***Harry Potter and the Chambers of Secret***

***Chapter 11***

***Summary and analysis***

***Summary:***

### The Dueling Club

* The next morning, Madam Pomfrey lets Harry leave the Hospital Wing.
* Ron and Hermione have already gotten started on the Polyjuice Potion.
* Ron resolves, "The sooner we get a confession out of Malfoy, the better" (11.15).
* Ron thinks Lucius Malfoy was the one to open the Chamber of Secrets the first time.
* The news that Colin Creevey has been Petrified terrifies the whole school.
* Harry, Ron, and Hermione all plan to stay at Hogwarts during the winter break.
* They know that Draco is going to be at Hogwarts, too, so it'll be a perfect chance to try the Polyjuice Potion.
* They need to steal some ingredients from Professor Snape's private stores.
* Hermione plans to do the actual stealing, while Harry and Ron are going to create a diversion.
* During Potions class, Harry tosses a firecracker into Goyle's cauldron full of Swelling Solution.
* The whole class starts to panic as their limbs start to swell up.
* While Professor Snape tries to quiet the students down and administer a Deflating Draught, Hermione creeps into Snape's office and takes what she needs.
* Professor Snape finds the burned firework in Goyle's cauldron and clearly thinks it's Harry's fault.
* He can't prove it, though, so what can he do?
* A week later, Seamus Finnegan and Dean Thomas tell Harry, Ron, and Hermione that the school has decided to start a Dueling Club.
* They think it might be useful – until they see that the club is being run by Professor Lockhart.
* Professor Lockhart's surprising assistant is Professor Snape.
* The two face off against each other as a demonstration of wizard dueling technique.
* Professor Snape knocks Professor Lockhart into a wall.
* Professor Lockhart shakes it off and starts putting the students into pairs.
* Professor Snape pairs Harry with Draco (a recipe for disaster, of course).
* The two of them exchange vicious spells.
* After a few brief minutes, Professors Lockhart and Snape stop the "dueling" – these haven't been formal duels so much as they have been a bunch of kids beating the tar out of each other.
* To prevent the naked violence of the previous few minutes, Professor Lockhart decides to teach them all blocking spells.
* Professor Snape suggests Draco and Harry as the perfect pair to demonstrate these charms.
* Professor Lockhart demonstrates something he claims is a blocking spell to Harry, but it doesn't do anything.
* Draco shouts, "Serpensortia!" (11.94).
* A huge snake appears in front of Harry.
* Professor Lockhart tries to get rid of it, but all he does is make it mad.
* It goes for Justin Finch-Fletchley, who is standing nearby.
* Harry tells the snake, "Leave him alone!" (11.99).
* The snake backs off.
* Harry looks around at his fellow students, and is surprised to see that everyone looks terrified. Of him.
* Ron and Hermione pull Harry out of the hall.
* Ron tells Harry he's a Parselmouth – a wizard who can talk to snakes.
* That's not a great talent to have: generally, Parselmouths are dark wizards.
* Hermione warns Harry: "It matters [...] because being able to talk to snakes was what Salazar Slytherin was famous for. That's why the symbol of Slytherin House is a serpent" (11.119).
* After all, Slytherin lived so long ago that who knows? Maybe Harry is his descendant – the Heir of Slytherin.
* Harry decides to go and see Justin Finch-Fletchley the next day to explain what really happened with the snake.
* Herbology is canceled so that Professor Sprout can take care of the Mandrakes.
* So, Harry goes to seek out Justin Finch-Fletchley in the library.
* He finds a big group of Hufflepuffs gathered around.
* One of them (Ernie Macmillan) is telling the others that Harry went after Justin because Justin is a Muggle-born.
* Harry interrupts the conversation to say that he's looking for Justin.
* Ernie refuses to tell Harry because he thinks Harry will hurt Justin.
* Harry swears that he was telling that snake not to attack.
* The Hufflepuffs don't believe him. They think he hates Muggles.
* Harry is so angry that he walks right into Hagrid in the corridor.
* Hagrid is carrying a dead rooster.
* It's the second rooster killed this year, and Hagrid needs Professor Dumbledore's permission to charm the hen-coop against predators.
* Harry doesn't want to talk about the Hufflepuffs' suspicions.
* He walks up to Gryffindor Tower to get his supplies for Transfiguration.
* On his way up, he finds "Justin Finch-Fletchley [...] lying on the floor, rigid and cold, a look of shock frozen on his face, his eyes staring blankly at the ceiling" (11.172).
* Next to Petrified Justin is something even weirder: Nearly Headless Nick is floating "immobile and horizontal, six inches off the floor" (11.173).
* Harry panics and can't figure out what to do next.
* Peeves the Poltergeist finds him and the two Petrified figures and shouts, "ATTACK! ATTACK! ANOTHER ATTACK! NO MORTAL OR GHOST IS SAFE! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES! ATTAAAACK!" (11.178).
* Ernie appears and shouts, "Caught in the act!" (11.180), pointing at Harry.
* Professor McGonagall shushes Ernie, but she still has to bring Harry to Professor Dumbledore's office.

***Brief Summary:***

Harry is released from hospital and is disappointed to find that Ron and Hermione aren't there to meet him. He finds them in Moaning Myrtle's toilet, where they are busy preparing the Polyjuice potion. They feel they have no time to waste, after yesterday's performance at the Quidditch match. Firm in the belief that Draco Malfoy is the heir of Slytherin, they are determined to find out the truth. Harry tells them what he has learned in hospital overnight. All three students are worried, a worry that is shared by the rest of the students as news of Colin Creevey spreads and pupils buy charms and talismans to protect themselves.

