

## Editor's Introduction

To the magic of literature, its creators, and its passionate readers

We are inaugurating *Beacham's Sourcebooks for Exploring Young Adult Fiction* with the Harry Potter series because Harry has awakened so many readers to the joy of the beautifully written word and the complexities of the ideas they generate. Following soon after is the second volume in the series, C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Our sourcebooks are intended to expand readers' enjoyment and knowledge of the novels by providing insights into the creative process that have made them unique.

Unlike a traditional book of criticism, our sourcebooks do not try to guide a reader through a series of logical arguments that arrive at a conclusion about the merits or meaning of the novel. Rather, they provide background, ideas, questions, and bibliographies that can be used in part or as a whole to encourage critical thinking and to explore the *layers* of meaning in the novels. There are many more projects, discussion questions, and research topics than any one teacher, parent, or reader wants to explore, but the range and depth of these resources provide almost unlimited opportunities to study and admire Harry Potter and his creator.

Sourcebooks are not generally intended to be read cover to cover but to provide answers to questions as a reader becomes more involved in the novel. The extensive index helps locate chapters that may answer your questions about the origins of magic and alchemy; parallels between the novels and mythology, religious symbols and allusions; the mystery of the characters' names; the geography of Hogwarts and Hogsmeade; references to science; and many other ideas.

We have also included websites for internet exploration; a timeline that explains how characters are related to each other by blood, friendship or vendettas, and to history; an interpretative biography of J. K. Rowling; and a long bibliography posted on our website arranged by areas of interest relating to reviews and criticism about novels, Ms. Rowling, and the intellectual history behind the novels.

We are presenting the Harry Potter sourcebook in two parts. Sections dealing with analyses and chapter development for teachers are included in this print edition. Sections that will be expanded or need to be continually updated are posted on our website ([www.beachampublishing.com](http://www.beachampublishing.com)). The website material is an integral part of the print edition, and the electronic medium will permit us to keep your information current as new Potter novels appear and as critical attention increases.

### How Parents Can Use the Sourcebook

There is much more to the Harry Potter stories than most student readers will recognize, and readers who have enjoyed the novels can be easily stimulated to explore related learning ideas. For example, alchemy, which figures prominently in the Potter novels, was an early pseudo-scientific discipline that eventually laid the groundwork for chemistry. A Roman king ordered his alchemists to change ordinary material into gold; centuries later the Grimm Brothers discovered the fairy tale of Rapunsel, who was forced by a tyrant to spin straw into gold before he would release her to marry the king. Harry's parents had caches of gold whose origin has yet to be revealed. The philosopher's/sorcerer's stone in the Potter novels takes its roots from alchemy. The sourcebook helps you help your children to see Harry's connection across centuries, deep into cultures, and rooted in the universal consciousness of many people.

### **How Teachers Can Use the Sourcebook**

For teachers, we have provided chapter-by-chapter discussion questions (Section III) that develop analytical thinking and vocabulary expansion. These questions can be used to create lesson plans or to construct games that students can play with each other. The timeline is designed to suggest historical research projects that are related to some aspect of Harry's world. There are many, many projects and discussion ideas suggested for teachers, both in this book and on our website, which you can turn into classroom activities or school projects.

### **How Student Readers Can Use the Sourcebook**

Many of the questions are appropriate for students to use as a game to test each other's knowledge of the novels. These questions can be turned into flashcards, a board game, or a quiz show. There are also activities that students can perform without adult supervision. Students with internet access can search our recommended websites for fascinating facts and images related to Harry's mystical world.

### **How Librarians Can Use the Sourcebook**

For librarians who are helping students or entire classes locate information related to Harry, such as haunted castles in Scotland, or giving them ideas for research or reports, the sourcebook provides hundreds of suggestions, including websites. The Related Titles chapter discusses other novels students will enjoy based on particular features of the Potter novel.

### **How Researchers Can Use the Sourcebook**

Each of the chapters contains an extensive bibliography and websites related to the chapter topic which have been posted on the Beacham Publishing website ([www.beachampublishing.com](http://www.beachampublishing.com)) along with the extensive General Bibliography. Dr. Schafer's critical analysis in the print edition and the sources posted on the website provide researchers with a gateway for further study.

Ms. Rowling has spoken extensively about her plans for future Potter novels, and stated that the magical number seven will see the conclusion of Harry's education at Hogwarts. As the series continues, visit our website at [www.beachampublishing.com](http://www.beachampublishing.com) for analyses of newly released novels, or to tell us your ideas about the meaning and achievement of Harry.

Walton Beacham