***Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone***

***Chapter 12***

***Summary and analysis***

***Brief Summary:***

The holidays are upon Hogwarts, and Harry chooses to stay at Hogwarts instead of returning to the Dursleys. Ron and his brothers will also be staying since their parents will be visiting their eldest son in Romania. Harry, Ron, and Hermione have been diligently searching every book in the Hogwarts library for information about Nicolas Flamel, the wizard whom Hagrid mentioned, who had some connection to the mysterious package. Hermione leaves for the holidays as do most of the other students, leaving Harry on Ron to their own devices.

On Christmas morning, Harry is surprised to discover he has gotten a rather interesting gift from an anonymous person. Ron recognizes the long flowing material as an invisibility cloak; a very valuable item because it makes anything beneath it disappear completely. The attached note says, "Your father left this in my possession before he died. It is time it was returned to you. Use it well. A very Merry Christmas to you."

Harry had a fabulous Christmas dinner with Ron and his brothers, Fred and George the twins, and Percy who is a "Prefect" at Hogwarts. After they are all full they return to the Gryffindor boys' dorm. Harry and Ron go to their room, and after Ron is asleep, Harry gets the irresistible urge to don the cloak and do some investigating.

Harry heads right to the Restricted Section of the school library. He takes a book down from the shelf, and it begins to shriek and draws the attention of Filch, the groundskeeper, and his cat, Mrs. Norris. Harry barely escapes and overhears Filch telling Snape that someone has visited the restricted section of the library. The two set out in search of the intruder. Harry ducks inside an abandoned classroom.

At the back of the room is a magnificent, inscribed mirror, and Harry walks toward it. As he watches the mirror, he sees a very pretty woman standing behind him waving, smiling, and crying. Beside her stands a tall man with glasses and untidy hair. They resemble Harry. The people in the mirror are his parents. He looks a long time at them, but a noise startles him, and he returns to the dorm.

Harry returns to the room a second and third night, anxious to see his family again. On the third night he sits before the mirror intending to stay all night visiting with his family. He hears a voice from behind him and it is the Headmaster Albus Dumbledore. He tells Harry it is the Mirror of Erised and it shows the person before it his or her deepest desires. It can become an obsession and drive one mad if one stands before it long enough. He then sends Harry to bed with a smile telling him the mirror will be gone come morning.

***Brief Analysis:***

Harry's deepest desire is to see his parents and nothing else. It seems he has a secret champion in the cloak giver and an admirer and protector in Headmaster Dumbledore. He is becoming a tireless investigator in the pursuit of information about the object in the forbidden wing. But he is getting the dangerous attention of Professor Snape and Filch.

Harry’s discovery of the Mirror of Erised is important both as plot development and as a revelation of Harry’s own character. The mirror room is a taboo zone, and thus once again, Harry’s entry is another violation of the rules. Harry finds the mirror in a room where he is not supposed to be, having just fled from the restricted-books section of the library where he is also not supposed to be. But it is a crucial scene, as it is the room in which the climactic encounter of the story later takes place. It is also the site of the first intimate and friendly conversation between Harry and Dumbledore, foreshadowing Harry’s future successes in fighting for Dumbledore’s side in the coming clash. Symbolically, the Mirror of Erised is a mirror into the soul, because it depicts the heart’s deepest desire (“Erised” is “desire” spelled backward). Harry finds out nothing about the mysterious Nicolas Flamel, but he finds out a lot about his love for his long-dead parents and his wish that they were alive again. Like the invisibility cloak that also appears in this chapter, the Mirror of Erised helps Harry connect his present adventures with the past world of his parents and the fond feelings that dwell in his heart. As it turns out, this understanding of desire is much more important for Harry than the information that any book could convey. The turn from the outer world of library research to the inner world of memories and desires suggests that part of Harry’s search involves an inward investigation of his own self.

Harry’s growing intimacy with Dumbledore is an important development. At the beginning, Dumbledore is a rather abstractly presented grand person whom we glimpse from afar when he gives the students a welcome speech the night of their arrival. But when Dumbledore comes upon Harry in the mirror room, the old wizard and the young boy are alone for the first time in the story, conversing privately, and we see a more human side of Dumbledore. There is an increasing sense that Dumbledore cares about Harry as an individual, as there is no mention of him having a private audience with any other Hogwarts student. Even more important, Dumbledore surprises Harry at a very intimate moment of self-exploration, when Harry is examining his soul’s deepest desires. Dumbledore’s explanation of the mirror and gentle advice that Harry not consult it anymore show that the great wizard is a wise psychologist, as well as almost a father figure for Harry.

