the issues that Harry is dealing with, and touches on all of the major themes in the book in quick succession. He thinks of the prejudice that Malfoy displayed openly, and of how this prejudice continues to grip the school despite the fact that it is misguided and baseless. He worries about breaking the rules by brewing Polyjuice Potion, but also knows that this is the right decision. He thinks about how, without the full support of Ron, he became afraid of telling the teachers the truth about the voice he had heard. Finally, he worries about the rumors and fear surrounding him because people believe that he is Slytherin's heir.

However, by linking all of these issues in Harry's mind, Rowling shows that his identity is actually abundantly clear. Even though he can sometimes get mixed up with trouble, Harry is inherently a good person who is taking on the responsibility of protecting his friends and other students and choosing to battle prejudice, even if it comes at personal cost if he is caught breaking the rules. And so, even though later Harry thinks that not telling Dumbledore what

is happening makes him similar to Tom Riddle, these choices and these fears show that Harry is really very different from Riddle.

## Chapter 14 Quotes

“Riddle might have got the wrong person,” said Hermione. “Maybe it was some other monster that was attacking people...”

“How many monsters d’you think this place can hold?” Ron asked dully.

“We always knew Hagrid had been expelled,” said Harry miserably. “And the attacks must’ve stopped after Hagrid was kicked out. Otherwise, Riddle wouldn’t have got his award.”

[...]

“And Riddle was going to go back to some Muggle orphanage if they closed Hogwarts,” said Harry. “I don’t blame him for wanting to stay here....”

**Related Characters:** Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger (speaker), Rubeus Hagrid, Tom Riddle/Voldemort

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 250

### Explanation and Analysis

After Tom Riddle shows his memories to Harry and allows Harry to see the incident in which he catches Hagrid as the person who opened the Chamber of Secrets, Harry relays this information to Ron and Hermione. The three of them discuss what to do, and their responses illustrate key aspects of who they are and the dilemmas that they face. First and foremost is the issue of whether to believe what Riddle showed them. Hermione, rightly, chooses to question what Riddle showed Harry because she understands that any information coming from one individual’s perspective can be biased and inaccurate, and she notes that it is possible that Riddle didn’t have all the facts. Hermione treats Riddle’s assumptions as akin to rumor, knowing that Hagrid could have been the most obvious target but not the true culprit.

Additionally, Harry, Ron, and Hermione weigh Riddle’s word against their loyalty to Hagrid. Even though they reason that Hagrid could have been the person to open the Chamber years earlier, they choose to have faith in their

friendship and in Hagrid’s character, and ultimately they agree not to confront him unless there is another attack, demonstrating again how crucial loyalty is to the trio. Lastly, Harry’s feelings about the school closing highlight another similarity between himself and Riddle—one that will come to worry Harry by the end of the novel, as he continues to work toward defining his own identity.

“Look at it from my point of view,” said Fudge, fidgeting with his bowler. “I’m under a lot of pressure. Got to be seen to be doing something. If it turns out it wasn’t Hagrid, he’ll be back and no more said. But I’ve got to take him. Got to. Wouldn’t be doing my duty —”

**Related Characters:** Cornelius Fudge (speaker), Tom Riddle/Voldemort, Hermione Granger, Ron Weasley, Harry Potter, Professor Dumbledore, Rubeus Hagrid

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 261

### Explanation and Analysis

After Hermione is attacked, Harry and Ron go down to Hagrid’s hut under the invisibility cloak to confront him about what Harry saw in Tom Riddle’s memory. But before they can ask him about the incident, Dumbledore and Cornelius Fudge (the Minister of Magic) arrive. Cornelius tells Hagrid that they have to take him away because he was the person who was caught for opening the Chamber of Secrets the last time. But the argument that Fudge uses here is not exactly confidence-inspiring, as far as leadership goes. The Ministry of Magic is supposed to be the body that carries out justice in the wizarding world. Yet here, all Fudge seems to want is to *appear* to be doing something, rather than actually maintaining the moral order of the wizarding world or doing the right thing by Hagrid. Fudge has no evidence that Hagrid is the person who has opened the Chamber of Secrets this time around, and yet he takes Hagrid to Azkaban prison because it is the easy thing to do and because it will make it look like he’s being responsible. This is in direct contrast with Harry and Ron, who do not always follow the rules themselves, but whose main goal is always to do the right thing and protect the school and its students.

## Chapter 15 Quotes

“ But Lockhart’s disgusting cheeriness, his hints that he had always thought Hagrid was no good, his confidence that the whole business was now at an end, irritated Harry so much that he yearned to throw *Gadding with Ghouls* right in Lockhart’s stupid face. Instead he contented himself with scrawling a note to Ron: *Let’s do it tonight.*”

Ron read the message, swallowed hard, and looked sideways at the empty seat usually filled by Hermione. The sight seemed to stiffen his resolve, and he nodded.

**Related Characters:** Tom Riddle/Voldemort, Rubeus Hagrid, Gilderoy Lockhart, Hermione Granger, Ron Weasley, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 270

### Explanation and Analysis

Just before Hagrid is sent to Azkaban prison, he tells Harry and Ron that if they want to find out information about what happened fifty years prior, they should “follow the spiders.” But when they observe a trail of spiders leaving the school and heading towards the Forbidden Forest, their courage is tested. Ron is terrified of spiders and Harry had a horrific experience a year earlier in the Forbidden Forest when he came face to face with Voldemort. Yet this exchange serves as a clear example of how Ron and Harry are both inspired by and reliant on their loyalty to others in order to muster up their courage and face their fears. First, they want to do as Hagrid counsels in the hope that they can exonerate him, or at least find more information about what happened from Hagrid’s point of view. They know he is at heart a good person and want to prove it—which is why Lockhart’s words grate on Harry so much.

Additionally, they are both extremely loyal to Hermione and want to do all they can to figure out what is happening, as evidenced by Ron’s glance in this passage. Lastly, this passage shows how Harry and Ron are loyal to each other and gain strengths from their friendship, and their mutual resolve and support is what helps them to face their fears and venture into the Forbidden Forest.

## Chapter 17 Quotes

“ From everything Ginny had told me about you, I knew you would go to any lengths to solve the mystery – particularly if one of your best friends was attacked.”

**Related Characters:** Tom Riddle/Voldemort (speaker), Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, Ginny Weasley, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 311

### Explanation and Analysis

When Harry and Ron solve the mystery of the Chamber of Secrets and head into the Chamber to rescue Ginny, Tom Riddle is also in the Chamber. He explains that he is in fact the one who opened the Chamber, but after Ginny told him about Harry, his new goal became meeting Harry. Riddle’s description of how he was able to lure Harry into the Chamber reveals key insights about Harry’s character and also about how the people around him perceive him. Even through Ginny’s descriptions of Harry’s character as she wrote in Riddle’s diary, Riddle could see how important friendships are to Harry, and how he would “go to any lengths to solve the mystery” once Hermione was attacked. Harry has a reputation for loyalty and for his strong friendships, and Harry proves Riddle’s assumption to be true: he works hard to figure out information about the Chamber, particularly after Hermione is attacked and then again when it is reported that Ginny has been taken into the Chamber.

How Harry and Riddle view friendship also becomes an important difference between them, and this difference serves as evidence that one’s choices are vital in shaping one’s identity. While Riddle sees friendship and loyalty as weaknesses that he can (and does) exploit, to Harry friendships make a person the opposite of weak. Harry could not have accomplished any of his feats in the book without his friends, and their loyalty provides him with the necessary courage to face the obstacles that he encounters. Lastly, in choosing to protect the ones he loves, Harry proves himself to be firmly on the side of good, unlike Tom Riddle. Through this key difference, Rowling shows how Harry manages to create an identity that contrasts sharply with Riddles, despite the many similarities between the two.

“ He might not see what use Fawkes or the Sorting Hat were, but he was no longer alone, and he waited for Riddle to stop laughing with his courage mounting.”

**Related Characters:** Professor Dumbledore, Tom Riddle/Voldemort, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:**   **Page Number:** 315**Explanation and Analysis**

When Harry is facing off with Tom Riddle in the Chamber of Secrets, Riddle starts to disparage Dumbledore by saying that he has been driven out of the castle by Riddle. But Harry counters, saying that Dumbledore isn't really gone, and with this affirmation of loyalty, Fawkes (Dumbledore's phoenix) arrives carrying the Sorting Hat. Ultimately Fawkes and the Sorting Hat become instrumental in helping Harry defeat the basilisk, as Fawkes helps to gouge out the snake's eyes and the Sorting Hat conjures the Sword of Gryffindor for Harry. But even before he experiences their practical support, the mere presence of Fawkes and the hat makes Harry feel that he is not battling Riddle alone. This is important for Harry because he so often relies on connections with others in order to help him succeed.

This episode in particular demonstrates the benefits of loyalty and friendship. Because Harry shows Dumbledore loyalty and support, Dumbledore in turn provides Harry with the same loyalty and support. This allows Harry to restore his courage and ultimately enables him to destroy both the basilisk and Riddle, making friendship and loyalty both necessary prerequisites to Harry's success as the hero of the story.

**Chapter 18 Quotes**

 "I seem to remember telling you both that I would have to expel you if you broke any more school rules," said Dumbledore. Ron opened his mouth in horror.

"Which goes to show that the best of us must sometimes eat our words," Dumbledore went on, smiling. "You will both receive Special Awards for Services to the School and — let me see — yes, I think two hundred points apiece for Gryffindor."

**Related Characters:** Professor Dumbledore (speaker), Tom Riddle/Voldemort, Ron Weasley, Harry Potter

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 331**Explanation and Analysis**

At the end of the book, after Harry and Ron have explained

exactly how they came to discover the Chamber of Secrets and to defeat Tom Riddle and the basilisk, Dumbledore doles out their reward. At first, however, he makes it seem as though he is going to punish them—after all, as he recalls here, he had warned Harry and Ron that they would be expelled if they broke any more rules following the incident in which they flew the car to school. But Dumbledore's turn here emphasizes that sometimes it is necessary to break the rules in order to do the right thing. All of ways that Harry and Ron broke rules over the course of the book—making Polyjuice Potion, stealing from Snape, sneaking down to Hagrid's at night, going into the Forbidden Forest, threatening Lockhart—were necessary in order to find the Chamber and defeat Tom Riddle. And because Dumbledore, who is essentially the highest moral authority in the series, rewards Harry and Ron for this behavior, Rowling indicates that breaking rules is sometimes a necessary part of doing the right thing.

 "It only put me in Gryffindor," said Harry in a defeated voice, "because I asked not to go in Slytherin...."

"Exactly," said Dumbledore, beaming once more. "Which makes you very different from Tom Riddle. It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."

**Related Characters:** Professor Dumbledore, Harry Potter (speaker), Tom Riddle/Voldemort

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 333**Explanation and Analysis**

At the end of the book, Harry and Dumbledore have a final heart-to-heart in which Harry confesses some of the insecurities that have been plaguing him throughout the book. His worry stems from the fact that he and Tom Riddle (Voldemort) share many qualities, and because he feels that he was supposed to be in Slytherin because the Sorting Hat wanted to put him in that house. Thus, he worries that he is destined to have a fate that he wants to avoid: being so similar to Voldemort that he is in danger of following the same path. However, Dumbledore's sage advice here becomes a key argument of the series as a whole, as Harry continues to parse his and Voldemort's intertwining lives: choices are what truly shapes a person's identity. Harry chose to be in Gryffindor over Slytherin; he chose love and friendship over prejudice and hatred; and he chose courage over cowardice. These choices are ultimately what distinguish him from Voldemort, and they forge him into the

hero of the book rather than into its villain.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

### CHAPTER 1: THE WORST BIRTHDAY

At breakfast on Harry's twelfth birthday, Harry's uncle, Vernon, scolds Harry because his owl, Hedwig, woke him up with her screeching. Vernon insists on keeping Hedwig locked in her cage, which Harry complains about because it prevents him from sending mail to his friends. When Harry's cousin Dudley asks Harry to pass the frying pan, Harry says he's "forgotten the magic word," at which Vernon and Petunia explode in fury over his use of "the 'M' word." Vernon and Petunia treat Harry as though he is "a bomb that might go off at any moment"—though Harry is not allowed to do magic outside of school.

Harry misses Hogwarts, a magical school where he has just completed his first year. He misses eating in the Great Hall, visiting Hagrid, the gamekeeper, and playing Quidditch (a wizarding sport played on brooms). All of his magical possessions have been locked in a cupboard under the stairs.

A year ago, Harry's life was changed when Hagrid revealed to him that he and his parents were wizards; at one year old, he had somehow survived a curse from the greatest Dark sorcerer, Lord Voldemort, while his parents Lily and James had died protecting him. Harry is famous in the wizarding world, but with the Dursleys, he is treated like a dog.

Vernon and Petunia are hosting an important business dinner that night for a couple named the Masons, and Harry is instructed to stay in his room and not make any noise. While they prepare for the dinner, Harry slumps in the front lawn and sings happy birthday to himself. He hasn't received any letters from his best friends, Ron and Hermione, all summer, and he hasn't been able to send Hedwig to them either.

Dudley comes over and begins making fun of Harry for not having any friends. Harry pretends to curse Dudley, and Petunia punishes him by making him do a slew of difficult chores. Dudley's words get him thinking: maybe he doesn't have any friends. He viciously thinks, "Wish they could see famous Harry Potter now" as he spreads manure on the flowers. Harry is then made to eat dinner very quickly, and he is sent upstairs before the Masons arrive.

*The opening moments of The Chamber of Secrets return once again to the Dursley household. Harry's failure to tell the Dursleys that he is not supposed to do magic outside of school is an early demonstration of the way in which lack of information can inspire fear. Without this information, the Dursleys live in constant terror that Harry will use magic to hurt them.*



*Harry's love of Hogwarts, and his hatred of spending the summers with the Dursleys, will ultimately become a connection between himself and Tom Riddle, highlighting the similarities between them.*



*Harry's fame throughout the wizarding world has a great impact on how other people view his identity, and on how he is treated throughout the school year. Rowling reminds readers that Harry has a far humbler background than most wizards believe.*



*Friendship and loyalty are crucial to Harry's character, and this is one of the rare moments in which he questions his friends' loyalty. It demonstrates how, when Harry feels isolated, he also feels extremely vulnerable.*



*Rowling shows the vulnerability that Harry experiences from not hearing from his friends as a way of contrasting later points at which the loyalty and friendship Harry receives from Ron and Hermione spur him to bravery. It is notable, too, that Harry comments on his humble upbringing, observing the irony that many people deeply admire him in the wizarding community, in contrast to how he is treated at the Dursleys.*



## CHAPTER 2: DOBBY'S WARNING

When Harry arrives in his room, a little creature with “large, bat-like ears and bulging green eyes” named Dobby is waiting for him. Dobby explains that he is a house-elf. When Harry politely asks Dobby to sit down, Dobby begins wailing in gratitude at being treated “like an equal.” Harry tries to comfort Dobby while also asking him to be quiet, as the Masons have arrived downstairs.

Dobby tries to explain to Harry why he is there, but he keeps beating his head furiously on the wall, saying that because he is visiting Harry against the wishes of the family of he works for, he must punish himself. Harry asks if he can help Dobby or save him from what seems like an abusive family. But Dobby explains that a house-elf can only be set free by the family he works for, and again he marvels at Harry’s kindness and modesty.

Dobby asks Harry if the rumors are true that he escaped Voldemort a second time. When Harry says yes, Dobby remarks on how “valiant and bold” Harry is. He then tells Harry why he is there: he wants to warn Harry that he should not go back to Hogwarts, implying that there is a plot to make “most terrible things” happen this year. When Harry asks who is plotting them, Dobby furiously bangs his head against the wall again. Harry understands that Dobby can’t tell him.

