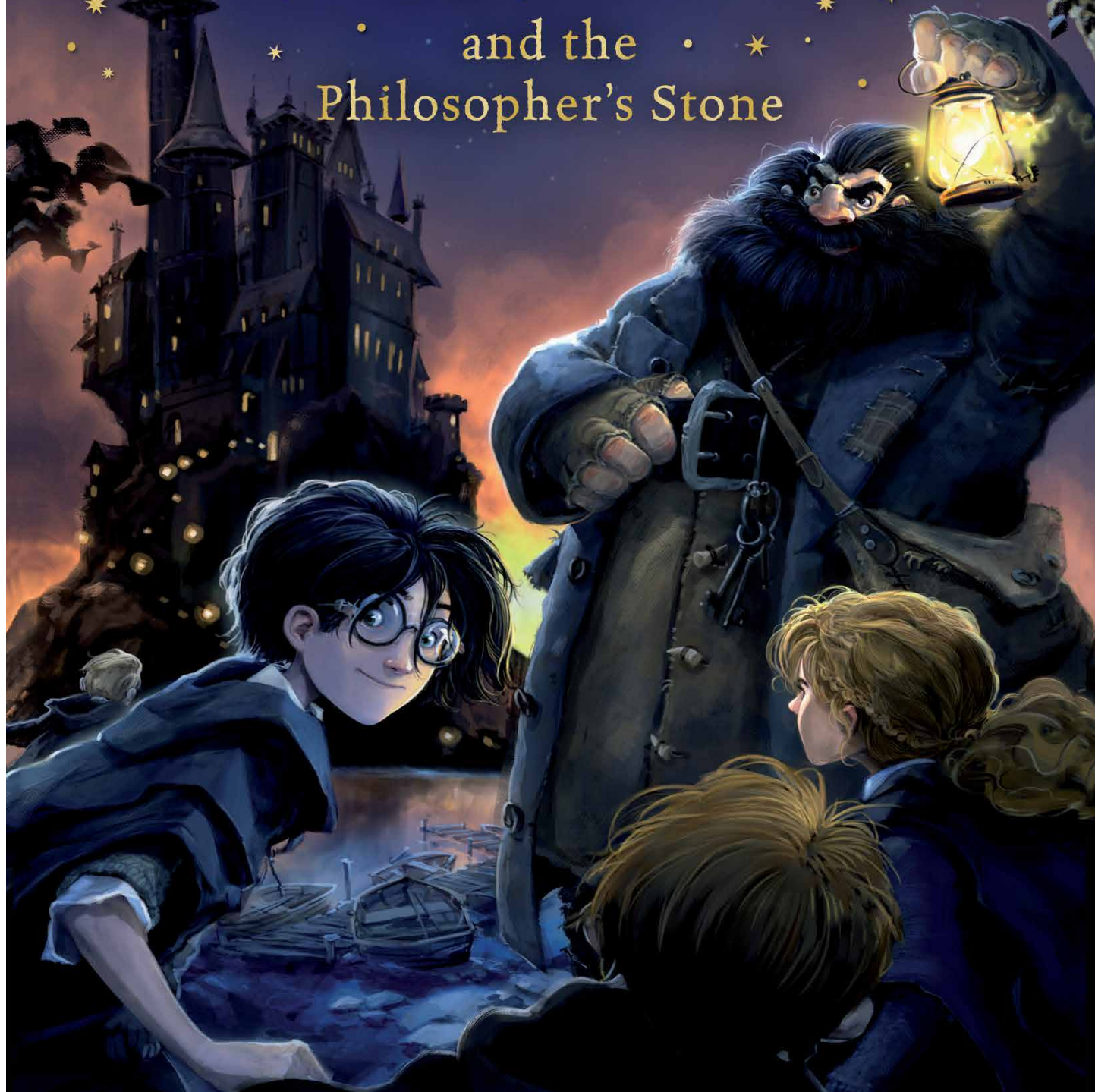


J.K. ROWLING

HARRY POTTER

and the
Philosopher's Stone



DISCUSSION GUIDE



HARRY POTTER

and the Philosopher's Stone

DISCUSSION GUIDE

ABOUT THE HARRY POTTER BOOKS AND THIS GUIDE

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books are among the most popular and acclaimed of all time. Published in the UK between 1997 and 2007 and beginning with *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the seven books are epic stories of Harry Potter and his friends as they attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Crossing genres including fantasy, thriller and mystery, and at turns exhilarating, humorous and sad, the stories explore universal human values, longings and choices.

