

名人传记系列 (英文注释版)




J.K. Rowling

A BIOGRAPHY

J. K. 罗琳 传

【美】康尼·安·柯克 著

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[美] 康尼·安·柯克 (Connie Ann Kirk) 著

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SERIES FOREWORD

In response to high school and public library needs, Greenwood developed this distinguished series of full-length biographies specifically for student use. Prepared by field experts and professionals, these engaging biographies are tailored for high school students who need challenging yet accessible biographies. Ideal for secondary school assignments, the length, format and subject areas are designed to meet educators' requirements and students' interests.

Greenwood offers an extensive selection of biographies spanning all curriculum-related subject areas including social studies, the sciences, literature and the arts, history and politics, as well as popular culture, covering public figures and famous personalities from all time periods and backgrounds, both historic and contemporary, who have made an impact on American and/or world culture. Greenwood biographies were chosen based on comprehensive feedback from librarians and educators. Consideration was given to both curriculum relevance and inherent interest. The result is an intriguing mix of the well known and the unexpected, the saints and sinners from long-ago history and contemporary pop culture. Readers will find a wide array of subject choices from fascinating crime figures like Al Capone to inspiring pioneers like Margaret Mead, from the greatest minds of our time like Stephen Hawking to the most amazing success stories of our day like J.K. Rowling.

While the emphasis is on fact, not glorification, the books are meant to be fun to read. Each volume provides in-depth information about the subject's life from birth through childhood, the teen years, and adulthood. A

thorough account relates family background and education, traces personal and professional influences, and explores struggles, accomplishments, and contributions. A timeline highlights the most significant life events against a historical perspective. Suggestions for further reading give the biographies added reference value.

PREFACE

To those living around me while I was working on this project, I have frequently described the challenge of writing a biography about a living author in the prime of her life and at the height of her career as something like chasing a tornado. The subject is continually changing and moving at top speed (she is a living, breathing human being, after all), and the details about her life keep getting swept up and spit out as quickly as the information is gathered and verified or proven false. Trying to write an accurate story from a dizzying sea of misinformation about a subject fighting to keep her private life private amid the blitz of a massive popular culture environment at times seemed to be an almost impossible task; however, the reader should know that a sincere effort has been made here, just the same.

As yet, there is no full-length scholarly biography of J.K. Rowling in existence, so that makes writing a biography for the general reader and education audience even more challenging in terms of gathering and evaluating information. My mode of working has been to cast a wide net. I obtained every biography that was in print, watched or read a transcript of every live or taped interview I could find, then went deep sea fishing in the dangerous waters of the internet. Wherever possible, I yielded to Jo Rowling's own accounts of events. Sometimes, to my surprise, even she appeared to contradict herself, such as when she said in one interview that she did not particularly care for fantasies, and then in other places she mentions reading a number of them, even placing fantasies such as Elizabeth Goudge's *The Little White Horse* among her favorite books as a child. For a biographer, even one who is trying to gather information for

the interested general reader as well as for students and teachers to use in the classroom, details like this are frustrating, to say the least. I hope my sincere attempt to relay the information as I found it and was best able to evaluate it at the time will be considered when new and conflicting information comes along, as it inevitably will.

I want to thank Sean Smith for his very helpful book, *J. K. Rowling: A Biography*, which came out just when I needed a rudder to help guide this biography written for Greenwood's author series. Despite the faults that some have found with it, including Rowling's own reported dismissal, Smith's mass market book is the best documented, most thorough, and fairest treatment of J. K. Rowling's life that I have seen to date, and much of the information I include in this volume I owe to Smith's well-meaning work. I applaud his effort to clarify some inconsistencies in previously reported information (for example, he includes a copy of Rowling's birth certificate in his book that contradicts Rowling's statement of where she was born) and for interviewing many of the people in Rowling's life, even if, for the most part, they are not what readers might call the "main characters," such as family and closest friends. Inconsistencies and challenged information still exist, nonetheless, and I hope readers of this book will feel free to contact the author through Greenwood to offer corrections and additions for subsequent editions. Famous as she is, J. K. Rowling is still a relatively new author, and information about her life remains sketchy and incomplete.

