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

***Chapter 12***

***Summary and analysis***

***Summary:***

### The Polyjuice Potion

* Harry has never been inside Professor Dumbledore's office before.
* It's a beautiful, large circular room.
* He spots the Sorting Hat.
* Harry puts the Sorting Hat on, "just to make sure it had put him in the right House —" (12.4).
* The Sorting Hat agrees that Harry "would have done well in Slytherin" (12.7).
* Harry's stomach sinks.
* He takes off the Hat.
* He hears a gagging noise and looks over. There's an old-looking bird in the corner. It looks really sick.
* Suddenly, it bursts into flames.
* There's nothing but a pile of ash left where the bird used to be.
* Professor Dumbledore comes in and Harry stammers, "Professor [...] Your bird – I couldn't do anything – he just caught fire —" (12.14).
* Professor Dumbledore explains that Fawkes is a phoenix.
* Phoenixes burn up when it is time for them to die, and then they are reborn from the ashes.
* Their tears have healing powers and they are hugely loyal.
* Just then, Hagrid bursts in.
* Hagrid swears to Professor Dumbledore that it couldn't have been Harry who Petrified Justin and Nearly Headless Nick.
* Professor Dumbledore agrees that it wasn't Harry.
* Yet he still wants to know if there is anything Harry wants to tell him.
* Harry thinks about the voice he's been hearing and his suspicions that he is connected to Salazar Slytherin.
* He decides not to tell Professor Dumbledore.
* The Weasleys' parents are in Egypt visiting Ron's oldest brother, Bill, so Percy, Fred, George, Ginny, and Ron are all spending the holiday break at Hogwarts.
* On Christmas morning, Hermione sneaks into their dorm room to tell Harry and Ron that the potion is finally ready.
* They decide to use the potion that night.
* Hedwig arrives with Harry's Christmas present from the Dursleys: a toothpick.
* Still, he gets plenty of real presents from Ron, Hermione, Hagrid, and Mrs. Weasley.
* Hermione comes up with a plan to get the "bits of the people [they're] changing into."
* She already has a hair from Millicent Bulstrode's robes for her own transformation.
* Ron and Harry are going to need hairs from Crabbe and Goyle.
* She fills two chocolate cakes with Sleeping Draught.
* Harry places these cakes on the banisters near the Dining Hall where Crabbe and Goyle have been having Christmas tea.
* When they come out, they spot the cakes and eat them up right away.
* They promptly pass out, and Harry and Ron take the required hairs.
* Ron and Harry meet Hermione in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom.
* The Polyjuice Potion is ready and waiting for the last ingredient: the hairs of the three Slytherins they will be impersonating.
* They will have exactly one hour before the potion starts to fade.
* The potion is disgusting and makes all three of them want to hurl.
* They all survive, though. Harry looks like Goyle and Ron looks like Crabbe.
* Hermione won't come out of her toilet stall, though – she tells Harry and Ron to go on without her.
* The two of them sneak down to the Slytherin dungeons.
* Oddly enough, they find Percy Weasley down there.
* Draco comes upon the three of them and asks, "And what're you doing down here, Weasley?" (12.147).
* Percy retorts, "I don't like your attitude!" (12.148) and storms off.
* Draco wants to show Crabbe and Goyle something funny: a clipping from the Daily Prophet announcing that Mr. Weasley has been fined fifty Galleons for enchanting his car.
* Draco keeps running his mouth off about the Weasleys, Harry, and Hermione.
* Harry and Ron are disappointed to hear that Draco doesn't know who the Heir of Slytherin is.
* He does know that the Chamber of Secrets was opened before, fifty years ago.
* Then, a Muggle-born student died.
* Harry and Ron start to turn back to their old selves, so they rush back to Moaning Myrtle's bathroom.
* They want to tell Hermione everything, but she still won't come out of her bathroom stall.
* Unfortunately, poor Hermione has made a slight miscalculation.
* That hair she grabbed from Millicent Bulstrode's robe is actually a cat hair.
* Polyjuice Potion isn't intended for non-human transformation.
* Hermione has cat fur all over her face, two ears sprouting from her hair, and a tail.

***Brief Summary:***

McGonagall leaves Harry in Dumbledore's office to wait for the Headmaster. He is intrigued by Dumbledore's office, which is the most interesting office he has been in. Harry notices the Sorting Hat and is tempted to try it on again, to see if the hat has changed its mind about its original choice of Slytherin house for Harry. Harry is dismayed to find that the hat is still of the same opinion, " you would have done well in Slytherin," p155. Harry is dismayed and refuses to listen; instead, his attention turns to a rather ill-looking bird. Harry is alarmed to see the bird's feathers falling out; he is in enough trouble without the bird's fate being blamed on him as well. Harry's worst fears are realized when the bird bursts into flames and disappears. Thankfully, when Dumbledore arrives, he is neither angry nor surprised. His pet bird is a phoenix, a bird with magical, healing properties, renowned for rising from the ashes.

Hagrid bursts into the office before Dumbledore can begin to question Harry. Hagrid defends Harry and is determined to testify to his innocence. Dumbledore manages to calm Hagrid and convince him that he, too, believes that Harry is innocent. What Dumbledore is keen to know is whether there is anything else, which Harry can tell him about the recent events. Harry recalls Ron's caution that hearing voices is never a good sign, and doesn't tell Dumbledore about the voice that he has been hearing in the walls.

