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

***Chapter 15***

***Summary and analysis***

***Summary:***

**Aragog**

* With Professor Dumbledore gone, the whole school falls into fear again.
* Harry looks around for spiders as much as he can at school, but he's having trouble because none of the students are permitted to wander without a teacher present.
* The only person who looks as though he's really enjoying himself is Draco Malfoy.
* In Potions, Draco says openly, "I'm quite surprised the Mudbloods haven't all packed their bags by now […] Bet you five Galleons the next one dies. Pity it wasn't Granger —" (15.14).
* Harry barely holds Ron back from attacking Draco.
* One bright spot: during Herbology, Ernie Macmillan apologizes to Harry for suspecting him.
* He knows that Harry would never hurt Hermione.
* From the Herbology greenhouse, Harry also spots several large spiders "moving in an unnaturally straight line as though taking the shortest route to a prearranged meeting" (15.27).
* They're heading to the Forbidden Forest.
* Harry and (a reluctant) Ron agree to sneak into the forest under Harry's Invisibility Cloak, with Hagrid's large dog Fang for protection.
* First, though, they have Defense Against the Dark Arts.
* Professor Lockhart appears thrilled: he is sure that the Minister of Magic would not have arrested Hagrid without sure proof that he is guilty.
* None of the kids are convinced by this logic.
* That night, Harry and Ron creep out of the castle to Hagrid's cottage to get Fang.
* They then follow the spiders through the forest for at least half an hour, until Harry hears "something moving over there […] sounds like something big" (15.174).
* There's a sudden blaze of light in the darkness.
* It's the headlights of Mr. Weasley's enchanted Ford Anglia.
* It's been in the Forbidden Forest all this time.
* Distracted by the car, Harry doesn't notice something coming up behind him until it grabs him.
* It takes Ron and Fang, too.
* The thing carries Harry, Ron, and Fang to a large hollow in the ground, which is absolutely crawling with spiders.
* It is a giant spider.
* It drops Harry, Ron, and Fang in the hollow and calls for Aragog.
* Aragog is "a spider the size of a small elephant [….] There was gray in the black of his body and legs, and each of the eyes on his ugly, pincered head was milky white. He was blind" (15.104).
* Aragog is confused: "Hagrid has never sent men into our hollow before" (15.113).
* Aragog tells Ron and Harry that Hagrid raised Aragog from an egg.
* When Aragog was found and blamed for the death of a student, Hagrid sneaked Aragog out of the castle.
* Aragog describes the monster in the Chamber of Secrets as "an ancient creature we spiders fear above all others" (15.127).
* The spiders will not even speak its name.
* Harry and Ron try to leave, but Aragog won't let them: *he* won't eat them out of respect for Hagrid, but he can't deny his family their rights.
* As the spiders approach, a horn sounds.
* It's the honking of Mr. Weasley's Ford Anglia.
* Ron, Harry, and Fang climb in and the car races to the edge of the Forbidden Forest.
* They walk safely up to Hogwarts, leaving the car in the Forbidden Forest.
* Now, Harry and Ron have learned for sure that Hagrid is innocent.
* They don't know what to do next, though.
* Suddenly, Harry has a revelation: that girl who died?
* What if she's *Moaning Myrtle*?

***Brief Summary:***

In the absence of Dumbledore, fear spreads quickly through the school. The students are subdued and stay up late at night, discussing events and worrying about the future. Ernie realizes that it can't be Harry, since he would never harm Hermione, and apologizes to him. Someone not affected by recent events is Draco Malfoy, who seems to thrive on the fact that his father forced Dumbledore to resign. He is happy that Dumbledore has gone and suggests to Snape that he become head teacher. His attitude leads some to wonder if he is the heir of Slytherin and responsible for the attacks, as no one from Slytherin has been harmed. Ernie asks Harry if he believes Draco is the culprit, but Harry knows he isn't.

Ron and Harry are puzzled by Dumbledore's words to them and are unable to act on them but are able to follow Hagrid's advice about following the spiders. During a Herbology class, they notice a trail of spiders heading towards the forbidden forest. Harry and Ron decide to investigate it, that night, using the invisibility cloak to protect them. The sight of the empty seat usually occupied by Hermione strengthens their resolve.

Harry and Ron escape from the castle at night without being detected by sentries or teachers. They make their way to Hagrid's cabin, where they leave the cloak; the forest being too dark for them to be detected, and they will be taking Fang with them, as protection. They follow the trail of spiders towards the forbidden forest. The night becomes darker as they get nearer to the forest, so Harry charms his wand to light up and show them the way.

