

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Year 7

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Harry leaves the Dursley home for the last time to begin his quest to vanquish Lord Voldemort. Devastated by the death of his mentor and also angry at the limited information left to him by Dumbledore, he embarks with Ron and Hermione on a long, tortuous journey to find the last of his enemy's Horcruxes so that Voldemort can be killed. The worlds of both wizards and Muggles are subjected to a reign of terror as Voldemort and his Death Eaters gain control of the ministry, and of Hogwarts, and Harry and his friends are constantly on the move to avoid detection.

Along the way, they become aware of an ancient legend that may have a bearing on Harry's ability to defeat Voldemort – the story of three brothers who tried to thwart Death with three objects known as the Deathly Hallows. This is an idea that Harry finds irresistible for a while. But the death of Dobby, the house-elf who rescues them from a desperate situation, helps Harry focus again on the quest to destroy the Horcruxes, and eventually there is only one place left to go – back to Hogwarts. When Harry makes his last and best gesture to bravely surrender himself to Voldemort in order to end the battle of Hogwarts, everything he has worked for reaches a shining climax, allowing goodness to triumph at last.

1. In the first chapter, Voldemort says, "That Potter lives is due more to my errors than to his triumphs." (p. 6) Is this true? What character traits and skills does Harry possess that Voldemort cannot understand or accept?
2. What is Harry's immediate reaction to the article in which he reads about Rita Skeeter's book on Dumbledore? How does this news – and his later readings of parts of the book – affect his feelings for Dumbledore? Why did Dumbledore not share this part of his past with Harry?
3. When Harry leaves the Dursley home with the decoy lookalikes, how do the Death Eaters know which one is the real Harry? What does Lupin mean when he says that Expelliarmus is Harry's "signature" move? What does this tell us about Harry?
4. What are the reactions of Harry, Ron, and Hermione to each of their bequests from Dumbledore's will? Why do these objects turn out to be the perfect gifts for each of them? Why is it important that Bill and Fleur's wedding take place before they leave on their quest? Why is Harry so disturbed to learn at the wedding that Dumbledore's family lived in Godric's Hollow?
5. What causes the change in Kreacher when Harry, Ron, and Hermione return to Grimmauld Place? Why does this location make the perfect hideout for them to start their search? What causes the argument between Harry and Lupin? Why does Harry refuse Lupin's help? Why is he so adamant about searching for the Horcruxes himself, without help from the members of the Order of the Phoenix?
6. Compare Dolores Umbridge's role at Hogwarts in Order of the Phoenix to her role at the Ministry in Deathly Hallows. How have the Death Eaters gained control of the Ministry, and how do they maintain that control? Compare the takeover of the Ministry to tyrannical regimes that you have studied.
7. Why does Slytherin's locket affect the mood of whoever is wearing it? Did the locket affect Umbridge the same way? Is it the locket that causes Ron to desert Harry and Hermione? Would they have quarreled without its influence? Why is it fitting that Ron be the one to destroy the locket, and why is it so difficult for him to do so? Compare Ron's experience of being taunted by the images from the locket to the way in which Tom Riddle's diary possessed Ginny in Chamber of Secrets.
8. Discuss the grave inscriptions that Harry and Hermione see in Godric's Hollow: on Kendra and Ariana's grave, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (p. 325) and on James and Lily's grave,

“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” (p. 328) What do these inscriptions mean to Harry? What do they mean to you?

9. What is the importance of “The Tale of the Three Brothers”? Why does Xenophilius Lovegood wear the symbol of the Deathly Hallows, and why do so few wizards know the name for the three objects in the tale? When Harry, Ron, and Hermione discuss which is the most important Hallow, they each choose a different one. What does this tell us about them and about the tale?

10. Why does Harry become obsessed with the idea of the Deathly Hallows and especially the Elder Wand? Is it because he knows that Voldemort is searching for the wand? What does Grindelwald mean when he says to Voldemort, “My death will not bring you what you seek ... there is so much you do not understand.” (p. 469) What does Ollivander add to Harry’s knowledge of the Elder Wand?

11. Why does Wormtail’s silver hand cause his own death when Harry reminds him that he spared his life? Compare Wormtail’s death to Dobby’s sacrifice while saving Harry and his friends from Malfoy Manor. Why does Harry insist on digging Dobby’s grave himself, without using magic? How does Dobby’s death affect Harry?

12. What does Griphook mean when he tells Harry he is a strange wizard? How does Harry’s friendship with Dobby, and his rescue of Griphook, contribute to his eventual triumph over Voldemort and the Death Eaters? What other experiences in Harry’s life have helped him to have an open mind and heart?

13. When Harry reaches Hogwarts, he isn’t planning to involve the other students who gather to welcome him back until Hermione tells him, “you don’t have to do this alone.” Compare Harry’s response to the approaches of Tom Riddle, who confided in no one and operated alone, and Albus Dumbledore, whose brother Aberforth called him a “natural” at secrets. (p. 562)

14. What is the most important thing that Harry learns from the memories that Snape gives him? Why is it important for the dying Snape to share these with Harry? When Dumbledore appears to Harry he asks, “Was I better, ultimately, than Voldemort?” (p. 713) Compare the motives of Dumbledore, Voldemort, and Snape in their early lives and later. What experiences and beliefs shaped each of them?