Harry asks if Dobby’s warning has anything to do with Voldemort, and Dobby slowly shakes his head, though he seems to be trying to give Harry a hint. Harry simply says that with Dumbledore at Hogwarts, he can’t think who might try to make horrible things happen there. Dobby agrees that Dumbledore is a great wizard, but says there are powers that “no decent wizard” can wield. Dobby again beats himself with Harry’s lamp.

Vernon, hearing this beating, starts to climb the stairs. Harry shuts Dobby in a closet. Vernon warns Harry not to make another sound. When Vernon leaves, Harry turns to Dobby and says that anywhere would be better than the Dursleys, and that he has friends at Hogwarts. Dobby notes that Harry’s friends haven’t written to him, which leads Harry to realize that Dobby has been stopping his letters, thinking that if Harry believed his friends didn’t care about him, he would not want to go back to school.

Dobby’s words imply that he rarely receives equal treatment from wizards, demonstrating the prejudice that other wizards bear against house elves. Harry, however, does not have such a prejudice. Part of this is because he simply does not know that many people consider house elves inferior, but mostly this is due to the fact that Harry treats everyone he meets with respect.



Harry’s gesture of friendship towards Dobby, even when he himself is abused by the Dursleys, strikes Dobby as an enormous kindness, given the fact that he is a house-elf and often thought of as inferior. This action gives Dobby a great deal of loyalty to Harry through this book as well as the rest of the series.



It is important to compare the loyalty that Dobby bears Harry with the loyalty that Dobby bears his family (the Malfoys). With the Malfoys, his loyalty is required by a magical contract between house-elves and their families. But with Harry, Dobby’s loyalty stems first from the desire to do good and then from the respect that Harry shows him. Rowling suggests that Dobby’s loyalty to Harry prevails because kindness and respect will always win over prejudice, even when it comes at great physical cost as it does to Dobby here.



Harry’s loyalty towards Dumbledore is evident even in these early pages, and this loyalty is what allows Harry to be brave enough to know that he can return to Hogwarts without fear. Ultimately this loyalty, and Harry’s bravery, will be tested when Dumbledore leaves Hogwarts, but his departure ultimately demonstrates how Harry’s loyalty extends even beyond Dumbledore’s presence.



Even Dobby, who knows very little of Harry Potter, understands how much Harry values his friends and their loyalty to him, and thus how they can be used against him to make him feel vulnerable. Tom Riddle will explain later in the novel that he too takes advantage of the knowledge that Harry will always prioritize the well-being of his friends.



Harry grabs for the thick stack of letters that Dobby presents, but Dobby runs out of the bedroom and down into the kitchen. Harry follows him, and when he arrives he sees Petunia's "masterpiece of a pudding" floating near the ceiling. Harry begs Dobby not to do anything. But when Harry won't promise that he will not return to Hogwarts, Dobby lets the pudding drop to the floor and then vanishes.

Vernon rushes into the kitchen and sees Harry covered in frosting. He apologizes to the Masons, saying that Harry is "very disturbed" and so they keep him upstairs. Vernon threatens to "fay" Harry, who starts mopping the kitchen. Vernon is almost able to salvage the night, but then an owl swoops through the window and drops a letter. The Masons run out of the house, as Mrs. Mason is very afraid of birds.

Harry reads the letter, which is from the Ministry of Magic. It says that they have detected a Hover Charm used in Harry's home, reminds Harry that underage wizards are not allowed to use magic outside of school, and says that if he uses any more magic he will be expelled from the school.

Vernon, who reads the letter as well, is livid that Harry didn't tell them he couldn't use magic. He puts bars on Harry's window, puts a cat-flap in the door for food, and lets Harry out to use the bathroom twice a day. Other than that, Harry is locked in around the clock and Vernon is adamant that he will not be returning to Hogwarts.

Three days later, Harry is still locked in his room. He is nearly starving, but he splits his food with Hedwig, who is also trapped in her cage. He doesn't know what to do: if he uses magic to escape, he will be expelled from Hogwarts. But that night, he hears the bars on his window rattling, and when he wakes up, Ron Weasley is outside his window.

## CHAPTER 3: THE BURROW

Ron and his brothers Fred and George are in a flying turquoise car, and they have come to rescue Harry. Ron explains that he had wondered why Harry hadn't answered his letters. They pull the bars out of the window and load up all of Harry's things for school, waking up Vernon in the process. Vernon tries to grab Harry as he piles into the car, but Fred and George are able to pull him into the car and then fly off.

*It is interesting that for all of the trouble-making and lying that Harry does throughout this book, he is unable here to lie to Dobby. This moment actually reinforces the deep integrity that Harry possesses: he only lies when he knows that it will help to do what is right. Here he knows that lying is not morally right, even though telling the truth causes trouble for him.*



*Later in the novel, Rowling establishes that many wizards are prejudiced against Muggles. Here, the opposite is true: Vernon and Petunia are so prejudiced against wizards that they even try to apologize for Harry by associating him with mentally ill people, another group that experiences discrimination.*



*This is the first introduction to the Ministry of Magic, and it is not accidental that their warning is unfair. In the wizarding world, the Ministry of Magic often wants to appear to be doing the right thing (policing underaged wizards using magic) rather than actually doing the right thing (figuring out who really conjured the Hover Charm and punishing that person).*



*In contrast to Harry's inability to lie to Dobby, Harry chose to lie about his inability to use magic outside of school because he knew that without lying, he would be subjected to brutal abuse by the Dursleys.*



*The injustice of the rules is shown once again. Harry feels unable to perform magic even when he is essentially imprisoned in his room for no reason and is starving. These harsh circumstances make it clear that Harry feels like the Ministry is not interested in justice, because they do not make an exception for his dire circumstances.*



*Just when Harry is weak and vulnerable, Ron appears. He demonstrates his loyalty (he assumes that something must be wrong on Harry's end, unlike Harry, who worries that his friends don't care enough to write to him). He also proves how Harry often relies on his friend in order to achieve his accomplishments.*



As the boys drive home, Ron asks what's happened to Harry. Harry tells him all about Dobby's warning, the letters, and the pudding fiasco. Fred and George wonder whether Dobby was lying, as house-elves usually can't use magic without their family's permission. They think it might be a prank. Harry and Ron wonder whether Draco Malfoy, who hates Harry, might have done it. Fred and George mention that Draco's father, Lucius, used to be a big supporter of Voldemort (though he said afterward that he'd been bewitched at the time), and that they are a very wealthy old wizarding family.

The boys continue home. Harry asks whether Ron's father, Mr. Weasley, knows that they took the car to rescue him. Ron says no, he's working that night. Ron explains that his father works for the Ministry of Magic in the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office, which prohibits and regulates the bewitching of Muggle items. But Ron explains that his dad also really likes to bewitch Muggle items, like the car.

Fred, George, Ron, and Harry arrive home at the Burrow, which amazes Harry. It is a stone house with several stories, and it is very crooked. The boys try to sneak in, but they are immediately caught in the yard by Mrs. Weasley, who is furious that they snuck out and stole the car. After her rant at her sons, however, she immediately tells Harry how happy she is to see him and how she, too, had been worried about him.

They go into the kitchen, and Harry is astonished. He has never been in a wizard house before, and he's amazed to see objects like the enchanted clock whose hands point to words on the edge like "you're late" and "time to make tea." Mrs. Weasley makes the boys breakfast while still scolding them that they could have been seen by someone. At that moment, Ron's little sister Ginny walks in, sees Harry, squeaks, and walks out. Ron explains that Ginny's been talking about Harry all summer and will probably want an autograph.

Fred, George, and Ron start to head up to bed, but Mrs. Weasley instead instructs her sons to de-gnome the garden. Harry offers to join them. De-gnoming the garden involves taking gnomes (small, potato-like creatures) by the ankles, swinging them in the air and hurling them as far away as they can. To the Weasleys it's a chore, but Harry enjoys spending time with them.

*This speculation serves as an early example of the dangers of rumor and not having information. Harry and Ron's assumption that Draco sent Dobby as a prank not only demonstrates their own bias against him, but it also blinds them to the danger that will soon be present within the castle. Later they will exhibit this bias again when they assume that Draco is the heir of Slytherin and is causing the attacks on Muggle-borns.*



*Ron's description of his father's work reveals that Mr. Weasley often breaks the rules that he is meant to enforce; again, Rowling highlights the ineffectiveness of the Ministry of Magic.*



*Even though Mrs. Weasley disagrees with the way in which Fred, George, and Ron broke the rules in order to go get Harry, she understands the value in what they did because of the dire situation that the Dursleys had put him in.*



*As Harry returns to the world of magic, he also starts to be reinitiated into the ways in which many other people treat him. Ginny, like many others will this coming year at Hogwarts, views Harry as a celebrity and treats him differently only because she knows that he is famous. This will cause Harry to try to define his identity on his own terms and grapple with the ideas that other people have about him.*



*As Harry spends time with Ron and the other Weasley boys, he regains the friendships and the love that he was never able to receive from his own family. This friendship becomes the ultimate support for Harry, and eventually enables him to be brave.*



Fred, George, Ron, and Harry continue this process until they hear Mr. Weasley return to the house, whereupon they scurry back into the kitchen. Mr. Weasley is a thin, balding man with red hair like his children. He explains that his department made nine raids on wizarding houses, finding “shrinking door keys and a biting kettle.”

Mrs. Weasley reenters the kitchen, furious with Mr. Weasley that he enchanted the car (which she did not know he had done). Mr. Weasley explains that it isn’t against the law: if no one is intending to fly the car, it’s not illegal to make the car fly. Mrs. Weasley points out that he wrote the law with a loophole in it. As they argue, Harry and Ron slip upstairs to Ron’s bedroom.

Ron’s room is covered in merchandise from his favorite Quidditch team: the Chudley Cannons. It is also filled with spell books, Self-Shuffling playing cards, and his rat, Scabbers, who is lying by the window. Ron admits that it’s a bit small, but Harry smiles and says: “This is the best house I’ve ever been in.”

## CHAPTER 4: AT FLOURISH AND BLOTTS

Harry is amazed by life at the Weasley home, which is both chaotic and wonderful—and, even more amazing, everyone likes him there. Mr. Weasley often asks him about the “ingenious” ways that Muggles get along without magic, like telephones. About a week into Harry’s stay, letters from Hogwarts arrive with their list of books for the year—including all seven volumes of Gilderoy Lockhart’s books.

Ron also receives a letter from Hermione, asking him if he was able to retrieve Harry and if Harry is okay. She also suggests they meet up to buy their books together in Diagon Alley the following week, which they agree to do. Harry spends the rest of the afternoon with Fred, George, and Ron practicing Quidditch in a small field surrounded by trees so that people won’t be able to see them flying.

The next Wednesday, the Weasleys and Harry set off for Diagon Alley using Floo powder. Ron explains to Harry, who has never traveled this way, that he simply has to take a pinch of the powder, throw it into the fireplace, and shout “Diagon Alley.” But Harry doesn’t speak clearly enough and he ends up in a menacing-looking shop. Harry tries to get a sense of where he is, but when he looks out the shop window he knows the street he is on is not Diagon Alley.

The items that Mr. Weasley finds illustrates an aspect of wizarding prejudice, as some people believe that it’s funny to create shrinking door keys or biting kettles, in order to sell them back to Muggles and take advantage of them. Later Rowling will reveal that the Malfoys, who have quite a bit of this prejudice, fear these raids.



Even though Mr. Weasley has a good heart, this is another example of how the Ministry wants to appear to be doing the right thing rather than actually creating fair rules. The loopholes Mr. Weasley writes into the laws make them easily exploited—as even he himself does.



Ron’s worry illustrates his fear of another prejudice: the prejudice against those who are not wealthy, which his family is not. But Harry, true to form, is kind to Ron and reassures him that the Weasleys do not need a lot of money in order to have a wonderful home.



In contrast to the way in which some other wizarding families (like the Malfoys) despise Muggles, Mr. Weasley not only works to protect Muggles but is also truly interested in and supportive of them. His respect for and interest in Muggles also extends to Harry, who has a lot of insight on Muggles.



When Dobby was stopping his letters, Harry felt extremely vulnerable and cut off from his friends. But now, surrounded by their love and concern, and realizing that they had been loyal to him all along, he regains the confidence and support that he had lost at the Dursleys.



Harry’s lack of knowledge about Floo powder drops him into unknown territory, which makes him more and more nervous when he realizes that he doesn’t know where he is. This is something that he experienced quite a bit in the first book and will as well in this book: that lacking information can lead him into scary situations.



Harry starts toward the door, but then he sees Draco Malfoy and his father, Lucius, walking toward the store. Harry immediately hides inside a large cabinet. Harry eavesdrops, hearing Draco complaining about how everyone thinks Harry is so smart and wonderful, and about his ability to have a broom at school—which he says is only because Harry has a scar on his forehead. Lucius warns Draco that he shouldn't so openly dislike Harry, whom most people regard as “the hero who made the Dark Lord disappear.”

Lucius then addresses the owner of the shop, Mr. Borgin, and says he wants to sell some items that “might embarrass” him if the Ministry were to raid his home. He expresses frustration over the rumors of a new Muggle Protection Act, saying it must be the work of that “Muggle-loving fool Arthur Weasley.”

Mr. Borgin laments that “wizard blood is counting for less everywhere,” but Lucius responds, “not with me.” He also insults Draco by wondering why Hermione Granger, who is “of no wizard family,” beats Draco in every exam, although Draco protests that she’s merely the teachers’ favorite. Lucius then haggles with Mr. Borgin; once the items are sold, he and Draco leave.

Harry waits for Mr. Borgin to disappear into a back room and then slips out of the shop. He is in a dingy alleyway and feels quite afraid of the shabby-looking people in the street who eye him from the shadows. A street sign reads “Knockturn Alley,” but he doesn’t know where that is. He tries to stay calm as an old witch approaches him, leering and wondering if he needs any help.

Just then, Hagrid appears and asks Harry what he’s doing down there. Harry is relieved to see him and explains he’s lost. Hagrid steers him away from the witch and down an alleyway back to Diagon Alley, explaining that Knockturn Alley is a “dodgy place” and that it was lucky that Hagrid happened to be there buying a Flesh-Eating Slug Repellant. Harry explains what happened with the Floo powder. They then see Hermione, Ron, and the Weasleys across the street, who have been frantically looking for him.

Harry explains what happened and describes the exchange he saw with Draco and Lucius. Mr. Weasley is happy to hear that Lucius is worried about the Ministry raids, but he is quickly distracted when he sees Hermione’s Muggle parents, excited to talk to them. Everyone splits up to buy different things, with the plan to meet up at Flourish and Blotts after an hour.

Harry continues to contend with others’ conceptions of his own identity. Draco laments that Harry is famous for doing nothing, a critique that has some merit, as Harry was only a baby when he made the Dark Lord disappear. At the same time, Draco acknowledges something that Harry is starting to realize: that people’s perception of him is somewhat out of his control because of their preconceived notions about what he has accomplished.



Although readers got a taste of the Malfoys’ prejudice through Draco in the first book, here it becomes clear where that prejudice stems from, and the fact that it is specifically directed towards Muggles.



Not only does Lucius dislike Muggles, but it is also evident here that he dislikes Muggle-borns or anyone associated with Muggles. His dislike of Hermione also illustrates the generalizations that he makes: despite the fact that she is the best in the class, he still believes her to be inferior because of her blood status.



Again, Harry’s lack of knowledge about the world around him brings him a deep degree of fear, as he is not sure of how he might get to Diagon Alley. He also knows that he is very recognizable, and that that knowledge imbalance—that others know who he is while they remain anonymous to him—makes him even more nervous.



Hagrid, who served as a mentor and friend to Harry in the first book, here saves him from unknown dangers and fear. Harry greatly appreciates this rescue, and feels his confidence and bravery returning as Hagrid pulls him away from a frightening situation and returns him to the comfort of his friends.