Dumbledore continues to be a protective force for Harry. His advice to refrain from looking in the Mirror of Erised stems from his understanding that the mirror’s powerful images might overwhelm the young Harry. In contrast to Snape, who mocks Harry’s celebrity status without hesitation, Dumbledore understands that Harry is a still a little boy with emotional needs. The later revelation that Dumbledore is the one who gives Harry’s father’s invisibility cloak to Harry reinforces his fatherly role. Finally, with Harry’s discovery that the secret of Nicolas Flamel’s identity is actually in his own possession the whole time, in a collector’s card in his pocket that depicts Dumbledore, we feel even more strongly that Dumbledore occupies a very personal and intimate place in Harry’s life.

***Summary in Detail(12 and 13):***

Harry and Ron spend their Christmas holiday at Hogwarts. Although Malfoy teases Harry for staying at school during the vacation, Harry is actually looking forward to having Christmas away from the Dursleys, who always make the holiday a particularly unpleasant occasion. Hermione is going home for the vacation, but she forces Harry and Ron to spend a few more hours researching [Nicolas Flamel](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-philosophers-stone/study-guide/character-list#nicolas-flamel) before she has to leave. Despite their best attempts since [Hagrid](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-philosophers-stone/study-guide/character-list#hagrid)’s accidental slip, Harry, Ron, and Hermione have had no luck finding out anything about Nicolas Flamel. Hermione urges them to keep looking while she is away.

Harry and Ron spend most of their holiday relaxing in the Gryffindor common room, roasting marshmallows over the fire, and playing wizard chess. On Christmas day, Harry is surprised to find a small pile of presents at the base of his bed. In additional to a fifty pence piece from the Dursleys, Harry receives a box of fudge and a hand-knitted sweater from Ron’s mother, a large box of Chocolate Frogs from Hermione, and a wooden flute from Hagrid. He also receives a rare invisibility cloak from an anonymous source; the package is accompanied only with a note that tells him that the cloak once belonged to Harry’s father.

Harry decides to use the invisibility cloak to sneak into the restricted section of the library during the night and do some more research on Nicolas Flamel. Once of the books starts screaming after he opens it, and Harry runs out of the library and hides in an abandoned classroom while Filch prowls around. Inside the classroom, Harry discovers a massive mirror that is ornately decorated and carved with a strange inscription: “Erised stra ehru oyt ube cafru oyt on wohsi.” Harry looks in the mirror and is terrified when he does not see his own reflection. Instead, he sees several people smiling and waving at him. One of the figures is a very pretty woman with striking green eyes, and Harry realizes that he is looking at his mother.

Harry runs back to the dorm to get Ron and show him his family in the mirror. When Ron looks, however, he only sees Harry’s reflection. When he looks in the mirror for himself, he sees himself as Head Boy and captain of the Gryffindor Quidditch team. Ron wonders if the mirror shows the future, but Harry knows that it does not because it shows his dead family. The next day, Harry is preoccupied with the images that he saw in the mirror. Ron urges him to forget it, but Harry feels a growing obsession to see his family again.

That night, he rushes off to the room and is so eager to sit in front of the mirror again that he does not notice that Dumbledore is already in the room. Dumbledore explains that the Mirror of Erised shows an individual’s most earnest desires. Yet, it does not provide knowledge or truth, and Dumbledore warns that its images can be very addictive and cause a person to lose sight of reality. Dumbledore tells Harry that the mirror will be moved to a new location the next day and urges Harry not to look for the mirror again.