Hysteria reaches a peak in the school but is thankfully halted by the Christmas Holidays. Most pupils go home, relieved to be away from the danger. Some pupils remain at school for Christmas; among them are Harry, Hermione, and the Weasleys along with Draco, Crabbe and Goyle. Christmas is an ideal time to try out the Polyjuice Potion, and Hermione adds the final touches to the mixture. After the spectacular Christmas feast, Hermione puts her plan into action.

Harry and Ron capture Crabbe and Goyle by leaving chocolate cakes laced with sleeping potion where Crabbe and Goyle are bound to find and eat them. True to form, they eat the cake and are instantly sent to sleep. Harry and Ron drag them into a nearby cupboard, where they remove some hairs from their heads, necessary to make the potion work, and their shoes to wear while they're in their roles as Crabbe and Goyle.

The potion is completed in Moaning Myrtle's toilets and the trio drink the mixture. Harry and Ron are instantly transformed into Crabbe and Goyle but Hermione refuses to come out of her cubicle, making the boys go ahead without her. They bump into Draco in the corridor who has been looking for Crabbe and Goyle He takes them to the Slytherin common room and shows them an article sent to him by his father. The Ministry, as a result of the bewitched car, has fined Ron's father. Draco's father has called for Mr. Weasley's resignation. Draco gloats about the fine and the fact that his family has Dark Arts materials hidden in their house that went undiscovered in a recent raid. Ron and Harry have to pretend to sympathise with Draco and laugh at his jokes, but underneath they are seething. Their theory about Draco being the heir proves to be unfounded, as he tells them he doesn't know who it is, although he wished he did. A valuable piece of information gained from their transformation is that, the last time the chamber was opened, a non-pureblood wizard was killed, something that makes Ron and Harry worry about Hermione's safety and Draco's wish for her to be harmed.

Eventually the potion begins to wear off. Harry and Ron manage to escape before their true identities are revealed, returning to the toilets to find that Hermione's transformation has gone drastically wrong. Instead of becoming Millicent Bulstrode, she is half cat. The potion isn't wearing off and she has to be taken to the hospital wing.

***Brief Analysis:***

The dark side is becoming undeniably stronger. Hermione's spell goes horribly wrong for the first time ever. Lucius Malfoy escapes unscathed from a ministry inspection, yet Mr. Weasley is fined. The more powerful magic is definitely dark magic at this point in the novel. Good characters with great power like Dumbledore and McGonagall seem unable to solve the puzzle, and the implications of the chamber being opened become direr. The strength of the good side at this point lies in their faith and determination to succeed despite the odds. Harry, Ron and Hermione risk their own safety again in the name of good. Hagrid is loyal to Harry completely and is prepared to go before the Ministry of Magic to swear to Harry's innocence. Dumbledore is convinced that Harry is innocent but is unable to solve the problem, with only his faith to guide him. The faith of the good characters is being tested. If their faith is strong enough, they will succeed. If they start to doubt or question their belief, then itand theybecome weak and vulnerable.

***Critical Analysis:***

As frightened as Harry feels as he is brought to speak with Dumbledore, he still is deeply impressed by Dumbledore's office. He spies the Sorting Hat, and while waiting for Dumbledore to emerge from the back room, he tries it on. The hat repeats what it told him last year, that he would have done well in Slytherin. Desperate, Harry tears the hat off his head. His attention falls next on a sickly bird perched near the door, and before he can observe it for long, the bid bursts into flames and is gone. Harry yells, and moments later is reassured by Dumbledore that the bird, Fawkes, is a phoenix, and the time had come for his burning and rebirth. During this explanation, Dumbledore also mentions that phoenixes are excellent pets because they are faithful, can carry heavy loads, and can heal injuries with their tears. At this moment, Hagrid bursts into the room proclaiming Harry's innocence, and Dumbledore impatiently informs Hagrid that he does not think Harry is responsible for petrifying the students. Hagrid leaves, and Dumbledore then asks Harry if there is anything that Harry wants to tell him. Harry considers all of the things currently pressing on his mind, and then answers no.

The school is still frightened about the Heir, and Fred and George humor the situation by walking in front of Harry in the halls and crying out, "Make way for the Heir of Slytherin, seriously evil wizard coming through…" Harry appreciates this humor, because it reassures him that at least the twins think that the idea of him being the Heir is laughable.

Soon the term ends, and on Christmas day Ron, Hermione, and Harry open their presents and plan for their Polyjuice Potion adventure later that night. The feast is exquisite, as always, and afterwards Hermione instructs Harry and Ron to leave two sleeping-potion-filled cakes in easy places for Malfoy's large, hulking friends Crabbe and Goyle to find, and then to hide them in a closet and pluck out a few of their hairs to add to the potion. Ron and Harry do this, and within minutes the cakes have been eaten, the sleeping bodies hidden, the hairs plucked. Soon they are back in the bathroom with Hermione. Hermione already has her hair, it turns out, because the day she was paired to duel with Millicent, one of the hairs of the large Slytherin girl wound up on Hermione's robes. The three friends add their hairs to their respective potions and drink them, and soon Harry is a replica of Goyle, Ron of Crabbe. Hermione refuses to come out of her stall, so Harry and Ron set off alone.