15. How does Harry survive Voldemort’s attack? Why does he decide to lose the Resurrection Stone in the Forest and place the Elder Wand back in Dumbledore’s grave? What insights has Harry gained during his quest to destroy Voldemort that make him a true hero?

1. Discuss the idea that appears throughout the series of the power of a name. Dumbledore teaches Harry that fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself. Why are so many wizards afraid to say the name Voldemort, and why does Harry insist on using it? When Dumbledore faces Voldemort at the end of Order of the Phoenix, and when Harry faces him in the final battle in, Deathly Hallows, why do they both call him by his given name, Tom Riddle?

2. Describe the growth and maturation of major characters throughout their seven years at Hogwarts. Who do you think has changed the most? What experiences and insights contribute to their growth? Which characters – students and/or adults – remind you of people you have known in your own life?

3. Comparing the six Defense Against the Dark Arts teachers Harry encounters, which one do you think was most effective and why? Which classes at Hogwarts prepare the students with skills for their future lives? In Order of the Phoenix, Dolores Umbridge tells her class: “I am here to teach you using a Ministry-approved method that does not include inviting students to give their opinions on matters about which they understand very little.” (p. 317) Discuss this point of view in relation to teaching methods of the other professors at Hogwarts and those that you have experienced in your own schooling.

4. Author Philip Pullman, in his 1996 Carnegie Medal acceptance speech, said: “There are some themes, some subjects, too large for adult fiction; they can only be dealt with adequately in a children’s book.” (<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/pullman/author/carnegie.php>)

) Discuss this quote in relation to the Harry Potter series. What do you identify as the major themes, that you can identify, and why are they best illuminated in a coming-of-age saga?

5. Susan Cooper, author of The Dark Is Rising sequence, has written: "Fantasy goes one stage beyond realism; requiring complete intellectual surrender, it asks more of the reader, and at its best may offer more . . . Fantasy is the metaphor through which we discover ourselves." (Susan Cooper, *Dreams and Wishes: Essays on Writing for Children*

, McElderry Books, 1996, pp. 44-45) How does the fantasy element of the Harry Potter series help readers discover more about themselves and others? What insights have you gained from reading these volumes?

6. In Harry Potter's world, the magic community exists alongside our "real" world and provides a contrast to the institutions that are familiar to us: educational, governmental, medical, and sporting. Compare the Ministry, Hogwarts, St. Mungo's, Azkaban, the Tri-Wizard Tournament, and the Quidditch World Cup to similar organizations and events in our own world. How do these parallel existences compare to the similar constructions in other books of fantasy?

7. Dumbledore tells Harry: "That which Voldemort does not value, he takes no trouble to comprehend. Of house-elves and children's tales, of love, loyalty, and innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing . . . That they all have a power beyond his own, a power beyond the reach of any magic, is a truth he has never grasped." (

Deathly Hallows, p. 709) Discuss this idea in relation to the truths of your own life. What are the important elements that have shaped your own character?

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Book Club Questions

1. What do you think of the 3rd person narration?
2. Should any one try to read this book without having read the other 6?
3. Do you think it is effective to start the book with the villain?
4. Is Voldemort right that he must be the one to kill Harry?
5. Is it normal that Harry never talked to Dumbledore about his own youth?
6. What do you think of Dudley's change of heart in relation to Harry?
7. Do you think that the 7 Harry Potter pairs is a good idea to help Harry escape?
8. When you are reading are you afraid of which characters will not survive even though you actually know because you have read the book and seen the movies?
9. Are you still sad when you lose each important character?
10. Do the deaths make the stakes higher?
11. In a dark book, do you still laugh at Ron insisting that he does not have to clean his room in spite of his brother's upcoming wedding?
12. What do you think of Hermione making her parents forget that she exists?
13. Should she have done this?
14. What do you think of the inheritances that Harry, Ron and Hermione get on Harry's birthday?
15. Is the wedding interesting?
16. The Ministry of Magic as led by the Death Eaters controls the media and the government, what do you think this means for their power?
17. Who is correct, Harry or Hermione about Harry using his mind connection to Voldemort?
18. Does it seem like the trio spend a long time in the forest waiting for something to happen?
19. What do you think of the fight between Ron and Harry?
20. Were you happy when Harry and Hermione finally went to Godric's Hollow because something happened?
21. Would you have followed the creepy old witch Bathilda into her scary house?
22. Does Harry diving into the frozen pond after the sword seem terribly symbolic?
23. Were you surprised that Ron saved him?
24. What do you think of the trios discussion of which of the Deathly Hallows they would want?
25. Did they choose what you thought they would pick?
26. Were you surprised the Luna's dad sold them out to save his daughter?