I would also like to thank Lindsey Fraser for her work, which I also used as source material for this one. Ms. Fraser interviewed Rowling for the two autobiographical books that have appeared thus far—in the United States *Conversations with J. K. Rowling*, published by Scholastic, and in England *An Interview with J. K. Rowling*, part of the Telling Tales series published by Mammoth. Without the trust that Ms. Fraser has obviously engendered from Jo Rowling, we would perhaps not have Rowling's own words in book form answering many of the most frequently asked questions from general readers, teachers, and students about her life and her writing. Wherever possible, I have deferred to Rowling's own answers to questions that come up about her biography.

Philip Nel's *J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Novels: A Reader's Guide*, part of the Continuum Contemporaries series published by Continuum, provides a good, quick introduction to the novels from a literary point of view, especially in terms of the novels' contexts within world literature. While the biography section in Nel's guide repeats several errors present in the earlier information circulated about the novelist, such as her birthdate, the guide does provide an adequate introduction to Rowling's placement thus far within various literary traditions.

By far the best reference I encountered for in-depth details about the novels themselves within the realm of Rowling's made-up world is the "Harry Potter Lexicon," edited and maintained on the web by librarian Steve Vander Ark at <http://www.i2k.com/~svderark/lexicon/index.html>. Vander Ark's work in compiling plot timelines, lists of language variations between the British and American publications, and various other lists and information was a good resource for questions of that sort that came up occasionally in my work.

The last resource for this project that I'd like to recognize here is the biographical documentary made with Rowling's cooperation, "J.K. Rowling: Harry Potter and Me," originally broadcast by the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) in late 2001 and re-aired in the United States on the Arts & Entertainment (A&E) network as an A&E *Biography* program in 2002. In the documentary, Rowling relates facts about her own story on location from the various places of importance to her life and work and clarifies some widespread misconceptions. The documentary contains information that older readers, the audience for which this book is intended, will find especially interesting.

I would like to thank Lynn Malloy at Greenwood, who initiated the idea for a general reader and education biography and asked me to write it. Thanks also to Ms. Rowling's agent, Christopher Little, and her American editor, Arthur A. Levine, for their gracious and helpful replies to my requests for information.

A special personal thank you to my family—Ken, Ben and John—for living with, and taking an active interest in, this uninvited guest in our home for the duration of its research and writing. Finally, a last thank you to Jo Rowling, fellow traveler, for continuing to live her life with courage, cleverness, and a little help from her friends.

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Chapter 1

ORIGINS AND CONTEXTS

It is early November 2001, and J.K. Rowling (pronounced “rolling”) stands outside, posing for photos behind three young British actors. Flashbulbs fire and pop every which way, and the author shows her characteristic closed-mouth grin while protectively touching the shoulders of the small actors in front of her. She’s been through this before. Well, not quite, but she’s certainly seen hype surrounding her books before. A year earlier she read to an audience of 12,000 people at Skydome Stadium in Toronto, Canada, an event that was quite possibly the largest audience recorded for an author’s reading. She read before another 10,000 at the International Writers and Readers Festival in Vancouver just 24 hours later. She has appeared on American national television shows such as *The Today Show* and *Larry King Live*, which broadcast to millions of people every day. In England, she rode on a 57-year-old train for a four-day tour from King’s Cross Station in London to meet with thousands of screaming fans hoping to obtain a coveted autograph. She watched in dismay, attempting to greet them, as her promoters forced her to stay onboard, waving from her compartment window and moving on with the rush of the promotional machinery to the next scheduled stops. In a single day’s appearance in Boston in 1999, the fans lined up, curling around the block, and she signed 1,400 copies of her book. Just as her character, Harry Potter, woke up one day to find that he was famous in the wizard world, Jo Rowling must have found herself in a similar state of shock not long after her first book was published.