Again, the difference between the Weasley family and the Malfoy family is highlighted by Mr. Weasley’s excitement over Hermione’s parents—people that the Malfoys would never interact with. This difference will come to a head later in the chapter.



At Flourish and Blotts, there is a large crowd because Gilderoy Lockhart is signing copies of his new autobiography, *Magical Me*. He is handsome, with a bright white smile and wavy hair. His table is surrounded by pictures of himself, each one winking and smiling at the crowd. Hermione is excited that they're getting to meet him.

Lockhart recognizes Harry and insists that they take a photo together, saying that the two of them together could make the front page. Lockhart then announces, before Harry can get out of the spotlight, that he will be the new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts. The crowd cheers and claps. Harry manages to get away, but Draco Malfoy, who has just entered the shop, comments, "Can't even go into a bookshop without making the front page." Ginny tries to defend him, but Draco only makes fun of Harry even more.

Mr. Weasley tries to herd the kids outside, but he is confronted by Lucius Malfoy. Lucius coldly comments on the fact that Mr. Weasley has been working many hours overtime at the Ministry but still can't afford to buy Ginny new books. He picks up one of her second-hand schoolbooks scornfully. Lucius also notices Hermione's Muggle parents, commenting that he thought the Weasleys "could sink no lower." Mr. Weasley, angry, knocks Lucius into a bookshelf until Hagrid comes over and pulls them apart. Lucius thrusts Ginny's book back at her, and he and Draco leave the shop.

Hagrid tells Mr. Weasley that he should have ignored Lucius—that the whole family is "rotten ter the core," and that they have "bad blood." The group then parts ways: Hermione and her parents walk toward the bus stop, and Harry and the Weasleys return to the fireside at the Leaky Cauldron, where they take Floo Powder back to the Burrow.

Regarding the question of how identity is shaped, Lockhart serves as another representation of the idea that identity is a choice. Despite the fact that Lockhart has actually accomplished very little himself, he has nonetheless worked to achieve the identity of a superstar.



This is a key moment in which Harry starts to realize that his choices in the public eye matter as a way of shaping his identity. Harry is thrust into the spotlight, and despite the fact that he is incredibly humble, this moment opens him up to criticism that he is attention-seeking, just like Lockhart is. Harry will spend much of the book trying to shy away from the focus that gets placed upon him, as many people try to make him the center of attention.



This conflict centers on the Malfoys' prejudice not only against Muggles and Muggle-borns, but also against those who are less wealthy (the Weasleys) and who deign to interact at all with Muggles. This prejudice is so harmful that it leads Lucius to give Ginny Tom Riddle's diary (unnoticed in this moment), which ultimately enables the attacks on Muggle-borns and other students that will later occur at Hogwarts.



Hagrid and the Weasleys have their own prejudice against the Malfoys as a whole, but there is a distinction: while the Malfoys view others unkindly because of a perceived inferiority, Harry and the other characters dislike the Malfoys because they are simply hateful.



## CHAPTER 5: THE WHOMPING WILLOW

The morning that the Hogwarts Express is set to leave, Harry and the Weasleys drive the car to King's Cross Station, though they make many return trips to the Burrow on the way for forgotten items. By the time they arrive, it is almost the departure time. They finally arrive at King's Cross, and Mr. Weasley and Percy hurry ahead into the barrier at platform nine and three quarters, followed by Fred and George, and then by Mrs. Weasley and Ginny. But when Harry and Ron try to go through, they crash into the barrier rather than being able to magically walk through it.

It is later revealed that it is Dobby who prevented Harry and Ron from being able to pass through the barrier, in his latest attempt to prevent Harry from returning to Hogwarts. He does this out of a kind of loyalty, hoping that he will be able to save Harry from the terrible things that he expects to occur at Hogwarts.



Harry and Ron don't understand why they cannot enter the barrier, watching the clock tick until they see that they have missed the train. They worry that Mr. Weasley and Mrs. Weasley won't be able to get back to them. Harry suggests they wait by the car, but then Ron suggests that they fly the car to Hogwarts, and his parents can simply Apparate home.

Harry and Ron load the car, and Ron starts the car. He presses the Invisibility Booster, making themselves and the car invisible, but as they start to rise over London, the Invisibility Booster sputters out and the car can be seen again. Ron takes them above the clouds, but then they realize they have to find the Hogwarts Express in order to follow it. They duck below the clouds over London, see the train, and follow it north.

A few hours later, Harry and Ron are approaching the school, and Harry imagines how awed the other students will be when they land on the front lawn. But the car engine begins to whine, and Ron starts to grow nervous that they may not make it to the school. They see Hogwarts in the distance, but the car starts to lose speed. When they reach the lake, the engine dies completely. Harry and Ron crash spectacularly into a giant tree, which they soon learn is the Whomping Willow—a tree that can attack with its branches. Ron's wand snaps in two and the car ejects Harry and Ron before driving away into the darkness.

Harry and Ron drag their luggage to the front steps, where they can see through a front window that the Sorting has started in the Great Hall. Harry recalls his own Sorting, during which he had been terrified that the hat might have sorted him into Slytherin—but instead it sorted him into Gryffindor with Ron and Hermione.

Harry wonders where Professor Snape is, noticing that he is not at the feast. Harry and Ron speculate hopefully that he has left, or that he has been fired because everyone hates him, until they realize Snape is standing right behind them. Snape takes Ron and Harry to his office, and reprimands them because they were seen flying by seven Muggles. Harry realizes how much trouble Mr. Weasley could be in, because he was the one who enchanted the car.

Harry and Ron's worry about what might have happened to the barrier, and what might have happened to Ron's parents, serves as another example in which their lack of information sparks a kind of fear. They're not sure why this has happened, and they're afraid they won't be able to get to Hogwarts for the year.



Harry and Ron are so worried about their ability to get to Hogwarts that they decide breaking the rules and flying the car there is the best decision. But it is clear that their fear is their primary motivator: had they taken a few extra minutes to think through their options and garnered more information about their situation, they could have avoided their rule-breaking, as McGonagall points out later.



Part of what enables Harry and Ron's rule-breaking is that spur each other on and inspiring each other's bravery. They are also motivated by the idea of gaining even more notoriety from the other students. Thus, unlike some of their other escapades in the books, they don't quite have the same moral justification here for breaking the rules.



Harry's Sorting becomes a key worry for him. The fact that the hat almost did sort him into Slytherin makes him question his own identity as he starts to note more and more similarities between himself and Voldemort over the course of the book.



Harry and Ron have their own prejudice against Professor Snape, but it differs from the prejudice of the Malfoys in key ways: while the Malfoys make harmful generalizations about Muggles and Muggle-borns, Harry and Ron don't respect Snape because he treated them and other students very unkindly in their first year.



Snape then retrieves Professor McGonagall, who asks them to explain what happened. After hearing Ron's story, she asks why they didn't send an owl. Harry realizes how stupidly they acted. Then Dumbledore arrives, and Harry can hear the disappointment in his voice as he asks Harry to explain what happened. After hearing the story, Dumbledore concludes that he will not expel them, but he says that their offense is a serious one and he will be writing to both of their families. He then leaves Professor McGonagall to dole out their punishment.

Harry argues that they acted before the start of the term, and therefore Gryffindor shouldn't have points taken from it. Professor McGonagall agrees, almost smiling, but she still gives Harry and Ron detention. She then conjures sandwiches and says that they should go straight to the dormitory after they have finished eating. She also tells Ron that Ginny has been sorted into Gryffindor.

When Harry and Ron return to the portrait of the Fat Lady who guards Gryffindor tower, Hermione is there, asking where they've been and about the rumors that they have been expelled for flying a car. Harry notes that they haven't been expelled, but that they did fly there. Hermione is shocked at what they did.

When Harry and Ron enter the common room, everyone is cheering and clapping at their "inspired" entrance. However, they see Percy incredibly upset, and head up to bed in order to avoid another lecture. But in their room with the other Gryffindor second-years (Seamus, Dean, and Neville), the other boys are awestruck, and Harry and Ron can't help but grin.

While Harry and Ron perhaps did not have to break the rules in this circumstance, Dumbledore understands that they didn't do any true harm and also believed that they were doing the right thing. Additionally, Harry's immense loyalty to Dumbledore and his view of Dumbledore as a mentor is shown here in the fact that he does not want to disappoint Dumbledore.



*It is ironic that Harry uses a technicality about the rules in order to prevent himself from being punished for breaking the rules. Yet Harry is also demonstrating loyalty to his friends, hoping to avoid having the other students in Gryffindor pay for the thoughtless decision that he and Ron made.*



*Of the three protagonists, Hermione is the one who feels the most duty towards the rules—although, as Rowling demonstrated in the first book and continues to do so in this one, Hermione is willing to break the rules as well when it means being loyal to her friends or doing what is morally right.*



*Percy's disappointment here foreshadows the negative consequences of what they have done—particularly the punishment that Mr. Weasley receives as a result. And even though Harry is usually quite humble, flying the car is interpreted by many to be arrogant, strengthening Harry's identity as an attention-seeking celebrity.*



## CHAPTER 6: GILDEROY LOCKHART

The next morning at breakfast, Hermione is still disapproving of Ron and Harry's arrival method. When the mail arrives, Ron receives a letter from Mrs. Weasley called a Howler. When he opens it, it screams in Mrs. Weasley's amplified voice. It scolds him for stealing the car, particularly because Mr. Weasley is now facing an inquiry at work, and also says that Ron and Harry could have died. The entire Great Hall looks at Ron, who has turned a bright red. Harry feels incredibly guilty for what they'd done.

Harry and Ron begin to realize the real ramifications of their actions. Here, they start to realize that breaking the rules without thinking, and without having a truly good reason, is a problem. Even though Ron is the one getting in trouble, Harry understands that he is just as responsible for what happens and that the two of them spurred each other on to this plan—and he is particularly guilty because of the kindness that Ron's family showed him over the summer.



Harry, Ron, and Hermione then go to their first class: Herbology with the Hufflepuffs. On their way to the Greenhouses, Harry notices that Gilderoy Lockhart and Professor Sprout have just been patching up the Whomping Willow, and Lockhart brags about showing Professor Sprout the proper way to do so. He then spots Harry and pulls him aside for a moment. He notes that Harry has gotten “a taste for publicity” and wanted to fly the car to school to get himself noticed. Harry tries to protest, but Lockhart simply counsels him to take it easy and not try to garner so much attention yet.

Harry returns to Herbology class, where Professor Sprout announces that they’ll be repotting Mandrakes. When she asks who can name the properties of the Mandrake, Hermione’s hand immediately shoots up and she explains that Mandrakes can be used to restore someone who has been transfigured or cursed to their original state, but she adds that their cries are fatal. Professor Sprout gives Hermione twenty points.

The students put on earmuffs to prevent them from hearing the cries—though these Mandrakes are only seedlings, and thus their cries will only knock the students out for several hours if heard. As Harry, Ron, and Hermione work, they are joined by a Hufflepuff student who introduces himself as Justin Finch-Fletchley. Justin knows who they all are, and he tells them that he’s glad to be at Hogwarts—though his mother had always wanted him to go to Eton. They don’t have much more chance to talk, as they spend the rest of the class with their earmuffs on.

The Gryffindors’ next class is Transfiguration with Professor McGonagall. Harry feels like he’s forgotten everything he learned the previous year, and he has a very difficult time turning a beetle into a button. Ron has even worse problems, because his wand appears to be damaged beyond repair. Hermione transfigures several beetles perfectly.

After class, Harry, Ron, and Hermione eat lunch and then sit out in the courtyard for a bit. An eager first-year student named Colin Creevey comes over and introduces himself to Harry, saying that he knows all about Harry, and asks him for a picture to prove that he’s met Harry. Colin marvels at Hogwarts, explaining that he never knew the odd stuff he was doing was magic until he got the letter from Hogwarts, and now he’s taking lots of photos to send back to his dad. He asks Harry if he could perhaps sign the photo.

Lockhart’s speech to Harry continues to confirm the celebrity identity that others have bestowed upon him, and reinforces the idea that people may view his choices as attention-seeking. Despite Harry’s attempt to set the record straight, Lockhart only sees the actions that Harry has taken. Lockhart himself also illustrates the idea that one’s choices shape one’s identity, because Lockhart’s identity is completely self-created.



Hermione’s intellect and work ethic recur again and again in this chapter. She actively combats the prejudice that Muggle-born students are less intelligent, less deserving, or somehow inferior to the other students, because she outperforms them all.



In this exchange, Justin reveals with his reference to Eton that he is a Muggle-born student. Though Harry, Ron, and Hermione treat everyone with kindness and respect, when rumors later fly that Harry doesn’t like Justin or is targeting him, Justin’s revelation that he is Muggle-born is given as the reason.



Hermione’s transfiguration skills again reinforce her magical talents, as she does better both than Harry (who is “half-blood”) and Ron (who is pure-blood)—proving that blood status has little to do with one’s abilities.



Harry continues to face the prospect of being defined by what other people see in him. Colin, like Ginny and Justin, sees Harry as a celebrity, and their treatment of him adds to his celebrity hype. Colin exasperates Harry throughout the book because Harry tries to choose not to have this kind of fame, knowing that to many people it seems conceited, as Lockhart points out moments later.



Just then, Draco Malfoy comes over, sarcastically asking if Harry is giving out signed photos and then insulting Ron by saying that one would be worth more than his family's house. Gilderoy Lockhart then comes over, wondering who's giving out signed photos until he sees Harry. He poses for a picture with Harry, then pulls him aside again and says that handing out signed pictures looks "a tad bigheaded." Harry can't get a word in to explain that he wasn't giving out signed photos.

The students then go to Lockhart's classroom for Defense Against the Dark Arts. Lockhart begins the class by giving a quiz, with questions entirely about himself ("What is Gilderoy Lockhart's favorite color?"; "What is Gilderoy Lockhart's secret ambition?"). Lockhart collects the quizzes and grades them, disappointed that so few remembered the answers. But he commends Hermione for getting every question right.

Lockhart then lifts a covered cage from behind his desk, warning that the students are about to face their worst fears. When he uncovers the cage, he reveals what is inside: Cornish pixies, eight inches high and bright blue. Lockhart then opens the cage, and the pixies start to cause pandemonium in the classroom: lifting Neville by the ears into the air, breaking through the glass window, dumping ink bottles onto the class.

Lockhart tells the students to round up the pixies, then tries to cast a spell to stop them. But the spell has no effect, and the pixies seize his wand and throw it out the window. Lockhart dives under the desk. The bell rings and the students dash toward the door. Lockhart then tells Harry, Ron, and Hermione to take care of the rest of the pixies before leaving the classroom. Ron and Harry are flabbergasted. Hermione immobilizes the pixies and then defends Lockhart, saying that he's trying to give them hands-on experience; he obviously knows what he's doing, she says, because of all the things he's done in his books. Ron clarifies: all the things "he says he's done."

## CHAPTER 7: MUDBLOODS AND MURMURS

After Harry's first week of class, he, Ron, and Hermione plan to visit Hagrid on Saturday. But that morning, Quidditch captain Oliver Wood wakes Harry very early for practice. Harry leaves a note for Ron explaining where he's gone. When he reaches the stairs, Colin is there with the photo of him and Lockhart, asking Harry to sign it. Harry says no, saying that he's in a hurry to get to Quidditch practice. Colin tags along, saying he'd like to see Harry play.

Malfoy continues to demonstrate his prejudice against those who don't have as much wealth as he does. Additionally, it is ironic here that Lockhart cautions Harry against arrogance, given the fact that Lockhart is the most arrogant person in the book. Still, Harry realizes that he has to actively fight against this perception of him.



Where Harry wants to be humbler, Lockhart chooses to be anything but. As is revealed at the end of the novel, he has no qualifications to be a teacher. All his life choices are based on what will gain him fame and fortune, allowing him to craft an identity in the wizarding world that is based on his charm and deceptions rather than real accomplishments.