Harry heeds Dumbledore’s advice not to look for the Mirror of Erised, but he finds himself haunted by the images that he saw. He also starts to have nightmares about his parents. When Hermione returns from vacation, she is shocked at Harry’s adventures with the invisibility cloak but is disappointed that he was not at least able to find out about Nicolas Flamel in the process. Quidditch practice begins in earnest again, and Harry is horrified to learn that Snape is going to referee Gryffindor’s next match against Hufflepuff. Ron and Hermione urge him not to play, but Harry does not feel that he can back out and let down the team.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione finally uncover the mystery of Nicolas Flamel from the collectible card on Dumbledore found in a Chocolate Frog. The description on the card mentions Nicolas Flamel as Dumbledore’s partner in his work on alchemy, and Hermione uses one of her books to find a more detailed description. Flamel is the only known maker of the Sorcerer’s Stone, which can turn metal into gold and produce the elixir of life. Harry, Ron, and Hermione conclude that Flamel asked Dumbledore to take the Stone from Gringotts and place it under his protection at Hogwarts. Harry becomes increasingly nervous as the Quidditch match approaches. If Gryffindor wins the match, they will also be likely to win the House Cup championship. Yet, Harry worries about Snape as the referee for the match, especially since he is unsure of Snape’s motivation for stealing the Sorcerer’s Stone. Harry’s Potions classes are almost unbearable, and Harry gets the sense that Snape is treating him particularly bad because of the impending match.

When the match finally arrives, Harry feels more confident when he sees Dumbledore in the stands; he knows that Snape will not try to harm him in Dumbledore’s presence. Harry catches the Snitch in the first five minutes of the game, allowing Gryffindor to claim victory over Hufflepuff in an unprecedented amount of time. After the game, Harry flies toward the Forbidden Forest on his way to broom shed and overhears Snape threatening [Professor Quirrell](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-philosophers-stone/study-guide/character-list#professor-quirrell). Snape mentions the Sorcerer’s Stone and warns Quirrell not to become his enemy before stalking back to the castle. Harry decides that Snape is bullying Professor Quirrell to help him get past the three-headed dog and steal the Sorcerer’s Stone for his own purposes. Harry tells Ron and Hermione, and the three fear that the stammering Defense Against the Dark Arts professor will not be able to stand up to Snape for long.

***Analysis in Detail(Chapter 12 and 13):***

For the majority of the text thus far, Dumbledore is a detached, almost abstract figure in Harry’s life. He is introduced in Little Whinging when Harry is an infant, but Harry has no idea that Dumbledore played such a crucial role in placing him with the Dursleys and protecting him from attention until his entrance to Hogwarts. He also has no idea that Dumbledore gives him the invisibility cloak for Christmas that he had borrowed from [James Potter](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-philosophers-stone/study-guide/character-list#james-potter). From Harry’s perspective, then, Dumbledore is little more a figure on the trading card of a Chocolate Frog, more of an idea than an actual person.

With Harry’s discovery of the Mirror of Erised and Dumbledore’s subsequent conversations with him, all of this changes. Dumbledore is no longer a detached wizard but rather becomes a sort of father figure for Harry. He demonstrates genuine affection for Harry and a clear interest in Harry’s life and personal development, far more than that of any other student. He also takes it upon himself to teach Harry the valuable lesson of the Mirror of Erised: that desire can bring neither knowledge nor truth. Dumbledore’s position as a father figure will become increasingly important over the course of the book series, just as Harry’s loyalty to him and Gryffindor House will be.

Because of Dumbledore’s well-timed intervention, Harry avoids becoming dangerously obsessed with the Mirror of Erised and the images that he sees within it. At the same time, however, Harry’s visions in the mirror reveal elements of his character of which he was not even aware. As Dumbledore explains, the Mirror of Erised (“desire” spelled backward) reveals an individual’s deepest, most earnest desires. While Ron’s deepest desire is to surpass his successful brothers, Harry’s desire is far more poignant: a wish to be reunited with the family that he never knew.

Until this moment, Harry does not realize the extent to which the memory of his murdered parents directs his actions. His beliefs about [Voldemort](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-philosophers-stone/study-guide/character-list#voldemort), his interest in the Sorcerer’s Stone, and even his refusal to be placed in Slytherin House all lead back to his loneliness and desperate desire to know his parents. The Mirror of Erised provides Harry with a clarifying glimpse into his own nature and ensures that he will view all of his future actions in light of this deep desire. As Dumbledore reminds him, a glimpse is all that Harry needs to develop this self-awareness; any more than a glimpse threatens to overpower Harry’s sense of reality and trap him into becoming fixated on family that will never be.

