
J. K. Rowling: A Source Of Inspiration For Young People Everywhere

She's enchanted millions of people around the world with her whimsical, wonderful stories of an orphan wizard with his lightening scar. According to Pottermore, there have been over half a billion books sold worldwide in 80 languages. Her final book in the series ranks as the all-time fastest-selling book of fiction. It's mind-boggling to think that the internationally acclaimed inventor of Harry Potter's world struggled with poverty, depression, and rejection.

Growing up in England, J.K. Rowling's childhood was tainted by her mother's struggle with multiple sclerosis; one of Rowling's favorite coping mechanisms was to write and share her stories with her younger sister. Her parents encouraged her to pursue a career in more secure industries, however, and so she studied French and later worked as a translator for Amnesty International. While acknowledging the importance of her work, Rowling's heart just wasn't in it. She scribbled story ideas during breaks and office meetings.

She dreamed up the main characters of Harry Potter in 1990, sitting on a delayed train from Manchester to King's Cross station. She brainstormed and drafted the story over the next seven years, which were the most tumultuous of her life. Her mother passed away on New Year's Day in 1991, when Rowling was 25 years old; this heavily influenced her work, as one of the main themes in the Harry Potter series is death: the fear of dying, the quest for immortality, and the transcending power of love. The following year, Rowling moved to Portugal to teach English, where she met and married a Portuguese journalist. In 1992, she had a miscarriage; in 1993, Rowling gave birth to a girl she named Jessica (after one of her favorite authors). By the end of the year, however, Rowling had separated from her husband and moved back to England with a suitcase brimming with the first three chapters of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.

Jobless, battling depression (an illness personified in her books by the Dementors), and struggling to raise Jessica as a single mom, Rowling lived off of government welfare in a tiny flat and escaped to various cafes (where her toddler slept most soundly) to write her first novel on a typewriter. She meanwhile trained as a teacher and began teaching at the city's schools, continuing to write whenever she could.

Eventually she finished her first novel, enlisted the help of an agent, and got rejected by 12 major publishing houses. Finally, Bloomsbury agreed to take the book on in 1997—largely due to the fact that the editor's eight-year-old daughter loved the first chapter. Within weeks, book sales skyrocketed. Six more books followed the first, all attaining record-breaking success.

Rowling finally attained her own (much deserved!) happily ever after. On a personal note, she happily remarried in 2001 and had two more children. Today Rowling is the UK's best-selling living author, one of the world's wealthiest people, a gracious philanthropist, one of the most influential women of Britain, and a major advocate for multiple charities (including her own). She's succeeded as a film producer, screenwriter, and television producer, and she continues to be a role model and inspiration to young people everywhere.