**Potter Has Limited Effect on Reading Habits**

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I. Of all the magical powers wielded by [Harry Potter](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/complete_coverage/harry_potter/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier), perhaps none has cast a stronger spell than his supposed ability to transform the reading habits of young people. In what has become near mythology about the wildly popular series by [J. K. Rowling](http://www.nytimes.com/indexes/2005/07/15/books/authors/index.html?inline=nyt-per), many parents, teachers, librarians and booksellers have credited it with inspiring a generation of kids to read for pleasure in a world dominated by instant messaging and music downloads.

II. And so it has, for many children. But in keeping with the intricately plotted novels themselves, the truth about Harry Potter and reading is not quite so straightforward a success story. Indeed, as the series draws to a much-lamented close, federal statistics show that the percentage of youngsters who read for fun continues to drop significantly as children get older, at almost exactly the same rate as before Harry Potter came along.

III. There is no doubt that the books have been a publishing sensation. In the 10 years since the first one, “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone,” was published, the series has sold 325 million copies worldwide, with 121.5 million in print in the United States alone. Before Harry Potter, it was virtually unheard of for kids to queue up for a mere book. Children who had previously read short chapter books were suddenly plowing through more than 700 pages in a matter of days. Scholastic, the series’s United States publisher, plans a record-setting print run of 12 million copies for “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows,” the eagerly awaited seventh and final installment due out at 12:01 a.m. on July 21.

IV. But some researchers and educators say that the series, in the end, has not permanently tempted children to put down their Game Boys and curl up with a book instead. Some kids have found themselves daunted by the growing size of the books (“Sorcerer’s Stone” was 309 pages; “Deathly Hallows,” will be 784). Others say that Harry Potter does not have as much resonance as titles that more realistically reflect their daily lives. “The Harry Potter craze was a very positive thing for kids,” said Dana Gioia, chairman of the [National Endowment for the Arts](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/n/national_endowment_for_the_arts/index.html?inline=nyt-org), who has reviewed statistics from federal and private sources that consistently show that children read less as they age. “It got millions of kids to read a long and reasonably complex series of books. The trouble is that one Harry Potter novel every few years is not enough to reverse the decline in reading.”

V. Educators agree that the series can’t get the job done alone. Young people are less inclined to read for pleasure as they move into their teenage years for a variety of reasons, educators say. Some of these are trends of long standing (older children inevitably become more socially active, spend more time on reading-for-school or simply find other sources of entertainment other than books), and some are of more recent vintage (the multiplying menagerie of high-tech gizmos that compete for their attention, from iPods to Wii consoles). What parents and others hoped was that the phenomenal success of the Potter books would blunt **these trends**, perhaps even creating a generation of lifelong readers in their wake.

VI. Many thousands of children have, indeed, gone from the Potter books to other pleasure reading. But others have dropped away. Starting when Avram Leierwood was 7, he would read the books aloud with his mother, Mina. “We’d sit in the treehouse in our backyard and take turns,” recalled Ms. Leierwood, of South Minneapolis. But while Ms. Leierwood has remained an avid fan, Avram, now 15, is indifferent. When “Deathly Hallows” comes out, he will be on a canoe trip. As for reading, he said: “I don’t really have much time anymore. I like to hang out with my friends, talk, go watch movies and stuff, go to the park and play ultimate Frisbee.”

VII. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a series of federal tests administered every few years to a sample of students in grades 4, 8 and 12, the percentage of kids who said they read for fun almost every day dropped from 43 percent in fourth grade to 19 percent in eighth grade in 1998, the year “Sorcerer’s Stone” was published in the United States. In 2005, when “Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince,” the sixth book, was published, the results were identical.

VIII. Many parents, educators and librarians say that despite such statistics, they have seen enough evidence to convince them that Harry Potter is a bona fide hero. “Parents will say, ‘You know, my son never spent time reading, and now my son is staying up late reading, keeping the light on because he can’t put that book down,’ ” said Linda B. Gambrell, president of the International Reading Association, a professional organization for teachers. In a study commissioned last year by Scholastic, Yankelovich, a market research firm, reported that 51 percent of the 500 kids aged 5 to 17 polled said they did not read books for fun before they started reading the series. A little over three-quarters of them said Harry Potter had made them interested in reading other books.

IX. In a way that was previously rare for books, Harry Potter entered the pop-culture consciousness. The movies (the film version of “Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix,” the fifth in the series, just opened) heightened the fervor, spawning video games and collectible figurines. That made it easier for kids who thought reading was for geeks to pick up a book. Until Harry Potter, “I don’t think kids were reading proudly,” said Connie Williams, the school librarian at Kenilworth Junior High School in Petaluma, Calif. “Now it’s more normalized. It’s like, ‘Gosh we can read now, it’s O.K.’ ”

X. But creating a habit of reading is a continuous battle with kids who are saturated with other options. During a recent sixth-grade English class at the John W. McCormack Middle School in the Dorchester section of Boston, Aaron Forde, a cherubic 12-year-old, said he loved playing soccer, basketball and football. On top of that, he spends four hours a day chatting with friends on [MySpace.com](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/companies/myspace_com/index.html?inline=nyt-org), the social networking site. He had read the first three Harry Potter books, but said he had no particular interest in reading more. “I don’t like to read that much,” he said. “I think there are better things to do.”

