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

***Chapter 16***

***Summary and analysis***

***Brief Summary:***

Harry manages to get through his final exams with the fear of Voldemort coming for him and finishing the job of killing him once and for all. Harry worries about the stone constantly now because he knows it grants immortality to the drinker of the elixir that comes from it. He can only imagine what would happen if Voldemort got hold of the stone. Ron and Hermione assure him that with Dumbledore at the school, he is perfectly safe.

It dawns on Harry that Hagrid mentioned he won the dragon in a drunken card game with a "stranger." When he asks Hagrid about the incident Hagrid admits that the stranger did ask him about Fluffy. Harry realizes that Hagrid has been duped into telling the secret of getting past Fluffy. Harry goes to tell Dumbledore about what has happened with Hagrid and the stranger only to find that the Headmaster is away on business. Desperate, he tells Professor McGonagall what he knows about the Sorcerer's Stone, but she dismisses his worries.

Harry decides to take matters into his own hands. Ron and Hermione realize that they must help him since they cannot dissuade him. Harry knows the secret to soothing Fluffy, and the three set out under the cloak for the forbidden wing. When they enter the room where Fluffy resides, they see that someone has gotten there already. Fluffy is sniffing around, the trap door is open, and a golden harp sits at his feet. Harry takes a flute out of his pocket and begins playing until all three are down the trap door into the darkness below. They fall on a plant that binds their legs, but they escape it.

They then head down a passageway and into a chamber filled with small, brightly lit birds. They cross the room to find a locked, heavy wooden door. Hermione realizes that the birds are really winged keys. They have to find the correct bird-key that will unlock the door; a difficult task since there are hundreds, and they are all very similar. Once they find the correct key and open the door, they are confronted with a room set up as a giant chessboard. They must play the board correctly to reach the other side of the room. Harry, Ron, and Hermione play the board; Ron sacrifices himself so that Harry can checkmate the King. The Queen grabs Ron and knocks him out cold. With sadness and difficulty, Harry and Hermione win the game and go into the next chamber hoping Ron will be alright.

This room has a logical puzzle that must be figured out. The two figure out the riddle and walk through a wall of fire. On the other side is a man, but it is not Snape or Voldemort. They are astounded to see who it is, however.

***Brief Analysis:***

Harry knows that somehow he must get involved in keeping Snape from getting the Stone to save his own life. He realizes that he is lucky to have Hermione and Ron with him to get through the traps under Fluffy. The three of them are proving to be very brave and clever students who, as a team, can work wonders together. There is a lot of tension in this chapter because they must figure out the way to the stone.

***Summary in Detail:***

The year-end examinations go off without a hitch, although Harry fears that Voldemort will burst through the door at any second. While he is a guest at Hagrid’s, Harry learns that while drunk and playing cards, Hagrid revealed to Voldemort that anyone can get past the three-headed guard dog, Fluffy, by playing music to him. Harry and his friends rush to find Dumbledore to tell him this news, but they run into McGonagall, who informs them that Dumbledore has been called off to London by the Ministry of Magic. Harry convinces Hermione and Ron that they need to grab the stone that night. As they are heading out, Neville tries to stop them. Hermione immobilizes him with a spell, and they proceed.

When they reach Fluffy, Harry, Hermione, and Ron notice a harp by his feet and realize that someone has already passed by Fluffy. Harry plays a flute he has brought, putting Fluffy to sleep and allowing his gang to go through the trapdoor. They land on some sort of plant with twisting tendrils that wrap around Harry and Ron. Hermione gets out immediately and uses fire from her wand to stave off the plant. Next, they encounter a large locked door in a room full of birds that are actually keys. Harry uses his Quidditch skills to catch the right bird and unlock the door. They then must play a violent game of chess in which each of them is a chess piece. Ron masterfully leads them through the game, but he must allow himself to be captured—and severely beaten—by the opposing queen to win. Harry and Hermione then come upon a series of potions and a logic puzzle. Hermione figures out which potions to drink and then goes back to help Ron and Harry move forward to find the stone.