Interestingly, through his interactions with Harry in this scene, Dumbledore presents himself as a familial replacement for Harry’s lost family. The family that exists in the Mirror of Erised can never exist again, but that does not mean that Harry cannot create a new family in his life. Ron, Hermione, and Harry’s other close friends can each become a part of this new family, just as Dumbledore presents himself as a possible candidate. The most important thing is that Harry does not dwell in the past but focus on the future. Although Voldemort took away Harry’s true family, he did not take away Harry’s ability to make new friends, new loyalties, and new ties that are as strong as family.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

By mid-December, everyone is excited for the holidays so they can return home. [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter), however, will not be returning to Privet Drive; instead he will stay at Hogwarts for the holidays. Harry is excited, because [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley) and his brothers [George](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/george-weasley), [Fred](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/fred-weasley), and [Percy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters) are staying at school as well—their parents are going to Romania to visit [Charlie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters) for Christmas.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Harry doesn’t want to return to Privet Drive for the holidays because Hogwarts feels much more like home than Privet Drive ever did; additionally, he is bound to have a much more loving and enjoyable Christmas with Ron and his brothers than he would with the Dursleys.

***Summary Part 2:***

One day, as [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter), [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley), and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/hermione-granger) return from a Potions lesson, [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/rubeus-hagrid) is bringing in an enormous tree to decorate the Great Hall, and Ron offers to help. [Malfoy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/draco-malfoy), who is also in the corridor, remarks that Ron must be vying for the gamekeeper job because Hagrid’s hut is practically a palace compared to the Weasley’s home. Ron lunges at Malfoy in anger but is caught by [Snape](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/professor-snape), who deducts five points from Gryffindor for fighting. Harry and Ron are furious.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Harry’s friendship with Ron essentially extends his rivalry with Draco to Ron as well, as Draco feels it necessary to make fun of Ron too. Despite these divisions, friendships remain crucial for Ron and Harry because they can show each other support and even find comfort in disliking the same people, like Draco and Snape.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/rubeus-hagrid) tells the kids to cheer up—it’s the holidays after all. [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/hermione-granger) then reminds [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) and [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley) that they should head to the library before lunch. They’re trying to find out who [Nicolas Flamel](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters) is, which makes Hagrid furious. The trouble is that they don’t know where to look for Flamel—they can’t find him in any of the modern history books, and Harry wants to try to look at the Restricted Section, but students need specially signed notes to access those books.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Harry, Ron, and Hermione are bound by their friendship but also now by this collective desire to find out who Flamel is. For each of them, it feeds into a deeper desire to prove themselves: for Harry to prove that he can be a hero and not just a famous name, for Ron to prove that he is just as impressive as his brothers, and for Hermione to prove her intelligence.

***Summary Part 4:***

The next day, [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/hermione-granger) goes home for the holidays. [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) and [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley) spend their days sitting by the fire in the Gryffindor common room, roasting foods, plotting ways to get [Malfoy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/draco-malfoy) expelled, and playing wizard’s chess. Wizard’s chess is the same as Muggle chess, except that the figures are alive, and players must convince the figures to follow directions. Ron never has any trouble at this, as he plays with an old set that used to belong to his grandfather, but Harry’s chessmen (which he borrowed) don’t trust him at all.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Harry and Ron’s time together during Christmas demonstrates how their friendship and love has progressed to the point where they spend all of their time together, enjoy the same activities, and also dislike the same things as well. Ron’s prowess at chess also foreshadows his eventual success in another game of wizard’s chess, albeit with much higher stakes.

***Summary Part 6:***

On Christmas, [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) is amazed to find a small pile of packages at the foot of his bed—he hasn’t been expecting any presents. The first is a wooden flute that [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/rubeus-hagrid) has whittled. The second is from [Vernon](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/vernon-dursley) and [Petunia](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/petunia-dursley): fifty pence, which he promptly gives to [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley) once he sees how excited Ron is by Muggle money. The third present is from [Molly Weasley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters), who knit him a sweater and made him some fudge. The fourth is from [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/hermione-granger): a large box of Chocolate Frogs.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Harry’s presents serve as a representation of how much he has gained from the wizarding world: not only a sense of belonging, but a set of friends who substitute as his family. To Harry, who has experienced very little love before coming to Hogwarts, the gesture of friendship in being given presents at all far exceeds the value of the presents themselves.

