

J. K. Rowling

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Joanne Rowling (ROH-ling; born 31 July 1965), better known by her pen name J. K. Rowling, is a British novelist and author of Harry Potter, a seven-volume series about a young wizard. Published from 1997 to 2007, the fantasy novels are the best-selling book series in history, with over 600 million copies sold. They have been translated into 84 languages and have spawned a global media franchise including films and video games. She writes Cormoran Strike, an ongoing crime fiction series, under the alias Robert Galbraith. Born in Yate, Gloucestershire, Rowling was working as a researcher and bilingual secretary for Amnesty International in 1990 when she conceived the idea for the Harry Potter series. The seven-year period that followed saw the death of her mother, the birth of her first child, divorce from her first husband, and relative poverty until the first novel in the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, was published in 1997. Six sequels followed, concluding with *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007). By 2008, *Forbes* had named her the world's highest-paid author. The novels follow a boy called Harry Potter as he attends Hogwarts (a school for wizards), and battles Lord Voldemort. Death and the divide between good and evil are the central themes of the series. Its influences include Bildungsroman (the coming-of-age genre), school stories, fairy tales, and Christian allegory. The series revived fantasy as a genre in the children's market, spawned a host of imitators, and inspired an active fandom. Critical reception has been more mixed. Many reviewers see Rowling's writing as conventional; some regard her portrayal of gender and social division as regressive. There were also religious debates over the Harry Potter series. Rowling has won many accolades for her work. She was named to the Order of the British Empire and was appointed a member of the Order of the Companions of Honour for services to literature and philanthropy. Harry Potter brought her wealth and recognition, which she has used to advance philanthropic endeavours and political causes. She established the Volant Charitable Trust in 2000, and co-founded the charity Lumos in 2005. Rowling's philanthropy centres on medical causes and supporting at-risk women and children. In 2025, *Forbes* estimated that Rowling's charitable giving exceeded US\$200 million. She has also donated to the British Labour Party, and opposed Scottish independence and Brexit. Beginning in 2019, Rowling began making public remarks about transgender people, in opposition to the notion that gender identity differs from birth sex. She has been condemned as transphobic by LGBT rights groups, some Harry Potter fans, and various other critics, including academics, which has affected her public image and relationship with readers and colleagues, altering the way they engage with her works.