Unfortunately, they don't know where the Slytherin common room is, so they wander around, accidentally asking a Ravenclaw girl, and suddenly they run into Percy, who is emerging from a side room. They regard him warily and he regards them back, just as warily, and finally Ron and Harry are saved by the approach of Malfoy. Malfoy leads them through corridors, to a black stone wall whose password is "pure blood," which opens into the Slytherin common room. Malfoy is pleased with himself for obtaining a copy of the Daily Prophet, a wizard newspaper, and he shows Ron and Harry an article about Ron's father being fined for bewitching a Muggle car. Ron is furious, but tries to conceal it. Malfoy then speaks of the last attack by the Heir, and how a girl was killed, and then how he hopes that this time Hermione will be killed. Then he says wistfully that he wished he knew who the heir was, so that he could help him, and finally he reveals information about a hidden chamber under his family's drawing room floor, in which dark wizarding paraphernalia is kept. Ron and Harry are a blank audience to all of this, but Malfoy doesn't seem to notice that they are any slower than the real Crabbe and Goyle. After some time the spell begins to end, and Ron and Harry dash out of the room and back to Hermione, who is still in the stall. Moaning Myrtle is in delighted humor, and the reason turns out to be because the hair in the potion turned Hermione into a cat. Ron and Harry persuade her to go to the hospital wing, while Myrtle gloats in her toilet.

Dumbledore's information about the phoenix foreshadows Fawkes' role in the Chamber of Secrets. When Harry is brought to Dumbledore and given the freedom to confide, he lies that nothing is on his mind. Here we have another glimpse of his desire to be free of special treatment by adults, teachers or anyone. We see the string of worries cross his mind before he answers that he has nothing to tell the headmaster, revealing that even at the sacrifice of having Dumbledore in his confidence and on his side, Harry does not wish to be singled out. This is not unusual for him; recall during the Quidditch match against Slytherin that Harry preferred to face the Rogue Bludger on his own and allow himself the freedom to pursue the Snitch, than to ensure his own safety by having Fred and George hovering about him throughout the game. Perhaps as a side effect of having so much attention heaped on him for a triumph he does not remember, he wants to achieve goals and untangle fears by himself, without the assistance so willingly lent to him.

The Polyjuice Potion about which Hermione is so optimistic seems to have every possible reason to go awry. Yet, somehow all the steps seem to work, until Hermione refuses to emerge from the bathroom stall. The fact that the potion turns her into a cat does not hinder the eavesdropping plan, although it does disclose certain basic personality traits: Hermione will never fail to read directions correctly or recall a spell at the appropriate moment, but she does not possess some of the more practical skills and assumptions that Harry does. She concocts the potion without a hitch, but it does not occur to her that the hair she found on her could be anyone's other that Millicent's, whereas Harry and Ron tend to think outside the lines more, acknowledging more uncertainty and potential for error.

While Ron and Harry do not find out who the Heir of Slytherin is, the entire event is significant as it reveals to Ron the location of the secret vault under the Malfoy Manor, and furthermore it shows in full color the snobbery of the Slytherins, and it hints at a certain inbred stupidity that exists among the members of the house. Crabbe and Goyle are incomparably stupid, eating the cake Hermione left near the staircase, speaking-or not speaking-with such denseness that Malfoy is able to mistake the clueless, disguised Ron and Harry for the equally clueless real Crabbe and Goyle. Ron notes that only when bewildered does Harry looks exactly like Goyle. The two clearly were not admitted to Hogwarts on account of their wits. The password to the Slytherin common room is "pure blood," the unchanging house philosophy, as opposed to the Gryffindor word, always quirky and often changing. The Slytherins succeed in wizardry by connections through blood and exclusion, yielding a snobbery evident in Malfoy and his two daft acolytes. Nobody connected with Slytherin House is, as far as we can see, redeemable; Snape, Malfoy, Millicent, Crabbe and Goyle are all extremely unappealing, and lacking in rudimentary kindness, fairness, and goodness. It is no surprise that Voldemort was produced from this house; although he was cleverer than Malfoy, he was equally low and creepy.

***Critical Study(Ch 10-12):***

Professor McGonagall leaves Harry in Dumbledore’s office, telling him to wait. Harry discovers the Sorting Hat and puts it on his head. The Sorting Hat knows that Harry has been wondering if it placed him in the right house, and says “...you were particularly difficult to place. But I stand by what I said before, you would have done well in Slytherin–” Harry grabs the hat off of his head before it can finish, and says “You’re wrong.”

A strange gagging noise makes Harry turn around to find a decrepit-looking bird on a golden perch. The bird bursts into flames. Harry yells in shock, and looks around for water, but can’t find any. The bird gives a loud shriek, then becomes a smoking pile of ash on the floor. When Dumbledore enters, Harry desperately tries to explain what happened to the bird. Dumbledore smiles and explains that [Fawkes](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#fawkes) is a phoenix. When it is time for him to die he bursts into flame and is then reborn from the ashes. Harry looks down to see a tiny newborn bird poke its head out of the ashes. Dumbledore says that it’s a shame Harry has to see him on Burning Day–Most of the time, he is handsome, with red and gold plumage. Dumbledore relates that phoenixes “can carry immensely heavy loads, their tears have healing powers, and they make highly faithful pets.”

Hagrid bursts into the office, exclaiming that it wasn’t Harry, that he was talking to him seconds before the kid was found, that he wouldn’t have had time. Dumbledore tries to interrupt as Hagrid goes on defending Harry. Finally, Dumbledore says loudly that he does not think Harry attacked those people. Embarrassed, Hagrid goes to wait outside. Dumbledore then asks Harry if there’s anything at all he wants to tell him. Harry thinks of Malfoy shouting “You’ll be next Mudbloods!” and the Polyjuice potion. Then he thinks of the voice he has heard twice and Ron telling him that hearing voices isn’t a good sign, even in the wizarding world. And he thinks of what everyone is saying about him, and his dread that he’s connected with Salazar Slytherin. He tells Dumbledore no, there isn’t anything.

