

Harry Potter: Innocent Fun or Destructive Tool?

by Steve Wohlberg/*Dialogue Magazine*/Vol. 17

Witchcraft is on a worldwide march. Children, teenagers, and adults around the world are fascinated by mysterious energies flowing through witches. In increasing numbers, young and old are visiting popular witchcraft web sites, buying spell books, joining covens, mixing potions, and practicing magic. Wicca Witchcraft—also called the Craft—seems unstoppably on the move.

In the United States, so many teenagers are embracing the Wiccan Way that National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* aired in May 2004 a story called, "Teens and Wicca." The report drew attention to the growing number of teenagers secretly setting up witchcraft alters in their bedrooms, offering prayers to the goddess, and invoking the aid of spirits.¹ A similar trend is sweeping Canada, England, Europe, Australia, Russia, and other countries.

Why this exploding interest—especially among teenagers—in witchcraft? One reason is clear: Both children and adults are now being exposed to a vast array of pleasantly designed books and magical moves that increasingly portray witchcraft as a safe, exciting, and spiritually empowering religion—especially for young women. Some of the most popular TV programs, films and fiction books include:

Sabrina, the Teenage Witch (TV series): Features a "girl with supernatural powers" who learns "to use her witchcraft wisely."²

Buffy the Vampire Slayer (TV series): Stars a blonde teenager whose close friend Willow, nicknamed "The Willow Witch," exhibits "an increasing interest and involvement in Wicca and Witchcraft."³

Charmed (TV series): Features three sexy sorceress sisters who "use their individual powers as good witches to battle the forces of evil."⁴

The W.I.T.C.H series (novels for kids). An internationally popular series that follows the journeys of "five ordinary girls just going into their teens" who have "super powers over the Elements."⁵

The Daughters of the Moon series by Lynne Ewing (novels for kids). Titles include: *Goddess of the Night*, *The Sacrifice*, and *Possession*.

The Sweep series by Cate Tiernan (novels for kids). Titles include: *Blood Witch*, *Dark Magick*, and *Spellbound*.

Moving beyond these highly mesmerizing fiction productions, occult publishers are also capitalizing on the effects of movies and novels by churning out a growing body of how-to-practice-the-real-thing nonfiction works. Advertising dollars are netting results, and sales are soaring. Popular titles include:

Teen Witch: Wicca for a New Generation by Silver Ravenwolf (1997).

The Book of Shadows: A Modern Woman's Journey Into the wisdom of Witchcraft and the Magic of the Goddess by Phyllis Currott (1998).

The Wiccan Myasteries: Ancient Origins and Teachings by Richard Brimassi (1997).

Buckland's Complete Book of Witchcraft by Raymond Buckland (1986).

Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner by Scott Cunningham (1990).

The list is endless. When you add media productions, captivating novels, and books about witchcraft into a spiritually dry and searching public, the result is: steady Wiccan growth. If you doubt the trend, just go to <http://www.walmart.com> and do a search for books about “Wicca.” You’ll be shocked. Make no mistake about it: Real Wicca witchcraft is growing around the world.

But one series of novels and films towers above all others in popularity and controversy: *Harry Potter*. Most parents view the *Potter* books (written by British author Joanne Kathleen Rowling) as harmless entertainment not worth worrying about. They surely don’t see any subtle (or dangerous) Harry-wicca connection. Others do; in fact, many are certain that dark spiritual forces lurk beneath those magic-made-funny pages. A *Harry Potter* debate is raging—in secular society as well as among Christians. Are Rowling’s novels fueling teenage interest in the Craft? “Don’t be silly!” shout Potter supporters. “Open your eyes!” counter Potter critics. Which side is right?

Pottermania

Beginning with their initial American release in 1998, Rowling’s first five novels (seven are planned)—*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, and *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*—have sold more than 250 million copies in 200 countries in 60 languages. Further fanning the flames of Pottermania is the commitment of Hollywood titan Warner Brothers, Inc. to make each *Harry Potter* novel into a full-length movie. Three films have been released so far internationally, with four more on the horizon. Bottom line: Harry’s gone global.

Rowling’s series is an action-packed and highly imaginative sequence of fantasy novels chronicling the adventures of an orphaned wizard boy named Harry Potter who, as a teenager, attends Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry to sharpen his sorcery skills in the preparation for deadly encounters with “the greatest Dark sorcerer of all time, LordVoldemort.”⁶

As Harry gets ready for wizard school, he purchases occult textbooks, a wand, a cauldron (for mixing potions), a telescope (to study astrology) and other sorcery-related necessities. Required classes at Hogwarts include: History of Magic, Divination, Charms, Herbology, Potions, Transfiguration, and Defense Against the Dark Arts. Within the pages of each mesmerizing tale, Voldemort tries to kill Harry, yet the wizard boy always escapes through techniques learned at Hogwarts—by casting spells, through good luck, or through assistance from his dead parents.

At the end of each school year the young sorcerer regrettably returns home to spend the summer months with his non-magical relatives, the Dursley family—an unimaginative and droopy clan symbolizing perfect boredom. The Dursleys are classified as Muggles, or non-wizards, folks without “a drop of magical blood in their veins.”⁷ Throughout the *Potter* books, Muggles typically are represented as an unexciting, stick-in-the-mud group (with few exceptions), whereas witches and wizards who access supernatural powers are cool.

Harmless or destructive?

That’s the gist of *Harry Potter*—at least on the surface. The heated controversy swirls around whether these novels and movies are simply fictitious, harmless entertainment, or whether they might be whetting the appetites kids and adults to explore real witchcraft. Personally, I believe the latter. Here’s why.