Lockhart also shows how a lack of knowledge can create fear and chaos. He releases the Cornish pixies but has no idea how to contain them, causing panic among the students in the class. Lockhart's lack of knowledge on various subjects inspires fear throughout the rest of the book, as Harry and the others worry about the ramifications of Lockhart's stupidity.



In contrast to Lockhart's lack of knowledge and his inability to contain the pixies, Hermione comes to the rescue and uses her intellect in order to recapture them. Additionally, Ron makes a good point about Lockhart's identity: just because someone says that they have done something doesn't mean that they have actually done it, again reinforcing the idea that Lockhart has created the identity that the world knows.



Again, Colin's behavior forces Harry to confront how other people see him. Colin views him as a celebrity, while one of Harry's core traits is his humility. Rowling also demonstrates how Harry becomes quickly aggravated by not being able to control how others view him, which is part of why he later becomes so dismayed by the idea that his life might be left to fate.



The rest of the Gryffindor team is in the changing room, and Wood goes over some new strategies for the team so that they can win the Quidditch Cup. When Harry and the rest of the team head out to the field, he sees that Ron and Hermione are sitting in the stands to watch him—and so is Colin, excitedly taking pictures.

After a few minutes on the field, the Slytherin team walks up. Wood yells at the Slytherin captain, Flint, saying that Gryffindor booked the field. Flint pulls out a note from Professor Snape, giving them permission to practice on the field to train their new Seeker: Draco Malfoy. The team also has a brand new set of brooms, courtesy of Lucius Malfoy.

At that moment, Ron and Hermione come down from the stands to see what's going on. Draco explains that he's the new Seeker, and that everyone's been admiring the new brooms Lucius bought them. Hermione says that at least no one on the Gryffindor team had to buy their way in. Draco then calls Hermione a "filthy little Mudblood."

The entire Gryffindor team goes into an uproar at Draco's words. Ron points his wand at Draco, but when he tries to cast a spell, it backfires and hits him in the stomach. Ron starts belching up slugs, and the Slytherin team bursts into laughter. Harry and Hermione pull Ron up by the arms and take him over to Hagrid's hut.

Hagrid gives Ron a bucket while Harry explains what happened, though he admits that he doesn't understand what Draco called Hermione. Ron explains that Draco called her "Mudblood," which is "a really foul name for someone who is Muggle-born." He explains that people like the Malfoys think they're better because they're "pure-blood," but that most wizards understand that one's parentage doesn't make a difference at all. Hagrid affirms this, saying that there isn't a spell Hermione can't do.

Hagrid then tells Harry that he's heard Harry is giving out signed photos, and wonders why he doesn't have one. Harry refutes the idea, furious that Lockhart is saying so. Hagrid admits he's only joking—he told Lockhart that Harry doesn't need to give out signed photos to be famous.

Hermione and Ron's friendship and loyalty exists on many levels, as they show up to support Harry even for small things like his Quidditch practice.



*The benefits that the Slytherin team experiences thanks to Draco's wealth demonstrate how prejudice becomes easily accepted by those whom it benefits. It is easy for someone like Draco, who has wealth, to criticize someone without wealth and get no resistance from the other members of his team, because his wealth benefits them too.*



*True to form, Hermione and Ron come down to the pitch to reaffirm their loyalty to Harry. Hermione criticizes Malfoy for using his wealth to get onto the team rather than having talent, as Harry does. Draco's return insult also reintroduces the prejudice that he has against Muggle-borns.*



*The friendship and loyalty among the three protagonists are on full display here. Ron defends Hermione from Draco's slur, but when his spell backfires, Hermione and Harry likewise support Ron.*



*Draco's insult to Hermione parallels the racism of the real world, in which people use stereotypes and the perceived inferiority of others in order to make themselves feel more superior. Through Ron and Hagrid's defense of Hermione—explaining that she is far more talented at magic than Draco is—Rowling argues that these kinds of prejudices are often baseless or inaccurate.*



*Hagrid's statement demonstrates how friends can be a key component of anchoring one's identity. Though Lockhart is spreading the idea that Harry is giving out signed photos, Hagrid knows that Harry would never do this and helps buoy Harry and reaffirm his sense of character.*



Harry, Hermione, and Ron return to the castle for lunch. In the entrance hall, Professor McGonagall stops Ron and Harry, informing them that they are to serve their detentions that evening. Ron will be polishing the silver in the trophy room with Filch, and Harry will be helping Lockhart answer his fan mail.

That evening, Harry goes to Lockhart's office. Lockhart has Harry address the envelopes while he talks about all of his fans and fame. The minutes crawl by. But then Harry hears a cold voice, whispering, "Let me rip you...Let me tear you... Let me kill you..." Harry jumps up with a start, terrified. But Lockhart says that he didn't hear anything. Lockhart then realizes it's nearly midnight and releases Harry.

Harry leaves the office dazed, and strains to hear the voice again as he walks straight back to the Gryffindor dormitory. When Ron arrives, Harry tells him about the voice and that Lockhart couldn't hear it. Ron is confused, thinking that even someone invisible would have had to open the door. Harry lies in bed, unsure of what to make of the incident.

## CHAPTER 8: THE DEATHDAY PARTY

A few days before Halloween, Harry walks back to his dormitory after a rain-soaked Quidditch practice. He spots Nearly Headless Nick, the ghost of Gryffindor Tower, whom he notices seems very upset. Nick explains that other ghosts won't let him into a club called the Headless Hunt because his head is still slightly attached to his body. Harry tries to comfort Nick.

At that moment, Filch walks down the hall and notices the mud that Harry has tracked in. He leads Harry into his office and starts filling out a form stating Harry's crime. At that moment, however, a loud bang comes from the ceiling of the office. Filch runs out of the room, calling after Peeves the poltergeist, whom he assumes is the source of the bang.

Harry remains in a chair near Filch's desk and spots a letter on the desk. Harry reads the letter: it is an advertisement for Kwikspell, which seems to be a course to learn simple spells. Harry wonders if this means that Filch isn't a "proper wizard." When Filch returns, he notices immediately that the letter has moved. Harry lies and says he didn't read it, and Filch doesn't know what to do, half-furious and half-embarrassed. He sends Harry back to his dormitory.

Because Harry and Ron have to serve detentions, Rowling acknowledges that even if a person thinks that they are in the right, if they break the rules, sometimes they still have to face punishment.



*This is the first instance of the cold, unknown voice that comes to be associated with the attacks on Muggle-born students. But more than the words themselves, the more terrifying thing is perhaps that Harry doesn't know what the source of the voice is, that and Lockhart seems unable to hear it.*



*The lack of information about the voice and where it is coming from is the thing that unsettles Harry the most, and is ultimately the thing that enables a series of rumors about the attacks to spread through the castle.*



Ghosts are often avoided by students or sometimes even made fun of. This is particularly true of Nearly Headless Nick, whose near-headlessness makes him a kind of oddity to the students. Harry, on the other hand, treats Nick kindly, understanding that he is a being with feelings.



Like many other figures of authority at Hogwarts and in the wizarding world more generally, Filch frequently abuses his power in order to appear more menacing to the students than he actually is. In Harry's case, this strategy actually backfires, because if he can get into trouble for things like a little mud, he has no issue with breaking the rules and getting into trouble for larger offenses.



Rowling introduces yet another form of prejudice in the wizarding world, perhaps an even stronger one than the prejudice against Muggle-borns. Filch is (as Harry will soon learn) a Squib—a person of wizard heritage but with no magical ability. Squibs are often mistreated and discriminated against by the majority of the wizarding world.



When Harry leaves Filch's office, Nearly Headless Nick catches him again. He asks Harry if his distraction worked: he convinced Peeves to crash a large cabinet right over Filch's office. Harry thanks him, and wonders how he could help Nick with the Headless Hunt. Nick invites him to his five hundredth deathday party on Halloween: he says it would be an honor to have Harry attend, and wonders if Harry could tell the members of the Headless Hunt that he finds Nick very frightening. Harry agrees to go.

Harry, Hermione, and Ron are excited about going to the deathday party, because they know that living people are rarely invited to ghost parties. Halloween arrives, and they go down to the dungeon, which is filled with hundreds of ghosts. All of the food is moldy and gross, and the music sounds like fingernails being scraped on a chalkboard.

Hermione spots another ghost, Moaning Myrtle, who haunts one of the girls' bathrooms on the first floor. Hermione says no one really likes her because she's always crying and flooding the bathroom. Myrtle sulks over to Harry, Ron, and Hermione, and Hermione tries to cheer her up by saying how nice she looks. But Myrtle simply thinks that she's making fun of her and she starts to sob. Just then, a dozen headless ghosts on ghost horses glide through the dungeon wall and greet Nick. Nick tries to make a speech, but the Headless Hunt starts a game of Head Hockey and distracts the audience.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione decide to leave and go back to the feast, as they are very cold and hungry. As they leave, Harry hears the same voice from Lockhart's office: "...rip...tear...kill." Harry stops in his tracks and tries to listen, looking up and down the passage. Harry can hear the voice moving away, while Ron and Hermione can't hear anything. He wonders if it might be an invisible ghost, rising through the ceiling. Harry climbs the stairs with Ron and Hermione in tow, heading up to the entrance hall. Harry hears the voice again: "I smell blood..." He worries that the voice is going to kill someone.

Harry runs up to the second floor, stopping at the end of the passageway with Ron and Hermione behind him. There they see a message: "THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS HAS BEEN OPENED. ENEMIES OF THE HEIR, BEWARE." Below the words, there is a puddle of water, and hanging by her tail from one of the torch brackets is Filch's cat, Mrs. Norris, "stiff as a board." Harry, Ron, and Hermione try to leave the corridor, but the feast ends and students pile into the corridor. As the students approach, they fall silent, until they hear a cry from Draco Malfoy: "Enemies of the Heir, beware! You'll be next, Mudbloods."

Nick's gesture of kindness helps Harry escape Filch's punishment, and in turn Harry agrees to attend his party and help him. Not only does Harry show Nick respect, and vice versa, but their mutual kindness and budding friendship becomes mutually beneficial.



Just like Harry, Ron and Hermione reveal their respect for those who are different from themselves, and are even excited to widen their perspectives by experiencing something new. This shows that they are unlike other characters who simply write off those who are different from them as inferior.



Myrtle, like Nick, also experiences prejudice. She is clearly upset about something and is often made fun of, but people simply reinforce that stereotype by calling her "Moaning Myrtle." This abuse occurs to the point where Myrtle doesn't even believe that Hermione could be nice to her, which helps create a negative self-fulfilling prophecy of feeling like an outcast, and then becoming one.



Again, having no knowledge about the voice or where it might be coming from terrifies Harry. This point will become crucial in the following chapters, as lack of knowledge about the monster is what allows rumors and fear to fly around the castle. It is also notable that chooses to run toward the voice instead of running away from it. His impulse is to save others rather than to hide, showing his immense courage and willingness to sacrifice himself.



The first attack and the accompanying message reveal a bit of information about the motivation behind it. As Draco points out (perhaps because he has more knowledge about what "the Heir" means than others do), the motivation for the attacks is based on prejudice. Filch will go on to assume that Harry attacked Mrs. Norris because he discovered that Filch is a Squib. Even though Harry didn't petrify Mrs. Norris, the truth is not far off, as it later turns out that the monster is after those whom Salazar Slytherin felt were "undeserving" of being at the school.



## CHAPTER 9: THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Filch bursts through the crowd, stunned when he sees Mrs. Norris. He immediately turns on Harry, saying that he murdered Mrs. Norris. Dumbledore and other teachers arrive and escort Harry, Hermione, Ron, and Filch over to Lockhart's office, along with Mrs. Norris. Dumbledore concludes that Mrs. Norris is petrified, not dead, and that the magic is too advanced for Harry to have done it.

Filch, who has been sobbing, again accuses Harry, saying that Harry knows that he is a Squib. Harry argues that he didn't touch Mrs. Norris and doesn't even know what a Squib is. Snape then steps forward and asks why he, Ron, and Hermione weren't at the feast and why they went up to that corridor. They explain that they went to Nick's deathday party, but when Harry begins to explain why he went up to the corridor, he worries that explaining the bodiless voice no one else can hear will sound far-fetched. He says that they were too tired to go the feast, but Snape doesn't believe him.

Dumbledore says that the kids are innocent until proven guilty, and adds that the Mandrakes that Professor Sprout is growing will be able to cure Mrs. Norris. When the teachers leave, Harry asks Ron and Hermione if he should have told them about the voice. Ron immediately says no: hearing voices isn't good even in the wizarding world. Harry asks if Ron believes him and Ron immediately says yes, but he adds that what Harry described is admittedly strange.

Harry asks Ron what a Squib is, and Ron chuckles. He explains that it's someone who is born into a wizarding family but who doesn't have any magical powers, like the opposite of a Muggle-born. He explains that it's very rare, and it's probably why Filch hates the students so much.

For a few days, the entire school talks about the attack on Mrs. Norris. Ginny in particular seems very disturbed by what happened, though Ron tries to assure her that they'll "catch the maniac who did it." Hermione, for her own part, does nothing but read, trying to find out information about what the Chamber of Secrets might be. Additionally, when Harry is walking to meet Ron in the library, he sees Justin Finch-Fletchley, who sees him and immediately turns in the opposite direction.

This incident begins the fear and the rumors that permeate the rest of the book. Filch, lacking any other information, turns immediately on Harry and his friends because of the circumstances, despite Dumbledore's reassurance that it would have been impossible for Harry to commit the crime.



Filch also turns on Harry because he assumes that Harry has the prejudice Filch has experienced from many others because he is a Squib (a person of wizarding parentage but who does not have magical powers). But Harry does not dislike Filch because of his lack of magical powers, but rather because he treats the students terribly.



This is one of the rare instances in which Harry feels a lack of support from his friends. As they are unsure of what Harry is hearing, Harry himself becomes uncertain whether he should confide in the teachers, even though it would help for the teachers to have as much information as possible about the incident.



Ron explains another type of prejudice that people can experience because of their heritage or magical abilities. But Harry, Ron, and Hermione have a hard time treating Filch with respect not because he cannot do magic (which they didn't previously know) but because he is mean to students.



As rumors start to fly throughout the castle, the lack of information instills fear. For Ginny, it later becomes clear that she is afraid because she worries that she might have been part of the attack. For Harry, he sees that the rumors have started to make people afraid of him. But Hermione, on the other hand, tries to combat this lack of information by finding out all she can about the Chamber of Secrets.



Hermione is unable to find information on the Chamber of Secrets, and so one day in their History of Magic class, she asks Professor Binns (who is a ghost) about the Chamber of Secrets. Binns is hesitant at first, but then he reveals some of the backstory of Hogwarts's founders. There were four founders, for whom the four Houses are named. They built the school at a time when "magic was feared by common people, and witches and wizards suffered much persecution."

Binns explains that at first, the founders worked together to seek out young wizards and witches, but then a rift grew between Salazar Slytherin and the other founders. He believed that magical learning should be kept only in all-magic families, believing Muggle-born students to be "untrustworthy." This rift led Slytherin to leave the school, but legend has it that Slytherin had built a Chamber within the school that could only be opened by his heir.

Binns states, however, that no one has ever been able to find the Chamber. Hermione asks what is in it, and Binns says that it is said to hold some sort of **monster**, which the Heir of Slytherin alone can control, and which can be used to "purge the school of all who [are] unworthy to study magic." However, he begins to get angry at the students' questions, repeating that the Chamber is a myth.