Her understanding of Harry must be growing by the day. While she admits a likeness to her own youth can be found in the book-loving character

Hermione, her life right now is more like Harry's—a reluctant, brave hero trying to do good with the new powers she is discovering she has had all along. The more power she gains in fame, influence, and wealth, the more her privacy and personal history are tread upon and the more those who desire what she has obtained try to undercut her success. Like Harry, her courage through some of the worst moments in her life provides the legends that propel fascination with her life now, even though those are times that left scars she'd often rather not be reminded of.

By mid-2002, the Harry Potter books had sold over 150 million copies and had been translated into more than 50 different languages—only the Bible has been translated into more. At its American release, the Warner Brothers film adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* grossed a record-breaking \$31.3 million on opening day, blasting to another record-breaking \$90.3 million over its opening three-day weekend. The film spurred another round of sales for the first book in the series, pushing it above the other three on the bestseller lists, which none of them has left since their publication. Sales of the video and DVD versions of the first film were also exceptional, even as they coincided with already popular computer games based on the story. Merchandising—including Harry Potter Legos, Harry Potter action figures, play sets, stationery, and clothing—boosted holiday sales in an otherwise dipping economy. Internet sites with Harry Potter's and Rowling's names yielded more than 1,800,000 hits.

The books are not just a popular and commercial success, either. There are more than a dozen books of literary criticism, reading companions, teaching guides, biographies, and other related studies already in print, with more on the way. Scholars of literature and popular culture are discussing the books and the aura of hype surrounding them, called "Pottermania" or the "Harry Potter Phenomenon," at academic conferences and in journal articles for the serious-minded. Professors are offering seminars on Harry Potter to upper-level college undergraduates. So far, the books have been praised more than they have been criticized in most circles, but negative criticism is growing in literary and education communities, especially in the form of backlash against commercialism caused by the films. All this, with only a bit more than half of the seven-part series in publication in 2002. The power of magic draws suspicion today as it always has, and the power of the imagination remains as mysterious as the power of magic.

The mirror of desire reflects the rags-to-riches story of Harry Potter over and over. Harry himself goes from rags to riches, and so does his creator, Jo Rowling. Daniel Radcliffe, the young actor from Liverpool who plays Harry in the first two feature films, is also undergoing a magical

transformation to new found, worldwide fame. With Radcliffe just twelve years old at the time of the premiere of the first film, it is no wonder that Rowling reached out protectively behind him in the face of the barrage of photographers. She and Daniel share the same birthday, July 31, with the character they both hold dear in a way not even the most serious reader and dedicated fan will ever know. Other comparisons between Rowling and Radcliffe come to mind. Jo's and Daniel's eyes are similarly shaped; he could be her son based on their physical appearance. The actress in the movie who plays Lily Potter, Harry's mother, in the Mirror of Erised has the long reddish hair that is suggestive of Jo's in earlier days. In many ways, the stories of Jo, Harry, and Daniel are linked. Over time, we shall see how their stories unbraided and rebraided with one another. But this is Jo's story, and it is in her story that Harry's begins and Daniel's converges.

This book narrates the story beginning soon after the release of the first Harry Potter film by Warner Brothers in late 2001 and the release of the video and DVD in May, 2002. It then traces Jo Rowling's childhood and family life, moving gradually forward to her years in school, her early career, and then to the accounts of how Harry Potter originated in Rowling's imagination, the circumstances surrounding the completion and publishing history of the books, and finally the controversies that have arisen regarding the four books that have appeared to date.

How did a middle class, unemployed teacher from England who was down on her luck at the end of the twentieth century become one of the wealthiest women in Great Britain by the turn of the twenty-first century? What makes the Harry Potter books so popular around the world? How is J. K. Rowling holding up under the pressure of fame and promotional tours for the books and the films thus far? What is she doing with the mounting fortune that has come with the fame? What and who influenced Jo's life and career?