The final ingredients for the Polyjuice potion are gathered during one of Snape's classes. Harry creates a diversion by throwing a firework into Goyle's potion. While Snape is sorting out the resulting chaos, Hermione steals the necessary ingredients from his storage cupboard. Snape suspects Harry of causing the chaos but is unable to prove it. Instead, he seeks his revenge when a new dueling club set up by Lockhart.

Lockhart has started the club so that pupils can learn to defend themselves. Snape accompanies him to the first session and promptly wins a demonstration duel against Lockhart. Embarrassed, Lockhart moves on to pairing the students so they can practice dueling. This is where Snape achieves his revenge, by pairing Harry with Draco. Harry has only the benefit of Lockhart's tutoring, which is of no use, whereas Draco has the full benefit of Snape's support. The duel takes a turn for the worse with a large black serpent shooting out of Malfoy's wand. The serpent threatens another pupil, Justin Finch-Fletchley, who is powerless to stop the serpent. Lockhart is unable to control the situation and Snape savors the moment before making an effort to help. In the meantime, Harry advances towards the snake and tells it to leave Justin alone. The snake complies. Harry receives an unexpected reaction from his fellow pupils, who are stony faced and fearful of him.

Ron and Hermione make Harry leave the hall so that they can explain the problem. Harry has spoken to the serpent in Parselmouth, a language particular to snakes that only very few wizards are able to speak. Those wizards who can speak Parselmouth are associated with Slytherin and the Dark Arts, Salazar Slytherin being the most famous for this ability. Harry is shocked, since he is unaware that he spoke a different language. He now worries about the consequences of this unexpected ability.

Rumours spread quickly that Harry is the heir to Slytherin, fuelled by his problematic relationship with Filch and his loathing of the Dursleys. Others explain Colin Creevey's petrification as a response to him constantly annoying Harry, and Justin is thought to be included on Harry's hit list as he is Muggle born. (The students mistakenly think that Harry was urging the snake to attack Justin, since they could not understand Harry's words.) Unfortunately for Harry, he discovers the petrified bodies of Justin and Nearly Headless Nick in a school corridor, and this convinces many that Harry is indeed the heir. The situation is getting out of hand, even beyond McGonagall's powers, and she takes Harry to Dumbledore in order to find a solution.

***Brief Analysis:***

Evil seems to be winning the battle over good in this chapter. Lockhart, who symbolizes the fight against the Dark Arts (being the Defense against the Dark Arts Professor), is beaten by Snape in a duel witnessed by many of the pupils. The fact that Dumbledore had problems finding a Defense against the Dark Arts Professor suggests that this skill is becoming rare, making it difficult to find anyone to effectively combat the Dark Arts. The fact that Lockhart is ineffectual is symbolic of the fact that the fight against the dark arts is also becoming ineffectual. Malfoy beats Harry in a duel, with the benefit of Snape's support. The evil presence within Hogwarts has also become stronger, claiming another two victims without anyone knowing how to prevent it. Harry is suspected of being Slytherin's heir, with only his closest and truest friends remaining loyal to him. At this point in the novel, evil seems to be triumphing over good.

***Critical Analysis:***

When Harry awakes from his night in the hospital wing, his arm is healed and he is eager to tell Ron and Hermione about Dobby and Colin. He runs into Percy, who looks exceptionally happy, and then Harry heads into Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, where he finds his friends. Ron and Hermione have spent the morning concocting the beginning of the Polyjuice Potion, and they listen eagerly to the news about Dobby and the reopening of the Chamber of Secrets. Meanwhile, the entire school is all in a fright about Colin. Ginny Weasley is especially shaken up by the occurrence, and Neville Longbottom, a round and clumsy wizard, has started carrying around protective charms, since he acknowledges fearfully that he is almost a Squib.

In Potions class, Harry distracts Snape by throwing a firecracker into a Slytherin cauldron, splashing swelling potion on the faces of many students, while Hermione sneaks out of the room to procure Polyjuice ingredients from Snape's personal collection. When she returns with the ingredients inside her robes, the swollen faces are back to normal, and Snape is spitting with rage and looking straight at Harry as he threatens expulsion to the troublemaker.

A week later, Harry, Ron, and Hermione spy a poster advertising a new student dueling club, and they go to the meeting to learn to duel. It turns out that Lockhart is heading it, and when he practices his first dueling match, Snape, his opponent, disarms him by crying out, "Expelliarmus!" Lockhart quickly says that he had deliberately allowed Snape to win that one, and he divides the students into pairs, not wanting to lose another duel. Hermione is matched up with a large Slytherin girl named Millicent, and Harry is matched up with Malfoy. The two boys attack each other with all sorts of body-contorting charms, including a tickle-spell and a leg-jerking spell. The two boys are brought to the front of the room to demonstrate for the entire club, and Snape whispers something to Malfoy, who immediately conjures an angry black snake from his wand. Lockhart tries to help, but instead makes the snake angrier and sends it straight for Justin Finch-Fletchley. Without even thinking, Harry calls out at the snake to leave Justin alone, and the snake falls into a docile heap on the floor. Harry is relieved, but the class is terrified, and only after class does he find out through Ron and Hermione that he spoke Parseltongue-snake language-a feat for which Salazar Slytherin himself was famous. Harry begins to question if, in fact, he really could be the heir. Furthermore, he worries about the Sorting Hat's decision to place him into Gryffindor, when it mentioned first that he could be great through Slytherin.