After class, Ron says that he never knew the "pure-blood stuff" started with Slytherin, and that if the Sorting Hat had tried to put him in Slytherin, he would have taken the train straight home. Harry remains silent, because the Hat did consider putting *him* in Slytherin. He asked the Hat not to, knowing Slytherin's bad reputation, and so the Hat put him in Gryffindor instead. Harry realizes that people are starting to believe that he is Slytherin's heir, thinking of Justin that afternoon.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione walk back to their dorm through the corridor where the attack happened. They look for clues, noticing scorch marks on the ground, and at the window near the message, about twenty spiders are scurrying to get outside. Ron mentions that he's terrified of spiders. Harry remembers the water on the floor during the attack and wonders where it came from. Hermione says that it's coming from the bathroom nearby, which is the one that Moaning Myrtle haunts.

Hermione continues her quest of trying to find out information in the face of fear. Professor Binns sheds some light on the Chamber of Secrets, demonstrating how the prejudice against wizards had been the original source of Slytherin's own prejudice. It is also notable that Binns states that magic was feared—Muggles presumably didn't understand how magic worked, and therefore they feared what they did not know. This is also true in the present, as the Dursleys fear Harry's magical ability.



The story reinforces the fact that had the Muggles not been prejudiced against wizards and vice versa—had they simply treated each other with respect and kindness—the prejudice might not exist in the present, and the hatred and attacks could have been avoided altogether. But instead, each group made generalizations about the other and caused harm as a result.



Despite all of Binns' information, he is still unable to tell the students what might have attacked Mrs. Norris, which is the mystery that sparks the most fear. Additionally, because Binns refuses to acknowledge that the Chamber might actually be real, it only leads the students to create more rumors about it—like the idea that Harry might be the heir of Slytherin.



Harry reveals an insecurity about his identity here, as he worries that he might actually belong in Slytherin because the Sorting Hat believed that he might belong there. This is the first hint of Harry's worry there are aspects of his identity that are out of his control, and that might actually reveal a darker part of himself. As Hermione notes later, he does not actually know whether he is or is not the Heir of Slytherin.



Again, in order to combat their fear and lack of knowledge, the three friends try and search for clues in order to gain more information about the attacks. The spiders ultimately lead Harry and Ron to more information about the Chamber of Secrets later in the book, and the water on the floor is key to solving the mystery of why Mrs. Norris was petrified there.



That night, Harry, Ron, and Hermione try to speculate who the Heir of Slytherin might be. Hermione asks who would want to “frighten all the Squibs and Muggle-borns out of Hogwarts.” Ron immediately jumps to Draco, who hates Muggle-borns and who comes from an old family that has always been in Slytherin. Harry suggests that the Malfoys could have handed down a key from generation to generation.

Hermione proposes a plan to find out if it is Draco: take Polyjuice Potion, which transforms a person into the appearance of someone else. She, Ron, and Harry can then sneak into the Slytherin common room and ask Draco about the Chamber. They’d be “breaking about fifty school rules,” she says, and they’d need to get a note from a teacher in order to take the book with the recipe out of the Restricted Section of the library.

## CHAPTER 10: THE ROGUE BLUDGER

One day after Lockhart’s class—in which he makes Harry reenact an episode in which Lockhart wrestled a werewolf and turned him back into a man—Harry, Ron, and Hermione approach Lockhart. Hermione asks him to sign a note to take out *Moste Potente Potions*, which, she explains, will help her understand a part of Lockhart’s book *Gadding with Ghouls*. Lockhart is flattered and signs the note without even looking at it.

Hermione brings the note to the library and takes out *Moste Potente Potions*. Then Hermione, Harry, and Ron return to Myrtle’s bathroom, which no one ever uses, so they can look up the ingredients for Polyjuice Potion. Hermione realizes that they’re going to have to break into Snape’s store of ingredients to get some of the items. The boys worry about getting into more trouble after Dumbledore’s threat to expel them, but Hermione is adamant that they try and figure out who is threatening Muggle-borns. If they can get all the ingredients, she says, it should take about a month to brew.

The next day, Harry wakes early for the first Quidditch match of the season. He wants to win—not only to beat Malfoy, but because he had been in the hospital wing for the last match of the year prior and Gryffindor had lost miserably. In the locker room, Wood also says that he wants to show the Slytherins that it takes more than a rich father to win a match.

Despite the fact that Harry is experiencing some of the negative effects of students’ speculation, he and his friends also fall into the trap of not having information. Therefore they fill in the gaps with rumors of their own, assuming that because of Draco’s prejudice, he would be the one causing the attacks.



Again, Hermione’s strategy is always to find out more information about what is happening, rather than jump to conclusions. And in suggesting Polyjuice Potion, she demonstrates that she (like Harry and Ron) is willing to break the rules in order to help those in danger of being attacked.



Together, Harry, Ron, and Hermione use their collective efforts in order to get what they want. They play into Lockhart’s ego, flattering him during and after class. Using his note, they won’t even have to break the rules in order to take the book out from the library—though this will certainly lead them to break more rules.



This is a big change for Hermione. Just like in the first book, she is usually very against breaking the rules. But she knows that preventing the attacks on Muggle-borns is important, particularly because she has a vested interest in the matter as a Muggle-born herself. She knows that there are prejudices against her and that she could be in danger, and thus Harry and Ron know that it’s important to support her and brew the potion even when it might get them into a lot of trouble.



The Quidditch match becomes more than a game to Harry. It becomes a way to support his friends after leaving them hanging the year prior, as well as a way to make a statement about the fact that the wealthy shouldn’t be able to buy advantages.



When the match begins, Harry flies high above the action, looking for the Snitch. Almost immediately, a Bludger starts to hurtle toward him. When he avoids it, it pivots and swerves toward him again. And again. And again. Harry starts to worry: Bludgers aren't supposed to target one player. Harry continues to avoid the Bludger, unable to focus on the Snitch. Then he hears the score: 60-0, advantage Slytherin.

Gryffindor calls a time out, and Fred and George tell Wood that someone has bewitched the Bludger. One of the Chasers argues that they should ask for an inquiry, but Harry says if they stop they'll forfeit the match. Play resumes, and Harry keeps avoiding the Bludger. Draco makes fun of Harry, but then Harry spots the Snitch just next to Draco's head. At that moment, Harry feels the Bludger smash into his arm and break it. Harry ignores the pain, diving for the Snitch with his good hand. He rolls onto the ground, the Snitch in his good hand. They've won the game, and Harry promptly faints.

When Harry comes to, Lockhart is standing over him, saying that he's going to fix Harry's arm. Harry tries to protest, but Lockhart insists. Instead of fixing Harry's broken bones, however, Lockhart removes the bones in his arm entirely. Ron and Hermione escort Harry to the hospital wing.

Madam Pomfrey, the nurse, is raging, saying that Harry should have come straight to her. Growing the bones back will be painful, she says. Harry has to stay the night. She gives him a potion called Skele-Gro, which burns as he drinks it. But, Ron says, at least they won the match. Hermione, for her part, wants to know how Draco fixed the Bludger. Then Madam Pomfrey makes them leave so that Harry can rest.

Hours later, Harry wakes to find Dobby at his bedside. Dobby says that he warned Harry not to come back to school, adding that he should have gone home when he missed the train. Harry realizes that Dobby sealed the platform barrier, and that Dobby had also fixed the Bludger. He threatens Dobby, angry that he got Harry nearly killed.

Still, Harry can't help but feel sorry for Dobby, who starts to cry at Harry's threats and blows his nose on the pillowcase he wears. Harry asks why he wears a pillowcase; Dobby explains that he can only be freed from enslavement if his masters present him with clothes.

Later it is revealed that Dobby is the one bewitching the Bludger in order to try to scare Harry out of Hogwarts. Because Harry doesn't understand what's happening, he grows more and more afraid of the Bludger, seeing that it is targeting him directly.



Although Harry's friendships are at the core of his character, sometimes he is loyal to a fault: in this moment, he doesn't want to disappoint the rest of the team, and so he refuses to forfeit. He also doesn't want to appear weak in front of the Slytherins, and so he demonstrates that he is willing to get hurt in order to prevail. This is another key component of Harry's character: he is willing to and often chooses to sacrifice himself for the good of others.



Lockhart presents another way in which lack of knowledge can be both dangerous and terrifying. Harry knows that Lockhart has no idea how to fix his arm, and so desperately tries to prevent him from doing so, to no avail.



Harry, Ron, and Hermione again display their own prejudice against Draco, to the point where they assume that anything bad that happens to Hogwarts or Harry must be because of him, which blinds them to the realities of what's happening in the castle.



Although Dobby is trying to be loyal and supportive of Harry, his attempts to get him to leave the castle are dangerous. Harry's continued perseverance in the face of these obstacles also demonstrates how important Hogwarts is to his newfound identity as a wizard and how he cannot leave the place that he truly considers home.



The fact that Harry feels sorry for Dobby, even though Dobby has repeatedly tried to hurt him, demonstrates Harry's decency and kindness towards others. Dobby's words here about his enslavement also foreshadow Harry's future role in helping to free Dobby at the end of the book.



Dobby goes on to say that Harry has always represented hope for the house-elves, who were treated like vermin during Voldemort's reign. And that's why Harry can't stay, he says, now that the Chamber of Secrets has been opened again, because he is in too much danger. Harry latches on to this information, realizing the Chamber is real and that it's been opened before. But then they hear footsteps down the hall, and Dobby disappears.

Then, Dumbledore enters the room with Professor McGonagall while Harry pretends to sleep. They are carrying a petrified Colin Creevey, who is frozen holding his camera and taking a picture. They open the camera to see if he got a picture of the attacker, but it smells like burnt plastic. Dumbledore acknowledges that this attack means the Chamber of Secrets has been opened again. Harry can see on McGonagall's face that she doesn't understand what is happening any more than he does.

Just like Slytherin, Voldemort also used prejudice against Muggle-borns to gain support and power, which foreshadows who is in fact causing the attacks. This also made it easier to discriminate against other groups, like the house-elves, whom the wizards believed to be inferior, as Dobby highlights here.



The attack on Colin provides some information, but it also raises more questions. It confirms that the monster is targeting Muggle-born students, as Colin is Muggle-born. But it still doesn't provide any clues about who or what could be causing the attacks. And because Harry realizes that the people in charge have little understanding of what is happening as well, Harry and the rest of the students quickly become afraid that they will not be protected.



## CHAPTER 11: THE DUELING CLUB

Harry wakes up the next day and his arm has returned to normal. He leaves to go look for Ron and Hermione, a little hurt that they didn't come to check on him in the morning. Harry heads to Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, where he finds Hermione and Ron starting to brew Polyjuice Potion. He starts to tell them about Colin, but they already know what has happened and figured they should get started.

Even in little thoughts like this one, Harry reveals how much he values friendship and how, without Ron and Hermione's presence, he feels vulnerable and alone. Particularly coming out of seeing Colin attacked, it makes sense that Harry would want the support of his friends around him.



Harry also tells Ron and Hermione about the information that Dobby revealed about the Chamber of Secrets. Ron theorizes that Lucius opened the Chamber when he was at school and now Draco has opened it. Ron also wonders why no one has seen the **monster** sneaking around the school.

In a chapter full of rumors about Harry, the kids also begin to create their own rumors. Not only do they try to use the little information they have in order to make sense of the attacks, but they also pin it on someone whom they already dislike.



News about Colin spreads through the school by Monday. The air is thick with "rumor and suspicion." First-years travel the halls in groups, and Ginny, who sat next to Colin in Charms, is especially upset. Many students start buying protective devices and talismans to defend themselves.

In this description, Rowling illustrates the scale of the rumor and suspicion that spreads through the castle. Now that the monster has attacked a student and not just a cat, the fact that no one has been able to guess what the monster might be or how it might be getting around creates a deep fear in the students.



In December, Harry, Ron, and Hermione still need a few ingredients for the Polyjuice Potion. Hermione suggests that she do the actual stealing from Snape's store so that the boys won't get into any more trouble. During Potions, Harry creates a diversion in class while Hermione successfully slips in and out of Snape's office unnoticed and steals the ingredients.

A week later, Harry, Ron, and Hermione discover that the school is starting a Dueling Club. At the Club's first meeting, Lockhart (poorly) demonstrates with Snape the best way to disarm an opponent. Snape then partners Draco and Harry to duel. Draco hits Harry with a spell that makes him feel like he's been hit with a saucepan. Harry returns a spell that hits Draco in the stomach. They continue trading spells until Snape stops them. The other students' duels have resulted in similar chaos.

Lockhart and Snape then try and demonstrate how to block spells, pulling Harry and Draco up in front of everyone. When the duel begins, Draco casts a spell that sends a snake flying from his wand. The snake starts to slither towards Justin Finch-Fletchley, but then Harry shouts "Leave him alone!" Miraculously, the snake slumps to the floor. Harry looks back at Justin, who is angry and terrified. Snape makes the snake vanish, and also looks at Harry oddly. Murmurs sweep through the hall.

Ron and Hermione pull Harry out of the room and ask him why he didn't tell him he can speak Parseltongue, meaning he can talk to snakes. Harry explains that he thought a lot of people could do this, but Ron says it's not common. Harry says that he told the snake to leave Justin alone, but Ron says that it seemed like Harry was "egging the snake on." Harry is stunned that he spoke a different language without realizing it.

Ron and Hermione both look somber, but Harry doesn't understand what's wrong. Hermione explains that being able to talk to snakes was what Salazar Slytherin was famous for, and now the school will think that he's the Heir of Slytherin. Harry tries to protest, but Hermione says that for all he knows, he actually could be the heir.

Harry lies awake for hours that night, wondering if he could be a descendent of Slytherin. He knows very little about his father's family. He continues to worry through the night, particularly when he remembers that the Sorting Hat tried to put him in Slytherin. Harry resolves to talk to Justin the next day in Herbology and explain what happened with the snake.

Hermione again recognizes the value of breaking the rules, particularly as it appears that the teachers aren't able to stop the monster or even figure out what it might be. Together, Harry, Hermione and Ron bravely take it upon themselves to try and find out information about the Chamber and what is going on.



Harry's inherent rivalry with Draco is understandable, considering that they have nearly opposite ways of treating people. Harry is inherently kind and respectful, while Draco is a bully who denigrates others he feels to be inferior to himself. This scene also reinforces how false Lockhart's identity is; he's famous for winning battles, but he shows here that he can't even do basic spells.



It is revealed very shortly that when Harry speaks to the snake, he is speaking in snake language, which the others aren't able to understand. Their inability to know what Harry is saying—their lack of knowledge about what is happening—inspires their fear and confusion, because it is unclear whether Harry was trying to help or hurt Justin.



Harry's ability to talk to snakes is also what prompts many of the rumors about him—namely, that he is Salazar Slytherin's heir. Thus, Rowling demonstrates how fear of the unknown can lead people to spread dangerous and hurtful rumors in order to try and make sense of what they do not understand.



The fact that Ron and Hermione also share the doubt or fear that Harry could be the Heir of Slytherin (even if they know that he is not the one behind the attacks) makes him feel like he has lost the support of his friends, which affects his sense of his own identity.



Harry's ability to talk to snakes, coupled with his having no information about his father's family, impacts his sense of identity, as he worries that he is inheriting abilities and histories over which he has no control whatsoever. Ultimately, this leads him to fear that he might have no control over his trajectory and could ultimately become a dark wizard himself.



The next day, Herbology is canceled due to a blizzard, and so Harry goes to try to find Justin. He decides to check the library, where several second-year Hufflepuffs are talking. When Harry approaches, he hears them talking about him and hides behind a shelf to listen. A boy named Ernie explains that he thinks Harry is the Heir of Slytherin and is trying to target Justin because Justin told him he was Muggle-born.

When a Hufflepuff girl tries to argue that Harry always seemed so nice and that he made Voldemort disappear, Ernie says that only a powerful Dark wizard could have survived Voldemort's curse, and that's probably why Voldemort wanted to kill Harry in the first place. Harry can't take any more and walks up to the table, asking where Justin is. Harry says he wants to explain that he told the snake to back off.