XI. Some reading experts say that urging kids to read fiction in general might be a misplaced goal. “If you look at what most people need to read for their occupation, it’s zero narrative,” said Michael L. Kamil, a professor of education at [Stanford University](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/s/stanford_university/index.html?inline=nyt-org). “I don’t want to deny that you should be reading stories and literature. But we’ve overemphasized it,” he said. Instead, children need to learn to read for information, Mr. Kamil said, something they can practice while reading on the Internet, for example.

XII. Still, there is something about seeing the passion that a novel can inspire that excites those who want to perpetuate a culture of reading. Even as the Harry Potter series draws to a close, there are signs that other books are coming up to take its place. On a recent afternoon at at Public School 54 on Staten Island, a group of fifth grade boys shouted with enthusiasm for the “Cirque du Freak” series by Darren Shan, about a boy who becomes entangled with a vampire. “I like the books so much that even when the teacher is teaching a lesson, I still want to read the books,” said Vincent Eng, a wiry 11-year-old. His classmate Thejas Alex said he had stopped reading a Harry Potter book to jump into “Cirque du Freak.” “While I was reading them,” Thejas said, referring to the “Cirque” books, “I was like, addicted.”

Read the text “Potter Has Limited Effect on Reading Habits”

1. A. Circle the correct answer True or False according to paragraph I:

Many parents consider *Harry Potter* to be a blessing. True/ False

B. Justify your answer.

(8 points)

1. What is the main idea of paragraph II? Complete the sentence.

The writer claims that *Harry Potter* did not -------------------------------------------------------

(5 points)

1. Circle the number of the correct answer.

What is the meaning of the word ‘sensation’ as it is used in line 1, paragraph III?

1. Feeling
2. A state of consciousness
3. A cause of excitement

(5 points)

1. Give one fact from paragraph III which shows that the *Harry Potter* series was a stunning success.

(5 points)

1. Fill in the following graphic organizer according to paragraph III:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Before *Harry Potter* was published | After *Harry Potter* was published |
| Kids’ response for a published book | No scenes of kids waiting in line to purchase a mere book |  |
| Length of books read by children |  | Very long books |

(8 points)

1. Circle the correct answer according to paragraph V:

a. As kids move into their adolescence, they tend to read for pleasure less than when they were younger. True/ False

b. Copy the words that justify your answer

(4 points)

1. What does the words 'these trends' (paragraph V) refers to?

(5 points)

1. Circle the number of the correct answer.

What is the relation between paragraph V and paragraph VI?

a. Paragraph V presents a cause and paragraph VI presents the result of it.

b. Paragraph V presents an opinion, while paragraph VI presents an example of it.

c. Paragraph V presents an opinion, while paragraph VII presents another contradicting opinion.

(5 points)

1. Paragraph VII mentions that when “Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince,” the sixth book, was published, the results were identical". What were the results?

(6 points)

1. Circle the number of the correct answer:

The main idea of paragraph VII is:

a. *Harry Potter* series did not cause a real change in young readers' aptitude to read for fun.

b. *Harry Potter* series caused a real change in young readers' aptitude to read for fun.

(4 points)

1. Circle the number of the correct answer:

What is the relation between paragraph VII and paragraph VIII?

a. Contrast

b. Addition

c. Cause and effect

(5 points)

1. Complete the following sentence:

Paragraph VIII mentions that for some parents and educators, *Harry Potter* is a "bona fide hero"; in others words they believe that the series ……………………………….

(5 points)

1. Circle the correct answer True or False according to paragraph VIII:

a. According to the study held by Yankelovich, only a minority of the kids who participated in the study reported a positive effect of the Harry Potter series on their reading for fun habits. True/ False

b. Copy the words that justify your answer

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(10 points)

1. According to paragraph IX, what was the reason behind the change in the attitude of the kids who thought that 'reading was for geeks' towards reading?

(5 points)

1. The writer of the text claims that "reading is a continuous battle with kids who are saturated with other options". Name four of these options (paragraph X)

1. ----------------------------

2. ----------------------------

3. ----------------------------

4. -----------------------------

(12 points)

1. Circle the correct answer according to paragraph XI:

a. Professor L. Kamil thinks that educators should put more/ less emphasis on reading for pleasure

b. Why does he think so?

(8 points)

Good Luck!

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