The next day Harry is restless and goes to find Justin to explain what had actually happened, but as he looks for him in the library, he overheard several Hufflepuffs, led by Ernie Macmillan, discussing the probability that Harry was the heir, and that Voldemort had not succeeded in killing him only because the infant Harry already had powerful dark protective powers. Harry speaks to the Hufflepuffs and asks for Justin, and they all react fearfully and with accusations that anger and annoy Harry. As Harry returns to his house through the corridors, he runs into Hagrid, who is holding a dead chicken, and soon after he trips over the stone-hard figure of Justin Finch-Fletchley, lying near the airy floating figure of Nearly-Headless Nick. Soon Peeves the Poltergeist sees the scene and cries out, alerting the students and teachers, all of whom quickly rush into the corridor. Many angry faces glare accusatorily at Harry, and Professor McGonagall calls Harry to come with her. Together they walk to Dumbledore's room.

This chapter includes a great deal of foreshadowing, both of Percy, when he is walking cheerfully through the hallway the morning after Colin has been petrified, and of Ginny, who is unduly upset, and finally of Harry, who when put on the spot reveals himself as a Parselmouth. Nobody has been caught yet, but many people still look suspicious, and everybody is uneasy. The mandrakes are growing and everybody is eager for them to mature and be put to use to restore the petrified folk.

The dueling club meeting serves as a catalyst for the school to suspect Harry, and it is debatable whether Snape instructed Malfoy to conjure a snake simply because it is the Slytherin mascot, or because he wanted to test whether Harry could be the heir by seeing whether he could communicate with snakes. In any case, the students, including Ron and Hermione, are deeply worried by Harry's response to the snake, as we see in the library, when the Hufflepuffs speculate on Harry's dark powers. This scene is horribly unfair, especially when Ernie points out that everybody knows that Harry is a Muggle-hater because he so obviously hates living with the Dursleys. This upsets Harry further because he does hate the Dursleys, but not because they are Muggles. Explaining this brings him no success or sympathy. When he winds up alone in the corridor with the petrified figures of Justin and Nick, the wide-spread suspicion of him is deepened. Recall that in chapter six, Justin told Harry that he was signed up for Eton, a Muggle school, before deciding to go to Hogwarts. If Harry is the Heir of Slytherin, then this information would have helped him to target Justin.

***Critical Study:***

Harry wakes up Sunday morning with his arm re-boned but stiff. He looks over at Colin’s bed, but it’s blocked from view. Madam Pomfrey brings Harry a breakfast tray, bends and stretches his fingers, then releases him to leave. Harry hurries to Gryffindor tower to tell Ron and Hermione about Colin and Dobby, but they aren’t there. He goes to look for them, hurt that they aren’t interested in his recovery. Harry runs into [Percy Weasley](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#percy-weasley), who praises his flying in the Quidditch match, and says that he earned Gryffindor fifty points, and the lead for House Cup. Harry asks Percy if he’s seen Ron or Hermione, and he says no, but he hopes that Ron is not in another girls' toilet.

Harry finds Ron and Hermione in Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom. They are locked in a stall, where Hermione has conjured up a fire in a toilet and has placed a cauldron on top. Ron explains that they decided to get started on the Polyjuice potion. Harry starts to tell them about Colin, but Hermione interrupts, saying they already know, as they heard Prof. McGonagall tell another professor that morning. That’s why they started on the Polyjuice potion. Ron thinks that Malfoy was in such a foul mood after the Quidditch match, he took it out on Colin. Harry tells his friends about Dobby’s visit. When he hears that the Chamber of Secrets was opened before, Ron assumes that [Lucius Malfoy](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#lucius-malfoy) opened it the first time. He wonders what kind of monster is inside the Chamber, and why no one has seen it around the school. Hermione suggests that maybe it can make itself invisible or camouflage itself.

By Monday morning the news that Colin was attacked has spread through the school, causing an atmosphere of rumor and suspicion. First-year students move around the castle in groups for protection. Ginny is distraught. Fred and George try to cheer her up by covering themselves in fur and boils and jumping out at her. Percy, enraged, stops them by threatening to write to their mother that Ginny is having nightmares. A fad for protective talismans sweeps the school. [Neville Longbottom](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#neville-longbottom) buys a bunch; he is afraid because “they went for Filch first, and everyone knows I’m almost a squib.”

In the second week of December Prof. McGonagall collects the names of students who will be staying at Hogwarts for Christmas. Harry, Ron, and Hermione sign up, as does Malfoy. The three friends think the holidays would be a perfect time to use the Polyjuice potion to get a confession out of Malfoy. The potion is only half finished. They need two ingredients that they can only get from Snape’s private stores. Hermione says that they need a diversion, so one of them can sneak into Snape’s office. She decides that she would be the best one to do the stealing, since she has a clean record.

During the next Potions class Harry lobs a firework into Goyle’s cauldron, causing the students to be showered with Swelling Solution. Malfoy’s nose swells like a balloon. Goyle’s eyes expand to the size of dinner plates. Snape tries to restore calm and find out what happened. During the confusion, Hermione slips into Snape’s office. As the students rush to Snape’s desk with various swollen body parts, looking for an antidote, Hermione slips back into the dungeon with her robes bulging. After order is restored, Snape discovers the remains of the firework inside Goyle’s cauldron, and says that if he ever finds out who threw it, he will make sure that person is expelled. Harry tries to look puzzled, but can tell that Snape knows it was him. After class, they hurry to Myrtle’s bathroom, where Hermione throws the new ingredients into the cauldron and stirs feverishly. The Polyjuice potion will be ready in two weeks.