As they enter the forest, they can hear strange noises, scaring them and Fang. At one point, Fang howls with fear. They stop as they hear something large advancing towards them, terrified that it is going to attack them. They are relieved to see that it is the Mr. Weasley's car, which has remained in the forest since their flight to school, earlier in the year. When they stop to examine the car, they are surrounded by huge spiders that seize them, taking them to the spiders' leader, Aragog.

Aragog isn't pleased to see them, having being awakened. He instructs their captors to kill them. Harry prevents this by informing Aragog that Hagrid sent them, something that makes Aragog pause and listen. Aragog informs them that he used to be a pet of Hagrid's. When the chamber was first opened, he was believed to be the monster in the chamber that killed the girl. Hagrid was expelled as a result, but protected and saved Aragog, taking him to the forbidden forest. Aragog also tells them that the creature in the castle is one that the spiders are terrified of; a creature that is evil beyond belief, one whose name cannot be uttered. Aragog tires and Harry tells him that they will leave. Aragog, however, has other plans and again tells the spiders to kill them. Harry reaches for his wand but knows it's useless, as there are too many spiders. Thankfully, at the last minute, Mr. Weasley's car comes to the rescue, taking them to the edge of the forest and safety.

Ron and Harry return to the castle, thankful to be alive but perplexed by Hagrid's message. Ron is unable to see the value in the spider's words and goes to sleep, but Harry remains awake, pondering over the spider's information. He suddenly realizes that the girl who was murdered the last time the chamber was opened was Moaning Myrtle; he wakes Ron to tell him the news, renewing their hope of solving the riddle.

***Brief Analysis:***

Harry and Ron symbolize the struggle of good against evil. They remain true to their faith even when the dark side seeming to be more powerful. Their loyalty to their friends encourages them to continue fighting. Ron's bravery is demonstrated when he follows a trail of spiders into the forbidden forest; he is terrified of spiders but prepared to overcome this to save his friends. Even when the situation becomes virtually impossible, Harry and Ron don't give up.

As readers, we identify with the good characters, even though at this point they are losing. The characters associated with the dark side, like Draco Malfoy, are portrayed as smug and unbearable. Even though they are the more powerful force, they are the least trustworthy and likeable. In this case, we support the losers, wanting them to succeed at all costs.

***Critical Analysis(Ch 13-15):***

Summer arrives at Hogwarts but, without Hagrid striding around, the blooming grounds don’t look right to Harry. Inside the castle things are also horribly wrong. Harry and Ron try to visit Hermione, but visitors are now barred from the hospital wing. Madame Pomfrey is worried that the attacker might return to finish her patients off. With Dumbledore gone, fear has spread as never before. Harry remembers Dumbledore’s words, but is confused about who to ask for help. Hagrid’s hint is easier to understand, but Harry and Ron can’t find any spiders in the castle left to follow. Their search is hampered by the fact that they have to walk around the castle in a pack with other Gryffindors.

[Draco Malfoy](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#draco-malfoy) is enjoying the atmosphere of terror and suspicion. Harry hears Draco gloat to Crabbe and Goyle about his father getting rid of Dumbledore. Draco hopes that they get a headmaster who won’t want the Chamber of Secrets to be closed. During Potions class Draco asks Snape why he doesn’t apply for the headmaster job. Snape smiles and says that Dumbledore has only been suspended by the governors, and will likely be back soon. Draco offers to tell his father that Snape is the best teacher at Hogwarts. He continues that he is surprised that all of the Mudbloods haven’t left. He bets the next one dies. “Pity it wasn’t Granger.” Harry and Dean have to hold back Ron from fighting Malfoy.

During Herbology class in the greenhouses, Ernie formally apologies to Harry for suspecting him. He says he knows the Harry would never attack Hermione, and shakes his hand. When Ernie speculates that Draco Malfoy might by Slytherin’s Heir, Harry replies with a firm no. Harry spots several large spiders scuttling over the ground in an unusually straight line, heading towards the Forbidden Forest. After class Harry and Ron lag behind to discuss their plans. Harry proposes that they visit the Forbidden Forest wearing the Invisibility Cloak and accompanied by Fang. Ron, who has never been in the forest before, is nervous about werewolves. Harry assures him that there are good things in the forest too, like centaurs and unicorns.

