

Text A

"Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" is a red-blooded adventure movie, dripping with atmosphere, filled with the gruesome and the **sublime**¹, and surprisingly faithful to the novel. A lot of things could have gone wrong, and none of them have: Chris Columbus' movie is an enchanting classic that does full justice to a story that was a daunting challenge. The novel by J.K. Rowling was muscular and vivid, and the danger was that the movie would make things too cute and cuddly. It doesn't. Like an "Indiana Jones" for younger viewers, it tells a rip-roaring tale of supernatural adventure, where colorful and **eccentric**² characters alternate with scary stuff like a three-headed dog, a pit of tendrils known as the Devil's Snare and a two-faced immortal who drinks unicorn blood. Scary, yes, but not too scary--just scary enough.

Three high-spirited, clear-eyed kids populate the center of the movie. [Daniel Radcliffe](#) plays Harry Potter, he with the round glasses, and like all of the young characters he looks much as I imagined him, but a little older. He once played [David Copperfield](#) on the BBC, and whether Harry will be the hero of his own life in this story is much in doubt at the beginning.

Deposited as a foundling on a suburban doorstep, Harry is raised by his aunt and uncle as a poor relation, then summoned by a blizzard of letters to become a student at Hogwarts School, an Oxbridge for magicians. Our first glimpse of Hogwarts sets the tone for the movie's special effects. Although computers can make anything look realistic, too much realism would be the wrong choice for "Harry Potter," which is a story in which everything, including the sets and locations, should look a little made up. The school, rising on ominous Gothic battlements from a moonlit lake, looks about as real as Xanadu in "[Citizen Kane](#)," and its corridors, cellars and great hall, although in some cases making use of real buildings, continue the feeling of an atmospheric book illustration. At Hogwarts, Harry makes two friends and an enemy. The friends are Hermione Granger ([Emma Watson](#)), whose merry face and tangled curls give Harry **nudges**³ in the direction of lightening up a little, and Ron Weasley ([Rupert Grint](#)), all pluck, luck and untamed talents. The enemy is Draco Malfoy ([Tom Felton](#)), who will do anything, and plenty besides, to be sure his house places first at the end of the year.

The story you either already know, or do not want to know. What is good to know is that the adult cast, a who's who of British actors, play their roles more or less as if they believed them. There is a broad style of British acting, developed in Christmas pantomimes, which would have been fatal to this material; these actors know that, and dial down to just this side of too much. Watch [Alan Rickman](#) drawing out his words until they seem ready to snap, yet somehow staying in character. [Maggie Smith](#), still in the prime of Miss Jean Brodie, is Prof. Minerva McGonagall, who assigns newcomers like Harry to one of the school's four houses. [Richard Harris](#) is headmaster Dumbledore, his beard so long that in an Edward Lear poem, birds would nest in it. [Robbie Coltrane](#) is the gamekeeper, Hagrid, who has a record of misbehavior and a way of saying very important things and then not believing that he said them.

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- Source: Ebert, R. (2001, November 16). *Harry Potter and the sorcerer's Stone Movie Review (2001)*. Rogerebert.com. <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerers-stone-2001>

¹ **Sublime**: awe-inspiringly beautiful, grand, or excellent.

² **Eccentric**: Unconventional or slightly strange in behavior or style

³ **Nudge**: To gently push or prod someone or something

⁴ **Loathsome**: Extremely unpleasant or disgusting.

Text B

More than 100 million copies of these novels now circulate in 47 languages. The movie version of the first book has claimed national magazine covers and is backed by an initial marketing campaign pegged at more than \$40 million. Internet buzz-meisters have made the film an odds-on favorite to break the three-day opening box-office record. Thus, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the first of what Warner Bros. hopes will be a series of *Harry Potter* films to open each Christmas season, runs the risk of getting lost in its own consumer and media frenzy.

Fortunately, all hands involved in the production have faithfully observed the mantra, "It's the book, stupid." Taking only a few shortcuts and hewing as close to the spirit of a literary work as any movie can, *Harry Potter* vividly imagines the world of wizards, magic school and mystical creatures found in J.K. Rowling's series of children's adventure books. Clearly, the sky's the limit, not only for worldwide box office but video, DVD, television and merchandising.