The Harry Potter books are compelling reading for children and adults alike; they have met phenomenal success around the world and have been translated into 89 languages. A whole generation of children grew up awaiting the publication of each book in the series with eager anticipation, and they still remain enormously popular.

The Harry Potter books make excellent starting points for discussion. These guides outline a host of ideas for discussions and other activities that can be used in the classroom, in a reading group or at home. They cover some of the main themes of the series, many of which, while set in an imaginary world, deal with universal issues of growing up that are familiar to all children. You will also find references to key moments on pottermore.com, where you can discover more about the world of Harry Potter. These guides are aimed at stimulating lively discussion and encouraging close engagement with books and reading. We hope you will use the ideas in this guide as a basis for educational and enjoyable work – and we think your group will be glad you did!



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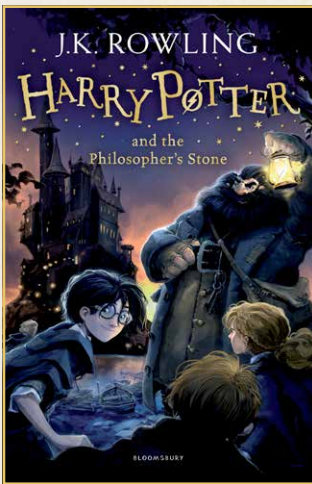


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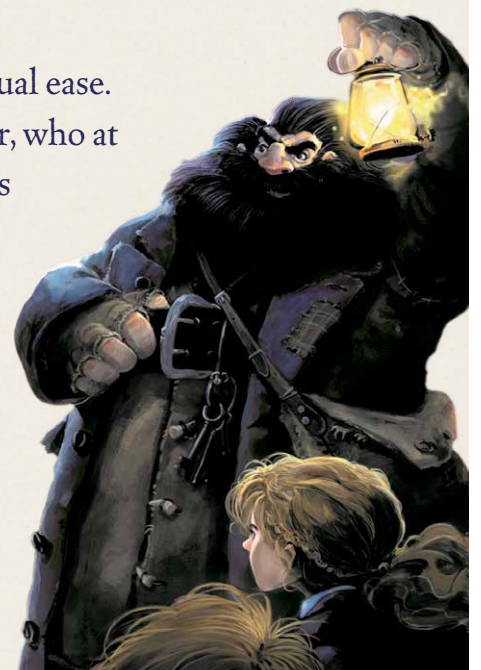
INTRODUCTION TO HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE



Harry Potter has been raised by his horrible relatives, Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia, who treat him with disdain while lavishing attention on their spoiled son, Dudley. On the eve of his eleventh birthday, Harry receives news that changes his life: he is being summoned to attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Harry is astonished to learn that his deceased parents, James and Lily Potter, were both wizards, and that they died trying to protect infant Harry from a Dark wizard named Voldemort. He also discovers, much to his own discomfort, that he is famous in the wizarding world; Voldemort's attack on

Harry has not only left a lightning-shaped scar on Harry's forehead, but has taken away Voldemort's power as well.

At school, Harry soon makes both friends and enemies with equal ease. Ron Weasley becomes Harry's sidekick, and Hermione Granger, who at first appears to be a boring know-it-all, quickly proves that she is a fast friend too, and the three become a team. Draco Malfoy, a bully and a bigot, along with his cronies, Crabbe and Goyle, become Harry's enemies. Involved with classes, teachers, and Quidditch, an aerial sport played on broomsticks, Harry is also intrigued by the mystery of a hidden object that is guarded by a three-headed dog. The attempt to solve the mystery with his friends brings Harry face to face with his nemesis, Voldemort, in the disguise of someone he least suspects.



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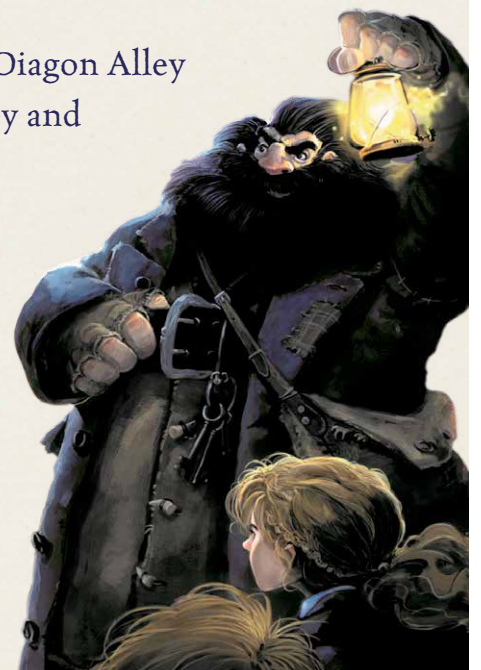
and the Philosopher's Stone