***Summary Part 7:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) opens his last present, which contains a “shining, silvery cloth.” [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley) is in awe: it’s an [Invisibility Cloak](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-invisibility-cloak), which he says is extremely rare. Harry throws on the Cloak, and his body disappears instantly. A note falls out, which reads: “Your father left this in my possession before he died. It is time it was returned to you. Use it well.” Since there is no signature, Harry wonders who could have sent it, and if it really belonged to [James](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/james-potter).

***Analysis Part 7:***

The Invisibility Cloak becomes a key piece of the rest of Harry’s story in this novel. Not only does it connect him to his father, but it also enables his rule-breaking tendencies. It is revealed at the end of the novel that Dumbledore left him the Cloak; with that critical piece of information in mind, Dumbledore’s counsel of “Use it well” reveals his support of rule-breaking when necessary.

***Summary Part 8:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) has an enormous and joyous Christmas dinner, and returns to his dorm with several party favors, including a new wizard’s chess set. Harry and the Weasley boys then have a snowball fight on the grounds, and later Harry breaks in his chess set by losing badly to [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley). At the end of the day, everyone climbs into bed, full and sleepy.

***Analysis Part 8:***

Not only Ron but also the entire Weasley clan become a substitute family for Harry, as they accept him as one of their own and treat him as they would a brother.

***Summary Part 9:***

In bed, the [Invisibility Cloak](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-invisibility-cloak) still nags at [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter), as well as the note: “Use it well.” He pulls out the Cloak and excitement floods through him, realizing that he can go anywhere undetected. He puts it on and makes his way toward the Restricted Section of the library, determined to discover who [Nicolas Flamel](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters) is. The library is dark, and Harry doesn’t know where to start. In the Restricted Section, he pulls out a large black and silver volume that catches his eye, but when he opens it, the book starts screaming.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Here, Harry’s rule-breaking is partially fueled by doing what is right, as he wants to protect whatever Fluffy is guarding from Snape, who Harry thinks is genuinely evil. However, it’s important that part of Harry’s motivation stems from wanting to prove that Snape is up to something bad. Given that Harry and Snape hate each other so passionately, it seems that Harry wants to find Snape guilty of something out of revenge for the awful way Snape treats him.

***Summary Part 10:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) closes the book, but the wail continues. Panicking, Harry knocks over his lamp and flees. He passes [Filch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters) in the doorway, trying to be as quiet as possible under the [Cloak](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-invisibility-cloak). Suddenly, he sees [Snape](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/professor-snape) come around the corner, saying that they can catch the intruder. Harry ducks into a nearby room so that Snape doesn’t run into Harry’s invisible body in the narrow hallway.

***Analysis Part 10:***

Harry flees in a panic, which suggests that he knows his motivations for being out of bed and in the Restricted Section aren’t purely good. Yet again, with the Cloak, he is granted a certain degree of freedom to do what he wants.

***Summary Part 11:***

Inside the room, [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) discovers an enormous mirror (later revealed as [the Mirror of Erised](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-mirror-of-erised)). Harry looks in the Mirror, and to his shock sees a crowd of people standing right behind him. But when he frantically turns around, the room behind him is empty. Harry looks again at the Mirror’s reflection. The woman standing right behind him has eyes just like Harry’s; the man standing next to her has glasses and untidy black hair. Harry realizes that these are his parents, [Lily](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/lily-potter) and [James](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/james-potter), and that the people around them are his extended family. They smile at him. Harry has “a powerful kind of ache inside him, half joy, half terrible sadness.”

***Analysis Part 11:***

The Mirror of Erised, as Dumbledore explains later in the chapter, shows the Harry’s deepest desire—to be with his family. While this is a virtuous wish, and demonstrates the power of the love that a family can provide to a child who has never really had it, the chapter goes on to demonstrate how the desire for something unattainable can be dangerous and maddening.

***Summary Part 12:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) doesn’t know how long he stands in front of [the Mirror](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-mirror-of-erised), until a distant noise makes him realize he has to go back to bed. The next day, Harry tells [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley) what happened, saying that he wants to go back and show Ron his family. Harry can’t eat all day; he can’t think of anything except seeing his parents—not even [Flamel](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters).

***Analysis Part 12:***

The descriptions of Harry here (standing there for an uncertain amount of time, not eating, not thinking of anything else) immediately hint at how these desires can be dangerous, because they prevent Harry from being able to live in the present. It is clear that the Mirror is addictive and can be maddening.