It cost a reported \$126 million to give substance to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, with its floating staircases and owl mail-delivery system. But the money is well spent: It has established *Harry Potter*'s cinematic credibility. Adapted by Steve Kloves and directed by Chris Columbus, the story remains a child's fantasy version of a British boarding school, where young heroes and a spunky heroine battle not only against the forces of evil but, more importantly, study hard enough to continue next year. (After all, who wouldn't want to go to this school?)

The young actors in the major roles all but pop out of Rowling's pages. Daniel Radcliffe plays the *Oliver Twist*-like Harry with an unaffected, intelligent approach that maintains his wide-eyed wonder yet grounds Harry in a realistic sense of loyalty and honor.

A beautiful young girl named Emma Watson nails **precocious**⁵ Hermoine Granger. She makes scholarly ambition and determination admirable virtues, even if these don't always go down well with fellow students. Rupert Grint's Ron Weasley gamely bucks a class system that exists even in a magic school and looks to exploit talents he does possess to maximum effect. As their snotty nemesis Draco Malfoy, Tom Felton is the personification of upper-class insolence.

As your child will be happy to tell you, Harry is an unreasonably well-balanced youngster, considering his miserable upbringing by a bullying family of Muggles — humans with no magical abilities. On his 11th birthday, though, the bespectacled Harry learns that he is the orphaned son of two powerful wizards. They were killed in a battle with an evil wizard, who was unable to kill Harry as an infant but did leave a lightning scar on his forehead. Now an adolescent, he is invited to attend Hogwarts to fulfill his destiny.

This opens up a parallel universe to Harry where the magical is everyday life. This begins with the school's groundskeeper, Hagrid. Robbie Coltrane plays this hulking gentle giant as a naïf, fond of weird creatures and loyal in his heart but forever letting school secrets slip despite the best of intentions.

Richard Harris lends graceful sagacity to headmaster Albus Dumbledore, while Maggie Smith is no-nonsense professor McGonagall (though looking too much like the Wicked Witch of the West). Alan Rickman gets the right edge of **haughty**⁶ arrogance for potions professor Snape, but soft-peddles the anger that marked the book's character. As his counterpart, the stuttering Quirrell, instructor in the defenses against the dark arts, Ian Hart performs in the overanxious, hesitant manner we later learn is a ruse.

In striving to include nearly every major episode from the book, Columbus' movie clocks in at over 2-1/2 hours. While this may create problems for parents of restless youngsters, the greater problem is this: *Harry Potter* feels like a movie in which its makers are afraid to make a single creative move. Rowling's book is Holy Writ. No liberties are allowed. Consequently, the film, while slavishly faithful, contains little innovative juice outside of its visual richness.

On U.K. soundstages, designer Stuart Craig and cinematographer John Seale establish a dark and intricately detailed Hogwarts. Portraits on walls come alive, prankish ghosts float through corridors and interiors always seem in motion, shifting with the castle's moods and **whims**⁷. The midair games of Quidditch have been reduced from two to one for the movie version. But seeing it makes all the difference as the wild and woolly sport feels like a giant pinball game in the sky.

All other technical credits are top-notch, save for John Williams' score — a great clanging, banging music box that simply will not shut up. —

⁵ Precocious: Showing unusually early development, especially in abilities or intelligence.

⁶ Haughty: Arrogantly superior or disdainful.

⁷ Whim: A sudden and impulsive idea, desire, or change of mind, often without a clear reason.

- Source: Honeycutt, K. (2021, November 16). "Harry Potter and the sorcerer's stone": Thr's 2001 review. The Hollywood Reporter. <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/harry-potter-sorcerers-stone-2001-review-946999/>

Text C

Has there ever been a big-budget movie adaptation as faithful to its source as "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone"? Acutely aware of how beloved J. K. Rowling's children's books are--and what a gold mine such a franchise could be for corporate giant AOL Time Warner--Team Harry has bent over backward to cram everything everybody loves about the book into its two-and-a-half-hour movie, being careful to invent as little as possible. It's all here, from the tape on our hero's oval spectacles to the cluttered splendor of Diagon Alley where 11-year-old Harry goes shopping for the magical school supplies required at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry to the grayish gunk that emanates from the giant nose of a fallen, full-grown mountain troll.

