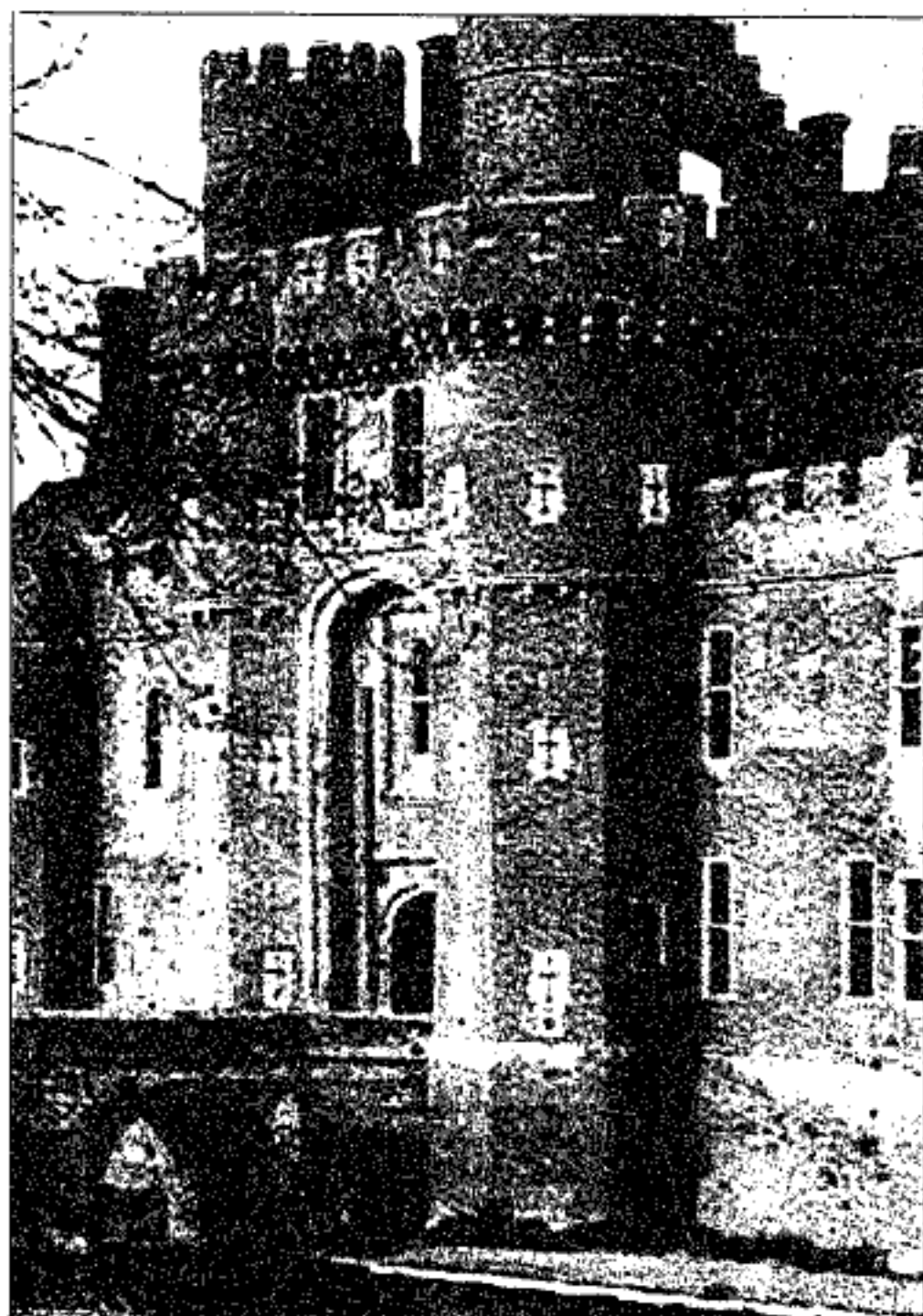


# HARRY POTTER'S CREATOR



**HOGWARTS:** This 15th century castle in London was used for the exterior shots of the foremost wizarding school in the world.

Continued from previous page

avourite books for me.

**QUESTION:** The great thing about having a Harry Potter feature film is that your fans will, at last, be able to see a game of Quidditch, not to mention some of those beasts, for real — albeit on the big screen. Are you happy with how your story has been translated for the cinema?

**ROWLING:** I wouldn't be truthful if I didn't say that I had some concerns to begin with.

As I recently said to my biographer, when I first started to get offers from film companies, I initially said no to all of them. I am not against cinema — I actually love good movies. However, the vital thing for me was that the studio which eventually got the production contract, Warners, promised to be true to the book, and I have great faith in their commitment to that.

Obviously there are some things that won't work onscreen, but I didn't want the plot to change very much at all. The crucial thing is that the integrity of the characters isn't messed about with.

**QUESTION:** Nevertheless, did you not feel at all concerned that you were letting Harry Potter fall into the hands of a major Hollywood studio, with the very real risk that they might be tempted to Americanize things too much for your tastes?

**ROWLING:** When I first met the screenwriter Steve Kloves, the fact that he was American did indeed make me wary, as I felt that he could very well be careless and insensitive with my creative baby. But as soon as he said his favourite character was Hermione, he completely won me over because, as I said earlier in this interview, she is the character who is closest to me. Steve also won my confidence by saying how protective both he and the production team were about my book, and that they were determined to avoid that usual Hollywood gaucheness.

**QUESTION:** I believe some of the cast came to you for advice as to how to interpret their roles. Which cast member did you particularly enjoy helping?

