



J.K. Rowling



J.K. Rowling
1965-

THE BASICS



Born	07.31.1965 Yate, England
Died	
Career	British children's novelist

J.K. Rowling

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J. K. Rowling is a British author best known as the creator of the Harry Potter fantasy series. The Potter books have gained worldwide attention, won multiple awards, sold more than 400 million copies and been the basis for a popular series of films, in which Rowling had overall approval on the scripts as well as maintaining creative control by serving as a producer on the final installment. She is perhaps equally famous for her "rags to riches" life story, in which she progressed from living on benefits to multi-millionaire status within five years.



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J.K. Rowling reading in her garden.

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Rowling was born to Peter James Rowling and Anne Rowling (née Volant), on 31 July 1965 in Yate, Gloucestershire, England, 10 miles northeast of Bristol. Her sister Dianne was born at their home on 28 June 1967 when Rowling was 23 months old. The family moved to the nearby village Winterbourne when Rowling was four. She attended St Michael's Primary School, a school founded by abolitionist William Wilberforce and education reformer Hannah More. Her headmaster at St Michael's, Alfred Dunn, has been suggested as the inspiration for the Harry Potter headmaster Albus Dumbledore.

As a child, Rowling often wrote fantasy stories, which she would usually then read to her sister. She recalls that "I can still remember me telling her a story in which she fell down a rabbit hole and was fed strawberries by the rabbit family inside it. Certainly the first story I ever wrote down (when I was five or six) was about a rabbit called Rabbit. He got the measles and was visited by his friends, including a giant bee called Miss Bee." At the age of nine, Rowling moved to the Gloucestershire village of Tutshill, close to Chepstow, Wales. When she was a young teenager, her great aunt, who Rowling said "taught classics and approved of a thirst for knowledge, even of a questionable kind", gave her a very old copy of Jessica Mitford's autobiography, *Hons and Rebels*. Mitford became Rowling's heroine, and Rowling subsequently read all of her books.

She attended secondary school at Wyedean School and College, where her mother, Anne, had worked as a technician in the Science Department. Rowling has said of her adolescence, "Hermione [A bookish, know-it-all Harry Potter character] is loosely based on me. She's a caricature of me



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However, in December of that year, Rowling's mother died, after her ten-year battle with multiple sclerosis. Rowling commented, "I was writing Harry Potter at the moment my mother died. I had never told her about Harry Potter." Rowling said this death heavily affected her writing and that she introduced much more detail about Harry's loss in the first book, because she knew about how it felt.

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J. K. Rowling, Harvard commencement address, 2008.



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Harry Potter



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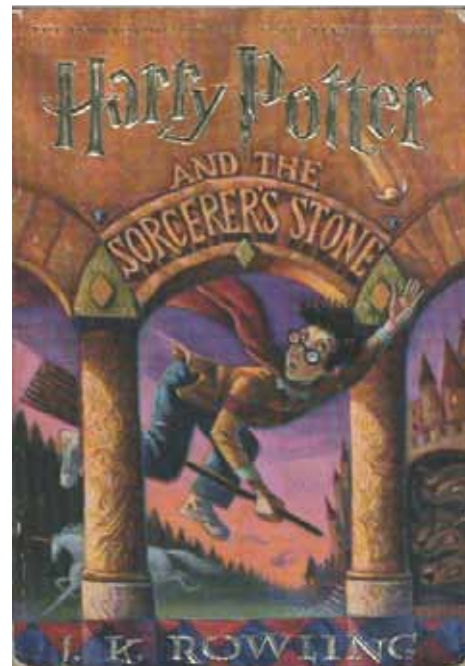
CAREER - BOOKS



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In 1995, Rowling finished her manuscript for Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone on an old manual typewriter. Upon the enthusiastic response of Bryony Evens, a reader who had been asked to review the book's first three chapters, the Fulham-based Christopher Little Literary Agents agreed to represent Rowling in her quest for a publisher. The book was submitted to twelve publishing houses, all of which rejected the manuscript. A year later she was finally given the green light (and a £1500 advance) by editor Barry Cunningham from Bloomsbury, a small publishing house in London. The decision to publish Rowling's book apparently owes much to Alice Newton, the eight-year-old daughter of Bloomsbury's chairman, who was given the first chapter to review by her father and immediately demanded the next. Although Bloomsbury agreed to publish the book, Cunningham says that he advised Rowling to get a day job, since she had little chance of making money in children's books. Soon after, in 1997, Rowling received an £8000 grant from the Scottish Arts Council to enable her to continue writing. The following spring, an auction was held in the United States for the rights to publish the novel, and was won by Scholastic Inc., for \$105,000. Rowling has said she "nearly died" when she heard the news.