First, the *Harry Potter* books are being read by kids around the world, and the Wicca witchcraft is growing among kids all over the *same world*. While this isn't proof that *Harry* enhances Wiccan interest, it seems naive to discern no connection between the two.

Second, while the *Harry Potter* books are filled with fictitious, goofy elements, they also contain plenty of references to real people, real places, and real practices performed by real sorcerers all over Planet Earth. Rowling herself has publicly admitted that fully one-third of her material is based in actual occultism.⁸

This isn't hard to prove. Beyond mentioning real places like Great Britain, London, the Kings Cross Subway Station, Brazil, Egypt, France, Albania, Australia, Ireland, Bulgaria, England, Wales, Uganda, Scotland, Norway, Luxemburg, and America," real historical occultists like Nicolas Flamel¹⁰ and Albert Waffling¹¹, real occult tools like wands, cauldrons, crystal balls, and tea leaves, the *Harry Potter* books overflow with references to real practices like spell casting, numerology, fortune telling, divination, astrology, palmistry, charms, crystal gazing, out- of-body travel, and spirit-channeling. However, here's the catch: Rowling consistently mingles these references with silly, absurd, and obviously imaginary elements so as to make the entire brew appear harmless (that's how the books sneak under the radar screen); yet this sober fact remains: All of these practices are real and are practiced by real witches everywhere. For proof, simply browse the occult section of any major secular bookstore.

Third, no matter what Potter supporters claim, real Wiccan philosophy *does* lurk within *Harry Potter*. For instance, Rowling's magic vs. Muggles dichotomy (which provides the framework for her entire series) reflects what real witches actually believe. Bestselling Wiccan author Silver Ravenwolf, in her popular nonfiction book, *Teen Witch: Wicca for a New Generation*, lists the following as a core Wiccan belief:

"We acknowledge a depth of power far greater than is apparent to the average person . . . Everyone has these abilities, but most don't use them, and some people fear these powers. Witches, and other enlightened souls, strive to strengthen these natural gifts."¹²

This key doctrine of the Craft is essentially the same teaching found within *Harry Potter*. "We acknowledge a depth of power," Ravenwolf writes, "far greater than is apparent to the average person." Rowling communicates this Wiccan concept when her books call all average, non-magical souls, Muggles. Ravenwolf says, "Some people fear these powers." This is exactly what one of Harry Potter's Hogwarts professors says about Muggles.¹³ Ravenwolf's occult publisher is Llewellyn Publications, based in St. Paul, Minnesota. Surprisingly, in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Rowling used the name of Ravenwolf's publisher—Llewellyn—as the name of a hospital ward dedicated to healing the sick! See for yourself:

"Arthur Weasley?" said the witch, running her finger down a long list in front of her. "Yes, first floor, second door on the right, Dai *Llewellyn* ward."¹⁴

Fourth, the evidence shows that kids *have* become interested in real witchcraft as a result of *Harry Potter*. Case in point: The Pagan Federation is a well-organized promoter of Wicca witchcraft in England. Shortly after Rowling's series hit the British Isles, the federation started receiving "a flood of inquiries" about the details of their religion—inquiries they attributed to "the success of the *Harry Potter* books."¹⁵ A British publication, *This Is London*, reported the facts in an article bearing the sobering title: "Potter Fans Turning to Witchcraft." The federation's media officer, Andy Norfolk, testified: "In response to increased inquiries coming from youngsters we established a youth officer . . .

It is quite probably linked to things like *Harry Potter*, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Every time an article on witchcraft or paganism appears, we have a huge surge in calls, mostly from young girls.”¹⁶

“Potter Fans Turning to Witchcraft,” “the success of the *Harry Potter* books,” “linked to things like *Harry Potter*,” “a huge surge in calls, mostly from young girls”—these provide convincing evidence, at least for those willing to see their significance.

The Bible and witchcraft

Let’s shift gears to God’s Word. Is there a real devil? Wiccans don’t believe so. Silver Ravenwolf and other Wiccan authors think Satan is a figment of misguided Christian imagination. Yet the Bible plainly says, “The great dragon was cast out. . .called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him,”(Revelation 12:9, NKJV). Satan not only exists, but he “deceives the whole world.”

In Scripture, sorcery isn’t imaginary. Moses warned that anyone “who practices witchcraft. . .or a sorcerer. . .or one who conjures spells” is “an abomination to the Lord” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12, NKJV). Paul pinpointed “sorcery” as one of the “works of the flesh” (Galations 5:19, 29), and John clearly predicted that “Sorcerers” will meet their final destiny in “the lake which burns with fire and brimstone which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8, NKJV). This is serious stuff.

Because Satan exists, and because real witchcraft and sorcery come from him, here’s a key question: How likely is it that Lucifer himself has nothing to do with the most popular series of books ever written, which portray witchcraft, sorcery, potions, and spells as fun and cool for kids? Paul wrote, “We are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11, NKJV). Don’t be fooled. By portraying witchcraft and casting spells as fun and exciting, *Harry Potter* desensitizes youngsters to the dangers of the occult. This is the devil’s plan.

John wrote, “By your sorcery all the nations were deceived” (Revelation 18:23, NKJV). This non-fiction passage warns that real sorcery coming from a real devil will really deceive real nations in the end-times. Should we not take seriously the Lord’s warning? Should we not flee from witchcraft in any form, including the most modern version of so called harmless entertainment? Should we not lead our children to the truth as found in the Scriptures?

Deuteronomy 18:9 says we shouldn’t even “learn” about wicked occult practices. As a wholesome alternative, Jesus says, “Learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29, NKJV). *He* is the alternative to witchcraft!

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