



## *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*

While home with [the Dursleys](#) for the summer, [Harry Potter](#) is not getting any mail from his friends, [Ron](#) and [Hermione](#). On his twelfth birthday ([July 31](#)) Harry is visited by [Dobby](#), a [house-elf](#), who warns Harry that he will be in mortal danger if he returns to Hogwarts. Harry is determined to return despite Dobby's dire warning. It turns out that Dobby was collecting Harry's letters, in the hope that if Harry thought his friends had forgotten him, he might not want to return to Hogwarts. Dobby, seeing that he will have to use force, decides to destroy a large cake that Aunt Petunia baked through the use of a charm. Harry is blamed by the [Ministry of Magic](#) for Dobby's charm, and is told that if he does magic outside of school again, he will be expelled. The Dursleys, upon learning that he cannot perform magic outside of school, have locked away Harry's books and wand; Mr. Dursley has fitted bars onto his window, making Harry a prisoner.

A few days later, [Fred](#), [George](#) and [Ron Weasley](#) come to his rescue in their fathers's enchanted [Ford Anglia](#). After a pleasant summer together in the Weasley house, everyone heads to [Platform 9¾](#) to take the [Hogwarts Express](#) back to

school. To their shock, Harry and Ron are unable to enter the barrier between platforms 9 and 10. In desperation, they fly to [Hogwarts](#) in the car, crashing into the [Whomping Willow](#) and damaging Ron's wand. The semi-sentient car ejects them and their belongings and disappears into the [Forbidden Forest](#).

Harry soon finds he is the unwanted centre of attention of three people: the vain new [Defence Against the Dark Arts](#) Professor [Gilderoy Lockhart](#), a wizard perpetuating his own legend; admirer [Colin Creevey](#), a young first year Gryffindor who endlessly takes Harry's photo and begs for autographs; and Ron's sister, [Ginny Weasley](#), who fancies Harry. Events take a bad turn when the [Chamber of Secrets](#) is opened and a monster stalks the castle, which literally petrifies several students. According to legend, the Chamber was built by [Salazar Slytherin](#) and can only be opened by his heir to purge Hogwarts of students who are not [pure-blood](#) wizards. Many suspect Harry is the Slytherin heir, especially after he inadvertently speaks [Parseltongue](#) (the language of [snakes](#)), a rare ability Harry gained after Voldemort's murderous attack upon Harry when Harry was an infant. Harry, Ron, and Hermione attempt to discover the Heir of Slytherin's true identity. Using [Polyjuice Potion](#) brewed by Hermione, they disguise themselves as Slytherin students, [Crabbe](#) and [Goyle](#), hoping to learn from [Draco Malfoy](#) the identity of the heir. Malfoy, they learn, does not know who the Heir of Slytherin is, but he inadvertently provides Harry and Ron with an important clue about the Chamber of Secrets.

Unfortunately, The hair that Hermione took from Millicent Bultstrodes uniform was from a cat, as the polyjuice potion is only intended for human transformations she assumes a feline appearance, and it takes a little more than a month to restore her normal human form.

The attacks increase throughout the year, petrifying students, including Hermione. Most horribly, a message written on a wall declares that Ginny Weasley has been taken into the Chamber where, "her skeleton will lie forever."

With Ron and [Moaning Myrtle's](#) help, Harry discovers the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. They force Gilderoy Lockhart, a fraud who wipes clean other wizards' memories and claims their achievements, to go with them. Once they find the entrance to the Chamber, Lockhart attempts to use Ron's broken wand to erase Harry and Ron's memories, but the spell backfires onto himself and brings the ceiling caving in, separating Harry from Ron and Lockhart. Lockhart revives again, but has now lost his own memory.

Harry makes it to the Chamber where he finds an unconscious Ginny. He also meets a young man named Tom Riddle, who claims to be a "memory". Harry learns that Ginny, under the control of [Lord Voldemort](#), opened the Chamber. Voldemort, whose real name is [Tom Marvolo Riddle](#) (the [anagram](#) of which is "I am Lord Voldemort"), imprinted his memory in [an enchanted diary](#), in order to one day continue the work he began when he reopened the Chamber fifty years ago—ridding Hogwarts of non-pureblood witches and wizards. It was [Hagrid](#), a Hogwarts student at the time, who was blamed for the attacks and expelled.

Tom Riddle's memory grows more powerful as it steals life from Ginny's body, and it tries to kill Harry by setting loose the [Basilisk](#) (the monster responsible for petrifying the students). But Dumbledore's [phoenix, Fawkes](#), arrives carrying the [Sorting Hat](#), from which Harry draws out the sword of [Godric Gryffindor](#). Fawkes blinds the Basilisk, destroying its fatal gaze, and Harry slays it with the sword. He stabs the diary with one of the Basilisk's fangs, and Riddle's memory is vanquished while Ginny revives from a near-death state. She fully recovers along with Mrs. Norris, Justin Finch-Fletchley, Nearly Headless Nick, Colin Creevey, Penelope Clearwater and the other students who were petrified.

Harry realizes it was [Lucius Malfoy](#) who slipped the diary into Ginny's cauldron when he encountered the Weasleys in a Diagon Alley bookshop, but he is unable to prove it. Dobby reveals he is the Malfoys' servant, and knowing their treachery, had been trying to protect Harry all year. In gratitude, Harry wraps the diary in one of his old socks and hands it to Lucius. Lucius throws away the sock, but Dobby catches it. This constitutes, in Dobby's eyes, a gift of clothing—the traditional manner in which a master frees a house-elf from servitude. The freed Dobby declares he is eternally grateful to Harry and protects him from an attempted reprisal from Lucius. In the [film of the same name](#) The word "Avada" is used as the beginning of Lucius Malfoy's curse, suggesting that it is the [Avada Kedavra](#) (the killing curse). This is not mentioned in the novel.

Dumbledore dispels Harry's fears that he could have been put into Slytherin rather than into Gryffindor when he tells Harry that it is his choices that define him and not his abilities, and that Harry could not have wielded the sword of Gryffindor if he did not truly belong to that house.