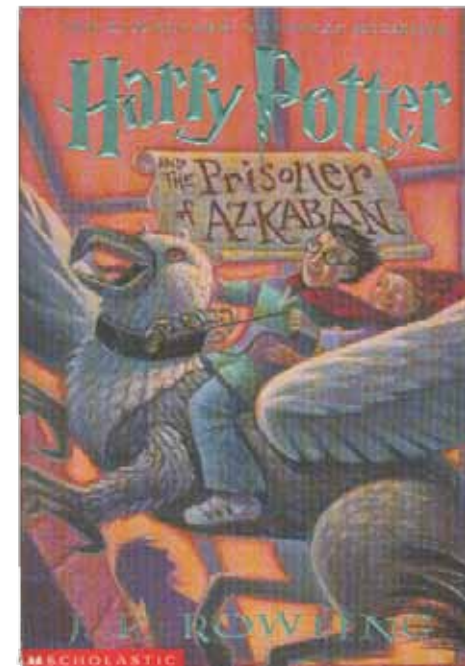
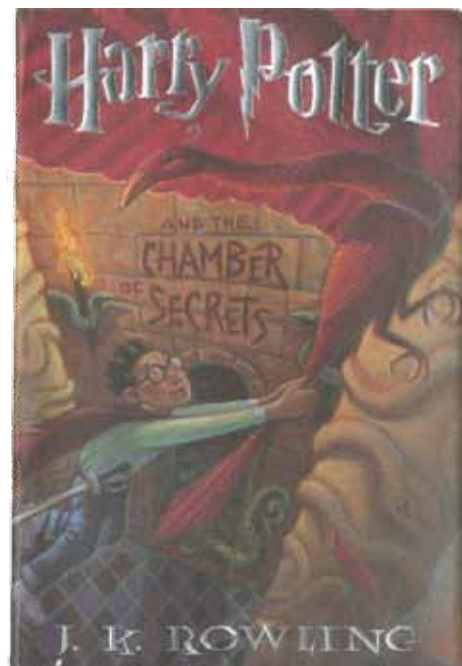
In June 1997, Bloomsbury published Philosopher's Stone with an initial print-run of 1000 copies, five hundred of which were distributed to libraries. Today, such copies are valued between £16,000 and £25,000. Five months later, the book won its first award, a Nestlé Smarties Book Prize. In February, the novel won the prestigious British Book Award for Children's Book of the Year, and later, the Children's Book Award. Its sequel, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, was published in July 1998. In October 1998, Scholastic published Philosopher's Stone in the US under the title of Harry



Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone: a change Rowling claims she now regrets and would have fought if she had been in a better position at the time.

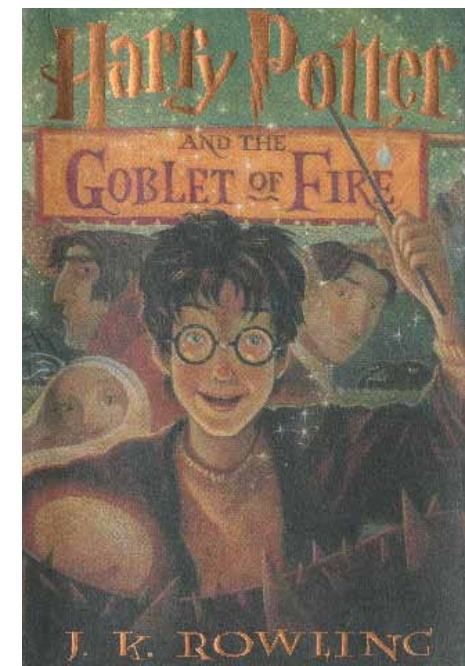
In December 1999, the third novel, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, won the Smarties Prize, making Rowling the first person to win the award three times running. She later withdrew the fourth Harry Potter novel from contention to allow other books a fair chance. In January 2000, Prisoner of Azkaban won the inaugural Whitbread Children's Book of the Year award, though it lost the Book of the Year prize to Seamus Heaney's translation of Beowulf.