**ROWLING:** One of my most enjoyable experiences involved assisting the big Scottish actor Robbie Coltrane. When Robbie approached me as to how to find the heart and soul of his onscreen character, the gamekeeper Hagrid, I said to imagine Ha-

grid as being one of those large Hells Angels minus his motorbike. The sort of guy who, when his fierce friends are not around, is quite happy to talk about gardening or child-rearing.

**QUESTION:** If the film is as successful as it is anticipated, you will make even more money than you have done already. Will that kind of success spoil you?

**ROWLING:** Gosh, I sincerely hope not. Apart from being able to buy a house in one of the more fashionable parts of London, my tastes are still pretty modest. However, it's great to be able to buy my daughter Jessica all the toys I once couldn't afford to get her. Because for many years when my marriage broke up, I was a single mom, and money was very scarce.

However, I can't pretend that this new-found financial success hasn't made our lives much more comfortable. The best thing about having money is that it stops me worrying about paying the bills, and for that I am truly grateful. And we now have a nice house to live in rather than the two-bedroom mouse-infested flat that Jessica and I used to inhabit.

**QUESTION:** Moving away from the financial rewards, what other parts of the success of Harry Potter have you most enjoyed?

**ROWLING:** Being by nature creative, I would have to say that the actual process of writing is my favourite part. And even though there are difficult days when very little comes out on paper, that's the part I love above all else. But part of being famous is that you have to go out and meet your readers, and that is incredibly satisfying.

The first time I ever had to do a Harry Potter reading was to about four people. In fact, so few people turned up at this bookshop that the staff felt really sorry for me and came and stood around and listened as well. I remember I was shaking so badly that I kept missing my line. I was terrified.

But since then, I have found readings to be the most fantastic experience. I think part of that satisfaction comes from the fact that I was writing the books in secret for so long that I never talked to anyone about them.

For five years I was the only person who had read a word of Harry Potter, and the only person who knew all these things about Harry's world and his friends. So the novelty of sitting in front of all these hundreds of people in bookshops all over the world and

hearing them laugh, answering their questions and discussing my characters still hasn't worn off.

**QUESTION:** Conversely, what have you least enjoyed about Harry Potter's success?

**ROWLING:** Journalists banging on my front door. I don't like that at all.

**QUESTION:** If you could travel anywhere by 'floo powder' (the magical powder in your stories that transports people anywhere they want to travel), where would you go and with who?

**ROWLING:** I'd take a few of my best friends to Hawaii. I was there for

last New Year's and it was wonderful.

**QUESTION:** Can you tell me anything about the next Harry Potter novel, which will be No. 5?

**ROWLING:** Well, it will be a papery object with pages inside. Harry, of course, will appear in it. The title is going to be *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, and I am afraid, for the time being at least, that that's as far as I am prepared to go at the moment. After all, I don't want to spoil the fun by giving anything away.

**QUESTION:** And finally, what do you hope your book and these film ad-

aptations will achieve?

**ROWLING:** To inspire people both young and old(er) to use their imagination. And to drive children back to reading books. If I can credit myself with anything, it has been to make it cool for young people to start reading again. And in this day and age when books have to fight it out with such diversions as Gameboy and Pokémon, that alone gives me more pleasure than anything.

POSTSCRIPT ...

This interview was given by J.K. Rowling in order to help the charity Comic Relief, which provides money for starving children in Africa and other disadvantaged countries of the world. However, as she has an aversion to over-inquisitive journalists, she would only consent to doing this interview if the questions were from children or ordinary readers of her books. In her view, children and ordinary folk have no hidden "media" agenda. So what you have read is, unusually, a truly democratic interview in which the best part of 12 people, from 8 to 35 years old, were able to ask her some searching questions.

J.K. (a.k.a. Joanne Kathleen) Rowling was born in the summer of 1965. Her parents were avid bibliophiles who stocked their house with books. At Exeter University, she earned a French and classics degree.

As a post-graduate, she moved to London to work at Amnesty International doing research into human rights abuses in francophone Africa.

Once she had made a serious start with *The Philosopher's Stone*, Jo then moved to north Portugal to teach English as a foreign language. She married a Portuguese journalist in October, 1992, and gave birth to her daughter Jessica in 1993.

J.K. Rowling has had her share of suffering and intense sadness. Apart from her marriage ending, on another sad note her beloved half-French, half-Scottish mother died of multiple sclerosis at the age of only 45.

In 1995, the Scottish Arts Council gave her a substantial grant to finish *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* — the largest literary award offered by the organization to a children's author.

Joanne Rowling's fortune is estimated at about £30,000,000 (\$70 million Canadian) and rising fast.

Tomorrow: The boy who would be Harry

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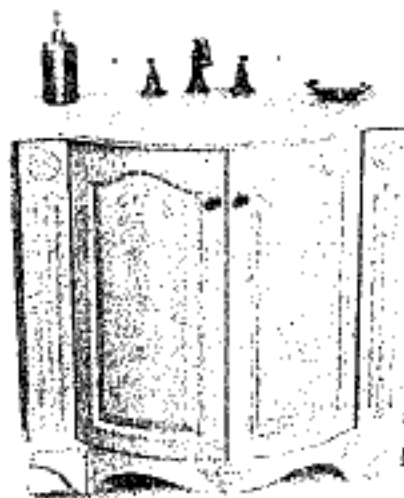


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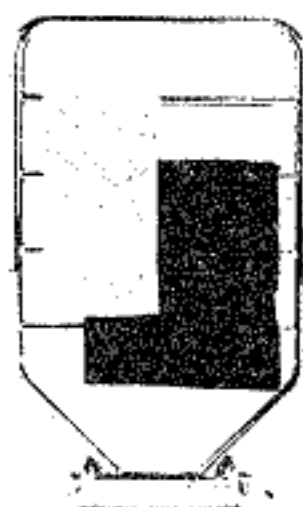
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