DISCUSSION GUIDE

DISCUSSION POINTS FOR HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. 'Yeh don' know what yeh are?' (Chapter 4, 'The Keeper of the Keys', p. 54) Hagrid was furious when he heard that the letter left with the Dursleys by Dumbledore had never been read to Harry. Who is Harry and why is his family so famous in the wizarding world?
2. Why does it take so long for Harry's wand to choose him when he visits Ollivanders in Diagon Alley? What is special about his wand? Why does Ollivander say, 'The wand chooses the wizard' (Chapter 5, 'Diagon Alley', p. 92)?
3. When Harry first meets Malfoy at Madam Malkin's in Diagon Alley (Chapter 5), he reminds him of Dudley. How are Dudley and Draco alike? How are they different?
4. The Sorting Hat sings a song at the start-of-term banquet (Chapter 7, 'The Sorting Hat', p. 125). What does it say about the members of the four houses at Hogwarts – Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw and Slytherin? Harry thinks 'Not Slytherin' (p. 130) when he is being sorted. What does this tell you about him?



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5. In Chapter 12, Harry is given an Invisibility Cloak. Why is the Cloak so important to Harry? How does he use it? If you could become invisible, what would you do and where would you go?
6. Discuss the importance of the Mirror of Erised and the meaning of its name. Dumbledore tells Harry: 'It shows us nothing more or less than the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts [...] However, this mirror will give us neither knowledge or truth.' (Chapter 12, 'The Mirror of Erised', p. 229) What does he mean by this? What would you see if you looked in the mirror?
7. While finding their way to the Philosopher's Stone in Chapter 16, 'Through the Trapdoor', what strengths do Harry, Ron and Hermione each contribute to solving the puzzles?
8. Were you surprised when Quirrell turned out to be the one who was after the Philosopher's Stone? Was there anything earlier in the plot that led you to suspect him?
9. Dumbledore tells Harry to 'Always use the proper name for things. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself.' (Chapter 17, 'The Man with Two Faces', p. 320)



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What does he mean by that? Why is it important to name a thing that you fear?

10. What explanation does Dumbledore give Harry for the protection he received during Voldemort's attack when he was a baby? What does he mean when he says: '... to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection for ever' (Chapter 17, 'The Man with Two Faces', p. 321)? How does this protection keep Harry safe even in the most difficult circumstances?

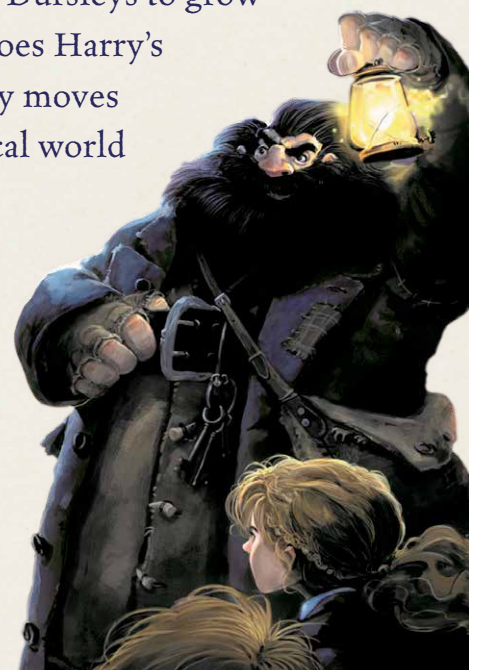
IN DEPTH

1. REAL AND PARALLEL WORLDS

Why does Dumbledore decide to place Harry with the Dursleys to grow up rather than with one of the wizard families? How does Harry's experience with his relatives build his character? Harry moves between an unhappy life in Privet Drive and the magical world in Hogwarts. In what ways is his life in the two worlds different, and in what ways the same? How do you think Harry feels as he moves between one world and the other? What can we learn from the world of Hogwarts that we could apply in our own school lives?

2. CHARACTER NAMES

Many of the characters in *Harry Potter and the*



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Philosopher's Stone have very memorable names. Discuss what some of the characters' names tell us about their personalities. What do names like Voldemort and Draco Malfoy convey about these characters? What about Albus Dumbledore and Severus Snape? And why does Harry Potter have a relatively ordinary name? Can you tell simply from a name what the character is going to be like?

3. FRIENDSHIPS

How do the relationships between Harry, Ron and Hermione grow and change over the course of the book? Why do Harry and Ron so quickly become firm friends? Why do they dislike Hermione in the beginning? Discuss the point in Chapter 10, 'Hallowe'en', when their friendship is sealed. How are the three different and how are they alike? What qualities and strengths does each of them bring to the group?