A week later, Harry, Ron, and Hermione see a crowd gathered around the notice board in the Entrance Hall. When [Seamus Finnigan](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#seamus-finnigan) and[Dean Thomas](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#dean-thomas) beckon them over they learn that a new Dueling Club is being formed, with its first meeting that night. They agree that it could be useful, and decide to join. At eight o’clock, they wait excitedly along with most of the rest of the school in the Great Hall. The dining tables have been replaced by a golden stage. Gilderoy Lockhart walks out onto the stage, waves his arm for silence, and calls for everyone to gather around. He announces that Dumbledore has granted him permission to start this Dueling Club to train the students to defend themselves as he has done on countless occasions. Then he introduces his “assistant” Professor Snape. Ron whispers to Harry: “Wouldn’t it be good if they finished each other off?”

Snape and Lockhart turn to face each other and bow. Lockhart explains that on the count of three they will cast their first spells, not aiming to kill. On three, both swing their wands above their heads and point them at each other. Snape cries “Expelliaramus!” With a flash of scarlet light, Lockhart is blasted off his feet, flies backward off the stage, smashes into the wall, and slides to the floor. Malfoy and other Slytherins cheer. Hermione worries if Lockhart is all right. “Who cares?” Harry and Ron say together. Lockhart recovers, explains that his was a Disarming Charm, and pretends that he let Snape win for the sake of instruction. Lockhart and Snape place the students into pairs. Lockhart pairs Neville with Justin. Snape pairs Ron with Seamus, Harry with Draco, and Hermione with Milicent. Lockhart instructs the students to cast their charms only to disarm their opponents on the count of three. Malfoy starts early on “two” hitting Harry hard. In retaliation, Harry hits Malfoy with a Tickling Charm. Harry hangs back, feeling that it would be unsporting to bewitch Malfoy while he’s doubled over with laughter on the floor. Malfoy points his wand at Harry’s knees, enchanting his legs to dance uncontrollably. Lockhart shouts “I said disarm only” and “Stop! Stop!” to no effect. Snape takes charge, shouting “Finite Incantium!” which stops Malfoy from laughing and Harry from dancing.

The aftermath of the duels is generally disastrous. Lockhart decides that he had better teach them how to block unfriendly spells. Afraid of Snape, he recruits a volunteer pair of students to demonstrate, and nominates Longbottom and Finch-Fletchley. Snape interrupts, saying that “Longbottom causes devastation with the simplest spells,” embarrassing Neville. He suggests Malfoy and Potter instead. Lockhart agrees, gesturing for Harry and Draco to come to the middle of the hall. Lockhart demonstrates to Harry how to block Draco’s spells, raising his wand and attempting “a complicated sort of wiggling action,” then drops it. Snape smirks as Lockhart says “Whoops—my wand is a little over-excited—” Snape whispers something in Malfoy’s ear. Malfoy smirks too. Harry asks Lockhart to show him the blocking maneuver again, but the Professor tells him to just do what he did. Harry replies “What, drop my wand?”

Lockhart isn’t listening. He counts to three. Malfoy raises his wand and bellows “Serpensortia!” With an explosion, a long black snake shoots out of Malfoy’s wand, falls on the floor between them, and raises itself, ready to strike. The crowd screams and backs away. Snape, lazily, tells Harry not to move, that he will get rid of it. Lockhart interjects, “Allow me!” But when Lockhart casts his spell, the snake, instead of vanishing, flies ten feet into the air and falls to the floor with a loud smack. Engraged, it slithers straight to [Justin Finch-Fletchley](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#justin-finch-fletchley) and raises itself, fangs exposed and ready to strike. Harry’s legs carry him forward as he shouts at the snake “Leave him alone!” The snake slumps to the floor docily, looking at Harry. Harry knows that the snake won’t attack anyone now. He looks at Justin, grinning, and is surprised to find Justin angry and scared. Justin shouts, “What do you think you’re playing at?” and storms out of the hall. Snape makes the snake vanish. He gives Harry a shrewd and calculating look that Harry doesn’t like. Then Harry hears an ominous muttering all around the walls.

Ron steers Harry out of the hall, Hermione hurrying beside them. People draw away from them, frightened. Harry is bewildered. Ron and Hermione explain nothing until they reach the empty Gryffindor common room. Ron says, “You’re a Parselmouth. Why didn’t you tell us?” Harry doesn’t know what a Parselmouth is, so Ron clarifies that it means he can talk to snakes. Harry says he knows, but it’s only the second time he has even done it. The first time was when he accidentally set a boa constrictor on his cousin Dudley at the zoo. Harry assumes that many people at Hogwarts can do it, but Ron says it’s an uncommon gift. Ron tells Harry this is bad. Harry gets angry, and doesn’t understand what’s wrong with everyone. Harry told the snake not to attack Justin. But they don’t know that, because he spoke in Parseltongue—snake language. Ron says: “You could have been saying anything—no wonder Justin panicked, you sounded like you were egging the snake on or something—it was creepy, you know—” Harry didn’t realize that he was speaking a different language. Harry still doesn’t understand why it matters how he stopped the snake from biting Justin, as long as he did it. Hermione explains that it matters because being able to talk to snakes was what [Salazar Slytherin](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#salazar-slytherin) was famous for. That’s why the symbol of Slytherin House is a serpent. Ron adds that the whole school is going to think that Harry is related to Slytherin. When Harry protests “with a panic he can’t quite explain” that he is not related to Slytherin, Hermione replies that he will find that hard to prove since Slytherin lived a thousand years ago. “For all we know, you could be.”