The double attack on Justin and Nearly Headless Nick sends Hogwarts into a panic. People are especially worried about the fate of Nick: what power could harm someone who was already dead? Students rush to book their tickets on the Hogwarts Express to go home for Christmas. Crabe and Goyle sign up to stay at Hogwarts over the holidays with Malfoy. Harry is glad that most people are leaving as he’s “tired of people skirting around him in the corridors, as though he was about to sprout fangs or spit poison; tired of all the muttering, pointing, and hissing as he passed.” Fred and George make a joke of it, marching ahead of Harry, shouting “Make way for the Heir of Slytherin, seriously evil wizard coming through.” Percy disapproves of their behavior. It upsets Ginny too. Harry doesn’t mind. It makes him feel better that Fred and George think that his being Slytherin’s heir is ridiculous. [Draco Malfoy](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#draco-malfoy) looks increasingly sour. Ron and Harry assume this is because Harry is getting credit for his dirty work.

The term ends. Harry enjoys the peace and quiet and having the run of Gryffindor tower with his friends. Fred, George, Ginny, and Percy stay at Hogwarts too. On Christmas morning Hermione wakes up Harry and Ron early with presents and the news that the Polyjuice potion is ready. [Hedwig](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#hedwig) flies in with a package for Harry from the Dursleys, which turns out to be a toothpick and a note asking if he can stay at Hogwarts for the summer vacation. Harry appreciates his other presents: a tin of treacle fudge from Hagrid, a book on his favorite Quidditch team from Ron, a luxury eagle-feather quill from Hermione, and a hand-knit sweater and a plum cake from Mrs. Weasley. Harry feels guilty about Mr. Wesley’s car and the rule-breaking he and Ron are planning next.

Everyone enjoys Christmas dinner at Hogwarts. The Great Hall looks magnificent. Dumbledore leads them in carols. Hermione ushers Harry and Ron out of the hall to finalize their plans for the Polyjuice potion that evening. They still need a bit of the people they want to change into. Hermione has a plan: She has filled two chocolate cakes with sleeping draught for Crabbe and Goyle to find and eat out of greed. She tells Ron and Harry to wait until they’re asleep, and then pull out a few of their hairs and hide the boys in the broom closet. Harry and Ron are incredulous, but agree to do it. Hermione already has a hair that Milicent Bulstrode left on her robe during their duel.

The first stage of the operation goes according to plan. Crabbe and Goyle eat the cake and pass out. Harry and Ron drag them to the closet, pull out their hair, steal their shoes, and then sprint up to Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom. Hermione has the potion ready. She also sneaked large spare robes out of the laundry for Harry and Ron to wear when they transform into Crabbe and Goyle. She explains that once they drink the potion, they will have an hour until they change back into themselves. They separate the potion into three glasses and add the hairs. They each take separate stalls and drink the potion on the count of three. Harry transforms into Goyle and Ron into Crabbe. Hermione says from her stall that she’s not going to come with them after all. Bewildered, Harry asks Hermione if she’s ok. She says she’s fine, so they agree to meet back in the bathroom, and set off to find a Slytherin student to follow to the Slytherin common room.

They walk deep into the passages of the school for a quarter of an hour without finding a Slytherin. They run into Percy in an unexpected place. Then Malfoy strolls toward them, and says that he has something funny to show them, so they follow him. Malfoy says the new password to the Slytherin common room—”pure-blood”—and they enter. He tells them to wait by the fire and then retrieves a newspaper clipping his father sent him. The article, titled “Inquiry at the Ministry of Magic” says that [Arthur Weasley](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#arthur-weasley), Head of the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Office, was fined fifty galleons for bewitching a Muggle car. Lucius Malfoy, a governor of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and wizardry, where the car crashed, is calling for his resignation. Lucius Malfoy is quoted as saying that Weasley is unfit to draw up their laws and the Muggle Protection Act should be scrapped immediately. Draco thinks the article is funny and makes disparaging remarks about Mr. Weasley. Ron is furious. Draco, thinking that he is Crabbe, asks what’s wrong with him, so Ron says he has a stomachache.

Draco tells Ron as Crabbe to go up to the hospital wing and give the Mudbloods a kick for him. He says he’s surprised that the newspaper hasn’t reported on the attacks at Hogwarts, and guesses that Dumbledore is trying to hush it up. Draco speculates that Dumbledore will be sacked if it doesn’t stop soon. His father always says that Dumbledore is the worst thing that has happened to Hogwarts because he loves Muggle-borns. “A decent headmaster would have never let slime like Creevy in.” Draco does a cruel impression of Colin Creevy taking pictures of Harry, who he calls “Saint Potter, the Mudblood’s friend.” Draco says that Harry also has “no proper wizard feeling, or he wouldn’t go around with that jumped up Granger Mudblood. And people think that he’s Slytherin's heir!”

Harry and Ron are shocked at Draco’s next pronouncement: “I wish I knew who it is. I could help them.” Harry-as-Goyle replies “You must have some idea of who’s behind it all.” Draco says he doesn't, and his father won’t tell him anything about the last time the Chamber was opened. It was fifty years ago, before Lucius Malfoy’s time. He knows about it, but it was kept quiet, so it will look suspicious if Draco knows. Draco does know that the last time it was opened a Mudblood died. “So I bet it’s a matter of time until one of them’s killed this time...I hope it’s Granger.” Ron clenches Crabbe’s gigantic fists. Harry, worried that Ron as Crabbe is about to punch Draco, shoots him a look and asks if the person who opened the Chamber last time was caught. Malfoy says yes, whoever it was was expelled, and is probably in Azkaban, the wizard prison. Draco also says that the Ministry of Magic raided their family manor last week, but didn’t find much. Then he reveals that his father has valuable Dark Arts stuff hidden under their drawing-room floor.