Ernie and the other Hufflepuffs don't believe Harry. Harry tries to explain that he doesn't want to attack Muggle-borns. Ernie says that he heard Harry hates the Muggles he lives with. Harry counters by saying that anyone who lived with the Dursleys would hate them, and then walks out of the library.

In the hall, Harry runs into Hagrid, who is carrying a dead rooster. He explains that it's the second one killed this term, though he doesn't know why it's happening. Hagrid then sees how angry Harry is and tries to ask what's wrong, but Harry says he has to run off to get his books for Transfiguration.

Harry starts to head back to his dorm, but he trips over something in a dark passageway. When he looks down, he sees that it is Justin Finch-Fletchley, petrified on the floor. Next to him is Nearly Headless Nick, who is floating immobile and horizontal six inches off of the floor. Harry doesn't know what to do. He knows that people will suspect him, but he also wants to help.

*In this incident, all of Harry's fears are intertwining. The uncertainty about Harry's identity has led people to spread rumors about him and assume that he is prejudiced against Muggle-borns, , when all of Harry's qualities show that he is anything but.*



*Ernie's reasoning demonstrates perhaps the most dangerous aspect of rumors. They lead people to search for evidence to confirm the beliefs that they already hold, because they are the only information available. Even Harry's celebrity, which had been largely positive up to this point, is used against him here as Ernie assumes that must be a dark wizard if Voldemort tried to kill him.*



*Harry's dislike of the Dursleys actually serves as more evidence that he is not prejudiced. He doesn't like the Dursleys, but that doesn't mean he dislikes all Muggles, because he recognizes that the Dursleys are not representative of Muggles as an entire group. Harry refuses to play into the kinds of generalizations that form the basis of prejudice.*



*Harry is extremely frustrated with being the subject of these rumors and feeling like people are making assumptions about who he is. This is particularly evident when he is so upset and insecure about what is happening that he even pushes away Hagrid, who is very loyal to Harry and always makes him feel better.*



*Again, Harry's thoughts reveal how different he is from Slytherin and Tom Riddle (which later becomes a major anxiety of Harry's). Harry knows that he will certainly get in trouble if he is found with more petrified students, but his impulse is nonetheless to help them in any way he can. He chooses to stay, and this choice distinguishes him from Slytherin and Riddle, who would likely have put themselves first.*



Peeves spots Harry, Justin, and Nick, and starts to scream that another attack has occurred. Doors fly open and Professor McGonagall comes out into the hall. Ernie, the Hufflepuff student, comes out and accuses Harry of the crime. Teachers start to move Justin and Nick up to the hospital wing, and then McGonagall takes Harry to Dumbledore's office.

Harry is a victim of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, but he is also a victim of rumors and fear. These rumors are not only false, but they are also distracting from any attempts to find the true Heir of Slytherin. It is easier for Ernie and others to believe that it is Harry than to try and discover who might actually be committing the crimes.



## CHAPTER 12: THE POLYJUICE POTION

McGonagall leaves Harry alone in Dumbledore's office and tells him to wait. He looks around and sees the Sorting Hat on a shelf. Hesitantly, he puts it on his head and asks the Hat if it put him in the right house. The Hat says that Harry was difficult to place, but that he would have done well in Slytherin. Harry feels sick, takes the Hat off, and says, "You're wrong."

Harry then notices a "decrepit-looking" bird on a golden perch. Suddenly, the bird bursts into flames and becomes a pile of ash, and Harry cries out in shock. Dumbledore enters; Harry tries to explain that the bird just caught fire and he couldn't do anything, but Dumbledore smiles. He explains that **Fawkes** is a phoenix, and Harry watches as a newborn bird pokes its head out of the ashes. Dumbledore explains that phoenixes can carry heavy loads, that their tears have healing powers, and that they are very loyal.

At that moment, Hagrid bursts into Dumbledore's office and says that Harry did not petrify Justin, as he was speaking with Hagrid moments before the attack. Dumbledore assures Hagrid that he does not think Harry attacked Justin and Nick. Slightly embarrassed, Hagrid leaves. Dumbledore then asks if Harry has anything that he needs to tell him. Harry thinks with dread about Draco's statement about Mudbloods being next, the Polyjuice Potion, the voices Harry had been hearing, and the rumors about his connection with Slytherin. He simply says no.

After the attack on Justin and Nick, panic erupts in the castle. At the holidays, students are eager to return home, but Harry, Ron, and Hermione plan to stay, having heard that Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle are also staying. On Christmas morning, Hermione announces that the Polyjuice Potion is ready.

To Harry, the Sorting Hat becomes a symbol of the idea that his identity has been predetermined, and that he has no way of directing his life. But in asserting himself and saying that the Hat is wrong, he proves that he can make choices and control his identity.



Fawkes, for his own part, is a symbol of loyalty, as Dumbledore hints. Later in the novel, all of the attributes that Dumbledore describes become key to rescuing Harry in the Chamber of Secrets. But the most important one by far is loyalty, because Harry must prove his loyalty to Dumbledore in order to be supported by Fawkes.



Hagrid's loyalty and friendship toward Harry resurface here, as he defends Harry from the rumors that have been circulating. But the fear that those rumors have instilled in Harry becomes very evident when he is so afraid of being judged for the rumors about him, so afraid of feeling like he doesn't know who he is, and so afraid of getting in trouble for breaking the rules that he feels unable to confide in Dumbledore.



Despite the fact that the attacks continue, with each new attack there is no more information about the monster or about who might be controlling it. This sense of mystery only increases the fear of the student body, as Rowling's escalating descriptions demonstrate.



At Christmas dinner, Hermione tells Harry and Ron her plan, which they carry out seamlessly. She fills two cakes with a sleeping draught and leaves them for Crabbe and Goyle. When they eat the cakes and pass out, Ron and Harry hide them in a broom closet and pull out a few of their hairs, then return to Myrtle's bathroom. Hermione has a hair from Millicent Bulstrode, a Slytherin girl who has gone home for Christmas.

Hermione finishes brewing the potion. She pours a glass for each of them and they add their individual's hairs. Harry transforms into Goyle, while Ron becomes Crabbe. Hermione refuses to come out of the bathroom stall, however, and tells Harry and Ron to go without her: they only have an hour before the potion wears off.

Harry and Ron head off, but they don't know where the Slytherin common room is. Fortunately, they run into Draco, who leads them down to the dungeons (the Slytherin password, Harry notes, is "pure-blood"). In the common room, Draco says he wants to show them something funny. He retrieves an article from the *Daily Prophet*, detailing how Mr. Weasley has been fined for bewitching the car. Lucius has called for his resignation, arguing that he is unfit to draw up laws and that the Muggle Protection Act should be scrapped.

Draco then comments on how surprised he is that the *Daily Prophet* hasn't reported on the attacks, and that Dumbledore will be fired if they continue. He then complains about Dumbledore letting in "Mudbloods," and about people who hang around with "Mudbloods"—like Harry. Draco scoffs at the fact that people think that Harry is Slytherin's Heir, commenting that he wishes he knew who the Heir really was so he could help them.

Draco then says that Lucius won't tell him anything about the last time the Chamber was opened, which was fifty years ago (and thus before Lucius's time at Hogwarts). But Draco does say that he knows that last time, "a Mudblood died." He says that Lucius told him to let the Heir of Slytherin rid the school of "all the Mudblood filth," but not to get involved.

The recurrence of attacks only increases the urgency of using the Polyjuice Potion in order to get information from Draco, even though they have broken many school rules along the way and continue to do so over the course of this episode. Their priority is simply to find information that can be used to prevent the attacks.



It is also notable that Harry, Ron, and Hermione are only able to carry out this plan together—Hermione crafts the plan and Harry and Ron carry it out as a pair (which is particularly necessary because Crabbe and Goyle are always together). Thus, without their bond of friendship, the trio would not have been successful.



Harry and Ron's interactions with Draco only help to confirm his horrible prejudice—and the prejudice of Slytherin House as a whole. The password is "pure-blood," and Draco's father continues to mount attacks against the Weasleys. Lucius's criticism of Mr. Weasley is not really because he is unfit to draw up the laws, but because Lucius doesn't like the Muggle Protection Act and is working to manipulate the rules to his advantage.



This is a particularly horrid statement from Draco, whose prejudice continues to extend to people who even remotely tolerate Muggle-born students, despite the fact that Muggle-born students are exactly like everyone else. The attacks on the students are akin to hate crimes, and the fact that Draco says he wants to help the person committing them puts him firmly on the side of evil.



Even though Draco confirms that he is not the Heir of Slytherin, he still provides Harry and Ron with key information that will later help them solve the mystery of the Chamber: that a student died fifty years ago when it was opened. Draco's words also foreshadow the revelation that Lucius is involved in the attacks, even if he is not the direct cause of them.



Harry and Ron realize that they've slowly started to turn back into themselves—their hour is up. Ron makes an excuse about getting medicine for an upset stomach, and they sprint back to Myrtle's bathroom. In the bathroom, they discover that Hermione's face is covered in black fur and she has yellow eyes. She says that the hair she pulled from Millicent's robe must have been a cat hair, and the potion isn't meant for animal transformation. Harry and Ron take Hermione to the hospital wing.

## CHAPTER 13: THE VERY SECRET DIARY

Hermione spends the week in the hospital wing, and rumors start to fly that she's been attacked. Ron and Harry visit her every day, trying to talk through any leads that they might be able to follow, but they can't think of anyone else the heir might be.

As Harry and Ron walk back from the hospital wing, they return to the corridor in which Mrs. Norris was attacked, just outside of Myrtle's bathroom. There is a new puddle on the floor, and Myrtle can be heard wailing inside. Harry and Ron go into the bathroom and ask her what's wrong. Myrtle tells them that someone threw a book at her.

Harry goes to pick it the book, which is small, thin, and has a shabby black cover, but Ron stops him, saying it could be dangerous. Harry ignores him and picks it up anyway. The year on the book tells him that it is fifty years old and belongs to a T.M. Riddle. Ron realizes he knows the name: when he was polishing trophies for detention, he polished an award for special services that T.M. Riddle earned fifty years prior. Harry opens the book, but it is completely blank. He puts it in his pocket.

When Hermione gets out of the hospital, Harry shows her the diary. They realize that because it is fifty years old, Riddle would have been at Hogwarts when the Chamber of Secrets was opened last. They wonder whether Riddle might have gotten his award for catching the Heir of Slytherin. Hermione performs spells to try and reveal invisible ink, but she is unsuccessful. Harry is plagued by the book, wondering why someone tried to throw it away.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione successfully carry out their plan together, but their rule-breaking is not without its hiccups. But even though Hermione was unable to accompany them on their interrogation, they still could not have carried out their plan without her. This demonstrates how only through their combined friendship are they able to succeed in their adventures.



Even while Hermione is in the hospital, the three protagonists are bonded by their friendship and their mutual desire to solve the mystery of the Chamber of Secrets, working together to find out any information possible.



Harry once again shows his deep kindness and decency in asking Myrtle what's wrong. This not only makes Myrtle feel better, but it also helps Harry because it leads him to Tom Riddle's diary, which provides some more clues as to what occurred at the school fifty years ago.



Ron's warning is an important one: even though the book could provide key information, it might also be dangerous. Harry ignores this skepticism, but it turns out to be an important lesson. Just because Tom's diary ultimately provides Harry with information doesn't mean that that information is necessarily accurate, and misinformation can be extremely harmful.



Even the prospect of finding more information on who Riddle is, or about any involvement he might have had with the opening of the Chamber fifty years prior, consumes Harry. Any information that he might be able to find could inform them about what is happening at the castle at that point, and could hopefully prevent more attacks.



On Valentine's Day, Lockhart brings in a dozen dwarfs dressed like cupids, inviting students to use them to send valentines. When Harry is walking to Charms, a dwarf tries to stop Harry and deliver one to him. Harry tries to run, but the dwarf tugs on his bag, spilling all of its contents and splattering ink over everything. The dwarf starts to sing to him, making Harry want to vanish on the spot. Draco, who is also in the hall, waves the diary around, thinking that he has Harry's diary. The onlookers (including Ginny Weasley, who is watching in horror) fall quiet. Harry disarms Draco in order to get the diary back.

Later, when Harry examines the diary, he notices something odd: his other books are covered in ink, but Riddle's diary is completely clean. That night, in his dorm, Harry drops another blot of ink on the diary and the ink is absorbed into the pages. Excitedly, Harry writes "My name is Harry Potter," and is amazed when other words appear on the page: "Hello, Harry Potter. My name is Tom Riddle."

Harry is stunned at the response. Riddle explains that he has preserved his memories in this diary. Harry asks Riddle whether he knows about the Chamber of Secrets. Riddle confirms that the Chamber was opened during his fifth year at school and that the **monster** attacked several students, killing one. Riddle caught the person who did it and that person was expelled. Riddle offers to show Harry the memory of the night he caught the person.

Harry is sucked into the diary. In the memory, Riddle speaks to the Hogwarts Headmaster at the time, Professor Dippet. Professor Dippet announces that Riddle cannot stay at school over the summer, even though he hates the Muggle orphanage he lives in (he is half-blood, but his witch mother died just after he was born). Dippet says that with the attacks at the school, Riddle will not be safe, and that the Ministry is even discussing closing the school. Riddle wonders aloud what would happen if the person who is responsible for the attacks were caught. Dippet asks him if he knows anything, but Riddle says no.

Riddle then goes to the dungeons and waits. When someone moves along the passageway, Riddle follows the person down the corridor. Harry sees a huge boy crouching in front of an open door with a large box. Riddle greets the boy—who turns out to be Hagrid—and says he's going to turn Hagrid in. Hagrid argues, saying that his pet never killed anyone.

This episode is key to helping Harry solve the mystery of Tom Riddle's diary, as the spilled ink will allow him to get information from the book. But it is also worth noting how the episode will also spur Ginny's bravery and loyalty to Harry. Later, it will be revealed that by this point she knows that the diary is evil (and she was the one who threw it into Myrtle's bathroom). When she sees Harry with it, she plots to get it back so that he will not be taken advantage of by Riddle as she was.



When Harry solves the mystery of Tom Riddle's diary, he is very excited—presumably because this will allow him to find out more information. Harry should actually be more skeptical and even fearful of this dangerous object, because it allows Riddle to mislead Harry and show him a false narrative.



Riddle lulls Harry into believing the information he is about to show him by first confirming what Harry already knows. In this way, Riddle is then able to gain Harry's trust and create a false sense of accuracy and security in the information that he provides.



This exchange is key to the comparisons that Harry later draws between himself and Riddle, noting many similarities. Riddle is half-blood and an orphan. He hates the Muggles he lives with and considers the school to be his home. He also has a habit of not telling the full truth to authorities, just as Harry did when Dumbledore asked him if anything was wrong. But Harry will ultimately see key differences between himself and Riddle: whereas Riddle's background fuels his prejudice and his tendency towards evil, Harry's background leads him to a life of friendship and love.



Riddle's memory is very clear, but as Rowling reveals later, it doesn't necessarily leave Harry with the right information. In this way, Riddle's memory is only as good as a rumor, because it is based on a biased perspective.



Riddle then lights up the corridor, and the creature scurries away through the open door. Riddle tries to send a spell after it, but Hagrid tackles Riddle, screaming “NOOOOOOO!” Harry is transported back onto his bed, the diary lying on his stomach. Ron enters the room, and Harry tells him what he’s found out: Hagrid opened the Chamber of Secrets fifty years prior.

Even though Riddle provides Harry with inaccurate information, it is still enough to convince Harry of his perspective. But this information plays against Harry’s loyalty, which turns out to be strong enough to make him question what Riddle has presented to him.