Director Chris Columbus and writer Steve Kloves (who are already in production on the second installment) worked in close collaboration with Rowling, and their respect for her vision is clearest in the uncannily apt casting. Who could imagine a more perfect fit for the sinister Snape than Alan Rickman, who brings a mesmerizing mixture of menace and drollery to his scenes. Hard to complain about Robbie Coltrane's incarnation of the sweet, mammothly uncouth Hagrid, or Maggie Smith's grasp of the tart but concerned Professor McGonagall, who doubles as a cat. Richard Harris has a sage delicacy as Hogwarts School's revered CEO, Albus Dumbledore, and John Hurt lights up his one, fine scene as Mr. Ollivander, seller of magic wands.

That these distinguished veterans hit their marks is no great surprise. It's the casting of the three children--Harry and his Gryffindor House co-conspirators, Ron and Hermione--that is the movie's greatest coup. His eyes dancing with intelligence, Daniel Radcliffe is a mercifully unsentimental Harry Potter, likable and inquisitive but slightly aloof, his self-possession the necessary defense of an orphan raised by hostile Muggles. Redheaded Rupert Grint brings just the right note of clownish **affability**⁸ to the nerdy Ron Weasley, while Emma Watson delights as the brainy, supercilious but always game Hermione.

Fidelity, however, is a virtue more crucial to marriage than movies. There are good reasons why filmmakers think it necessary to reshape the books that inspire them. Columbus's "Harry Potter" has many delights, but the magical alchemy that the book seemed to achieve so effortlessly eludes it. The movie gets most of the book's events in, but loses much of the lightness and charm of Rowling's vision. It's overstuffed. The **plethora**⁹ of special effects--some dazzling, some clumsy--make "Harry Potter" at times resemble a generic Hollywood horror movie. That three-headed dog that stands guard over a treasure was better left to the imagination; the slimy tentacles that encircle the three kids are too reminiscent of "Star Wars" and "Aliens."

Columbus stays true to the tale's English flavor, but he can't resist the Hollywood temptation to pump everything up a notch, starting with the overly broad awfulness of Harry's adopted family. The Quidditch game--a kind of aerial hockey played while flying on broomsticks--seemed perfectly clear on the page; on screen it's cluttered and confusing, utterly lacking in schoolboy lyricism. The biggest offender is John Williams's bombastic score, which smothers the action with inappropriate grandiosity. It's selling the movie, not supporting it.

"Harry Potter" is at its best in the Diagon Alley sequence, where Stuart Craig's deliciously detailed sets, Judianna Makovsky's rich, mysterious costumes and some truly spooky goblin/bankers combine to transport us into an enchanted Victorian dreamscape. The movie is beautifully designed, but it is often shot in a **drab**¹⁰ and muddy manner, a surprise from a cinematographer as gifted as John Seale. (My guess is a certain murkiness was mandated to prevent the computer-generated satyrs and ogres from looking too artificial and silly, a ploy that only partially succeeds.)

For the series to be as transporting as we all wish it could be, certain hard choices have to be made: at the risk of angering its fans, sacrifices have to be made to whip these wonderful books into svelte cinematic shape. "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" is a valiant first effort. The proper ingredients are all in place. What's needed is a wizard who can make it all levitate.

- Source: Ansen, D. (2001, November 18). The trouble with Harry. Newsweek. <https://www.newsweek.com/trouble-harry-149559>

⁸ **Affability**: The quality of being friendly, approachable, and easy to talk to.

⁹ **Plethora**: An excessive or abundant amount of something.

¹⁰ **Drab**: Dull, lacking brightness or liveliness.

Task 1: Check the following boxes for all of the Texts (A-C) that apply. You may choose multiple boxes.

Which text(s):	A	B	C
alludes to financial motivations for producing the film?			
criticizes the film's composer?			
concludes that the film will endure long after it leaves theaters?			
views closely following the book as a positive aspect?			
bemoans how closely the film follows the book?			
praises actors for their performances?			
evaluates the pacing of the film in a positive manner?			
suggests that certain scenes could have been left out of the film?			
makes references to other films?			
criticizes visual aspects of the movie?			