Ron and Harry start to turn back into themselves, and so Ron grunts “Medicine for my stomach” as they sprint out of the Slytherin common room. As they race through the entrance hall they hear Crabbe and Goyle pounding in the closet. Leaving their shoes outside of the closet door, they run upstairs to Myrtle’s bathroom. Ron says that it wasn’t a complete waste of time–He’s going to write to his father to tell him to check under the Malfoys’ drawing-room floor. Ron knocks on Hermione’s stall, but she tells him to go away. Moaning Myrtle glides through the stall door, looking happy, saying it’s awful. Hermione opens the door sobbing with her robes pulled over her head. When Hermione let her robes fall it’s revealed that her face is covered in black fur, her eyes have turned yellow, and there are long pointed ears poking through her hair. Hermione howls that it was cat hair, and that the potion isn’t supposed to be used for animal transformations. Myrtle says happily that she will be teased something awful. Harry reassures her that it’s okay, they will take her to the hospital, and Madam Pomfrey never asks too many questions. It takes a long time to persuade Hermione to leave the bathroom. Myrtle continues to taunt her.

Ron holds prejudice against Malfoy because of his pure-blood ideology and family. In this book, Ron is more of a foil for Draco than Harry, except in Quidditch. Hermione wants to investigate and prove if Draco is the heir of Slytherin one way or the other. Notably, she is willing to break school rules to figure out who wants to frighten Squibs and Muggle-borns out of Hogwarts. Her social position as a Muggle-born gives her a sense of justice outside of the norm. She grows beyond her normal personality as a rule-follower to risk finding out the truth. And she is impatient with Ron’s anxieties. The three friends decide to act on their suspicion to find out the truth.

Lockhart is the first adult whose weakness the three friends take advantage of to break the rules. If he were competent, they would be unable to pursue their plans. But if he were competent, they also wouldn’t need to do this work for him. The adults let the children down and are unable to protect them, so they must protect themselves. Lockhart seems unable to separate his own fiction from fact, as he offers repeatedly to do things he is incapable of doing.

Ron and Hermione have sometimes opposing natures. She has concocted a complicated magical scheme, whereas he thinks Harry should knock Draco off his broom in Quidditch. She wants to know the truth, while he wants to retaliate immediately. Hermione continues to be impressed with Lockhart, despite his obvious falseness. Because Ron is not a reader, he isn’t fooled by Lockhart’s books. His irritation at Hermione’s crush on Lockhart foreshadows their romantic relationship later in the Harry Potter series.

Wood’s speech sets up the dramatic conflict represented by the Quidditch match. The Slytherin team holds an advantage that wealth can buy, in this case, better brooms. But Woods says that the Gryffindors have “better people on their brooms.” This is an essentialist phrase, supported by calling Malfoy “slime,” and softened by claiming that they have trained harder. Then, in a moment of foreshadowing, Wood tells Harry to get the Snitch or die trying.

The rules of the game are altered by the rogue Bludger, disrupting a predictable win or loss. Dobby again acts as a trickster, making something behave outside of the norm. When Harry is hit unexpectedly by the Bludger, the passage is written with kinesthetic imagery to bring the reader inside of his moment-by-moment experience of being hit, feeling his arm break, hanging onto the broom in the rain, grabbing the Snitch, and heading for the ground. When Lockhart removes Harry’s bones it continues his role as comic relief, delivering a combination of situational and dramatic irony with his incompetence. Madame Pomfrey is his opposite, and one of the few competent adults, along with Sprout, in the story.

In more foreshadowing, Dobby tells Harry that his pillowcase outfit is a mark of his enslavement, that his masters are careful not to pass him even a sock. Harry also learns that the Chamber of Secrets was open before. Dobby’s speech about what Harry Potter means to the “Lowly, the enslaved, the dregs of the magical world” has been interpreted as Christian allegory, with Harry as Christ. Dobby is at once a pathetic, a comic, and a heroic figure, devoted to Harry’s salvation even as he disrupts his life and injures him. He receives redemption and freedom from slavery in the end through his service.

When Dumbledore says “The question is not who. The question is how,” it means that he knows that Voldemort is behind the terror in the school and the petrification of students. But he doesn’t know about the diary, so he doesn’t know how Voldemort was able to return, or how this return was abetted by Lucius Malfoy by enchanting [Ginny Weasley](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#ginny-weasley).

While Ginny continues to be distraught in the background, [Fred and George Weasley](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#fred-and-george-weasley) provide comic relief by exaggerating the students’ fears. The girls' bathroom serves as a place for Hermione to create Polyjuice potion, returning witchcraft to its feminine origins. At this moment, Hermione and Ginny are in conflict.

Harry Potter bravely causes the diversion in Snape’s class, so that Hermione may steal the ingredients she needs for the Polyjuice potion. In this, Harry continues his role as a rule-breaker and Snape’s adversary.

During the dueling competition, Professor Lockhart finally directly reveals his genuine ineffectualness as he is blasted off his feet by Snape. Lockhart makes a bad situation worse with misplaced confidence in himself.