Over the course of this book, we shall try to identify and define some of the answers to these questions and others. Every attempt has been made to present the facts as they are currently known, in an as objective a way as possible. Discrepancies in information will be noted so that the reader may make up his/her own mind about areas in question or do further research from the continuing updates available on the story of this living person at the height of her career.

While every effort has been made to present information objectively, the author admits that biographies are not free from bias. Information must be validated and cross-checked for accuracy and evaluated for bias in terms of its source, but it is the biographer's decision whether or not to include validated material in the telling of a life story. The criteria on which

decisions are made about leaving in or taking out information reflect a biographer's bias. This biographer admits the following biases up front, stemming from her own background: the perspective is distinctly American, moderately feminist, and reflects the sensibilities and interests of a fellow writer as well as a scholar of literature. These biases should be taken into consideration when evaluating claims made within this book.

With three volumes of the planned seven-book series yet to be published, it is perhaps unfair or premature to determine Jo Rowling's place as an author and contextualize her Harry Potter series within the vast universe of world literature. However, there are a few traditions and families of fiction with which the Harry Potter books appear to share commonalities, and these are worth noting, even at this stage in the series' publication. While Jo Rowling has said that she is writing the Harry Potter books for her own pleasure and amusement as an adult, most readers acknowledge that the books gained their initial fame as children's books. Within the constellation of children's books, the series can be compared with others in a number of ways. There are many children's series in which the same core group of characters appear in most or all of the books. Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* novels, for example, are autobiographical accounts of Laura Ingalls's family life growing up on the plains of the midwestern United States. The series shares the same group of characters, with some additions and deletions as the narratives move forward in time, age, and maturity. Popular "whodunnits" or detective series for children and young adults such as *The Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew* share a common set of characters grouped as friends or relatives who solve mysteries in novel after novel. The *Oz* books by L. Frank Baum, and Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* books are others. One difference between series of this type and Rowling's is that each book is an independent story, not necessarily a continuation of a number of tightly woven plot lines, as the Harry Potter books are. Also, many series books, such as the *Stratemeyer* Syndicate books, *The Hardy Boys* and *Nancy Drew*, become a commercial franchise that gets taken over by other authors when the original author dies, thus diminishing the authenticity of the original stories. Rowling has said that she has planned out all seven of the books in her series very carefully and that the series will end with book seven. She has even written the series epilogue, which will explain what happens to all of the remaining Harry Potter characters after they leave Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

A category of children's books that has a strong claim to the Harry Potter books is the genre of fantasy fiction. Fantasy includes a made-up world which, with children's books in particular, usually involves animals or animal-like creatures that exhibit human-like qualities. Inanimate

objects may also come to life with personalities of their own. Probably some of the best-known fantasies for children include Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*; C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*; Philip Pullman's series, including *The Golden Compass*; E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, *Stuart Little*, and *The Trumpet of the Swan*; Lewis Carroll's *The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland*, and Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit books, as well as J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

Fantasy allows the writer to create an entire world and populate it with whatever kind of flora and fauna and characters she or he desires. The boundaries seem almost limitless in these made-up worlds, but the author must know that boundaries exist within all worlds in order for the settings to be fully formed and believable. Readers of fantasy enjoy the freedom from the world they know but recognize and expect to learn the limits of the new world created by the fantasy writer. Part of the enjoyment of reading fantasy is pushing the limits with the author, learning right alongside the characters what is and isn't possible in this strange and unusual place, then coming to grips with how this setting is alike and different from the world we do know.

School stories are another longstanding tradition that the Harry Potter books share with the category of children's literature. School stories are set in academia or have plots that revolve around specific school settings and include an emphasis on school friendships and conflicts with teachers and/or schoolwork. Often there are social problems with bullies on the playground that a more sensitive character must confront. School-sponsored sporting events frequently provide a setting for climactic scenes where conflicts that have arisen elsewhere are played out in a safe environment. In Britain, many novels in this genre open and close with train rides to boarding schools. The first known British novel in the school story genre is *Tom Brown's Schooldays* by Thomas Hughes, published in 1857. The novel initiated the now-familiar motifs of school stories of its kind, which stopped being produced in large numbers between the world wars in the twentieth century. Motifs include a boy protagonist in boarding school, a kindly headmaster but some questionable teachers, school bullies, school sports championship tournaments, and experiences of self-discovery for the hero.