Task 2: Remember that in your own review, you will need to include:

	A	B	C
A description of the setting (time and place) and mention of key cast and crew members			
Elements of the adaptation specific to the historical/cultural context of the setting and/or time it was released (words/phrases used, clothing styles, etc)			
Analysis of the verbal and audio aspects of the film (script, actors' verbal performance, music, sound effects, etc)			
Analysis of the visual aspects and non-verbal communication of the adaptation (cinematography, physical performance of the actors, symbols, etc)			
An evaluation of how well the producers and director adapted the book			
Recommendations for the audience (who, if anyone, might enjoy the film, and why)			

Using highlighters or colored pencils, choose colors for each of these different aspects of the film and mark the sections of the review with the same color (highlighting, underlining, etc) where you see each of these elements. Do each of the reviews have all of these elements? Check the boxes when you find them.

Task 3: Remember that [according to Duke University's Thompson Writing Program](#), a film review is often structured in the following way:

Suggested structure:	Text A	Text B	Text C
1) Introduction 2) Plot summary 3) Description 4) Analysis 5) Conclusion/ Evaluation			

To what extent is each review structured in this way? Explain your answers.

Teacher's guide:

The idea of these tasks is for students to become more intimately familiar with the structure and style of mass media reviews of films that have been adapted from books. I would suggest first [trying these tasks about reviews of Home Alone](#) that are designed like tasks from the English II exam so that students are already familiar with reviews and have answered more traditional questions about them and discussed them, and now can focus more specifically on the structure, style, and content of reviews about adaptations so that they are able to write their own review.

Task 1: Although there has not been a task directly like this on the exam, it is still a useful way to compare texts with one another and organize the search for specific information. In this answer key, I have copied specific text from the readings. If it shows “-”, that means that the text was not a correct answer for that specific question.

Which text(s):	A	B	C
alludes to financial motivations for producing the film?	-	“...the first of what Warner Bros. hopes will be a series of Harry Potter films to open each Christmas season...” AND “Clearly, the sky’s the limit, not only for worldwide box office but video, DVD, television and merchandising.”	“Acutely aware of how beloved J. K. Rowling's children's books are--and what a gold mine such a franchise could be for corporate giant AOL Time Warner...”
criticizes the film’s composer? Students need to be able to figure out that “score” refers to the composed music for the film. Even if they do not know the term, Text B uses the term “music” next to it.	-	“All other technical credits are top-notch, save for John Williams’ score — a great clanging, banging music box that simply will not shut up.”	The biggest offender is John Williams's bombastic score , which smothers the action with inappropriate grandiosity. It's selling the movie, not supporting it.
concludes that the film will endure long after it leaves theaters?	“During "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," I was pretty sure I was watching a classic, one that will be around for a long time, and make many generations of fans.”	-	-
views closely following the book as a positive aspect?	“"Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" is a red-blooded adventure movie, dripping with atmosphere, filled with the gruesome and the sublime, and surprisingly faithful to the novel . A lot of things could have gone wrong, and none of them have...”	“Fortunately, all hands involved in the production have faithfully observed the mantra, “It’s the book, stupid.” Taking only a few shortcuts and hewing as close to the spirit of a literary work as any movie can, Harry Potter vividly imagines the world of wizards...”	-