Harry lies awake that night wondering if he could be a descendant of Salazar Slytherin. He doesn’t know anything about his father’s family. He tries to say something in Parseltongue, but the words don’t come. He has to be face-to-face with a snake to speak it. He reminds himself that he’s in Gryffindor, and the Sorting Hat wouldn’t have put him there if he had Slytherin blood. But then he remembers that the Sorting Hat wanted to put him in Slytherin. He decides to talk to Justin the next day in Herbology and explain that he was calling the snake off, not egging it on. He pummels his pillow angrily, feeling that “any fool should have realized” this.

But the next morning the last Herbology lesson of the term is canceled due to a blizzard. Professor Sprout wants to fit socks and scarves on the Madrakes. This is especially important because the Mandrakes must grow quickly to revive Colin and [Mrs. Norris](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#mrs-norris). While Ron and Hermione play wizard chess next to the fire in the common room Harry frets about Justin. Finally, Hermione tells Harry to go find Justin.

Harry goes to look in the library, where he overhears a group of Hufflepuffs talking. Ernie says that he told Justin to stay in their dorm. “Justin’s been waiting for something like this ever since he let slip to Potter that he was Muggle-born.” Ernie lays out the evidence that Harry is Slytherin’s heir: He speaks Parseltongue and “everyone knows that’s the mark of a Dark wizard.” He had a run-in with Filch right before Mrs. Norris was attacked. He was annoyed by Creevey taking pictures of him at the Quidditch match, then Creevy was attacked. Hannah is uncertain, saying that Harry has always been nice, and he made You-Know-Who disappear, so can’t be all bad. Ernie replies only a powerful wizard could survive a curse like that, and guesses that’s probably why Voldemort wanted to kill Harry in the first place: He didn’t want another Dark Lord competing with him.

Angry, Harry steps from behind the bookshelf, to the horror of the Hufflepuffs, and says that he’s looking for Justin. Ernie asks what he wants with him in a quavering voice. Harry says he wants to explain what really happened with the snake at the Dueling Club. Ernie and Harry argue about what happened. Harry explains that after he spoke to the snake it backed off. Ernie maintains that Harry chased the snake towards Justin. Ernie also starts to tell Harry about his own wizard blood, but Harry says he doesn’t care. Harry demands to know why he would want to attack Muggle-borns. Ernie replies that he’s heard that Harry hates the Muggles he lives with. Harry says, “It’s not possible to live with the Dursleys and not hate them. I’d like to see you try it” and storms out of the library.

Harry is so furious that he barely notices where he’s going, so he walks directly into Hagrid, knocking himself down. Hagrid asks if he’s all alright, and why he isn’t in class. Harry explains that it’s been canceled. When Harry asks what he’s doing there he holds up a dead rooster and says it’s the second killed this term. Hagrid needs the Headmaster’s permission to put a charm on the hen coop. Hagrid asks again if Harry is alright. Harry can’t bring himself to repeat what the Hufflepuffs had been saying, so he says it’s nothing, and that he has to go pick up his books for Transfiguration.

Harry stamps up the stairs and turns down a dark corridor. Halfway down the passage he trips over something. He turns to discover that it’s Justin Finch-Fletchley lying on the floor, rigid and cold, with a shocked expression. [Nearly Headless Nick](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#nearly-headless-nick) floats six inches off the floor next to Justin. Nick is oddly black and smokey, as opposed to his usual white transparent appearance. His head is half off and he also has a look of shock on his face.

Harry sees a line of spiders scuttling away from the bodies. He considers running away, but feels he needs to get help for Justin and Nick. He wonders: Would anyone believe that he hadn’t had anything to do with this? As Harry stands there panicking, [Peeves the Poltergeist](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#peeves-the-poltergeist) discovers him, and starts screaming about the attack. All of the doors fly open along the corridor and people flood out. The scene is complete confusion until McGonagall arrives, sets off her wand with a loud bang, and orders everyone back into their classrooms.

Then Ernie the Hufflepuff arrives, points his finger dramatically at Harry, and yells “Caught in the act!” McGonagall says “That will do, Macmillan,” sharply. Peeves hovers overhead enjoying the chaos, and sings a song: “Oh Potter, you rotter, what have you done, You’re killing off students, you think it’s good fun–” McGonagall also shuts down Peeves. Professors Flitwick and Sinistra carry Justin to the hospital wing. Professor McGonagall conjures a fan, with which she instructs Ernie to waft Nick upstairs. McGonagall then says “This way, Potter.” He starts to swear that he didn’t have anything to do with this, but she cuts him off, saying that this is out of her hands. They march around a corner and then stop in front of a gargoyle. When McGonagall says the password, the gargoyle springs to life, and hops aside, revealing a spiral staircase moving smoothly upward. They step onto it and rise upward in circles until they reach an oak door with a knocker in the shape of a griffin. Harry realizes this must be where Dumbledore lives.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) wakes up the next day and his arm has returned to normal. He leaves to go look for [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger), a little hurt that they didn’t come to check on him in the morning. Harry heads to [Moaning Myrtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/moaning-myrtle)’s bathroom, where he finds Hermione and Ron starting to brew Polyjuice Potion. He starts to tell them about [Colin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters), but they already know what has happened and figured they should get started.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Even in little thoughts like this one, Harry reveals how much he values friendship and how, without Ron and Hermione’s presence, he feels vulnerable and alone. Particularly coming out of seeing Colin attacked, it makes sense that Harry would want the support of his friends around him.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) also tells [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) about the information that [Dobby](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/dobby) revealed about the Chamber of Secrets. Ron theorizes that [Lucius](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/lucius-malfoy) opened the Chamber when he was at school and now [Draco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy) has opened it. Ron also wonders why no one has seen the [monster](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-monster-basilisk) sneaking around the school.