***Analysis in Detail:***

Harry’s breadth of wisdom is shown when he is forced to choose between obedience and fame on one hand and courage on the other and he opts for the latter. Hermione, who generally likes to follow rules, believes that Harry’s plan to find the Sorcerer’s Stone is crazy. Her fear that he will get expelled reflects her general concern about academic reputation. Harry, on the other hand, cares less about his status at school and more about the seemingly unavoidable battle between good and evil over the Sorcerer’s Stone. In a memorably brave response to Hermione, Harry shouts, “SO WHAT? . . . If Snape gets ahold of the Stone, Voldemort’s coming back! . . . There won’t be any Hogwarts to get expelled from! . . . Losing points doesn’t matter anymore.” Harry is able to see beyond the limits of Hogwarts and glimpse the cosmic dimension of Voldemort’s threats. He sees that the points system that dominates everyone’s thinking in the school is trivial compared to the prospect that Voldemort will unleash evil upon the world. In this respect, Hermione’s book-learning is contrasted with Harry’s practical wisdom. Hermione receives a grade of 112 percent on her final exams and has read every textbook backward and forward, but she lacks Harry’s key ability to view the broader consequences of facts. While Hermione has progressed a great deal, she fails to realize the full implications of the Sorcerer’s Stone. Harry, by contrast, seems wise beyond his years, recognizing that at a certain point the glory and fame that come from being crowned house champions are less important than the battle between good and evil. The obstacles that Harry, Hermione, and Ron encounter on their quest for the Sorcerer’s Stone force each of them to use his or her individual talents and skills. Harry, for example, is an excellent broom-flyer, and his aerial agility enables him to grab the bird key that unlocks the door for them. Ron is a good chess player, and he willingly sacrifices his own body to win, allowing Harry and Hermione to advance. Hermione is an expert in logic, and she successfully picks out the right bottle for Harry so that he can advance toward the stone while she goes back to help Ron. Rowling thus emphasizes the importance of teamwork over individual accomplishment.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

As [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) completes his exams, he constantly worries that [Voldemort](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/voldemort-you-know-who) is going to get [the Stone](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-sorcerer-s-stone). He is plagued by nightmares, and a little frustrated that [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) don’t seem as worried about the Stone. They try to comfort him again, saying [Snape](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/professor-snape) won’t go after the Stone with [Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/albus-dumbledore) there, and they still have no proof that he can get past Fluffy.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Harry’s inherent selflessness becomes more and more evident over the course of this chapter. Harry is unlike any other eleven-year-old in that he wants to make sure that the people around him are safe, and will personally put himself in harm’s way in order to ensure this.

***Summary Part 2:***

A sudden thought strikes [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter): it’s odd that [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/rubeus-hagrid) desperately wants a dragon, and a stranger just happens to show up in town with an egg. Harry, [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) visit Hagrid, who reveals that the stranger’s face had been hidden by a cloak, and that he had told the stranger (after a few drinks) that the key to taking care of a beast is knowing how to soothe it: for example, he told the stranger, with Fluffy all a person has to do is play music, and he’ll fall asleep.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Hagrid’s desire for a dragon serves as another, if more minor, example, of how desires can be dangerous. Hagrid’s intense longing for a dragon becomes a weakness that Voldemort is able to exploit, which can allow him to get past Fluffy.

***Summary Part 3:***

After hearing this information, [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) bolt inside, figuring that [Snape](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/professor-snape) or [Voldemort](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/voldemort-you-know-who) must have been the hooded stranger. When they see [Professor McGonagall](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/professor-mcgonagall), they ask to see [Professor Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/albus-dumbledore). McGonagall reveals that he left ten minutes prior to fly to the Ministry of Magic on urgent business. Harry is frantic, revealing that they need to see him about [the Sorcerer’s Stone](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-sorcerer-s-stone), as someone is going to try to steal it. McGonagall is shocked that they know about the Stone, but assures them that it is well protected.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Dumbledore’s sudden absence in this moment is suspect. While Dumbledore is called away on urgent business (perhaps a ruse from someone to get him out of the way), Harry later surmises that Dumbledore actually wanted Harry to have the opportunity to face Voldemort on his own. In this way, Dumbledore continues to encourage Harry to break the rules when necessary, and also reinforces Harry’s self-sacrificing tendencies.