Harry experiences a crisis of identity which turns into a social crisis. Because he has a rare skill, speaking Parseltongue, he is a Parselmouth. Ron acts again as an interpreter of common consensus that this is bad. Ron also calls it creepy, suggesting that Harry was egging on the snake. Ron related to Justin’s panic. Hermione knows the facts: that Salazar Slytherin is known for being a Parseltongue and that he lived a thousand years ago. She refutes Harry’s protest by saying it would be hard to prove. Harry is worried that because he is a Parselmouth he is Slytherin’s heir, and so inevitably a pure-blood supremacist sadist. This plays into one of his main insecurities: being an orphan, without knowledge about his father’s family. Harry is truly angry for the first time in the book. He is experiencing the same social exclusion he felt at the Dursleys, also as a result of prejudice against his abilities.

The growth of the Mandrakes acts as one timeline in the book. Professor Sprout keeps them warm so they grow quickly to revive Colin and Mrs. Norris. Their maturity coincides with the end of the term, and with the solving of the mystery. Ernie’s case against Harry uses the mystery around how he survived Voldemort’s curse against him, and why Voldemort wanted to kill him in the first place. The plot has left Harry vulnerable. The same thing that made him a hero and savior is now making people afraid of him. Lockhart was right, in a way, about the dangers of early fame.

Harry’s hatred of the Durselys also becomes an issue, as it is used to call him a Muggle-hater. At this point, Harry rebels against the authorial voice, saying “It’s not possible to live with the Durselys and not hate them.” It’s true: the character has been trapped in a cliche at the Dursleys. They are such broad characters that Muggles are at first portrayed as the opposite of wizards; the Muggle world and the wizarding world seem a dichotomy of awful and wonderful. Because Harry has experienced awful Muggles, he could decide that all Muggles are awful. But he doesn’t, as evidenced by his friendship with Hermione. When Harry trips over Justin it feels as though the fates, even the plot itself, is against him. Justin is the person who was most afraid of Harry, and the one he was accused of targeting. Harry thinks of moving away, but his impulse to help keeps him on the spot again.

The magic of the Sorting Hat is ambiguous. It is unclear if it sorts of people based upon reading their true natures. If so, is nature is determined by blood? Harry’s anxiety about the Sorting Hat’s decision represents his anxiety about his place in the world, whether it is determined by fate or his own free will.

Dumbledore’s description of Fawkes foreshadows the powers that allow the bird to save Harry in the end: strength, mercy, faith, and loyalty. Why doesn’t Harry tell Dumbledore what is on his mind? Malfoy’s threat represents a problem built into the structure of the school and the wizarding world: there is an inherent pureblood ideology built into the place. What is Dumbledore going to do about it? The Malfoys have power. Making the Polyjuice potion is Hermione’s response, as a “Mudblood”—she is using her powers, education, and skills to fight the threat that Malfoy represents. Harry supports that. If he were to tell Dumbledore, they could all be expelled. While kind, Dumbledore's position in authority makes him unable to condone something that needs to be done.

Harry also has self-doubts about his own identity, which is exacerbated by hearing voices that no one else can hear. This unique ability isolates him socially, and his self-doubt gives him a secret he feels he can’t share. Ron has reinforced the norm by telling him that hearing voices is not a good sign, even in the wizarding world. He can’t share his dread that he could be Slytherin’s heir because if he is, he would lose his place at Hogwarts. The atmosphere of fear and suspicion has been internalized, and the structure of Hogwarts is not such that he feels he can ask Dumbledore for help. The adult world has betrayed the children by failing to keep them safe. They are forced to face evil alone. This represents a dramatic irony, as the reader expects Harry to confide in Dumbledore. It would be the appropriate thing to do, and comes as a relief when he finally does so in the end. Harry’s hesitancy matches Riddle’s, and emanates from their powerlessness in the Muggle world, to their shame and desire to stay at Hogwarts, despite the toxic moment.

Harry stays over the Christmas holiday, exhausted from being socially ostracized. The episode of the Polyjuice potion represents transformation through imagination. Its literary antecedent is*Strange Case of*[Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde](https://www.gradesaver.com/dr-jekyll-and-mr-hyde)*,*a novella by Robert Louis Stevenson in which a normally-benevolent doctor is transformed into a different man by taking a potion. The characters of Crabbe and Goyle imply that biology is destiny: they are both large, and so “goons” for Draco Malfoy. But there is also an implicit argument in Ron and Harry’s experience of becoming Crabbe and Goyle that how you’re perceived determines how you are treated. Harry and Ron’s transformation shows the possibilities of the medium of fiction, as they are allowed to navigate forbidden spaces and learn information that changes the plot.

The scene further develops the underlying political tension driving the plot: Lucius Malfoy is calling for Arthur Weasley's resignation, claiming that Weasley is unfit to draw up wizard laws. He wants to scrap the Muggle Protection Act. Harry and Ron’s use of the car had serious consequences. This displays their adolescent position, unaware of the political world they inhabit. Arthur Weasley, as a wizard who appreciates Muggles, exists at an intersection and has an internal tension, represented by his car. His vulnerability is trying to have a bit of creative magical freedom, while working in an inflexible fearful bureaucracy that also offers important protections. He is trying to work both within the system and outside of it.

Draco’s comments also foreshadow Dumbledore’s firing. He continues to display a sadistic temperament, as he wants to kick Mudbloods and hopes that Hermione dies. His fantasies amount to ethnic cleansing. Draco reveals a Malfoy family secret: where the Dark Arts objects are hidden in their manor. Their transformed identities give Harry and Ron access to this secret knowledge. Hermione’s transformation represents the physical transformation of puberty: she gains male secondary characteristics, growing hair on her face, which shocks Ron in particular. Myrtle’s delighted taunts also represent the social trauma of adolescence. Hermione has experienced a consequence of risking new magic on her own without adult supervision. One theme of the book is identity: how it determines social position and thus power, confidence, and access to information.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[McGonagall](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-mcgonagall) leaves [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) alone in [Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-dumbledore)’s office and tells him to wait. He looks around and sees the Sorting Hat on a shelf. Hesitantly, he puts it on his head and asks the Hat if it put him in the right house. The Hat says that Harry was difficult to place, but that he would have done well in Slytherin. Harry feels sick, takes the Hat off, and says, “You’re wrong.”