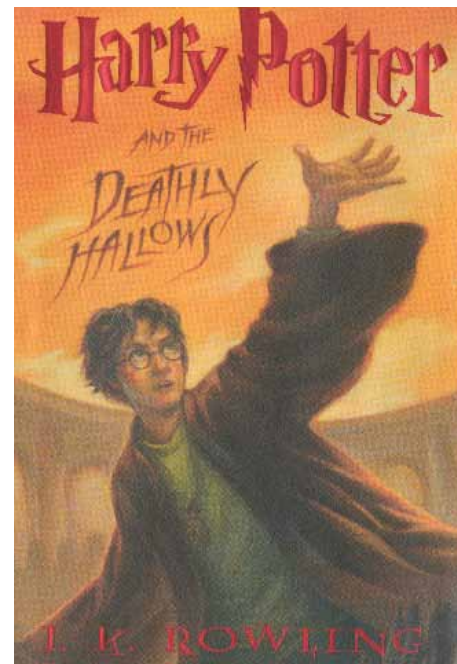
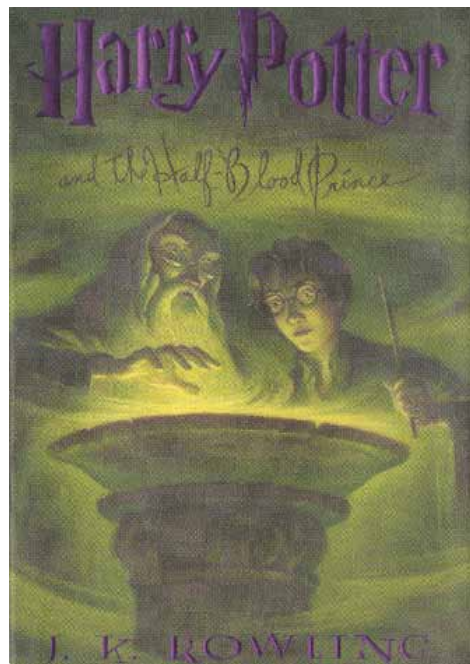
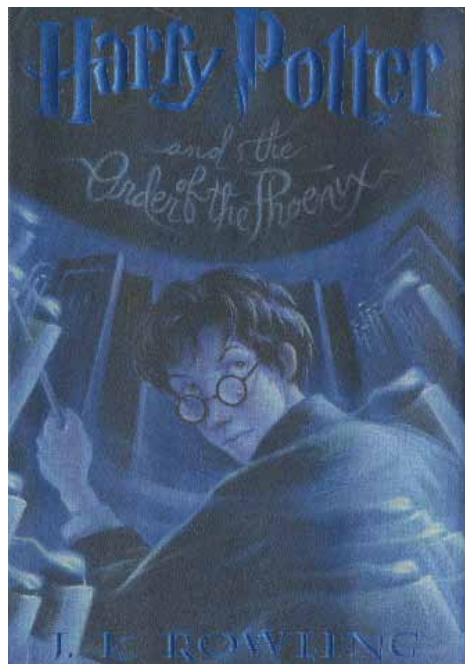
The fourth book, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, was released simultaneously in the UK and the US on 8 July 2000, and broke sales records in both countries. Some 372,775 copies of the book were sold in its first day in the UK, almost equalling the number Prisoner of Azkaban sold during its first year. In the US, the book sold three



million copies in its first 48 hours, smashing all literary sales records. Rowling admitted that she had had a moment of crisis while writing the novel; "Halfway through writing Four, I realized there was a serious fault with the plot ... I've had some of my blackest moments with this book ... One chapter I rewrote 13 times, though no-one who has read it can spot which one or know the pain it caused me." Rowling was named author of the year in the 2000 British Book Awards.