***Summary Part 13:***

That night, [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley) and [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) return to [the Mirror](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-mirror-of-erised). Harry once again sees [Lily](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/lily-potter) and [James](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/james-potter). But Ron can’t see anything, so Harry places him alone in front of the Mirror. However, Ron doesn’t see Harry’s family or his own family; instead, Ron sees an older version of himself as Head Boy and Captain of the Quidditch team, holding both the House Cup and the Quidditch Cup. Excitedly, Ron asks Harry if he thinks the Mirror shows the future. Harry says it can’t, as all of his family members are dead.

***Analysis Part 13:***

Just as the Mirror shows Harry’s deepest desire, it also shows Ron’s deepest desire. The image of fame and success Ron sees suggests that he longs to stand out among his brothers, many of which are high achievers. For Ron, the Mirror gives him hope that what he sees might be attainable, but for Harry, what the Mirror shows is both enchanting and torturous because what it shows can never be reality.

***Summary Part 14:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) asks to have another look, but [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley) wants to look a little longer. They start to push each other out of the way, but a noise in the corridor startles them. Ron throws the [Cloak](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-invisibility-cloak) over them as [Filch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters)’s cat, Mrs. Norris, enters. When she leaves, Ron pulls Harry out of the room and back to their dorm. The next day, Ron realizes that [the Mirror](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-mirror-of-erised) is still plaguing Harry. Ron tells Harry he shouldn’t go back that night, but Harry refuses to listen.

***Analysis Part 14:***

The dangers of the Mirror show themselves more fully here. The vision of Harry’s family isn’t real, but the love that comes with Ron’s friendship is. Unfortunately, the Mirror starts to drive a wedge between the friends, demonstrating how even a wholesome desire like Harry’s can have unintended negative consequences.

***Summary Part 15:***

The third night [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) returns alone. Harry sits down in front of [the Mirror](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-mirror-of-erised), knowing that nothing can prevent him from staying there all night with his family. [Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/albus-dumbledore) appears quietly behind him, noting that Harry has discovered “the delights of the Mirror of Erised.” Dumbledore explains that it shows “the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts.” Dumbledore then warns Harry that the Mirror provides “neither knowledge or truth,” and that people have “wasted away before it” and have “been driven mad” by what it shows.

***Analysis Part 15:***

Here, Dumbledore reveals the purpose of the Mirror to Harry. This passage makes it seem like Dumbledore actually wanted Harry to find the Mirror. In a way, this is Dumbledore’s first test for Harry: to be humble and self-sacrificing enough to give up his “deepest, most desperate desire,” in order to live for others.

***Summary Part 16:***

[Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/albus-dumbledore) tells [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) that [the Mirror](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-mirror-of-erised) will be moved to a new home the next day, and asks that Harry not look for it again. Before Harry goes, he asks what Dumbledore sees in the Mirror. Dumbledore says that he sees himself “holding a pair of thick, woolen socks.” When Harry is back in bed, he realizes that Dumbledore might not have been telling the truth. However, he also realizes that it had been a very personal question.

***Analysis Part 16:***

The Mirror of Erised will resurface at the end of the novel, where Harry will overcome this personal desire and demonstrate a new desire: wanting to keep the Sorcerer’s Stone out of evil hands. Thus, Harry’s desire transforms from something dangerous and consuming to something useful and self-sacrificing.

***Important Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

Should Harry wake him? Something held him back – his father's cloak – he felt that this time – the first time – he wanted to use it alone. (12.103)

***Explanation:***

Harry loves being able to share experiences with his new friends, but this is different. This is the first time he's had a tangible object that connects him to one of his parents, and it's understandable that he would want to savor the experience of using it all by himself.

***Quotation 2:***

Harry was looking at his family, for the first time in his life.  
  
The Potters smiled and waved at Harry and he stared hungrily back at them, his hands pressed flat against the glass as though he was hoping to fall right through it and reach them. He had a powerful kind of ache inside him, half joy, half terrible sadness. (12.127-128)

***Explanation:***

This passage really emphasizes how much Harry misses the parents he lost and how badly he wants to know something, anything, of them. This is the first time he's ever seen their faces; no wonder he wants to "fall right through [the glass] and reach them." Even though "half" of his feelings are "terrible sadness," it's worth enduring that for the "joy" he feels in looking at them at long last.