***Analysis Part 1:***

To Harry, the Sorting Hat becomes a symbol of the idea that his identity has been predetermined, and that he has no way of directing his life. But in asserting himself and saying that the Hat is wrong, he proves that he can make choices and control his identity.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) then notices a “decrepit-looking” bird on a golden perch. Suddenly, the bird bursts into flames and becomes a pile of ash, and Harry cries out in shock. [Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-dumbledore) enters; Harry tries to explain that the bird just caught fire and he couldn’t do anything, but Dumbledore smiles. He explains that [Fawkes](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/fawkes) is a phoenix, and Harry watches as a newborn bird pokes its head out of the ashes. Dumbledore explains that phoenixes can carry heavy loads, that their tears have healing powers, and that they are very loyal.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Fawkes, for his own part, is a symbol of loyalty, as Dumbledore hints. Later in the novel, all of the attributes that Dumbledore describes become key to rescuing Harry in the Chamber of Secrets. But the most important one by far is loyalty, because Harry must prove his loyalty to Dumbledore in order to be supported by Fawkes.

***Summary Part 3:***

At that moment, [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid) bursts into [Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-dumbledore)’s office and says that [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) did not petrify [Justin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/justin-finch-fletchley), as he was speaking with Hagrid moments before the attack. Dumbledore assures Hagrid that he does not think Harry attacked Justin and [Nick](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/nearly-headless-nick). Slightly embarrassed, Hagrid leaves. Dumbledore then asks if Harry has anything that he needs to tell him. Harry thinks with dread about [Draco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy)’s statement about Mudbloods being next, the Polyjuice Potion, the voices Harry had been hearing, and the rumors about his connection with Slytherin. He simply says no.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Hagrid’s loyalty and friendship toward Harry resurface here, as he defends Harry from the rumors that have been circulating. But the fear that those rumors have instilled in Harry becomes very evident when he is so afraid of being judged for the rumors about him, so afraid of feeling like he doesn’t know who he is, and so afraid of getting in trouble for breaking the rules that he feels unable to confide in Dumbledore.

***Summary Part 4:***

After the attack on [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), panic erupts in the castle. At the holidays, students are eager to return home, but [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) plan to stay, having heard that [Malfoy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy), [Crabbe](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters), and [Goyle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) are also staying. On Christmas morning, Hermione announces that the Polyjuice Potion is ready.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Despite the fact that the attacks continue, with each new attack there is no more information about the monster or about who might be controlling it. This sense of mystery only increases the fear of the student body, as Rowling’s escalating descriptions demonstrate.

***Summary Part 5:***

At Christmas dinner, [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) tells [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) and [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) her plan, which they carry out seamlessly. She fills two cakes with a sleeping draught and leaves them for [Crabbe](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) and [Goyle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters). When they eat the cakes and pass out, Ron and Harry hide them in a broom closet and pull out a few of their hairs, then return to Myrtle’s bathroom. Hermione has a hair from Millicent Bulstrode, a Slytherin girl who has gone home for Christmas.

***Analysis Part 5:***

The recurrence of attacks only increases the urgency of using the Polyjuice Potion in order to get information from Draco, even though they have broken many school rules along the way and continue to do so over the course of this episode. Their priority is simply to find information that can be used to prevent the attacks.

***Summary part 6:***

[Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) finishes brewing the potion. She pours a glass for each of them and they add their individual’s hairs. [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) transforms into [Goyle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters), while [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) becomes [Crabbe](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters). Hermione refuses to come out of the bathroom stall, however, and tells Harry and Ron to go without her: they only have an hour before the potion wears off.

***Analysis Part 6:***

It is also notable that Harry, Ron, and Hermione are only able to carry out this plan together—Hermione crafts the plan and Harry and Ron carry it out as a pair (which is particularly necessary because Crabbe and Goyle are always together). Thus, without their bond of friendship, the trio would not have been successful.

***Summary Part 7:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) and [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) head off, but they don’t know where the Slytherin common room is. Fortunately, they run into [Draco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy), who leads them down to the dungeons (the Slytherin password, Harry notes, is “pure-blood”). In the common room, Draco says he wants to show them something funny. He retrieves an article from the Daily Prophet, detailing how [Mr. Weasley](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/mr-weasley) has been fined for bewitching the car. [Lucius](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/lucius-malfoy) has called for his resignation, arguing that he is unfit to draw up laws and that the Muggle Protection Act should be scrapped.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Harry and Ron’s interactions with Draco only help to confirm his horrible prejudice—and the prejudice of Slytherin House as a whole. The password is “pure-blood,” and Draco’s father continues to mount attacks against the Weasleys. Lucius’s criticism of Mr. Weasley is not really because he is unfit to draw up the laws, but because Lucius doesn’t like the Muggle Protection Act and is working to manipulate the rules to his advantage.

***Summary Part 8:***

[Draco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy) then comments on how surprised he is that the Daily Prophet hasn’t reported on the attacks, and that [Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-dumbledore) will be fired if they continue. He then complains about Dumbledore letting in “Mudbloods,” and about people who hang around with “Mudbloods” —like [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter). Draco scoffs at the fact that people think that Harry is Slytherin’s Heir, commenting that he wishes he knew who the Heir really was so he could help them.