A wait of three years occurred between the release of Goblet of Fire and the fifth Harry Potter novel, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. This gap led to press speculation that Rowling had developed writer's block, speculations she fervently denied. Rowling later admitted that writing the book was a chore. "I think Phoenix could have been shorter", she told Lev Grossman, "I knew that, and I ran out of time and energy toward the end."





The sixth book, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, was released on 16 July 2005. It too broke all sales records, selling nine million copies in its first 24 hours of release. While writing, she told a fan online, "Book six has been planned for years, but before I started writing seriously I spend two months re-visiting the plan and making absolutely sure I knew what I was doing." She noted on her website that the opening chapter of book six, which features a conversation between the Minister of Magic and the British Prime Minister, had been intended as the first chapter first for *Philosopher's Stone*, then *Chamber of Secrets* then *Prisoner of Azkaban*. In 2006, *Half-Blood Prince* received the Book of the Year prize at the British Book Awards.

The title of the seventh and final Harry Potter book was revealed 21 December 2006 to be *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. In February 2007 it was reported that Rowling

wrote on a bust in her hotel room at the Balmoral Hotel in Edinburgh that she had finished the seventh book in that room on 11 January 2007. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* was released on 21 July 2007 (0:00 BST) and broke its predecessor's record as the fastest-selling book of all time. It sold 11 million copies in the first day of release in the United Kingdom and United States. She has said that the last chapter of the book was written "in something like 1990", as part of her earliest work on the entire series. During a year period when Rowling was completing the last book, she allowed herself to be filmed for a documentary which aired in Britain on ITV on 30 December 2007. It was entitled *J K Rowling... A Year In The Life* and showed her returning to her old Edinburgh tenement flat where she lived, and completed the first Harry Potter book. Re-visiting the flat for the first time reduced her to tears, saying it was "really where I turned my life around completely."



Over 400 million Harry Potter books have been sold.



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New York Times, 2008

CAREER - BOOKS



The Elephant House where J.K. wrote HP.

Harry Potter is now a global brand worth an estimated £7 billion (\$15 billion), and the last four Harry Potter books have consecutively set records as the fastest-selling books in history. The series, totalling 4,195 pages, has been translated, in whole or in part, into 65 languages.

The Harry Potter books have also gained recognition for sparking an interest in reading among the young at a time when children were thought to be abandoning books for computers and television, although the series' overall impact on children's reading habits has been questioned.



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A poster for Harry Potter 6.

Forbes has named Rowling as the first person to become a U.S.-dollar billionaire by writing books, the second-richest female entertainer and the 1,062nd richest person in the world. When first listed as a billionaire by Forbes in 2004, Rowling disputed the calculations and said she had plenty of money, but was not a billionaire. In addition, the 2008 Sunday Times Rich List named Rowling the 144th richest person in Britain. In 2001, Rowling purchased a luxurious 19th-century estate house, Killiechassie House, on the banks of the River Tay, near Aberfeldy, in Perth and Kinross, Scotland. Rowling also owns a home in Merchiston, Edinburgh, and a £4.5 million (\$9 million) Georgian house in Kensington, West London, on a street with 24-hour security.

On 26 December 2001, Rowling married Neil Michael Murray (born 30 June 1971), an anaesthetist, in a private ceremony at her Aberfeldy home. This was a second marriage for both Rowling and Murray, as Murray had previously been married to Dr. Fiona Duncan in 1996. Murray and Duncan separated in 1999 and divorced in the summer of 2001. Rowling's and Murray's son, David Gordon Rowling Murray, was born on 24 March 2003. Shortly after Rowling began writing *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* she took a break from working on the novel to care for him in his early infancy. Rowling's youngest child, daughter Mackenzie Jean Rowling Murray, to whom she dedicated *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, was born 23 January 2005.



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A poster for Harry Potter 7.