A third genre that can lay claim to the Harry Potter series within children's literature—or more properly its older sibling, young adult or adolescent literature—is the coming-of-age story. This is more evident in the later Harry Potter books, and when all of the books are considered together this will perhaps be an even more prominent theme. Books of this sort describe a character's maturation from childhood to adulthood, from

innocence to experience, from naiveté to knowledge. Coming-of-age books have been popular for a long time and include classics such as J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, as well as more recent titles such as Karen Hesse's *Out of the Dust*. Usually, these stories involve introducing the main character to a complex, adult situation. The conflict and how the protagonist deals with it result in growth and maturation of the adolescent and propel him/her toward adulthood. Readers of coming-of-age books must be sensitive about when they are ready to read about some of these complex, adult issues. In more recent years, the issues that shape these books have gone beyond the death of a loved one or the struggle between good and evil to other problems that are perhaps even more complicated. Young adult issues include war, disease, crime, dysfunctional families, alcoholism and other substance abuse, eating disorders, and complex social issues such as abortion, sexual activity, sexual orientation, sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, euthanasia, and poverty and injustice. Readers of the first four Harry Potter books have said that they are curious about what issues Harry may confront at Hogwarts in the latter books, which even Rowling has admitted are perhaps more appropriate for an adolescent audience. Many readers sense a foreshadowed deepening of the series' complexity beginning in book four.

The Harry Potter novels are also very popular with adults, and their connection to various genres in adult fiction makes it easy to see that there are several precedents to suggest that this would be the case. Among fantasies, Rowling's series is most often compared to J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, which she has admitted to reading. Rowling has pointed out that Tolkien created a much more elaborate alternative world—a Middle Earth complete with not only different beings, societies, and plants and animals as she has done, but also with its own languages and myths, which Tolkien worked out in intricate detail. Tolkien created over a dozen new languages and alphabets in such detail that dedicated readers have actually studied them and have been able to speak and write using them. For the film release of the first book in the Tolkien trilogy in late 2001, the actors consulted with these experts to learn how to pronounce the made-up languages correctly.

Another school of fiction for adults that Rowling's books fit into is that involving orphan protagonists and benefactors, a tradition that Rowling inherits from her famous predecessor and countryman Charles Dickens. Interestingly, Dickens's well-known classics, such as *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, were first serialized in periodicals that were wildly popular in their day. Dickens was a nineteenth-century British "celebrity" to be sure, one who was asked to give readings and was plied with questions

from the public about what his popular characters were going to do in upcoming installments of the stories. Scholars admit that Dickens's writing in later installments was probably influenced by his readers' comments about earlier installments. Rowling has made a pledge to herself not to let this happen, since she has said she has all seven books already plotted out the way she wants the full story to go. Orphans also appear with great regularity, of course, in children's literature as well. It is a frequent technique to give the child protagonist more control in the plot.

Still another genre in both the adult and children's realm is that of logic puzzles and whodunits that require deductive reasoning to figure out questions or mysteries of the plot. Usually the reader can share in solving the puzzles with the same clues, but can also wait and follow along until the characters solve them. Games, both actual games like chess and made-up games of fantastic sorts, are also popular in many of these books. Books of this type include Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes series. Ellen Raskin's *The Westing Game* represents another children's version of this same genre.

It is not possible to say at this stage whether or not the Harry Potter series will have long-lasting appeal as great literature. Many readers see the series having that potential, given the many allusions to mythology and languages, the incredible popularity of the books, and the insatiable appetite for the books yet to be released in the series. They see generations of young readers growing up with the series year by year and book by book, establishing a relationship with the author and her characters that will outlive the feature films, commercialization, and bestseller lists. Some fans foresee this generation of children as having a strong desire to share this experience with their own children, thus keeping the Harry Potter series viable and relevant for a new generation of children. They point to the word-of-mouth popularity among kids that sparked the sales of the first books, and to the thousands of reluctant readers across the globe who have been initiated into the joy of reading through the Harry Potter series.

