



J.K. ROWLING

Synopsis

Born in Yate, England, on July 31, 1965, J.K. Rowling came from humble economic means before writing *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, a children's fantasy novel. The work was an international hit and Rowling wrote six more books in the series, which sold into the hundreds of millions and was adapted into a blockbuster film franchise. In 2012, Rowling released the non-Potter novel *The Casual Vacancy*.

Early Struggles

As a single mother living in Edinburgh, Scotland, Rowling became an international literary sensation in 1999, when the first three installments of her Harry Potter children's book series took over the top three slots of *The New York Times* best-seller list after achieving similar success in her native United Kingdom. The phenomenal response to Rowling's books culminated in July 2000, when the fourth volume in the series, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, became the fastest-selling book in history.

A graduate of Exeter University, Rowling moved to Portugal in 1990 to teach English. There, she met and married the Portuguese journalist Jorge Arantes. The couple's daughter, Jessica, was born in 1993. After her marriage ended in divorce, Rowling moved to Edinburgh with her daughter.

While struggling to support Jessica and herself on welfare, Rowling worked on a book, the idea for which had reportedly occurred to her while she was traveling on a train from Manchester to London in 1990. After a number of rejections, she finally sold the book. The book, and its subsequent series, chronicled the life of Harry Potter, a young wizard, and his motley band of cohorts at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Fame and Fortune

By the summer of 2000, the first three Harry Potter books, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* earned approximately \$480 million in three years, with over 35 million copies in print in 35 languages. In July 2000, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* saw a first printing of 5.3 million copies and advance orders of over 1.8 million. After a postponed release date, the fifth installment, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, hit bookstores in June 2003. The sixth installment, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, sold 6.9 million copies in the United States in its first 24 hours, the biggest opening in publishing history. Prior to its July 2007 release, the seventh and final installment in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, was the largest ever pre-ordered book at chain stores Barnes & Noble and Borders, and at Amazon.com.

Rowling, now Britain's 13th wealthiest woman—wealthier than even the Queen—does not plan to write any more books in the series, but has not entirely ruled out the possibility.

A film version of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, directed by Chris Columbus, was released in November 2001. In its opening weekend in the U.S., the film debuted on a record 8,200 screens and smashed the previous box-office record, earning an estimated \$93.5 million (\$20 million more than the previous recordholder, 1999's *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*). It ended the year as the top-grossing movie of 2001. The second and third films in the series opened in November 2002 and June 2004 respectively, each enjoying similar record-breaking

box-office success. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, directed by Mike Newell, was released in 2005. The fifth movie, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, released in July 2007, featured screenwriter Michael Goldenberg, who replaced Steve Kloves, writer of the first four films. In 2009, the film version of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* is scheduled to hit theaters on July 17. The movie is expected to gross several million at the box office. The Potter films are scheduled to come to an end in 2011.

After 'Harry Potter'

Although J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is finished, the author continues to work on more written works. *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, a collection of five fables mentioned in the *Harry Potter* book series, was released on November 4, 2008—at a tea party for 200 schoolchildren at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh. Rowling donated all royalties from the book to the Children's High Level Group, a charity that Rowling co-founded to support institutionalized children in Eastern Europe, which has since been renamed Lumos.

Rowling's first book aimed at adults, *The Casual Vacancy*, was published in September 2012. The novel, a dark comedy about a local election in the small English town of Pagford, received mixed reviews. A book review in *The New York Times* called the novel "disappointing" and "dull." A review in *The Telegraph*, however, gave the book three out of five stars, stating that the novel is "Rowling on bodkin-sharp comic form in the early pages ... Jane Austen herself would admire the way [Rowling] shows the news of Barry's death spreading like a virus round Pagford."

In 2013, Rowling broke into a new genre: crime fiction. But this new work involved a mystery all of its own. She published the mystery novel *Cuckoo Calling* that April under the pen name Robert Galbraith. In its first few months of release, the novel had modest sales and received positive reviews. Sales for the work skyrocketed in July when its author's identity was discovered. According to Bloomberg News report, Rowling said that "I had hoped to keep this secret a little longer, because being Robert Galbraith has been such a liberating experience. It has been wonderful to publish without hype or expectation, and pure pleasure to get feedback under a different name."

Later that year, Rowling announced a new film venture with Warner Bros. This new film series will be based on Rowling's hogwarts textbook *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. According to *Entertainment Weekly*, Rowling explained in a statement that the movies draw from "the worldwide community of witches and wizards where I was so happy for 17 years," but "is neither a prequel nor a sequel to the Harry Potter series, but an extension of the wizarding world."

Rowling is also reportedly working on a new *Harry Potter*-related book. On her website, she announced that she will write "an encyclopedia of Harry's world" and the royalties from this volume will be donated to charity.

In 2014, Rowling published a short story about grown-up Harry Potter and a Hogwarts school reunion on her website *Pottermore*.