

A first year's year of
food: cuisine and
character in 'harry
potter and the sorce...



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You are what you eat, they always say. This timeless proverb holds true for the wizarding world, as well. Harry Potter might be able to escape the muggle world after he becomes a wizard, but no one is immune to the truth behind proverbs. Throughout *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, J. K. Rowling uses food-related imagery to complement the emotions Harry has. In his first year at Hogwarts, Harry experiences a vast change in his surroundings, feelings, and sense of self. These stark life changes are mimicked by the different flavors and connotations of food Harry is surrounded by.

For the first ten years of Harry's life, he lives with his only remaining relatives, the Dursleys. Unloved and unwanted, he lives in the cupboard beneath the stairs. His spoiled cousin Dudley has everything he can get his hands on, but very rarely is Harry allowed to have anything. While Harry does not starve at the Dursleys', he is never shown what it feels like to have a full stomach or allowed a treat. On the one occasion that Harry is allowed to attend Dudley's birthday party, the Dursleys, "Buy Dudley and Piers large chocolate ice creams...(and) Harry a cheap lemon ice pop" (Rowling 26). This simple treat is a joy for Harry, even though his popsicle is not as decadent as his cousin's. Being allowed to go to the zoo and have a treat is something Harry appreciates more than Dudley and Piers. Harry's life has improved greatly for just this one day; it is as sweet as the lemon ice pop. But, it is not nearly as self-indulgent as Dudley's life and his large chocolate ice cream cone.

On his eleventh birthday, Harry experiences an extraordinary discovery about himself and his place in the world. Hagrid, tasked with the duty to <https://assignbuster.com/a-first-years-year-of-food-cuisine-and-character-in-harry-potter-and-the-sorcerers-stone/>

inform Harry of his magical heritage, discovers the boy hidden away with the Dursleys. After introducing himself, Hagrid presents Harry with a, " Large, sticky, chocolate cake with Happy Birthday Harry written on it in green icing" (48). Birthday cakes are full of wonder and wishes, and this cake is the first thing that has ever truly been made specifically for Harry. It is just the same as Hogwarts's letters and Hagrid's news: meant specifically for Harry. In the morning, Harry cannot believe what has happened. He thinks that the cake and Hagrid must have been a very nice dream (61). For the first time, Harry has a reason to hope and wish. Soon, on Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$, Harry is alone in the wizarding world for the very first time. After boarding the train, he meets his future best friend, Ron Weasley. Harry is optimistic and full of excitement about leaving the horrible Dursleys behind and discovering what is waiting for him at Hogwarts (98).

The very beginnings of childhood friendships are full of excitement, as well. After the train leaves the station, a smiling woman offers the two new friends a variety of treats from the trolley. Harry is excited to discover that the cart contains no candy like he has ever seen before (101). Indeed, the woman with the cart delivers a medley of wizarding candy including, " Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans, Drooble's Best Blowing Gum, Chocolate Frogs, Pumpkin Pasties, Cauldron Cakes, Licorice Wands, and a number of other strange treats" (101). A few chocolate wrappers later, Harry is well on his way to discovering friendships, the wizarding world, and strange candy. Hogwarts is famous for its banquets, and Harry's first does not disappoint. Dinner is served immediately after the Sorting Hat, and all of the first years are rather excited about what is to come. Harry eats to his fill from a dinner plate as

large as his eyes. All of his favorite foods are featured, including, “ Roast beef, roast chicken, pork chops and lamb chops, sausages, bacon and steak...Yorkshire pudding, peas, carrots...(and) peppermint humbugs” (123). This mountainous amount of food doesn't even include what Hogwarts served for dessert! The possibilities for what Harry can eat have become wide and endless, the same as the possibilities for what Harry can make of himself in his new home.

By Christmas time, Hogwarts truly has become Harry's home. He has become close with his friends, Ron and Hermione, he has mastered the sport of Quidditch, and he has finally found a place where he belongs. On Christmas morning, Harry awakes to a lumpy parcel from Mrs. Weasley. Inside, Harry finds a, “ thick, hand-knitted sweater in emerald green and a large box of homemade fudge” (200). Homemade fudge tastes like just that: homemade. Mrs. Weasley's gift has come at the perfect time to help Harry expand on his emotions. Three days after Harry survives his second encounter with Voldemort, he awakes to find Dumbledore sitting bedside. What follows is an important conversation between the two, with Harry asking questions and discovering what really happened behind Fluffy's trapdoor. This conversation is full of discovery for Harry. He discovers why Professor Snape hates him, why Professor Quirrell couldn't touch him, and how he managed to get the Stone out of the mirror (299-300). A few of these answers are not what Harry was expecting to hear, particularly the answer Dumbledore gives him about Snape. After this conversation, Harry is left to wonder about certain questions, as Dumbledore pulls out a pack of Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Bean. Opening the box, Dumbledore, “ Smiled and

popped (a) golden-brown bean into his mouth” (301). But, his smile soon turns into a cough, as the bean happens to be earwax flavored. Dumbledore is surprised by this unfortunate flavor in the same way that Harry is surprised about Snape and other answers.

As often as people turn to comfort foods when they are sad, they turn to party foods when they are celebrating. Certain meals can balance or strengthen emotions. Harry Potter experiences of plethora of different emotions throughout his first year at Hogwarts. J. K. Rowling strengthens and complements these feelings through the use of food-related imagery and underlying metaphors. For Harry, this comparison might go undetected. But, recognizing these parallels in literature can add to the joy of reading and deepen our understanding of a character. We might even be able to spot these correlations in our own daily lives, and be able to appreciate our heightened emotions.