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W131 / Honors Composition

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Final Draft

### The Spell of Reading

When I was a child, my parents would read to me every night. The books were small (less than 30 pages) and insignificant, but the stories were my favorite part of the day. It was a time when I could fall asleep and continue the fairytale in my dream. Like a normal child, I enjoyed looking at the pictures and could care less about the words. As the years went by I began to read on my own, but my passion for reading did not begin until I heard about Harry Potter.

I had always adored reading and read books suitable for my age until the first grade. I remember playing at recess and listening to kids chat about this movie called *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. I did not know much about it, but I knew it dealt with a school for witches in England. I had heard enough of my friends discussing it and the topic was somewhat interesting, so I decided to check it out. I asked my parents if we could see the movie, but to my disbelief, they said no. I found that answer very unsatisfactory. Arguing was usually futile, but that day my parents were easily swayed, and consented under one condition. They came up with the idea that I could not see the film until I had read the novel. Of course, this change was hardly an improvement for a kid in elementary school. Nevertheless, I was on a quest to find *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. I was disappointed with my discovery. The book was nothing like what I pictured in my mind. *How was I going to read a novel that was roughly 300 pages when I could barely read a book half that size?* I opened the cover and took a deep breath as my

fingers grazed the spine. *I'm not sure I can do this.* My confidence began to waver until my anger took over. It was difficult to be upset with my parents because they were normally so kind and reasonable, but this was just frustrating. I was dismayed that my parents had made this new rule; couldn't they see that this was outrageous? I did not have time to read the novel, but I guess the point was to have me make time to read. Looking back, I think they thought the daunting size and unfamiliarity of the book would cause me to lose interest. My parents were unsure how appropriate the film was for a first grader, and therefore they discretely attempted to keep me from seeing the movie. While the movie was rated PG, I believe my parents were skeptical about the film. The use of magic and violence made my parents nervous, so instead of just saying no, my parents wanted to discourage me from exploring the world of Harry Potter until I was older. They did not predict that I would have the drive and motivation to follow through with our agreement.

Obviously, they underestimated me, but I overestimated myself. As I attempted to sift through the first chapter, I found there were one too many words I had never heard of and did not know. The British spoke English but I learned rather quickly that they used many distinctive terms. *Why is the bathroom called the toilet? What is a Headmaster?* I was confused. Rather than giving up, I enlisted my mom to help me.

“What does it mean when they say bogey-flavored beans?” I questioned.

“Booger flavored jelly beans!” My mom managed to reply after she finished laughing. It was an enjoyable time as I spent evenings with my mother and discovered the magic of reading. I learned about the British culture and my vocabulary grew as we progressed through the story. She read *Harry Potter* to me nightly, and I found myself recollecting my early childhood. I plunged into the series with my parents the same way I learned to read. My parents

started my love for reading, but *Harry Potter* helped me discover it. I became engrossed in the world of Hogwarts and the adventures of Harry, Ron, and Hermione. Each spell and detail of this magical world was engrained in my mind. All I could think about was a mysterious castle where adolescents were taught magic. However, there were times when the material became too dull or the passages too confusing. I would question whether or not I would finish the book, but my mom was there to urge me to continue.

As we came to the end of the first book, I could hardly wait to see the movie. While it had taken a month to read the novel, it only took two hours to see the movie. I loved being able to watch the action, but I surprised myself when I discovered I preferred the book. The movie made it easy to picture the complex world J. K. Rowling had created, but it was nothing compared to the book. When I read, I was able to feel more of the characters' emotions and could learn more details than could ever be presented in the film. That was when I knew I was hooked on reading.

From then on I grew up with Harry Potter. I devoured the series and was pleased to find each novel more enjoyable than the last. It was no longer necessary for my parents to threaten me with the 'read the book before the movie' rule; I was already doing it myself. As Harry, Ron, and Hermione matured, I did too. It was as if they had become my three other siblings. I cared about them as if they were real people. They began to think about their futures, and I did too. The series became more serious and was no longer about three kids casting spells. There was so much more to the books and I was glad I grew up with the characters. The novels got longer and more intense, but I was ready for it.

When the series came to a close I was heartbroken. I was excited to finally finish the series, but I was sad to see it all end. I worshipped the *Harry Potter* series and could not believe

everything was over. The pages began to blur as I plowed through the final book. There were so many questions to be answered and the unnerving foreshadowing of death for Harry. I cried and laughed as I read the book, experiencing a whirlwind of emotions. But there was always this nagging thought in the back of my mind. *This was it. The end.* I could not put down the New York Times Bestseller as I worried over the end, but in a few days it was all over. I smiled in relief at the relatively happy conclusion to the series, but I could not help but feel dismayed. *What was I supposed to read now?* I had spent the last six years reading little else but *Harry Potter* and *The Princess Diaries*. While I cared about *The Princess Diaries*, I only read them to pass the time as I waited for the next installment of *Harry Potter*. Now that I was done reading about Harry, I needed to find something new to read. It was as if a chapter of my life had ended, but I was ready to read on.

At this point, it became my mission to find a book that could compare to that of the Harry Potter series. *Harry Potter* was on a high pedestal, but I knew there were other books out there that were of a similar caliber. I have read a variety of books since then, and my love for reading has only increased. As the list of my favorite books continues to grow, I still find the Harry Potter series to be the greatest. Most of this is attributed to the content and the amazing amount of imagination it took to create the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, but I think part of it is because the series had such an impact on my life. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* sparked my passion for reading that I previously did not know existed. I discovered that books did not have to be boring or fit a certain criteria. I kept thinking I had solved all of the mysteries of *Harry Potter*, but J. K. Rowling was surprising me until the very end. She taught me that writing does not have to be predictable and that it should be something enjoyable.

When I sit down to write I continue to recall Rowling's writing in *Harry Potter*. *How did Rowling bring the characters to life? What can make this story more exciting for the reader?* The series is my foundation for reading and writing. I have re-read the books to look at Rowling's writing style, and have applied some tips to my own writing. I have become more creative and find writing slightly more pleasurable now that I understand there are no restrictions. Reading for school has often times been the most enjoyable homework I have received because I have learned to appreciate a good story (even if it was written a hundred years ago) I do well in school and have always excelled in English courses. I will not go as far as to say this is all because I read *Harry Potter*, but it definitely made a difference. The series allowed me to feel like I was Harry, and I understood the power behind that kind of writing. J. K. Rowling allowed me to see reading and writing at a completely new angle, and I continue looking for new ways to experience them. She probably never guessed the impact a boy with a lightening shaped scar could have on an ordinary girl like me.