***Quotation 3:***

"I do feel so sorry," said Draco Malfoy, one Potions class, "for all those people who have to stay at Hogwarts for Christmas because they're not wanted at home." …  
  
It was true that Harry wasn't going back to Privet Drive for Christmas… He didn't feel sorry for himself at all; this would probably be the best Christmas he'd ever had. (12.3, 12.5)

***Explanation:***

Malfoy is trying to insult Harry and the other students who are staying at Hogwarts over the break, but once again he falls short of the mark. Harry may not be "wanted" at the Dursleys, but since he doesn't consider it home, it's not much of an insult. He doesn't want to go there either. In fact, he doesn't even refer to his aunt and uncle's house as a home, calling it by its street name ("Privet Drive") instead of a home or a house. While Malfoy claims to "feel so sorry" for everyone who's stuck at Hogwarts, Harry is excited for what he thinks will be the "best Christmas" of his life.

***Quotation 4:***

Ron also started teaching Harry wizard chess. This was exactly like Muggle chess except that the figures were alive, which made it a lot like directing troops in battle. (12.45)

***Explanation:***

This is just a small example of how the wizarding world is filled with magic, down to the board games children play. Even the small playing pieces are "alive." When you consider how a single "live" children's toy is often the inspiration for a whole book (see The Velveteen Rabbit, The Indian in the Cupboard, The Return of the Twelves, etc.), it's pretty amazing that the Harry Potter series is so rich and full of detail that this abundant topic becomes another small detail in the magic tapestry Rowling paints.

***Quotation 5:***

'I don't need a cloak to become invisible,' said Dumbledore gently. 'Now, can you think what the Mirror of Erised shows us all?' (12.189)

***Explanation:***

In case we needed any reminding about just how powerful Dumbledore is, he tells Harry that he doesn't "need a cloak to become invisible." Harry depends on an object with its own magical properties – he or anyone else could use it with the same effects. Not so for Dumbledore's invisibility: this is magic the first-year students can't even dream of.

***Quotation 6:***

Ron was fascinated by the fifty pence.  
  
"Weird!" he said, "What a shape! This is money?"  
  
"You can keep it," said Harry, laughing at how pleased Ron was. (12.55-57)

***Explanation:***

Compared to Knuts and Sickles, fifty pence sounds straightforward (especially if you're British). The fifty pence piece has no value to Harry – it would barely buy anything Muggle, it's an insulting gift from the dreaded Dursleys, and it has no value in the wizard world, except as a curiosity. But for Ron, it is a curiosity, and it seems as "weird" to him as the idea of a Knut might have first seemed to Harry. Maybe weirder.

***Quotation 7:***

our father left this in my possession before he died. It is time it was returned to you. Use it well. A very merry Christmas to you.

***Explanation:***

This note accompanies the vanishing cloak that Harry mysteriously receives at Christmas in Chapter 12. It signals once again that Harry’s growth at Hogwarts will bring him back into contact, at least symbolically, with his long-lost parents. The cloak also becomes an important symbol of the relationship between Harry and Albus Dumbledore when we find out later that it is Dumbledore who has given the cloak to Harry. It symbolizes Dumbledore’s growing trust in Harry, as the great wizard surely knows that giving a boy the gift of invisibility is bound to lead to some naughtiness, which it in fact does. Dumbledore may caution Harry to “[u]se it well,” but in all his wisdom he must realize that Harry will use it wrongly, breaking into the restricted-books section of the library and hauling an illegal dragon across the campus.

Yet, in the long run, Dumbledore’s trust in Harry is justified, because Harry does learn finally to use the cloak—and all his magic gifts—toward the right ends. His disaster in being caught and punished after the dragon incident, when he stupidly forgets to wear the cloak, forces him to think more carefully about the consequences of his actions. We sense that Harry’s education in personal responsibility is all part of Dumbledore’s grand plan in giving Harry the cloak, because after the dragon affair Dumbledore returns the cloak to Harry neatly folded. With it, Dumbledore places his own vote of confidence in Harry.

***Quotation 8:***

Your father left this in my possession before he died. It is time it was returned to you. Use it well. A very merry Christmas to you.

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