***Summary Part 4:***

When [McGonagall](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/professor-mcgonagall) leaves, [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) figures that [Snape](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/professor-snape) sent the owl summoning [Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/albus-dumbledore), and that he’s going to try to steal the Stone that night. Harry resolves to get to the Stone before Snape. [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/hermione-granger) and [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley) warn that he’ll be expelled if he’s caught, but Harry is adamant. He gives an impassioned speech, saying that if Voldemort returns, “there won’t be any Hogwarts to get expelled from,” and that he can’t let the wizard return who killed his parents.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Here Harry’s heroism truly stands out, as he takes it upon himself to make sure that Voldemort doesn’t return, even if he is putting himself in grave danger. His stated reasons for doing so also demonstrate his most important motivators: doing what is right, protecting the wizarding world and the school that have become his home, and repaying the love and sacrifice that his parents gave to him.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/hermione-granger) and [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley) acknowledge that [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) is right, and decide to go with him. That night, they take the [Invisibility Cloak](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-invisibility-cloak) and the flute that [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/rubeus-hagrid) gave Harry for Christmas—but there’s one hitch. [Neville](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/neville-longbottom) is waiting in the common room, and tries to prevent them from going so that Gryffindor doesn’t get into any more trouble. Hermione apologizes profusely and then uses a spell on Neville that locks his whole body. They then leave through the portrait hole.

***Analysis Part5:***

Hermione, Ron, and even Neville pick up on Harry’s humility, and demonstrate how they, too, put others above themselves. Here, Hermione and Ron put themselves in danger in order to steal the Stone just as Harry does. Neville, for his part, stands up to his friends in order to try to protect them from their own rule-breaking, and for the good of Gryffindor house as a whole.

***Summary Part 7:***

When [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) arrive at the third-floor corridor, the door is already open. Fluffy is there, and as Harry plays a tune on the flute, the dog’s eyes droop. The three of them open the trap door, and Harry offers to drop down first into the darkness, falling a long way down before landing with a thump on something soft. Ron and Hermione follow suit.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Another element of Harry, Ron, and Hermione’s adventure is that they know they are breaking the rules (and have broken many in their quest to solve the mystery of what Fluffy is guarding), but it is all in the name of doing what they ultimately believe is the right thing to do.

***Summary Part 8:***

[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) land on a snakelike plant, which starts to wind around them and constrict their breathing. Hermione remembers that it’s called Devil’s Snare, and that it will loosen in the presence of light or fire—but says they don’t have any wood. As he and Harry start to choke, Ron reminds Hermione that she’s a witch; Hermione quickly casts a spell that sets flames on the plant. It loosens its grip and they are able to pull free. They run down the corridor that leads out of the room.

***Analysis Part 8:***

As the central trio continue through these obstacles, their friendship becomes key to achieving their goal because they need each other to pass through all of the rooms. In facing Devil’s Snare, Hermione’s knowledge of spells (as well as Ron’s logical reminder that Hermione is a witch) becomes essential in preventing them from being choked to death.

***Summary Part 9:***

At the end of the corridor is a large, high-ceilinged chamber with hundreds of flying keys in the air and a locked wooden door on the other side. [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) spots broomsticks, and he, [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) each mount one, realizing that they have to find the correct key. Harry quickly spots a large silver one with a bent wing, as if it had already been caught and stuffed in the keyhole. Together, Harry, Ron, and Hermione close in on the key and Harry is able to catch it.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Just as Hermione’s knowledge was crucial to passing the Devil’s Snare, here Harry’s Quidditch skills become central to catching the key. But even though Harry takes the lead, it does require all three of them to accomplish the task, once again highlighting the value of friendship in facing challenges.