## CHAPTER 14: CORNELIUS FUDGE

Harry, Ron, and Hermione have long discussions about Riddle’s memory. Hermione wonders whether Riddle could have caught the wrong person, and if another **monster** could have been attacking students. But Ron questions how many monsters could be living inside the school, and Harry figures that the attacks must have stopped after Hagrid was expelled. They wonder whether they should ask Hagrid about it, but in the end, they decide to talk to him only if there is another attack.

One of Harry’s most important qualities is his loyalty to his friends, and his loyalty to Hagrid shows here. Hagrid has always been a friend and even a father figure to Harry, and Harry also knows that Hagrid would never intentionally do something to hurt students. This prevents Harry, Ron, and Hermione from immediately reporting him, showing how loyalty can combat misinformation.



It has now been four months since Justin and Nick were petrified, and life continues somewhat normally in the castle. Students sign up for classes for the following year, and Harry has another Quidditch game coming up. But the evening before the match, Harry discovers that someone has ransacked his dorm room, and that Riddle’s diary is gone. He wonders who could have done it, as only a Gryffindor would have the password.

Later it is revealed that Ginny is the person who steals Riddle’s diary here because she doesn’t want Harry to be possessed by Riddle like she was. This exhibits an immense amount of bravery and loyalty from Ginny, as she in essence sacrifices herself in order to protect Harry from Riddle.



The next day, Harry, Ron, and Hermione are returning from breakfast when Harry hears the cold voice again. He asks Ron and Hermione if they can hear it, but they shake their heads. Then Hermione says suddenly that she thinks she understands something, and she hurries off to the library.

In this moment, Hermione connects the fact that only Harry can hear the voice to the fact that only Harry can talk to snakes. True to form, she heads to the library in order to discover more information and confirm her suspicions before taking action.



Harry isn’t able to catch the voice again, so he heads off to the match. But just before it is about to start, Professor McGonagall comes out and says the match has been cancelled. She beckons Harry and Ron and brings them up to the hospital wing. Hermione and a Ravenclaw girl named Penelope Clearwater have been petrified. A mirror was found on the floor near them, but Harry and Ron don’t know what that could mean.

The attacks continue to plague the Muggle-born students, this time taking Hermione. But Riddle also later explains that he wanted to target Hermione because he knew that Harry is incredibly loyal to his friends. Harry would have no choice but to try and find out more information about the Chamber of Secrets and attempt to save more friends from this fate. In this way, Riddle plays Harry’s sense of loyalty against him.



Harry, Ron, and Professor McGonagall head back to the Gryffindor common room. She announces that all students must be back in their common rooms by six each evening and will be escorted to each lesson by a teacher. She also mentions that it is likely the school will be closed if the culprit isn't found. Harry can't stop thinking about Hermione—and about how Tom Riddle felt at the prospect of the school closing.

Harry tells Ron that they have to go and talk to Hagrid, though it won't be easy with the new rules in place. They decide to break out Harry's Invisibility Cloak and sneak down to Hagrid's hut in the middle of the night. When Hagrid answers the door, he is holding a crossbow, but he lowers it when he sees Ron and Harry. Hagrid seems very nervous as he makes them tea, and Harry asks if he's all right—and if he heard about Hermione. Hagrid confirms that he heard, but just then there is a knock on the door. Ron and Harry get under the Invisibility Cloak once more.

Dumbledore enters with Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic. Fudge explains that the Ministry has to act, now that four Muggle-born students have been attacked. Though Dumbledore tries to assure Fudge that Hagrid has his confidence, Fudge says that he's under a lot of pressure, that he has to be seen doing something, and that Hagrid's record is against him. Fudge must take Hagrid to Azkaban prison.

There is another knock on the door, and this time it is Lucius Malfoy. He is looking for Dumbledore: he and the other school governors feel that it is time for him to "step aside." He has an Order of Suspension to remove Dumbledore from his post because of the attacks on Muggle-borns. Fudge tries to protest that it would be a bad idea to suspend Dumbledore, but Lucius states that this is a matter for the governors to decide.

Hagrid becomes very upset at the idea of Dumbledore's removal, but Dumbledore remains calm. He says that if the governors want his removal, he will step aside. He leaves with these parting words: "You will find that I will only truly have left this school when none here are loyal to me." Harry thinks that Dumbledore is looking right at him, even though he and Ron are invisible.

Harry's sympathy for Riddle's feelings again highlights the similarities between the two. But his thoughts just before also highlight their differences: Harry is worried about one of his best friends, and about all the Muggle-born students, whereas Riddle was simply looking out for himself when he was in the same situation.



Again, Harry and Ron demonstrate loyalty to Hagrid by trying to ask him about the attacks and the events of fifty years ago, rather than assuming the worst without finding more information. Additionally, they begin their rule-breaking streak once more by sneaking out at night, because they know that it is more important to try and save other students than to follow the curfew rules.



Unlike Harry and Ron, who are more concerned about doing what is right than about the rules, Fudge proves that he thinks in the opposite way. The Ministry is more concerned with the appearance of doing something than with actually trying to stop the attacks.



Lucius is also more concerned with the appearance of doing something than with actually finding out what happened. As is revealed later, he knows that Riddle's diary is what is actually causing the attacks, because he planted the book in Ginny's cauldron. But he takes advantage of the situation in order to remove Dumbledore, which he knows will only make the school more dangerous. Thus, Harry and Ron see how easily the rules are manipulated by corrupt people.



This advice from Dumbledore becomes key for Harry. Later, when Harry is facing Riddle and the monster in the Chamber of Secrets, he proves his loyalty to Dumbledore. This calls Fawkes to him and enables him to be brave in the face of immense danger.



Lucius and Dumbledore lead the way out. Before Hagrid exits, however, he says that “If anyone wanted ter find out some stuff, all they’d have ter do would be ter follow the spiders.” Fudge looks at him in confusion, and then the two men leave. Once they are alone, Harry and Ron pull off the Cloak, horrified at what has just happened.

Hagrid’s advice to Ron and Harry will also test their bravery and loyalty, as this advice leads them into the Forbidden Forest. But because they want to prove Hagrid innocent and save Hermione, they work together and are able to summon their courage even in a frightening situation.



## CHAPTER 15: ARAGOG

With Dumbledore gone, everyone at the school is even more frightened. Harry thinks about his words concerning loyalty, but wonders whom he is supposed to ask for help now that everyone is terrified and confused. Harry and Ron also look out for any spiders they can find, but they all seem to have left the castle.

Dumbledore’s absence increases fear because it appears that no one is able to figure out what is happening in the school. But it also tests Harry’s own bravery and his loyalty, as he wonders what kind of support Dumbledore might have left for him.



Harry notes that Draco is “strutting around the school” because Lucius was able to get rid of Dumbledore. In Potions, Draco wonders if they’ll get a decent headmaster now, one who “won’t want the Chamber of Secrets closed.” He wonders why the “Mudbloods haven’t all packed their bags by now” and says it’s a shame that Hermione wasn’t killed by the **monster**.

Draco’s words show how without a proper authority that represents kindness, respect and justice (as Dumbledore did), prejudice is allowed to flourish. Draco really takes it too far in that he openly wishes for Hermione and other Muggle-borns to die.



In the next class, Herbology, Ernie apologizes to Harry for suspecting him, saying that he knows that he’d never attack Hermione. Ernie wonders aloud if Draco might be Slytherin’s heir, but Harry says that he doesn’t think so. Then something catches Harry’s eye: several large spiders moving in a straight line, headed toward the Forbidden Forest.

Despite the rumors that Ernie perpetuates, when he is confronted with Harry’s actual qualities (his kindness and his strong friendship with a Muggle-born student), Ernie realizes how misguided his previous beliefs were. Harry, to his credit, also refuses to play into creating rumors, even though he dislikes Draco.



In Defense Against the Dark Arts, Lockhart wonders why they all look so sad. He says that they’re all out of danger now because “the Minister of Magic wouldn’t have taken Hagrid if he hadn’t been one hundred percent sure that he was guilty.” Ron protests, but Lockhart shuts him down. Harry passes a note to Ron, resolving to go to the Forest that night.

Using Lockhart, Rowling creates a veiled critique of those who believe in the incorruptibility of the justice system. The Minister of Magic doesn’t know that Hagrid is guilty, and Hagrid is in fact innocent. This shows that contrary to Lockhart’s belief, the institutions in charge of the rules and carrying out justice can be proven wrong.



Harry and Ron head down to Hagrid’s hut that evening under the Invisibility Cloak and take Hagrid’s dog Fang with them to the Forest. Harry lights his wand and follows the spiders along the path through the Forbidden Forest. They walk for half an hour until Fang starts barking wildly. The boys are terrified until they see that it’s the flying car.

Harry and Ron break the rules in this moment for very important reasons: they want to help rescue Hermione from being petrified, and they also want to find out the information that Hagrid has led them to, which they hope will help exonerate him.



Then out of nowhere, something seizes Harry, Ron, and Fang and lifts them off the ground. They are carried into the heart of the forest until they come to a hollow that is lit enough to show hundreds of horse-sized spiders. The spiders call to Aragog, who turns out to be an old spider the size of an elephant. When the other spiders announce that they have found humans, Harry says that they are friends of Hagrid's.

Harry explains that Hagrid is in trouble because the school thinks he is setting something to attack the students. Aragog explains that this also happened years ago: the school thought that Aragog was the **monster** that lives in the Chamber. Aragog is not that monster; Hagrid raised him from an egg. When Hagrid was discovered, he protected Aragog and took him to the forest.

Harry asks whether Aragog ever attacked a student. Aragog says no—the girl who was killed died in a bathroom, and Aragog never left the cupboard Hagrid raised him in. He says that the thing that lives in the castle is an ancient creature that the spiders fear more than anything else, and they refuse to name it. At that moment, the car returns, knocking the spiders aside and allowing Harry, Ron, and Fang to escape. The car drives as fast as it can until they reach the edge of the forest, where it leaves them. Harry and Ron go back into Hagrid's hut.

Ron is furious with Hagrid for sending them there, but Harry says that they've found out important info: Hagrid never opened the Chamber of Secrets. They climb back up to the castle under the Invisibility Cloak and head back to their dormitory. But just before Harry falls asleep, he realizes one more thing they learned: the girl who died was found in a bathroom. Ron completes Harry's thought: Moaning Myrtle might be that girl.

## CHAPTER 16: THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

Harry and Ron have an even harder time trying to sneak into Myrtle's bathroom, which is right next to the scene of the first attack. A few days before exams start, Professor McGonagall announces at breakfast that the Mandrakes are almost ready. Once the students are revived, they can then ask those who were attacked what happened. Just as breakfast is finishing, Ginny comes over to Ron and Harry, looking tense and nervous. She tries to tell them something, but Percy comes over and startles Ginny, sending her scampering away.

In this moment, Harry and Ron support each other in order to help them overcome their fears: Ron's intense fear of spiders, and Harry's fear of the Forbidden Forest (where he had been face to face with Voldemort a year prior).



Aragog's story demonstrates how he and the other spider have been viewed with prejudice. Despite the fact that Aragog is a large and terrifying creature, he was not the monster that attacked the students, as people assumed. Hagrid was punished for this prejudice as well, simply because he tried to protect and care for Aragog.



The fact that the spiders refuse to name the monster in the Chamber of Secrets connects it with Voldemort (whom wizards often call "You-Know-Who rather than saying his name). This illustrates how fear can be spread simply based on reputation and rumor, and that fear only grows over time to the point where one's name becomes so synonymous with fear that it prevents wizards from even trying to face the truth.



Even though Ron is upset at having to deal with the giant spiders, they have been well rewarded for their loyalty to Hagrid. They discovered key information that not only proves Hagrid is innocent, but that also allows them dispel unfounded rumors, solve the mystery of the Chamber of Secrets, and save the school from being closed.



Once again, information becomes key in quelling the fear and rumors surrounding the Chamber of Secrets. Harry and Ron want to get information from Myrtle, the school wants to get information from the attacked students, and Ginny wants to provide Harry and Ron with information so that they can help free her from the fear she is experiencing at the hands of Tom Riddle.



Later that morning, Lockhart is escorting the Gryffindors to History of Magic, but he is complaining that teachers still have to do this when Hagrid was clearly the person responsible for the attacks. Harry and Ron then convince him to leave them so they can walk the rest of the way alone. They let the rest of the Gryffindors go ahead and then sneak off to Myrtle's bathroom.

On the way, Harry and Ron are stopped by Professor McGonagall. Harry lies and says that they were trying to sneak off to visit Hermione, and McGonagall gets quite teary-eyed and allows them to go. They then head up to the hospital wing and sit by Hermione's side. Harry then notices that Hermione has a piece of paper crumpled in her hand.

Harry reads the paper, which is from a very old library book. It bears information about the **Basilisk**, which is the King of Serpents. The snake lives for hundreds of years, has venomous fangs, and anyone who looks in its eyes suffers instant death. Harry realizes that Hermione had found the answer: Harry can hear the monster's voice because it is a snake. He also realizes that no one has been killed yet because no one has looked at it directly: they have all seen it through something else—a camera lens in Colin's case, a reflection in Mrs. Norris and Hermione's cases, or through Nearly Headless Nick in Justin's case.

Ron wonders how the **basilisk** has been getting around the school, and Harry points to a word that Hermione had scribbled on the page: "pipes." Ron then realizes that the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets could be in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom. They decide to go to the staffroom to tell Professor McGonagall what they've discovered.

Just then, Professor McGonagall's voice echoes throughout the corridors: all students are to return to their dormitories at once, and teachers are to go to the staffroom. Harry and Ron decide to hide in the closet of the staffroom in order to eavesdrop. The teachers assemble, and McGonagall tells them that Ginny has been taken into the Chamber of Secrets.

McGonagall goes on to say that all the students will be sent home the following day. Then, Lockhart enters, late to the meeting. The teachers explain what happened and suggest that he go to the Chamber of Secrets (since he has previously said he knows where the entrance is) to rescue Ginny. Lockhart nervously agrees. He leaves, and then the rest of the teachers exit to tell the students what has happened.

Lockhart's statement shows that he has far too much faith in the institution of the Ministry. Harry and Ron, however, understand that the Ministry and the governors are completely wrong, and thus Harry and Ron again feel the need to break the rules in order to do the right thing.



Harry and Ron use their friendship as an excuse as to why they were breaking the rules, but this doesn't detract from the fact that they are exceptionally loyal to Hermione. McGonagall's reaction here shows that she too understands how meaningful loyal friendships are.



Even though Hermione was petrified before she was able to reveal what she had found out to Harry, her reliance on information proves to be successful. Rather than giving in to rumors and suspicion, Hermione was able to piece together the mystery using rational inquiry. This information also prevented her own death because she used a mirror to navigate around the corners, knowing that she could be attacked by the basilisk at any moment.



Using the information that Hermione discovered, Harry and Ron are able to piece the rest of the mystery together as well. This reinforces the idea that only together, through their friendship, are they able to defeat the basilisk and save the school.



Again, Harry and Ron skirt the rules because they want to find out more information about what is going on, and because they want to do the right thing and use the information they have to help others. Ron and Harry also feel a newfound investment and urgency in the situation because they are loyal to Ginny and want to rescue her.



The teachers' suggestions quickly expose Lockhart as a fraud and reveal how he has been lying about his entire identity. All of the rumors that he has been spreading about the Chamber of Secrets (that he knows where it is and how to defeat the monster) come back to bite him here.



Harry and Ron decide to go to Lockhart's office and tell him what they know. But when they get there, Lockhart has been packing and planning to run away, terrified of facing the **monster**. Harry and Ron are in disbelief, especially after all of the things Lockhart described doing in his books. "Books can be misleading," he says. Lockhart explains that he didn't do any of the things he wrote about doing; he simply asked other people about the details of what they had done, and then wiped their memories in order to take credit.