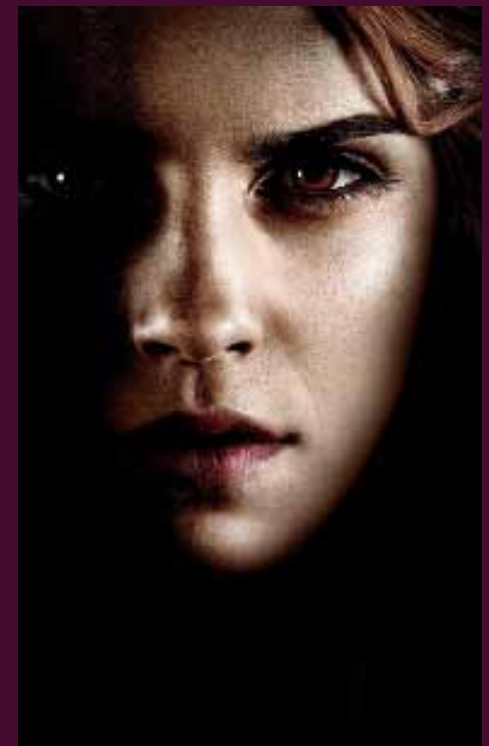


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Rowling is a close friend of Sarah Brown, wife of former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, whom she met when they collaborated on a charitable project (see below). When Brown's son Fraser was born in 2003, Rowling was one of the first to visit her in the hospital. Rowling has received honorary degrees from St Andrews University, the University of Edinburgh, Napier University, the University of Exeter, the University of Aberdeen and Harvard University, for whom she spoke at the 2008 commencement ceremony. In 2009 Rowling was awarded the Légion d'honneur by French President Nicolas Sarkozy. She revealed publicly, during the Elysée Palace ceremony, that her maternal grandfather was French and had also received the Légion d'honneur for his bravery at the First World War battle of Verdun.

Clock wise from top left:
Ron Weasley
Hermione Granger
Harry Potter
Dobby
Posters for HP 7 Part 2



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Rowling, once a single parent herself, is now president of the charity One Parent Families, having already become their first Ambassador in 2000. Rowling collaborated with Sarah Brown to write a book of children's stories to aid One Parent Families.

In 2001, the UK anti-poverty fundraiser Comic Relief asked three bestselling British authors – cookery writer and TV presenter Delia Smith, Bridget Jones creator Helen Fielding, and Rowling – to submit booklets related to their most famous works for publication. Rowling's two booklets, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* and *Quidditch Through the Ages*, are ostensibly facsimiles of books found in the Hogwarts library. Since going on sale in March 2001, the books have raised £15.7 million (\$30 million) for the fund. The £10.8 million (\$20 million) they have raised outside the UK have been channelled into a newly created International Fund for Children and Young

In 2005, Rowling and MEP Emma Nicholson founded the Children's High Level Group (now Lumos). In January 2006, Rowling went to Bucharest to highlight the use of caged beds in mental institutions for children. To further support the CHLG, Rowling auctioned one of seven handwritten and illustrated copies of *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, a series of fairy tales referred to in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. The book was purchased for £1.95 million by on-line bookseller Amazon.com on 13 December 2007, becoming the most expensive modern book ever sold at auction. Rowling commented, "This will mean so much to children in desperate need of help. It means Christmas has come early to me." Rowling gave away the remaining six copies to those who have a close connection with the *Harry Potter* books. In 2008, Rowling agreed to publish the book with the proceeds going to the Children's High Level Group.



Emma Watson and J.K. Rowling at the British Academy Awards.



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J.K. Rowling's gold handprints.

“It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all - in which case, you fail by default.”

J.K. Rowling

Rowling has contributed money and support for research and treatment of multiple sclerosis, from which her mother suffered before her death in 1990. In 2006, Rowling contributed a substantial sum toward the creation of a new Centre for Regenerative Medicine at Edinburgh University and in 2010 she donated a further £10 million to the centre. For reasons unknown, Scotland, Rowling's country of adoption, has the highest rate of multiple sclerosis in the world. In 2003, Rowling took part in a campaign to establish a national standard of care for MS sufferers. In April 2009, she announced that she was withdrawing her support for Multiple Sclerosis Society Scotland, citing her inability to resolve an ongoing feud between the organisation's northern and southern branches that had sapped morale and led to several resignations.





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J.K. Rowling and Queen Elizabeth.



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WOMEN BREAKING BARRIERS