***Analysis Part 2:***

In a chapter full of rumors about Harry, the kids also begin to create their own rumors. Not only do they try to use the little information they have in order to make sense of the attacks, but they also pin it on someone whom they already dislike.

***Summary Part 3:***

News about [Colin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) spreads through the school by Monday. The air is thick with “rumor and suspicion.” First-years travel the halls in groups, and [Ginny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ginny-weasley), who sat next to Colin in Charms, is especially upset. Many students start buying protective devices and talismans to defend themselves.

***Analysis Part 3:***

In this description, Rowling illustrates the scale of the rumor and suspicion that spreads through the castle. Now that the monster has attacked a student and not just a cat, the fact that no one has been able to guess what the monster might be or how it might be getting around creates a deep fear in the students.

***Summary Part 4:***

In December, [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter), [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley), and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) still need a few ingredients for the Polyjuice Potion. Hermione suggests that she do the actual stealing from [Snape](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-snape)’s store so that the boys won’t get into any more trouble. During Potions, Harry creates a diversion in class while Hermione successfully slips in and out of Snape’s office unnoticed and steals the ingredients.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Hermione again recognizes the value of breaking the rules,  particularly as it appears that the teachers aren’t able to stop the monster or even figure out what it might be. Together, Harry, Hermione and Ron bravely take it upon themselves to try and find out information about the Chamber and what is going on.

***Summary Part 5:***

A week later, [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter), [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley), and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) discover that the school is starting a Dueling Club. At the Club’s first meeting, [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart) (poorly) demonstrates with [Snape](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-snape) the best way to disarm an opponent. Snape then partners [Draco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy) and Harry to duel. Draco  hits Harry with a spell that makes him feel like he’s been hit with a saucepan. Harry returns a spell that hits Draco in the stomach. They continue trading spells until Snape stops them. The other students’ duels have resulted in similar chaos.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Harry’s inherent rivalry with Draco is understandable, considering that they have nearly opposite ways of treating people. Harry is inherently kind and respectful, while Draco is a bully who denigrates others he feels to be inferior to himself. This scene also reinforces how false Lockhart’s identity is; he’s famous for winning battles, but he shows here that he can’t even do basic spells.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart) and [Snape](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-snape) then try and demonstrate how to block spells, pulling [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) and [Draco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy) up in front of everyone. When the duel begins, Draco casts a spell that sends a snake flying from his wand. The snake starts to slither towards [Justin Finch-Fletchley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/justin-finch-fletchley), but then Harry shouts “Leave him alone!” Miraculously, the snake slumps to the floor. Harry looks back at Justin, who is angry and terrified. Snape makes the snake vanish, and also looks at Harry oddly. Murmurs sweep through the hall.

***Analysis Part 6:***

It is revealed very shortly that when Harry speaks to the snake, he is speaking in snake language, which the others aren’t able to understand. Their inability to know what Harry is saying—their lack of knowledge about what is happening—inspires their fear and confusion, because it is unclear whether Harry was trying to help or hurt Justin.

***Summary Part 7:***

[Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) pull [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) out of the room and ask him why he didn’t tell him he can speak Parseltongue, meaning he can talk to snakes. Harry explains that he thought a lot of people could do this, but Ron says it’s not common. Harry says that he told the snake to leave [Justin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/justin-finch-fletchley) alone, but Ron says that it seemed like Harry was “egging the snake on.” Harry is stunned that he spoke a different language without realizing it.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Harry’s ability to talk to snakes is also what prompts many of the rumors about him—namely, that he is Salazar Slytherin’s heir. Thus, Rowling demonstrates how fear of the unknown can lead people to spread dangerous and hurtful rumors in order to try and make sense of what they do not understand.

***Summary Part 8:***

[Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) both look somber, but [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) doesn’t understand what’s wrong. Hermione explains that being able to talk to snakes was what Salazar Slytherin was famous for, and now the school will think that he’s the Heir of Slytherin. Harry tries to protest, but Hermione says that for all he knows, he actually could be the heir.

***Analysis Part 8:***

The fact that Ron and Hermione also share the doubt or fear that Harry could be the Heir of Slytherin (even if they know that he is not the one behind the attacks) makes him feel like he has lost the support of his friends, which affects his sense of his own identity.

***Summary Part 9:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) lies awake for hours that night, wondering if he could be a descendent of Slytherin. He knows very little about his father’s family. He continues to worry through the night, particularly when he remembers that the Sorting Hat tried to put him in Slytherin. Harry resolves to talk to [Justin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/justin-finch-fletchley) the next day in Herbology and explain what happened with the snake.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Harry’s ability to talk to snakes, coupled with his having no information about his father’s family, impacts his sense of identity, as he worries that he is inheriting abilities and histories over which he has no control whatsoever. Ultimately, this leads him to fear that he might have no control over his trajectory and could ultimately become a dark wizard himself.