bemoans how closely the film follows the book?	-	“In striving to include nearly every major episode from the book, Columbus’ movie clocks in at over 2-1/2 hours. While this may create problems for parents of restless youngsters, the greater problem is this: <i>Harry Potter</i> feels like a movie in which its makers are afraid to make a single creative move. Rowling’s book is Holy Writ. No liberties are allowed. Consequently, the film, while slavishly faithful, contains little innovative juice outside of its visual richness.”	“Has there ever been a big- budget movie adaptation as faithful to its source as ‘Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone’?” AND “Fidelity, however, is a virtue more crucial to marriage than movies. There are good reasons why filmmakers think it necessary to reshape the books that inspire them.” AND “For the series to be as transporting as we all wish it could be, certain hard choices have to be made: at the risk of angering its fans, sacrifices have to be made to whip these wonderful books into svelte cinematic shape.”
praises actors for their performances?	“What is good to know is that the adult cast, a who's who of British actors, play their roles more or less as if they believed them.”	“The young actors in the major roles all but pop out of Rowling’s pages...” “Richard Harris lends graceful sagacity to headmaster Albus Dumbledore...”	“That these distinguished veterans hit their marks is no great surprise. It's the casting of the three children--Harry and his Gryffindor House co-conspirators, Ron and Hermione--that is the movie's greatest coup.”
evaluates the pacing of the film in a positive manner?	“It takes the time to be good. It doesn't hammer the audience with easy thrills, but cares to tell a story, and to create its characters carefully.”	-	-
suggests that certain scenes could have been left out of the film?	-	In striving to include nearly every major episode from the book, Columbus’ movie clocks in at over 2-1/2 hours. While this may create problems for parents of restless youngsters, the greater problem is this: <i>Harry Potter</i> feels like a movie in which its makers are afraid to make a single creative move.	“For the series to be as transporting as we all wish it could be, certain hard choices have to be made: at the risk of angering its fans, sacrifices have to be made to whip these wonderful books into svelte cinematic shape.”
makes references to other films?	“Like ‘The Wizard of Oz,’ ‘Willy Wonka and	-	“That three-headed dog that stands guard over a

	<u>the Chocolate Factory</u> , 'Star Wars' and 'E.T.', it isn't just a movie but a world with its own magical rules. And some excellent Quidditch players."		treasure was better left to the imagination; the slimy tentacles that encircle the three kids are too reminiscent of 'Star Wars' and 'Aliens.'"
criticizes visual aspects of the movie?	-	-	"The movie is beautifully designed, but it is often shot in a drab and muddy manner, a surprise from a cinematographer as gifted as John Seale. (My guess is a certain murkiness was mandated to prevent the computer-generated satyrs and ogres from looking too artificial and silly, a ploy that only partially succeeds.)"

Task 2: The different aspects mentioned here in the second tasks are the ones that I mentioned as the required aspects of the film review which come partially from the Skola2030 sample program and from the national curriculum standards. I have color-coded the different aspects here and gone through each of the three reviews and highlighted the parts which apply to each of the different sections. The goal of this task is for students to understand how professional writers structure their reviews, and that it is not necessary to always have to divide each paragraph by topic simply as "the paragraph about setting, cast and crew"; "the paragraph about the historical/cultural context"; "the paragraph about the verbal and audio aspects"; etc. Most professionals will cover these key elements in a review that is structured into well-flowing paragraphs from broad to specific and follow the general overall structure mentioned below (from Duke University's Thompson Writing Program).

I also want to show that different reviewers focus on different elements more than others, and that is perfectly normal — in a 700 or so-word review, it is not possible to cover every aspect in detail. For example, since these are all reviews written in 2001 about a movie that just came out, there are not as many mentions of the historical/cultural context as there would be in a review written about a film that came out decades ago. Also, since this is a fantasy film, there is often a tendency to focus on the elements that are less "everyday" since many people use fantasy as a form of escapism.

I would suggest showing these highlighted versions on the screen and showing that although the elements do not all go in chronological order and are mixed throughout different parts of the review, they are all there and it is not necessary to have these broken down by paragraph in the students' own reviews as long as they are all covered.

- A description of the setting (time and place) and mention of key cast and crew members
- Elements of the adaptation specific to the historical/cultural context of the setting and/or time it was released (words/phrases used, clothing styles, etc)
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Task 3: Before the task, it is assumed that students would have read through Duke University's guide to writing student film reviews which I have linked to. You can find it here as well:

<https://twp.duke.edu/sites/twp.duke.edu/files/file-attachments/film-review-1.original.pdf>

In the guide, the following general overall structure of a review is offered. Students do not need to follow this paragraph-by-paragraph, and might have different elements of this structure mixed together. However, there should still be a general flow from basic information to description, analysis, and evaluation throughout the review. I have highlighted the different elements mentioned in that guide, and I have again gone through the three different reviews

- **Introduction**

- In the opening of your review, provide some basic information about the film. You may include the **film's name, year, director, screenwriter, and major actors**. -
- Your introduction, which may be longer than one paragraph, should also **begin to evaluate the film, and it should allude to the central concept of the review**. A film review does not have to contain a thesis or main claim, but it should **focus on a central analysis and assessment**.