Skeptics see the series more as a cultural phenomenon that is simply a flash in the pan that will die out as soon as the seventh book appears telling the end of the story, if not before. They claim that young people read the books because of peer pressure and curiosity to see what all the fuss is about more than for any connection they may see or feel with the characters. Critics point to how the books are a "fast read," are badly edited (especially, they claim, book four), and seem to follow a formulaic pattern of a group of friends solving a mystery by piecing together clues dropped into the novels, with a climatic scene that always combines suspense, action, and adventure. They say that, like a television show, all of

the action occurs within the same timeframe, in this case the length of a school year, and that the mystery gets solved before the characters return home for the summer.

Skeptics also point to the unprecedented amount paid in the American purchase of the rights to the books by Scholastic at auction. They say Rowling's rags-to-riches legend as a single parent trying to write fueled the hype and mystery surrounding her and her books, and that the hype continues as the movie adaptations pile onto the near-annual book releases. Critics also say that even the insatiable hunger created by popular culture in the early twenty-first century will be oversaturated with "Pottermania," and that the stories will lose their appeal once they are all in print and on film. When there is a lull between book publications as happened in 2002, skeptics argue, the enthusiasm of readers for the series wanes. They say the books will not stand up to time or in-depth analysis, but that the "Harry Potter Phenomenon" will be studied longer than the books themselves as a turn-of-the-millennium cultural moment.

Two things are certain when pondering which of these two views about the lasting qualities of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books is right. One is that not even the author, who is sharing the spotlight with Harry these days, knows which projection will come true. She has said that she will always write, that when all the Harry Potter books are done she will leave Hogwarts like her characters and start another project. In the meantime, her life appears to keep running along a parallel track with Harry's. While Harry is getting interested in relationships in books four and five, Rowling is enjoying a romance of her own. At Christmas 2001, she married a doctor she had met in Scotland one year before. The second thing that is sure about which prediction holds true—whether the Harry Potter books will be regarded as flashes in the pan or as timeless classics—is that only time, and the future, will tell. In the meantime, in her late thirties, Rowling's life proceeds full throttle. Before we try to catch up to the events in her life at the moment, it is important that we look back at where she's been and how she's gotten where she is.

Chapter 2

EARLY LIFE AND FAMILY

The woman behind the J.K. Rowling persona is, quite literally, a child of the 1960s. She was born in 1965, the middle year of one of the most turbulent decades of the twentieth century, a truly exciting time to be alive. That same summer the Beatles—who had “invaded” America the year before with a landmark appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show* on CBS that would change rock and roll and popular culture forever—played Shea Stadium in Flushing, New York, to 60,000 screaming fans. It had been three years since the Americans put John Glenn into orbit, and landing the first man on the moon was still four years away. Seen in retrospect, it is fitting that UNICEF (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund), one of Rowling’s later interests, won the Nobel Peace Prize the same year that she was born.

Given that the success of this writer occurred at the turn of the century, it is interesting to consider the world into which J.K. Rowling was born. In the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson (Democrat from Texas) was president; in Great Britain, Harold Wilson (Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, Labor Party) was prime minister. It was the year Winston Churchill died and Malcolm X was assassinated. In 1965, the first American combat troops arrived in Vietnam, growing to 190,000 by December of that year. Popular movies released in 1965 included the classics *Dr. Zhivago* and *The Sound of Music*. The latter won the Oscar for best picture. The Watts riots occurred over six days in Los Angeles, and Martin Luther King, Jr. and 2,600 other civil rights activists were arrested in Selma, Alabama, for protesting voting registration rules. Poet T.S. Eliot died that year, as did singer Nat King Cole. Soviet cosmonaut Aleksei Leonov performed the first space walk.