



# One Story that Lives On



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Every fandom, for each of its followers, is serious business. Having grown up with my nose buried into hijinks of the Wizarding World, Harry Potter is serious business for me. Despite that, the incessant flow of follow-up content ever since we turned the last page on Harry's adventures makes us wonder whether they're overdoing it now.

The strength of fantasy fiction lies in the creation of its own realm – with its own culture, history and even language – and the way it gets readers to believe in it. Such is the power wielded by J. R. R. Tolkien and George R. R. Martin, attracting fans to immerse themselves completely into the politics of Westeros or adventures of Middle Earth. J. K. Rowling did quite the opposite – her creation weaved itself so deeply into our lives that it wasn't us that escaped into an alternate universe, it was the wizarding world that slammed doors open and cemented a place for itself in the Muggle world. That's what makes Harry Potter so difficult to let go of.

"Its appeal comes from the awesome imaginary world it is based on," says Ornab Olindo, a university student who grew up reading Harry Potter. "When I'm stuck in traffic I imagine myself using floo powder." Using examples of Star Wars and the Game of Thrones, Ornab voices the opinion that, "A franchise can never expand if it isn't commercialised. All you can expect is that they do justice to the

original material that made it great in the first place."

And that's where the difficulty lies. The Harry Potter series left a benchmark that made it difficult for many of us to connect to other literary worlds with as much passion. The risks involved in doing justice to it with new material, therefore, are as monumental as its original impact.

It was exciting at first to be able to revisit the wizarding world in the newly launched Pottermore website, and even more so when Rowling started releasing 12-part Harry Potter short stories back in the winter of 2014. With each new release of HP content and trivia, however, the excitement of many fans seems to have dimmed. It has hammered home the age-old fact that anything dragged on for too long tends to lose its charm; the magic hiding behind the courtyard of the Leaky Cauldron is least deserving of such a fate.

Mustafa Rafid Amin, a university graduate who started reading Harry Potter at the age of 11 admits, "I'm not at all excited about people meddling with the franchise. Being a 90s kid and a huge Potterhead myself, I'd actually discourage people from stretching the storyline. I mean, why take the risk? We fans have a special bond with the Potter trio, the Weasleys and many others. We want to cherish that memory by re-reading the books and watching the movies over and over again. We live the original storyline. I think it would be better if people let it be."

Meanwhile, the upcoming movie "Fan-

tastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" seems like an interesting premise, giving us a chance to further explore Rowling's magical world while keeping the original story of Harry Potter intact. The concept behind "The Cursed Child" just left me worried – do we really want to see Harry, a character that essentially shaped our entire childhood through his many adventures, as an "overworked Hogwarts employee, a husband and a father of three", living an ordinary life?

"But I don't think things will stay ordinary for long," counters Shababa Iqbal, another millennium-bred Potterhead. "As a true fan, you want to get hold of anything related to your favourite series, because they have been such a big part of your life."

The majority of the Potterhead population comprises "90s kids" and millennials. Incidentally, these are the same people who grew up watching the TV show "Friends". The cultural influence of Friends and the Potterverse are largely similar. As a passionate follower of both, I can speak for a large portion of its fan base when commending the makers' decision to leave the TV show alone after it ended. They refrained from cashing in on the Friends' stronghold on its viewers with a follow-up movie that would probably have fallen short of expectations. As a result, the favourite onscreen story of millions was left untouched – a story we still return to on lazy weekends and during exam stress. It's the kind of novelty that Harry Potter and his friends deserve

to live on with.

"I cried a million times when the series ended," shares Tahrina Chowdhury, recent university graduate who became a Potterhead at the age of 13. "But I am glad it did, as most TV shows ruin their charm after a while, unlike Friends. The same goes for Harry Potter. I will watch/read The Cursed Child but I wouldn't get my hopes up," she explains.

Tahrina adds, "The fact that something remains unfinished keeps its image intact and allows the readers to wonder what could have been. That imagination never lets fans forget the magic of Harry Potter. No matter what, if something continues for too long it is bound to lose its appeal and then people don't feel the same way about it. I don't want to ruin how I feel about Harry Potter."

Amidst the valuable morals of tolerance, integrity and courage that Harry's story instilled in us, another prevalent theme was obsession – from Snape's fixation on Lily to Voldemort's obsession with world domination. In the end, both of them lost. As Dumbledore advised an eleven-year-old Harry glued to the illusion of the past displayed on the Mirror of Erised – "It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live." Maybe we'd do well to listen to his advice. After all, he was the greatest wizard of all time.

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