- **Plot Summary**

- Remember that many readers of film reviews have not yet seen the film. While you want to provide some plot summary, **keep this brief and avoid specific details that would spoil the viewing for others**.

- **Description**

- While the plot summary will give the reader a general sense of what the film is about, also include a more detailed description of your particular cinematic experience watching the film.
- This may include your personal impression of what the film **looks, feels, and sounds like**. In other words, **what stands out** in your mind when you think about this particular film?

- **Analysis**

- In order to explain your impression of the film, **consider how well the film utilizes formal techniques and thematic content**.
- How do the film's **formal techniques (such as cinematography, editing, mise-en-scène, lighting, diegetic and non-diegetic sound, genre, or narrative)** affect the way the film **looks, feels, and sounds** to you?
- How does the **thematic content (such as history, race, gender, sexuality, class, or the environment)** affect your experience and interpretation?
- Also, **do the formal techniques work to forward the thematic content?**

- **Conclusion/Evaluation**

- The closing of your film review **should remind the reader of your general thoughts and impressions of the film**.
- You may also **implicitly or explicitly state whether or not you recommend the film**.
- Make sure to remind the reader of why the film is or is not worth seeing.

The point of this particular task is to show that all of the reviews follow a basic structure in terms of having an introduction, having very minimal to no plot summary (text C doesn't have any explicit summary at all), and that with the exception of Text B, all of them evaluate and implicitly explain whether or not the film is worth seeing at the end in the final paragraph. Students often tend to write a lot of plot summary in their reviews, which is what they are used to from previous levels; however, at the C1 level they need to get used to writing a minimum of summary and instead use specific examples from the film/text to

Text A

"Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" is a red-blooded adventure movie, dripping with atmosphere, filled with the gruesome and the sublime, and surprisingly faithful to the novel. A lot of things could have gone wrong, and none of them have: Chris Columbus' movie is an enchanting classic that does full justice to a story that was a daunting challenge. The novel by J.K. Rowling was muscular and vivid, and the danger was that the movie would make things too cute and cuddly. It doesn't. Like an "Indiana Jones" for younger viewers, it tells a rip-roaring tale of supernatural adventure, where colorful and eccentric characters alternate

with scary stuff like a three-headed dog, a pit of tendrils known as the Devil's Snare and a two-faced immortal who drinks unicorn blood. Scary, yes, but not too scary--just scary enough.

Three high-spirited, clear-eyed kids populate the center of the movie. Daniel Radcliffe plays Harry Potter, he with the round glasses, and like all of the young characters he looks much as I imagined him, but a little older. He once played David Copperfield on the BBC, and whether Harry will be the hero of his own life in this story is much in doubt at the beginning.

Deposited as a foundling on a suburban doorstep, Harry is raised by his aunt and uncle as a poor relation, then summoned by a blizzard of letters to become a student at Hogwarts School, an Oxbridge for magicians. Our first glimpse of Hogwarts sets the tone for the movie's special effects. Although computers can make anything look realistic, too much realism would be the wrong choice for "Harry Potter," which is a story in which everything, including the sets and locations, should look a little made up. The school, rising on ominous Gothic battlements from a moonlit lake, looks about as real as Xanadu in "Citizen Kane," and its corridors, cellars and great hall, although in some cases making use of real buildings, continue the feeling of an atmospheric book illustration. At Hogwarts, Harry makes two friends and an enemy. The friends are Hermione Granger (Emma Watson), whose merry face and tangled curls give Harry nudges in the direction of lightening up a little, and Ron Weasley (Rupert Grint), all pluck, luck and untamed talents. The enemy is Draco Malfoy (Tom Felton), who will do anything, and plenty besides, to be sure his house places first at the end of the year.