***Analysis Part 8:***

This is a particularly horrid statement from Draco, whose prejudice continues to extend to people who even remotely tolerate Muggle-born students, despite the fact that Muggle-born students are exactly like everyone else. The attacks on the students are akin to hate crimes, and the fact that Draco says he wants to help the person committing them puts him firmly on the side of evil.

***Summary Part 9:***

[Draco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy) then says that [Lucius](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/lucius-malfoy) won’t tell him anything about the last time the Chamber was opened, which was fifty years ago (and thus before Lucius’s time at Hogwarts). But Draco does say that he knows that last time, “a Mudblood died.” He says that Lucius told him to let the Heir of Slytherin rid the school of “all the Mudblood filth,” but not to get involved.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Even though Draco confirms that he is not the Heir of Slytherin, he still provides Harry and Ron with key information that will later help them solve the mystery of the Chamber: that a student died fifty years ago when it was opened. Draco’s words also foreshadow the revelation that Lucius is involved in the attacks, even if he is not the direct cause of them.

***Summary part 10:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) and [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) realize that they’ve slowly started to turn back into themselves—their hour is up. Ron makes an excuse about getting medicine for an upset stomach, and they sprint back to [Myrtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/moaning-myrtle)’s bathroom.  In the bathroom, they discover that [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger)’s face is covered in black fur and she has yellow eyes. She says that the hair she pulled from Millicent’s robe must have been a cat hair, and the potion isn’t meant for animal transformation. Harry and Ron take Hermione to the hospital wing.

***Analysis Part 10:***

Harry, Ron, and Hermione successfully carry out their plan together, but their rule-breaking is not without its hiccups. But even though Hermione was unable to accompany them on their interrogation, they still could not have carried out their plan without her. This demonstrates how only through their combined friendship are they able to succeed in their adventures.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

"I must ask you, Harry, whether there is anything you'd like to tell me," he said gently. "Anything at all."

Harry didn't know what to say. He thought of Malfoy shouting, "You'll be next, Mudbloods!" and of the Polyjuice Potion simmering away in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom. Then he thought of the disembodied voice he heard twice and remembered what Ron had said: "Hearing voices no one else can hear isn't a good sign, even in the Wizarding world." He thought, too, about what everyone was saying about him, and his growing dread that he was somehow connected with Salazar Slytherin...

"No," said Harry. "There isn't anything, Professor..." (12.36-38)

***Explanation1:***

Harry willingly tells his friends about all of these things – that he's connected to Slytherin and that he's been hearing voices. It's also clear that Professor Dumbledore suspects something is up, though we can't be sure that he knows exactly what. So, why doesn't Harry want to tell Professor Dumbledore what has been troubling him? What is the difference between a friend and a mentor? What does Harry's behavior towards Professor Dumbledore in Book 2 tell us about his relationship with the Headmaster at this point in the novels? How do his motivations differ in this book, as compared to his refusal to speak to Professor Dumbledore in Book 5?

***Quotation 2:***

They heard the lock slide back and Hermione emerged, sobbing, her robes pulled up over her head.

"What's up?" said Ron uncertainly. "Have you still got Millicent's nose or something?"

Hermione let her robes fall and Ron backed into the sink.

Her face was covered in black fur. Her eyes had turned yellow and there were long, pointed ears poking through her hair.

"It was a c-cat hair!" she howled. "M-Millicent Bulstrode m-must have a cat! And the p-potion isn't supposed to be used for animal transformations!"

"Uh-oh," said Ron.

"You'll be teased something dreadful," said Myrtle happily.

"It's okay, Hermione," said Harry quickly. "We'll take you up to the hospital wing, Madam Pomfrey never asks too many questions..." (12.199-206)

***Explanation 2:***

Moaning Myrtle is so obvious. She's thrilled that Hermione is going to be teased because she gets some weird pleasure from other people's misfortunes. No wonder no one likes to use her bathroom. She's not a very pleasant ghost. That's a tangent, though. We really chose this passage because we love that Hermione accidentally turns herself into a cat-girl. This moment shows that Hermione is brilliant and amazing, but she's also human and messes up occasionally. Without this episode, Hermione might not be as believable as a character. She'd be too perfect. We also really love that neither Harry nor Ron laugh at Hermione or tease her for her mistake – they are truly loyal friends.

***Quotation 3:***

Malfoy started taking pictures with an imaginary camera and did a cruel but accurate impression of Colin: "'Potter, can I have your picture, Potter? Can I have your autograph? Can I lick your shoes, please, Potter? [...] Saint Potter, the Mudbloods' friend," said Malfoy slowly. "He's another one with no proper wizard feeling, or he wouldn't go around with that jumped-up Granger Mudblood. And people think he's Slytherin's heir!" (12.171-175)

***Explanation 3:***

Clearly, Draco's family represents the worst of wizarding prejudice. Lucius Malfoy believes absolutely in anti-Muggle-born claptrap, and Draco also buys right into it. Yet a lot of Draco's principles seem tied to jealousy. He's jealous of Harry for his fame and of Hermione for her genius. He uses the insults he's been taught by his father to try and shame them, but what really seems to bother him is that they do better at everything than he does. How much of Draco's conflict with Harry and his friends is because Draco really believes all of this pureblood stuff, and how much is because he is jealous and resentful? How much faith do you think Draco has in the belief system of the Death Eaters (Voldemort's supporters) or Voldemort himself?