Pottermore Tie-In: Moment 3, Chapter 10. Go to www.pottermore.com

4. POWER

Power and the use and misuse of it are big themes throughout the Harry Potter series. In Chapter 17, Quirrell, 'The Man with Two Faces', tells Harry: 'There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it.' (p. 313) What do you think this means? Do you agree with this view? What examples do we see of this theory in the real world?



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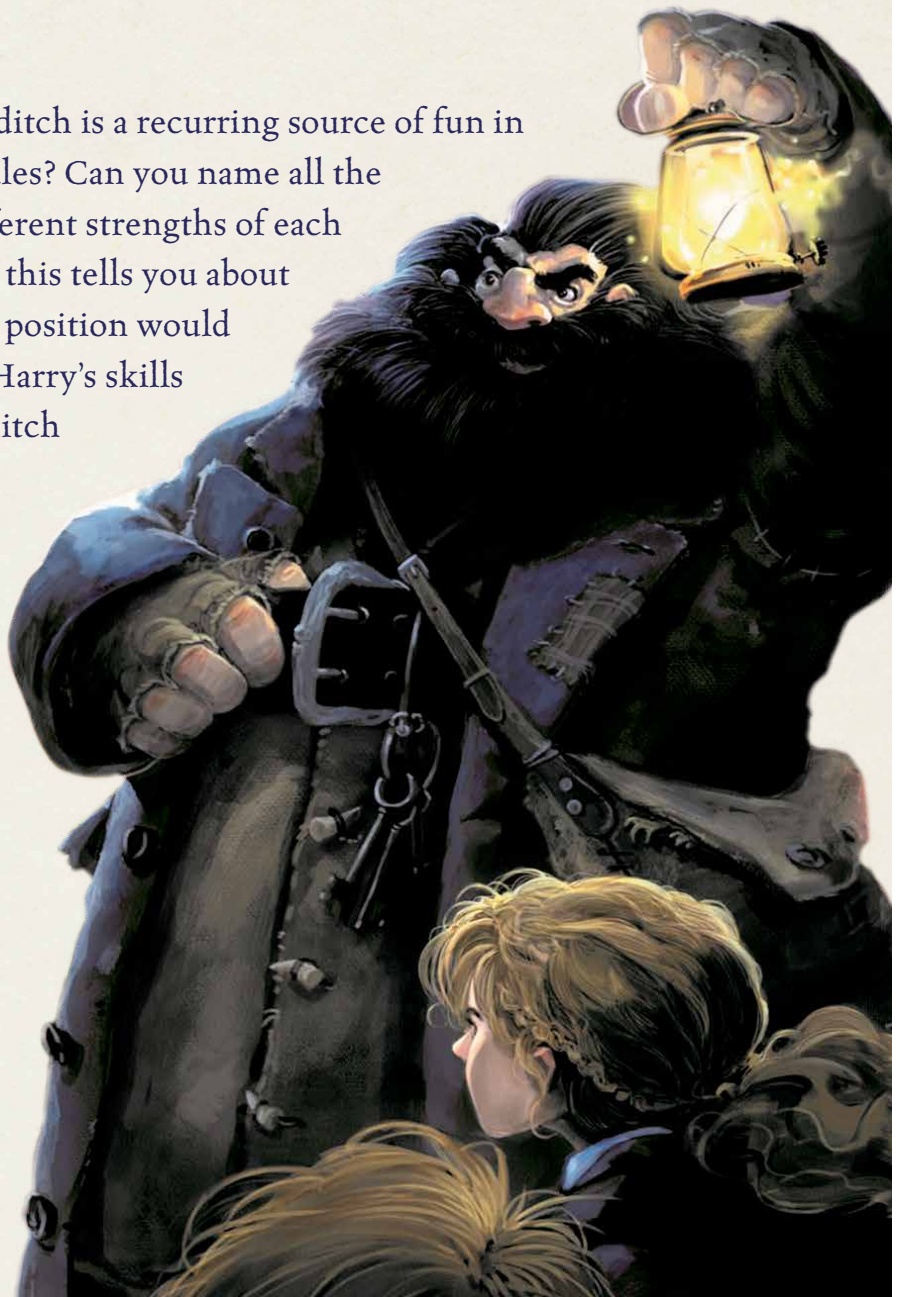
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5. QUIDDITCH

The wizarding sport Quidditch is a recurring source of fun in the series. What are the rules? Can you name all the positions? Discuss the different strengths of each player's position and what this tells you about tackling challenges. What position would you like to play? How do Harry's skills in catching the Golden Snitch relate to his skills in other conflicts and challenges?