The story you either already know, or do not want to know. What is good to know is that the adult cast, a who's who of British actors, play their roles more or less as if they believed them. There is a broad style of British acting, developed in Christmas pantomimes, which would have been fatal to this material; these actors know that, and dial down to just this side of too much. Watch Alan Rickman drawing out his words until they seem ready to snap, yet somehow staying in character. Maggie Smith, still in the prime of Miss Jean Brodie, is Prof. Minerva McGonagall, who assigns newcomers like Harry to one of the school's four houses. Richard Harris is headmaster Dumbledore, his beard so long that in an Edward Lear poem, birds would nest in it. Robbie Coltrane is the gamekeeper, Hagrid, who has a record of misbehavior and a way of saying very important things and then not believing that he said them.

Computers are used, exuberantly, to create a plausible look in the gravity-defying action scenes. Readers of the book will wonder how the movie visualizes the crucial game of Quidditch. The game, like so much else in the movie, is more or less as I visualized it, and I was reminded of Stephen King's theory that writers practice a form of telepathy, placing ideas and images in the heads of their readers. (The reason some movies don't look like their books may be that some producers don't read them.) If Quidditch is a virtuoso sequence, there are other set pieces of almost equal wizardry. A chess game with life-size, deadly pieces. A room filled with flying keys. The pit of tendrils, already mentioned, and a dark forest where a loathsome creature threatens Harry but is scared away by a centaur. And the dark shadows of Hogwarts library, cellars, hidden passages and dungeons, where an invisibility cloak can keep you out of sight but not out of trouble.

During "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," I was pretty sure I was watching a classic, one that will be around for a long time, and make many generations of fans. It takes the time to be good. It doesn't hammer the audience with easy thrills, but cares to tell a story, and to create its characters carefully. Like "The Wizard of Oz," "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," "Star Wars" and "E.T.," it isn't just a movie but a world with its own magical rules. And some excellent Quidditch players.

Text B

More than 100 million copies of these novels now circulate in 47 languages. The movie version of the first book has claimed national magazine covers and is backed by an initial marketing campaign pegged at more than \$40 million. Internet buzz-meisters have made the film an odds-on favorite to break the three-day opening box-office record. Thus, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, the first of what Warner Bros. hopes will be a series of Harry Potter films to open each Christmas season, runs the risk of getting lost in its own consumer and media frenzy.

Fortunately, all hands involved in the production have faithfully observed the mantra, "It's the book, stupid." Taking only a few shortcuts and hewing as close to the spirit of a literary work as any movie can, Harry Potter vividly imagines the world of wizards, magic school and mystical creatures found in J.K. Rowling's series of children's adventure books. Clearly, the sky's the limit, not only for worldwide box office but video, DVD, television and merchandising.

It cost a reported \$126 million to give substance to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, with its floating staircases and owl mail-delivery system. But the money is well spent: It has established Harry Potter's cinematic credibility. Adapted by Steve Kloves and directed by Chris Columbus, the story remains a child's fantasy version of a British boarding school, where young heroes and a spunky heroine battle not only against the forces of evil but, more importantly, study hard enough to continue next year. (After all, who wouldn't want to go to this school?)

The young actors in the major roles all but pop out of Rowling's pages. Daniel Radcliffe plays the Oliver Twist-like Harry with an unaffected, intelligent approach that maintains his wide-eyed wonder yet grounds Harry in a realistic sense of loyalty and honor.

A beautiful young girl named Emma Watson nails precocious Hermione Granger. She makes scholarly ambition and determination admirable virtues, even if these don't always go down well with fellow students. Rupert Grint's Ron Weasley gamely bucks a class system that exists even in a magic school and looks to exploit talents he does possess to maximum effect. As their snotty nemesis Draco Malfoy, Tom Felton is the personification of upper-class insolence.

As your child will be happy to tell you, Harry is an unreasonably well-balanced youngster, considering his miserable upbringing by a bullying family of Muggles — humans with no magical abilities. On his 11th birthday, though, the bespectacled Harry learns that he is the orphaned son of two powerful wizards. They were killed in a battle with an evil wizard, who was unable to kill Harry as an infant but did leave a lightning scar on his forehead. Now an adolescent, he is invited to attend Hogwarts to fulfill his destiny.

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