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Bio4Kids: J.K. Rowling (1965-)

Brief Outline

Rowling invented one of the best-known, most beloved characters in fiction-Harry Potter. Filled with magic, the adventures of the orphaned boy wizard have captured the imaginations of people everywhere, creating an international sensation.

So who is the author of the best-selling Harry Potter books? The "J. K." in J. K. Rowling's name stands for Joanne Kathleen and she was born in Chipping Sodbury, England, on July 31, 1965. She studied French at Exeter University and then took a job with Amnesty International in London, the human rights group. The idea for Harry Potter came to Rowling in 1990 during a ride train from Manchester to London. She then went to work on the story. That same year, her mother died, leaving Rowling and the rest of her family heartbroken. It is this loss, she said later, that shaped the way she wrote about Harry Potter and the challenges he faced after his parents passed away.

While she had been writing since the age of six, Rowling never was so inspired as she was by the story of Harry Potter. Rowling kept writing even after she moved to Portugal to teach English. While there, she was married to the Portuguese journalist Jorge Arantes. The couple had a daughter and later divorced. All the while she tended to her story about the thin, bespectacled boy with amazing powers.

Rowling moved from Portugal to Edinburgh, Scotland. She struggled to support herself and her daughter Jessica while working on her novel. She finished the book and, after several rejections, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was

published in the United Kingdom in 1997. The book came out the next year in the United States as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Soon two more books followed: *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Each title in the series follows the events of Harry Potter's life at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry for one year.

After the first three titles were published, it seemed like the entire world had Harry Potter fever. Fans eagerly read each new installment to find out more about Harry and his friends Ron and Hermione. The fourth book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, was released in 2000 and sold more than 3 million copies in the first 48 hours. Three years later, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* debuted and again fans camped out at bookstores to get one of the first copies.

The most recent title in the series, *Harry and the Half-Blood Prince*, set new records when it was released in 2005. Approximately 10 million copies of the book were printed for its first day of sale and almost 7 million of those were sold in the first 24 hours. Like the other titles in the series, it reached the top of the best-sellers list.

There is no doubt that the success of the Harry Potter books changed Rowling's life dramatically. She used to worry about making ends meet and now she is considered to be the wealthiest woman in Britain. It is said that she has more money than Queen Elizabeth II. In addition to her professional triumphs, Rowling has experienced positive changes in her personal life. She married Dr. Neil Murray in 2001 and the couple has two children together.

Rowling has always said that there would be seven books in the series and has indicated that she knows how she wants it to end. Fans around the world are anxiously waiting to see what the future holds for Harry Potter and his creator J. K. Rowling.

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