

# Harry Potter: Magic and the Science of Friendship

## GOALS

- Students will identify inferred and recurring literary, cultural and social themes such as bravery, loyalty, friendship and the notion of good vs. evil
- Students will consider how magic is a metaphor for knowledge

Students will make connections between the motives of characters or the causes of complex events in texts and those in their own lives

## RATIONALE

Harry Potter is the hero of J.K. Rowling's series not only because he's a powerful wizard but also because he's brave, loyal to his friends and fights against Voldemort's evil power.

Magical power dramatically changes Harry Potter's life; without magic, the story of an orphan boy's school days might not be so entertaining. Some of Harry's power, however, comes from sources other than magic. Knowing that his parents loved him enough to die for him, for example, gives Harry great strength.

Harry and his friends receive a very special kind of education that other children, like Harry's cousin Dudley, can't even begin to imagine. Through magic, Harry and his friends Ron and Hermione can change the world. They can use magic to accomplish the equivalent of scientific marvels — like flying and mixing potions — and they can also use magic to influence the way people treat one another.

Magical education at Hogwarts gives Harry and his friends some of the same advantages that scientific studies offer real-life students. Potions and spells can also affect people's attitudes and feelings, similar to the way confidence, conflict resolution and speaking skills enable people to get along better.

This activity asks students to think about how their time in school — like the time Harry spends at Hogwarts — offers them opportunities to invent new things, build strong relationships and imagine projects as spectacular as walking in space or building skyscrapers.

## PROCESS

As a group, brainstorm and write on the board some of the students' favorite examples of magic powers in fiction; on the other side of the board, briefly brainstorm what magic powers students would most want. (flying, turning things to gold, love potions, etc.)

Give students the handout, letting them complete Part I. individually or in pairs; reconvene for discussion after Part I. Repeat process for Part II; allow students to work in small groups, if appropriate. Allowing students to record their thoughts (in advance) on the handouts will enable them to participate more in large group discussion.

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**PART I**

Think about how some of the “magic” Harry and his friends use might not be so magical after all. Add examples to the chart:

Magical Power	Use	Effect	“Real-world” Equivalent
Felix Felicis Potion	Harry pretends to slip it in Ron’s juice so he will play well in the Quidditch match	Ron helps Griffyndor defeat Slytherin	Ron never drank the potion, but since he thought he was lucky he acted with self-confidence
Time-turner	Hermione uses it to have more time for studying	Her study skills bring her to the top of her class	When she turns time, she repeats information; repetition helps us learn
Harry’s “Defense Against Dark Arts” skills	He protects himself from Voldemort	Good overcomes evil	Support from friends and love from your family can protect you and make you a better person

**PART II**

Next, in small groups, brainstorm what you would do if you had magical power. You might want to make a huge sum of money, cure a disease or become a great leader. Would you need magic or just knowledge? The chart below has some examples:

What’s your power?	What do you need to know?	What could stop you?
I want to fly	This would take engineering skills to build a personal flying apparatus. To develop technology, you need lots of education	Engineers need concise instruments, a laboratory, and expensive materials. Not everyone has access to resources
I want to stop people from fighting	This would take listening to both sides, dialogue, and compromise. Some people take mediation classes	Lack of patience, needing to be “right,” not listening to both sides, focusing on people’s weakness
I want a million dollars	Without magic or an elite career, it would take lots of investment knowledge and start-up funds to make lots of money	You might not have any cash to invest, you might not know what companies make money, you might only know how to make money by working

Now make your own chart, using ideas from everyone in the group.

What's your power?	What do you need to know?	What could stop you?	What could help you?

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What would you need to know to make money, cure disease or become a great leader?
2. What are you learning in school that gives you the most power?
3. Are you learning anything in school that, like magic, could help you change your community?
4. Can you exclude people from gaining knowledge? How?
5. Why do you think learning magic is a special privilege in the Harry Potter books?
6. Can you think of "special privileges" that only certain people have today?