***Summary Part 10:***

The next day, Herbology is canceled due to a blizzard, and so [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) goes to try to find [Justin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/justin-finch-fletchley). He decides to check the library, where several second-year Hufflepuffs are talking. When Harry approaches, he hears them talking about him and hides behind a shelf to listen. A boy named [Ernie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) explains that he thinks Harry is the Heir of Slytherin and is trying to target Justin because Justin told him he was Muggle-born.

***Analysis Part 10:***

In this incident, all of Harry’s fears are intertwining. The uncertainty about Harry’s identity has led people to spread rumors about him and assume that he is prejudiced against Muggle-borns, , when all of Harry’s qualities show that he is anything but.

***Summary part 11:***

When a Hufflepuff girl tries to argue that [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) always seemed so nice and that he made [Voldemort](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/tom-riddle-voldemort) disappear, [Ernie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) says that only a powerful Dark wizard could have survived Voldemort’s curse, and that’s probably why Voldemort wanted to kill Harry in the first place. Harry can’t take any more and walks up to the table, asking where [Justin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/justin-finch-fletchley) is. Harry says he wants to explain that he told the snake to back off.

***Analysis Part 11:***

Ernie’s reasoning demonstrates perhaps the most dangerous aspect of rumors. They lead people to search for evidence to confirm the beliefs that they already hold, because they are the only information available. Even Harry’s celebrity, which had been largely positive up to this point, is used against him here as Ernie assumes that must be a dark wizard if Voldemort tried to kill him.

***Summary part 12:***

[Ernie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) and the other Hufflepuffs don’t believe [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter). Harry tries to explain that he doesn’t want to attack Muggle-borns. Ernie says that he heard Harry hates the Muggles he lives with. Harry counters by saying that anyone who lived with the Dursleys would hate them, and then walks out of the library.

***Analysis Part 12:***

Harry’s dislike of the Dursleys actually serves as more evidence that he is not prejudiced. He doesn’t like the Dursleys, but that doesn’t mean he dislikes all Muggles, because he recognizes that the Dursleys are not representative of Muggles as an entire group. Harry refuses to play into the kinds of generalizations that form the basis of prejudice.

***Summary part 13:***

In the hall, [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) runs into [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid), who is carrying a dead rooster. He explains that it’s the second one killed this term, though he doesn’t know why it’s happening. Hagrid then sees how angry Harry is and tries to ask what’s wrong, but Harry says he has to run off to get his books for Transfiguration.

***Analysis Part 13:***

Harry is extremely frustrated with being the subject of these rumors and feeling like people are making assumptions about who he is. This is particularly evident when he is so upset and insecure about what is happening that he even pushes away Hagrid, who is very loyal to Harry and always makes him feel better.

***Summary part 14:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) starts to head back to his dorm, but he trips over something in a dark passageway. When he looks down, he sees that it is [Justin Finch-Fletchley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/justin-finch-fletchley), petrified on the floor. Next to him is [Nearly Headless Nick](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/nearly-headless-nick),  who is floating immobile and horizontal six inches off of the floor. Harry doesn’t know what to do. He knows that people will suspect him, but he also wants to help.

***Analysis Part 14:***

Again, Harry’s thoughts reveal how different he is from Slytherin and Tom Riddle (which later becomes a major anxiety of Harry’s). Harry knows that he will certainly get in trouble if he is found with more petrified students, but  his impulse is nonetheless to help them in any way he can. He chooses to stay, and this choice distinguishes him from Slytherin and Riddle, who would likely have put themselves first.

***Summary part 15:***

[Peeves](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) spots [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter), [Justin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/justin-finch-fletchley), and [Nick](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/nearly-headless-nick), and starts to scream that another attack has occurred. Doors fly open and [Professor McGonagall](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-mcgonagall) comes out into the hall. [Ernie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters), the Hufflepuff student, comes out and accuses Harry of the crime. Teachers start to move Justin and Nick up to the hospital wing, and then McGonagall takes Harry to [Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-dumbledore)’s office.

***Analysis Part 15:***

Harry is a victim of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, but he is also a victim of rumors and fear. These rumors are not only false, but they are also distracting from any attempts to find the true Heir of Slytherin. It is easier for Ernie and others to believe that it is Harry than to try and discover who might actually be committing the crimes.

***Important Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

Harry swung his wand high, but Malfoy had already started on "two"; his spell hit Harry so hard he felt as though he'd been hit over the head with a saucepan. He stumbled, but everything still seemed to be working, and wasting no time, Harry pointed his wand straight at Malfoy and shouted, "Rictusempra!"

A jet of silver light hit Malfoy in the stomach and he doubled up, wheezing.

"I said Disarm only!" Lockhart shouted in alarm over the heads of the battling crowd, as Malfoy sank to his knees; Harry had hit him with a Tickling Charm, and he could barely move for laughing. (11.77-79)

***Explanation:***

Obviously, Professor Snape's choice to pair Harry with Draco is intended to punish Harry for existing. Still, why do you think Professor Lockhart chooses to start this Dueling Club? What does he hope to get out of it? Why teach a bunch of students to hex each other? Why do you think Professor Dumbledore agreed to Professor Lockhart's request? What is the purpose of a duel?

***Quotation 2:***

The news that Colin Creevey had been attacked and was now lying as though dead in the hospital wing had spread through the entire school by Monday morning. The air was suddenly thick with rumor and suspicion. The first years were now moving around the castle in tight-knit groups, as though scared they would be attacked if they ventured forth alone. (11.23)

***Explanation:***

One of Voldemort's main weapons is fear. A few unexplained Petrifications are all it takes to start turning the Hogwarts student body against one another. Most of the other students think the Heir of Slytherin must be Harry, while Harry and his friends (equally unjustly) suspect Draco Malfoy. This theme of fear turning innocent people against one another is a huge topic in the Harry Potter series, particularly in Book 5, when even the Sorting Hat starts to worry that the Hogwarts House system is creating unnecessary division among the students.