Lockhart then says that he will have to wipe Harry and Ron's memories as well; he can't let them reveal his secrets. But Harry immediately disarms Lockhart and forces him to come with them to the Chamber of Secrets. They then go to Myrtle's bathroom and ask her how she died. She says that she was crying in the bathroom when someone came in speaking a different language. She opened the door to the stall, saw a pair of big yellow eyes by the sink, and then died.

Harry and Ron examine the sink and notice that one of the taps has a tiny image of a snake on it. Ron suggests that Harry say something in Parseltongue. Harry says "Open up" in Parseltongue and the sink opens up to reveal a pipe big enough to slide into. They push Lockhart in first and then follow him. They slide for a long time until they land in a tunnel, miles below the school.

Harry, Ron, and Lockhart are walking along the tunnel when Lockhart attacks Ron and grabs his wand. But when Lockhart tries to cast a Memory Charm using the damaged wand, it backfires and explodes, causing chunks of stones to fall from the ceiling and form a barrier between Harry on one side and Ron and Lockhart on the other. Harry goes forward alone to rescue Ginny, trying to boost his own confidence. Two snakes are carved on the wall in front of him. Harry says "Open," and the wall parts, allowing him to walk inside.

## CHAPTER 17: THE HEIR OF SLYTHERIN

Harry enters the Chamber and sees Ginny on the floor of the Chamber, very still, along with a blurry version of Tom Riddle. Riddle explains that Ginny has been writing in his diary for months, pouring her heart and soul into it while he wrote back. He explains that he grew stronger the more she poured herself into him. In turn, Riddle started to possess her, preying on the fact that she felt lonely and insecure at school. Using Ginny, Riddle then opened the Chamber of Secrets and set the **basilisk** on the students—all without Ginny knowing that she had done it.

Even though Lockhart is a terrible person, he serves as an example of how identities can be based on choices and actions rather than fate. Lockhart wasn't fated to be great, but he chose to fabricate his persona and was able to create an identity for himself than he wouldn't have had otherwise.



Harry, unlike Lockhart, has immense bravery and loyalty and proves it here. He also demonstrates how treating others with respect can be beneficial to oneself. He has always been kind to Myrtle (unlike most of the other students), and she in response provides him with the information that he needs in order to access the Chamber of Secrets.



Once again relying on each other, Harry and Ron are able to enter the Chamber of Secrets. Their loyalty and support for each other (and for Hermione) fosters their bravery as they willingly take on the task of facing the basilisk.



As Harry gets deeper and deeper into the Chamber of Secrets, his true identity becomes clearer and clearer (something that has plagued him over the course of the novel, and which readers are again reminded of when Harry is able to speak Parseltongue). He is brave, loyal, and willing to sacrifice himself for others—qualities that are in complete opposition to Voldemort and Tom Riddle.



Riddle's ability to possess Ginny through the diary confirms the danger of information that comes from an unknown source. Ginny assumed that Riddle was a friend as he wrote back to her and sympathized with her, but as she slowly realized that she was missing pieces of her own memory, she started to fear the power that he had over her. Additionally, this revelation shows how lacking close friendships can leave a person vulnerable. Ginny was lonely at school, which led her to rely on someone untrustworthy.



Ginny became suspicious of the diary and tried to throw it away, Riddle explains. Then Harry picked it up, and Riddle showed Harry his memory in order to gain his trust. Harry realizes that Riddle framed Hagrid fifty years before. Riddle reveals that Dumbledore (who was a teacher at the time) always suspected him and kept a close eye on him after that. And so, Riddle left a diary behind so that someone else could finish his work in the future.

Harry says that in a few hours, Riddle's plan will be derailed because the Mandrake Draught will be ready to revive the petrified students. But Riddle says that his new goal has been to meet Harry—and he knew that Harry would "go to any lengths to solve the mystery—particularly if one of [his] best friends was attacked." And so, Riddle continues, he made Ginny come down into the Chamber so that Harry would follow.

Riddle asks Harry how he managed to escape Voldemort. When Harry asks why he cares, Riddle explains that Voldemort is his "past, present, and future." He rearranges the letters in his name, "Tom Marvolo Riddle," to spell "I am Lord Voldemort." Riddle explains that while he was at school, he made a new identity for himself because he knew that one day he would become "the greatest sorcerer in the world!"

Harry counters, saying that Dumbledore is the greatest sorcerer in the world, not Riddle. Riddle says that Dumbledore has been driven out by "the mere memory" of Riddle. Harry says that Dumbledore is "not as gone" as Riddle thinks, although even Harry himself doesn't know quite what he means by that. At that moment, **Fawkes** swoops in, holding the Sorting Hat. Harry realizes that he is not alone and musters his courage.

Riddle once more asks Harry how he managed to survive Voldemort. Harry says that his "Muggle-born mother" prevented Voldemort from killing him, and now Voldemort is barely alive. Riddle understands that this is what protected Harry—that despite the fact that he and Harry share "strange likenesses" and many similar qualities, Harry simply got lucky.

Just as Ginny was lulled into a false sense of security by the diary, so too was Harry fooled because he assumed that the information Riddle was showing him was reliable. Riddle's ability to manipulate information is what enabled him to commit his crimes not only in the present, but also in the past.



Even just from Ginny's descriptions of Harry in the diary, Riddle realizes one of Harry's key qualities is loyalty. He figures out quickly that Harry will go to any lengths to solve the mystery if doing so means saving his friends.



Riddle's description of himself at school actually presents a key distinction between himself and Harry. While Riddle made a clear choice to form an evil identity, knowing that one day he would amass greatness and power, Harry chooses instead to focus choosing a positive identity for himself and creating lasting friendships. These key differences show, as Dumbledore later points out, that one's choices are more important than one's innate abilities.



Harry's loyalty towards Dumbledore becomes key in stoking his bravery and in defeating the basilisk. Only after Harry affirms his loyalty to Dumbledore does Fawkes comes to his aid with the Sorting Hat, which in turn gives Harry a boost of courage.



The fact that Riddle notes many similarities between himself and Harry becomes even more concerning to Harry when he tries to grapple with his identity in the following chapter, as he worries that because they share many qualities, they could also share similar fates.



Riddle then calls the **basilisk**. Harry shuts his eyes and tries to blindly feel his way around. But then he hears **Fawkes** attacking the snake, and Harry peeks long enough to see that Fawkes has punctured the enormous basilisk's lethal eyes. Harry also grabs the Sorting Hat and begs it to help him. He pulls out of it a "gleaming silver **sword**."

The **basilisk** charges toward Harry, using its hearing and smell to find him. But just as it opens its mouth to swallow him, Harry drives the **sword** into the roof of its mouth. The basilisk keels over, but one of its fangs has sunk into Harry's arm, and he can feel poison spreading throughout his body. Harry thanks **Fawkes** for trying to rescue him, and the bird starts to cry. Tom Riddle relishes watching Harry die. The pain starts to leave Harry, but he realizes that he is not dying: the wound is healing. Harry remembers suddenly that phoenix tears have healing powers.

Riddle is aghast, and he raises the wand to try and finish Harry off. But before he can cast a spell, Harry grabs the **basilisk** fang and plunges it into Tom Riddle's diary. Ink spurts out of it, and Riddle writhes and twists, screaming, until he disappears. Harry collects his wand, the Sorting Hat, and the **sword**.

Ginny wakes up and confesses that she is the one who's been attacking the students. Harry tells her that it's okay, and that Riddle is gone now. They walk back to Ron, who has made a sizeable gap in the rock barrier. He is overjoyed to see Ginny alive. Lockhart is also there, his memory wiped from the Charm that backfired. **Fawkes** flies Harry, Ginny, Ron, and Lockhart through the air and back up to Moaning Myrtle's bathroom.

## CHAPTER 18: DOBBY'S REWARD

Harry, Ron, Ginny, and Lockhart go to McGonagall's office, where Mr. Weasley and Mrs. Weasley sob with relief to see Ginny, and Dumbledore sits beaming. Harry tells the story of how they came to discover the Chamber of Secrets and how Harry defeated the **basilisk**. He leaves Riddle's diary out of it, however, worried that Ginny would get into trouble because they would be unable to prove that he made her do it.

Harry's loyalty to Dumbledore not only enhances his courage because he is no longer alone, but it also gives him the ability to defeat the basilisk. Fawkes blinds the snake, preventing it from being able to kill Harry on sight. Thus Harry's loyalty for Dumbledore is reciprocated with loyalty to Harry.



Harry's loyalty to Dumbledore leads Fawkes to deliver the sword, which enables Harry to kill the basilisk. The sword also becomes a key part of Harry's understanding of his identity, which Dumbledore points out later. The sword belonged to Godric Gryffindor; therefore even if Harry believed that he might have been fated to be in Slytherin, his choices have led him to become a true Gryffindor.



The irony in Riddle dying from the basilisk fang highlights another key difference between himself and Harry. Harry was able to escape because of the deep bonds of friendship and love he has with Dumbledore. But Riddle has no such love, and so he dies alone, with his death caused by the only creature who might have been his ally.



Harry's success affirms that sometimes it is necessary to break rules in order to do the right thing: if he had not done so, he would not have been able to solve the mystery of the Chamber, rescue Ginny, and defeat the basilisk. At the same time, Ron and Hermione's roles in his success also affirm the fact that he could not have done it without them.



Even though Harry has already risked his life for Ginny, and broken lots of school rules to do it, he is still worried about being loyal to Ginny and making sure that she is not implicated in the attacks. On the other hand, Harry has no trouble admitting his own rule-breaking because he knows that he did so for the right reasons.



But to Harry's relief, Dumbledore asks how Voldemort managed to enchant Ginny. Harry then explains what happened with the diary. Mr. Weasley scolds Ginny, saying: "Never trust anything that can think for itself if you can't see where it keeps its brain." Ginny says she didn't know that it was full of Dark Magic; she explains that she found it inside one of the books she bought for school.

Dumbledore tells Ginny that she will not be punished for being possessed by Voldemort. He also announces that the Mandrake Draught is ready, and that the students are being revived as they speak, so there has been no harm done. Then Dumbledore turns to Harry and Ron, reminding them that he said if they broke any more rules they would be expelled—before saying that he must "eat [his] words." They will both receive Special Awards for Services to the School, plus two hundred points each for Gryffindor.

Dumbledore then asks for a few moments alone with Harry, and everyone else leaves the office. Dumbledore thanks Harry for showing him immense loyalty down in the Chamber, as nothing else could have called **Fawkes** to him.

Dumbledore asks Harry about meeting Tom Riddle, and Harry confesses that he is troubled by the ways in which they are similar. He admits that the Sorting Hat told him he'd do well in Slytherin, and everyone thought he was Slytherin's heir because he could speak Parseltongue. Dumbledore informs Harry that he suspects Harry can speak Parseltongue because Voldemort gave some of his powers to Harry the night he tried to kill Harry.

Harry sulks, saying that in that case he really does belong in Slytherin. The Hat only put him in Gryffindor, he thinks, because Harry asked it to. Dumbledore seizes on this, saying that this is what makes him very different from Tom Riddle. He says that "it is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities." He proves this idea by showing that the **sword** the Hat conjured belonged to Godric Gryffindor, and only a true Gryffindor could have pulled that from the Hat.

Mr. Weasley's warning to Ginny is akin to the lessons that the students learn about rumor: it is important not to trust information unless it comes from a reliable source. Riddle's diary allowed him to manipulate the information he told Ginny and Harry, and in this way he was able to control them.



*In rewarding rather than punishing Harry and Ron for their rule-breaking, Dumbledore reinforces the idea that sometimes it is necessary to break the rules in order to do what is right.*



Dumbledore shows how much he values Harry's loyalty—proving again how important it is, and how characteristic it is of the quintessentially good characters in the story. Friendship, loyalty, and bravery become the backbone of what allows Harry to become a hero.



*This becomes the crux of Harry's worry as he tries to get a sense of who he is and who he is meant to become. It is interesting to note that here, Harry can only express disappointment in feeling like he belongs in Slytherin, but over the course of the series, as Harry and Voldemort's fates become more and more intertwined, Harry will worry that he is becoming more and more like Voldemort.*



Dumbledore's advice becomes one of the key themes throughout the series as a whole. Even though Harry and Riddle seem similar on the surface, Harry always chooses love, friendship, self-sacrifice, and bravery, while Voldemort chooses power, greed, hatred, and cowardice.



The door then opens violently—it is Lucius Malfoy, accompanied by Dobby. Lucius is furious that Dumbledore is back. Dumbledore says the other eleven governors contacted him after Ginny was taken into the Chamber, asking him to come back immediately. And, he reveals, they seemed to think that Lucius had threatened them in order to suspend Dumbledore in the first place.

Lucius asks if they've caught the culprit. Dumbledore confirms that it was Voldemort, acting through Ginny via the diary. Dumbledore stares at Lucius, saying that if Harry and Ron hadn't discovered the diary, Ginny might have taken all the blame—also endangering Mr. Weasley's Muggle Protection Act in the process. Harry realizes then that Ginny got the diary from Lucius in Flourish and Blotts. Lucius says, "prove it," and leaves with Dobby in tow.

Harry gets a spark of inspiration. He takes the diary and pulls off his filthy sock. He stuffs the diary into it and then runs after Lucius, giving the sock to him. Lucius pulls the diary out of the sock and tosses the sock aside, furious. He tells Harry that he'll meet the same end as his parents, and then tells Dobby to come. But Dobby caught the sock after Lucius threw it: Dobby is free now because his master has given him clothing.

Lucius is furious at Harry for tricking him and lunges toward him. But Dobby shouts for Lucius not to hurt Harry and sends Lucius backward, crashing down the stairs. Lucius gets up and has no choice to leave. Dobby ecstatically thanks Harry for freeing him, sobbing with gratitude. Harry only makes him promise not to try and save his life again.

Hogwarts throws an end-of-year feast like never before. The celebration lasts all night, and in that time Hermione appears, cured and very excited that Harry and Ron were able to solve the mystery. Additionally Hagrid returns from Azkaban, Gryffindor is named as the House Cup winner, and McGonagall announces that exams have been canceled. Dumbledore also announces that Lockhart will be unable to return to his post next year, at which many people cheer.

The rest of the term passes in a blur, and Hogwarts more or less returns to normal. Lucius is sacked as a school governor, Draco sulks around the castle, and Ginny is happy once again. Too soon, everyone boards the train home. As the students exit the train, Harry gives Ron and Hermione his phone number and asks them to call him over the summer.

When Dumbledore confronts Lucius about his manipulation of the other school governors, it confirms for Harry once again how institutions and governing bodies that make the rules can be easily corrupted by those in power, and therefore the occasional rebellion is sometimes warranted.



Lucius's planting the diary in one of Ginny's books puts him firmly on the side of Voldemort and racial prejudice. This act enabled the return of the basilisk as well as the attacks on and potential murder of Muggle-born students in the school. And by planting it on Ginny, Lucius also demonstrates his prejudice against families like the Weasleys who strive to protect and befriend Muggles.



Harry's action both counteracts the hateful prejudice that the Malfoys bear against Dobby and also serves as another example of breaking the rules to do what is right. Harry's freeing of Dobby circumvents an established social structure in order to prevent Dobby's further abuse and enslavement.



In return for Harry's kindness, respect, and protection, Dobby repays the favor and prevents Lucius from being able to hurt Harry. Thus, Harry's friendship inspires great loyalty in Dobby and also gives him the bravery to stand up to Lucius (his former master) in this moment.



The final passages of the book reinforce the happy ending of the novel and particularly highlight friendship as the primary force for good in the book. Hermione and Hagrid's returns demonstrate that the best endings, at least in Harry's mind, are the ones in which he is able to reunite with his friends.



The very end of the book reasserts that the love Harry gets from friendship is the most important thing in his life. In contrast to the beginning of the book, in which Harry feels isolated and vulnerable, he makes sure to give his phone number to his two best friends so that he cannot feel that way again.





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