Pottermore Tie-In:
Moment 1, Chapter 11.
Go to www.pottermore.com



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HARRY POTTER

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ACTIVITY AND PROJECT IDEAS

WRITING THE HARRY POTTER NEWS

OBJECTIVE

Make a short class newspaper or news-sheet about events in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

CURRICULUM AREAS

English, Design & Technology

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Summarise and report episodes from the book in a journalistic style, and practise editing and proofreading skills

START POINT

Discuss children's favourite parts of the book. Which incidents were the most memorable for them? Which might be particularly suitable for a newspaper-style report? If any prompting is needed, you could suggest the arrival of Harry at Hogwarts (Chapters 6/7), the outcome of the game of Quidditch (Chapter 11) or the climactic scene (Chapter 17).

MAIN ACTIVITY

1. Based on the discussions, draw up a flip chart list of memorable scenes from the book to write about – aim for seven or eight.
2. Divide the group into teams of three or four children. Get them to discuss which scenes they would like to write about in a newspaper and make sure everyone



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in the group has been allocated a different one.

3. Set them writing about their scenes in a reportage style, summarising what has happened in their episode and what it means. Provide a word limit – perhaps 200 words. Explain the approach to report writing – the need for an attention-grabbing headline, the tone of voice that is suitable for the audience, and the need for impartiality. Provide examples by handing out a few examples of newspaper reports both in print and online. Children who have read other Harry Potter books might like to reference the *Daily Prophet*, the newspaper for the wizarding community that features in the series.
4. Get the group to swap pieces so they can proofread, edit and suggest improvements. Spend time redrafting pieces if necessary.
5. Decide how to produce their news-sheet, for example, as an online news article, a flyer, newspaper, etc. Decide what materials are required for this, like Adobe or bespoke software packages if producing online; or A3 paper if producing a handwritten sheet, with pieces pasted into place. Type up the news pieces if necessary.
6. Collate the newspapers or sheets in groups. Discuss the layout and which stories should be placed where. Brainstorm new ideas for the newspaper name and create a new newspaper logo. Insert a few drawings to break up the text.

WRAP-UP

Discuss how children found the experience of producing



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the newspaper. What worked well and what was challenging? What have they learned about how newspapers are produced? Share the papers around the group for comment.

FOUR MORE ACTIVITIES

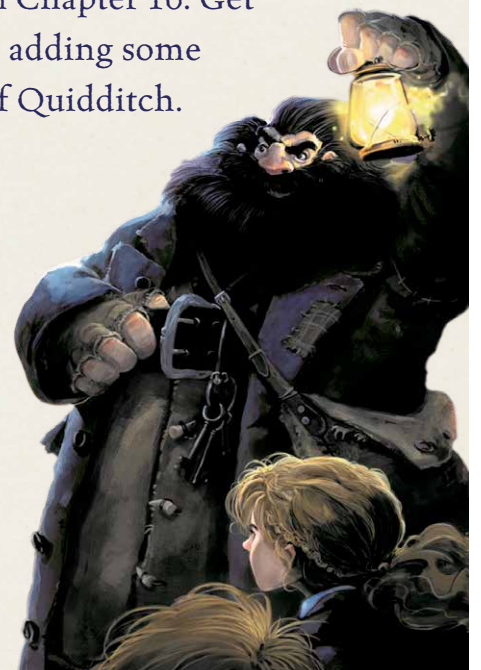
- 1. MAKE A MAGIC WAND**
Read the scene towards the end of Chapter 5 in which Harry receives his wand, then get the group to make and personalise their own wands. Twigs or paper can be the basis of the wands.

Pottermore Tie-In: Moment 3, Chapter 5. Go to www.pottermore.com

- 2. DESIGN A BROOMSTICK**
Harry is given a Nimbus Two Thousand broomstick in Chapter 10. Get children to sketch a drawing of their own broomstick, adding some features that make it particularly suitable for a game of Quidditch. Tell them to imagine a name for their broomstick too.

- 3. READ AS A GROUP**
Choose a chapter from the book and assign parts to different children, including a narrator. Encourage them to read quickly and with expression. Switch the roles around so everyone gets a chance to read.

- 4. COMPOSE A SCHOOL SONG**
In Chapter 7, the Hogwarts pupils sing the school



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song. Can the children write their own short song for their school? Aim for a similar length of a dozen lines and similar rhyme scheme. Encourage them to make it positive! You could get musicians among the group to produce a simple score for it.



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