

## **Merit of English Section**

### **Senior Division**

**Name of Winner : Fok Yan Ting Ruthie**

**Name of School : Carmel Divine Grace Foundation**

**Secondary School**

**Book Title : Harry Potter and the**

**Philosopher's Stone**

**Author : J.K. Rowling**

**Publisher : Bloomsbury**

*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J.K. Rowling is a captivating novel that kickstarted the beloved Harry Potter series, which is intriguing to read with all its plot twists and foreshadowing. The thrilling adventures of Harry Potter, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger showcase the sharp wit and

immense courage of these tiny students of Hogwarts as well as the enchanting world of the witches and wizards.

The story begins with Harry's tragic backstory, including the death of his parents at the hands of the Dark Lord, Voldemort. He is then sent to live with the neglectful Dursley family for 10 years. On his eleventh birthday, Harry discovers his magical abilities and is invited to attend Hogwarts, a school for wizards and witches. Alongside Ron and Hermione, he embarks on a journey filled with friendship and courage.

As the trio settles into Hogwarts, they encounter various challenges and mysteries. They uncover a corridor guarded by a giant three-headed dog that leads to the Philosopher's Stone, a powerful artifact that grants immortality and turns metal into gold sought by Voldemort. Through their bravery and determination, they confront obstacles and discover the truth

behind the stone's protection. After solving mysteries, they enter the corridor and face the tough challenges set by their professors courageously, but Harry is the only one who can go to the end of the corridor. Ultimately, Harry faces Professor Quirrell, who is working for Voldemort. Fortunately, Harry's mother's love for him has protected Harry. Dumbledore saves Harry just in time and destroys the stone. When Harry wakes up, he learns a lesson from Dumbledore that friendship and love are powerful forces against evil.

The book contains numerous subtle foreshadowing of plot twists. In the second chapter, Harry recalls his peculiar experiences around the Dursleys, such as his hair regrowing overnight and his ability to jump onto roofs when escaping Dudley. These instances foreshadow Harry's true nature as a wizard, capable of causing unusual events when he experiences fear or anger. Another example is the Dumbledore chocolate frog card that Harry collects on the

train to Hogwarts, which hints at the significance of Nicolas Flamel, the creator of the Philosopher's Stone. These details not only serve as hints for future events but also build suspense until the reader reaches the plot twists and is surprised by the connections between the earlier clues and subsequent revelations.

While the theme of the book emphasizes the power of friendship and love against darkness, the friendship between the main characters impressed me most. The Harry Potter series revolves around the trio of Harry, Hermione, and Ron, and their adventures are consistently captivating and thrilling due to the dangers they face in the wizarding world. In this particular book, the relationship between the three main characters is engrossing. Initially, on the train, Harry and Ron are unimpressed with Hermione's bossy demeanor as she stops them from breaking the rules. After Ron insults

Hermione following a Charms lesson, she spends the entire day crying in the bathroom. However, the trio's bond is solidified when they come together to save Hermione from a troll. From that point on, they embark on an investigation of the forbidden corridor, forging an unbreakable friendship. When faced with the life-sized chess set, Ron is willing to sacrifice himself for the others to win, while Hermione recognizes that Harry is the one who must proceed to the end of the corridor and willingly drinks a potion to save Ron. The relationship between Harry, Ron, and Hermione evolves from initial hostility to a deep and selfless friendship. I deeply admire their precious and powerful friendship. Even if people begin as enemies, I am confident that a common ground can be found, leading to lifelong friendships. Love is the only defense against hate, and friendship is an invaluable expression of love.

Since the book primarily focuses on Harry's life and his journey, it is worth considering his past with the Dursleys.

Given the circumstances, Harry often disobeys his family in a humorous manner. In the initial chapters, he responds to their mistreatment by disrespecting the Dursleys. It is not surprising that Harry behaves this way, given the physical and emotional abuse he has endured at the hands of the Dursleys. This mistreatment has left him with low self-esteem, and no one has ever stood up for him until Hagrid's arrival.

Considering that Harry has no parents, it is evident that Vernon and Petunia have done a poor job of informing him about his magical lineage. In typical cases, children would be told stories about their parents and be aware of their family history. However, the Dursleys never showed Harry any photos of his parents, nor did they mention anything about them. This led to Harry longing to understand his origins, as he saw his family in the Mirror of Erised, reflecting his

deepest desires. He was also ecstatic when Hagrid gifted him a photo album full of moving pictures of his parents after his encounter with Voldemort and Professor Quirell. This burning ache of Harry all points to the problem of the Dursleys being emotionally irresponsible toward him.

I greatly admire Harry's incredible resilience despite the neglect he endured from his unpleasant uncle, aunt, and cousin. In the early chapters, he had to wear broken glasses and Dudley's hand-me-down clothes, while living under the stairs or in a cupboard in the kitchen for ten years.

Additionally, he faced isolation from his peers at school due to Dudley's bullying. Fortunately, he gained fame in the wizarding world and found true friends. It is widely recognized that starving and confining children should never be a form of punishment, and they should not be subjected to constant insults. Even if Petunia despises her sister and magic,

it is absurd and inhumane to treat her nephew as a lowly servant.

These dreadful experiences undeniably left Harry with physical and mental trauma, causing him to doubt his abilities as a wizard. Initially, he struggled with the adoration he received as "The Boy Who Lived," as it disrupted his concentration on his studies. He was not accustomed to fame. However, Harry eventually found solace in his friends at Hogwarts, who treated him with love and acceptance, something he had never experienced as a child. The abuse Harry endured from his family mirrors real-life issues of bullying and child abuse. Reading the book has given me a different perspective on these problems, as I can directly witness the impact of trauma on Harry's thoughts and actions. It is crucial that we continue to combat these issues and support those who have been affected by such experiences.



*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* presents a captivating and enchanting world of magic, keeping readers engaged and excited throughout the entire book. Each chapter is filled with foreshadowing and plot twists, making readers eagerly anticipate what will happen next. The novel beautifully portrays the themes of friendship and love. It brings the characters to life and effectively showcases Harry's personality and his journey through his investigations and adventures alongside Hermione and Ron. I highly recommend this book to those with an adventurous spirit and an imaginative mind.