***Quotation 3:***

"What d'you mean? You were there – you heard me —"

"I heard you speaking Parseltongue," said Ron. "Snake language. You could have been saying anything – no wonder Justin panicked, you sounded like you were egging the snake on or something – it was creepy, you know —" (11.113-114)

***Explanation:***

Parseltongue is a perfect example of the old saying that fear comes from lack of knowledge. The whole student body hears Harry saying things they don't understand, and so they automatically assume the worst: that he's egging on the snake to attack Justin Finch-Fletchley. Why does Parseltongue seem like an evil gift? What do snakes symbolize in Western culture that seems relevant to the wizarding world's fear of Parseltongue? If you could speak to one sort of animal, what would it be?

***Quotation 4:***

No one knows how he survived that attack by You-Know-Who. I mean to say, he was only a baby when it happened. He should have been blasted into smithereens. Only a really powerful Dark wizard could have survived a curse like that [...] That's probably why You-Know-Who wanted to kill him in the first place. Didn't want another Dark Lord competing with him. I wonder what other powers Potter's been hiding? (11.142)

***Explanation 4:***

In Book 1, the wizarding world treats the apparent death of Voldemort in 1981 as a miracle and Harry as a hero. In Book 2, we see another frame for the exact same event: where did Harry get the power to hold back Voldemort? Will he turn his power against the wizarding world the same way Voldemort did? How can they trust him? It goes to show that public opinion is fickle. No matter how beloved Harry may have been in his first year, that's no guarantee of how they'll feel about him in his second. What does this reversal of Harry's fortunes say about Rowling's view on public opinion? Do you think her assessment of public opinion in this book has any relation to her own growing fame as an author?

***Quotation 5:***

Ginny Weasley, who sat next to Colin Creevey in Charms, was distraught, but Harry felt that Fred and George were going the wrong way about cheering her up. They were taking turns covering themselves with fur or boils and jumping out at her from behind statues. They only stopped when Percy, apoplectic with rage, told them he was going to write to Mrs. Weasley and tell her Ginny was having nightmares. (11.24)

***Explanation 5:***

We love the twins, but they don't always have the greatest sense of what is actually going to help their loved ones. This moment with Ginny accomplishes two things. First, it makes us laugh. Secondly, it indicates that Ginny seems to be suffering over something – what, of course, we find out later in the novel. This moment with the twins also reminds us of later moments in the Harry Potter series, when Fred and George's (mostly) well-meaning teasing has the opposite of its intended effect. We're thinking specifically of their mockery of Ron during Book 5, when he's doing such a bad job of being Quidditch Keeper. The twins manage to erode Ron's already shaky confidence (possibly) without meaning to. They're not bad guys, but they're not sensitive. How does the twins' insensitivity shape their love of (and skill with) practical jokes? What role do the twins' shenanigans play in the Harry Potter novels?

***Quotation 6:***

"So anyway," a stout boy was saying, "I told Justin to hide up in our dormitory. I mean to say, if Potter's marked him down as his next victim, it's best if he keeps a low profile for a while. Of course, Justin's been waiting for something like this to happen ever since he let slip to Potter he was Muggle-born. Justin actually told him he'd been down for Eton. That's not the kind of thing you bandy about with Slytherin's heir on the loose, is it?

"You definitely think it is Potter, then, Ernie?" said a girl with blonde pigtails anxiously.

"Hannah," said the stout boy solemnly, "he's a Parselmouth. Everybody knows that's the mark of a Dark wizard. Have you ever heard of a decent one who could talk to snakes? They called Slytherin himself Serpent-tongue."

There was some heavy murmuring at this, and Ernie went on, "Remember what was written on the wall? Enemies of the Heir, Beware. Potter had some sort of run-in with Filch. Next thing we know, Filch's cat is attacked. That first year, Creevey, was annoying Potter at the Quidditch match, taking pictures of him while he was lying in the mud. Next thing we know – Creevey's been attacked." (11.136-139)

***Explanation 6:***

What do you think of Ernie's evidence here? Would you believe him, based on this logic, if you didn't know that Harry is innocent? If the book weren't from Harry's perspective, could Ernie's deductions sound right? Why is Ernie so quick to believe that Harry Potter is the Heir of Slytherin?

***Quotation 7:***

Harry couldn't take anymore. Clearing his throat loudly, he stepped out from behind the bookshelves. If he hadn't been feeling so angry, he would have found the sight that greeted him funny: Every one of the Hufflepuffs looked as though they had been Petrified by the sight of him, and the color was draining out of Ernie's face.

"Hello," said harry. "I'm looking for Justin Finch-Fletchley."

The Hufflepuffs' worst fears had clearly been confirmed. They all looked fearfully at Ernie. (11.143-145)

***Explanation 7:***

Harry overhears the Hufflepuff second years accusing him of trying to kill Justin Finch-Fletchley with a snake. They even think that he is rising to be the next Dark Lord. Instead of continuing to hide or sneaking off, though, Harry chooses to confront the Hufflepuffs openly about their assumptions. He's a Gryffindor, and their main quality is supposed to be courage; we imagine it would take a lot of bravery to go and talk normally to a bunch of people who think you're a crazed killer on the loose.