***Summary Part 10:***

In the next chamber, [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) find a huge, life-sized wizard’s chess set, and Ron concludes that they have to play their way across the room. Harry takes the place of a bishop; Hermione, a castle; and Ron, a knight. Ron directs the pieces, shuddering when he sees their pieces being violently destroyed when they are taken. Eventually, Ron realizes that he must allow himself to be taken in order to win. Harry and Hermione protest, but Ron argues that they have to “make some sacrifices” to get to [the Stone](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/symbols/the-sorcerer-s-stone). He moves and the white queen pounces on him, striking him hard across the head. Harry then checkmates the king.

***Analysis Part 10:***

While Hermione took the lead on the Devil’s Snare and Harry took the lead with the keys, in this challenge Ron uses his chess skills to advance the trio (though again, only with the help of all three of them together, as they all must stand in as chess figures). Ron also demonstrates his humility by understanding that he will have to sacrifice himself, allowing the white queen to strike him, hard, in order to let Harry and Hermione continue on. This is particularly significant given that Ron feels overshadowed by his siblings and longs for his own success and fame; in letting Harry and Hermione go on without him, Ron humbly lets go of his own desires in this moment.

***Summary 11:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/hermione-granger) continue on, though they’re shaken by what happened to [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley). In the next room, they find that a troll has already been dealt with, so they press on. When they step into the next room, a fire springs up both in front of them and behind them. They see a table with seven potions and a logic puzzle. Only one potion will allow them to go forward; one will allow them to go back; three will kill them; and two will do nothing. Hermione quickly figures out the puzzle, discerning which potion is which.

***Analysis 11:***

Again, Hermione’s knowledge allows the two of them to get closer and closer to Voldemort. The puzzle also seems particularly suited to Hermione: the person passing this challenge must be able to solve regular logic as well as have magical knowledge. And so, Hermione’s Muggle upbringing, which perhaps made her feel like an outsider just as it did for Harry, actually becomes an advantage here.

***Summary 12:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/harry-potter) says that he will go forward, and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/hermione-granger) should take the one that will allow her to go back, so that she can take care of [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/ron-weasley) and then send an owl to [Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/albus-dumbledore). Worried that [Voldemort](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-sorcerer-s-stone/characters/voldemort-you-know-who) will be waiting for Harry, Hermione throws her arms around her friend and says that he is an excellent wizard. When he protests that she is better than him, she tells him that bravery and friendship are far more important than being just clever. They each take a potion, and Hermione walks back while Harry continues forward.

***Analysis 12:***

Hermione and Ron get Harry as far as they can, and their friendship is vital to getting Harry to the Sorcerer’s Stone—which Hermione notes in her final words to him. While Harry humbly suggests that Hermione is a better witch, ultimately he understands that he is the one who must face Voldemort, wishing to put himself in harm’s way rather than putting anyone else there.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation1:***

"I'm not as good as you," said Harry, very embarrassed, as she let go of him.  
  
"Me!" said Hermione. "Books! And cleverness! There are more important things – friendship and bravery and – oh Harry – be careful!" (16.288-89)

***Explanation:***

Of all the important qualities mentioned in this passage, friendship tops the list. Friendship matters more than just learning, or just being brave – those things matter too, of course, but friendship is at the core of it all. Harry values Hermione's academic success, which is nothing to sneeze at, but she reminds him that in the life-and-death situations that they're facing, friendship is one of the only things that will help them through.

***Quotation 2:***

"If you want to go back, I won't blame you,' he said. 'You can take the cloak, I won't need it now."  
  
"Don't be stupid," said Ron.  
  
"We're coming," said Hermione. (16.148-50).

***Explanation:***

Once again bravery is act first, think later, as Harry tries to persuade his friends to turn around and let him go forward alone; as Ron tells him, that's "stupid." In a way, it is foolhardy of all of them to continue, as their bravery puts all their lives in danger. True, it's totally worth it in the end, when they defeat Voldemort and live to fight another day, but that doesn't mean it was smart.