Professor Lockhart is inappropriately buoyant in his class. He is sure that the danger has passed, as the culprit has been taken away. He states confidently that the Minister of Magic wouldn’t have taken Hagrid if he wasn’t one hundred percent sure that he was guilty. Both Dean and Ron challenge him loudly. Lockhart hints that he is responsible for Hagrid’s arrest. Harry is so irritated with Lockhart that he scrawls a note to Ron: Let’s do it tonight. Ron, frightened, looks at Hermione’s desk, and then nods.

Harry spends the evening sitting on his Invisibility Cloak, waiting for the Gryffindor common room to clear. Fred and George challenge Harry and Ron to games of Exploding Snap, which the latter pair keep trying to lose on purpose to finish quickly. Ginny sits watching them in Hermione’s usual chair. It’s past midnight when Fred, George, and Ginny finally go to bed. Harry and Ron throw on the Invisibility Cloak and head to Hagrid’s cottage. Fang barks with joy to see them, so they feed him treacle fudge to glue his teeth together. Harry leaves the Invisibility Cloak on Hagrid’s table.

They walk to the edge of the forest, where Harry illuminates the tip of his wand. Harry spots two spiders hurrying away from the wand light. They follow the spiders along the path for twenty minutes. Then when the trees grow so thick they could no longer see the stars, they see the spiders leave the path. Harry remembers Hagrid telling him not to leave the path the last time they were in the forest. But Hagrid also told him to follow the spiders. Ron and Harry decide to continue on. They move slowly in the near blackness. After walking for about a half an hour, they notice the ground sloping downwards. Fang barks loudly. Harry hears something big moving in the forest. Ron starts to panic. Harry tells him to shut up, that it will hear him. They stand, terrified, waiting. To their right comes a sudden blaze of light. They fling up their hands to shade their eyes. Then Ron realizes that it’s his father’s car. Ron and the car move towards each other in the clearing. Harry squints in the headlights for more spiders, but they have all scuttled away.

Ron, speechless and immobile, stares at a point ten feet above the forest floor, his face livid with terror. Before Harry can turn around, something long and hairy seizes him around the middle and lifts him off the ground, so he’s hanging face down. He sees Ron’s feet leave the ground too. There are loud clicking noises, and the sound of Fang whimpering and howling. Harry sees that the monster carrying him has six immense hairy legs and pincers. Two other monsters carry Ron and Fang. After a time they reach a ridge of a vast hollow that has been cleared of trees. It is filled with gigantic hairy black spiders. The spider carrying Harry traverses the steep slope before releasing him in front of a misty, domed web in the center of the hollow. Harry, Ron, and Fang fall on all fours, terrified. The other spiders surround them, clicking their pincers excitedly.

The spider who dropped Harry calls out “Aragog!” From the middle of the web a spider the size of an elephant emerges slowly. He is blind. The spider who had caught Harry explains that they are men. Aragog asks if it’s Hagrid. The spider who had brought Ron responds with “Strangers.” Aragog orders the spiders to kill them. Harry shouts that they are friends of Hagrid’s. Argagog pauses, and says that Hagrid has never sent men into their hollow before. Harry explains that Hagrid is in trouble and has been sent to Azkaban because they think at the school that Hagrid has been setting something on students. Aragog clicks his pincers, as do the other spiders in the hollow.

Aragog remembers that years ago people at the school believed that he was the monster in the Chamber of Secrets. They thought that Hagrid had opened the Chamber and set him free, and so they made Hagrid leave the school. Harry asks Aragog if he came from the Chamber. Aragog replies angrily that he did not come from the castle. He came from a distant land. A traveler gave him to Hagrid when he was an egg. As a boy, Hagrid cared for him, hiding him in a cupboard in the castle. When Aragog was discovered and blamed for the death of the girl, Hagrid protected him. He has lived in the forest ever since. Hagrid still visits him. Hagrid found Aragog a wife, and their family has grown.

Harry confirms that Aragog never attacked anyone. Aragog says that he never harmed a human, out of respect for Hagrid. The girl who was killed was discovered in a bathroom. Aragog only knew his dark quiet cupboard. Harry asks if Aragog knows who did kill the girl. The spiders click and rustle around them. He replies that the creature who lives in the castle is an ancient one that spiders fear above all others. When Harry asks “What is it?” urgently, Aragog says fiercely “We do not speak of it!! We do not name it! I never told Hagrid the name of that dread creature, though he asked me, many times.”

As Aragog backs slowly into his web, the other spiders inch closer to Harry and Ron. When Harry calls out that they will go, Aragog replies “I think not...My sons and daughters do not harm Hagrid, on my command. But I cannot deny them fresh meat, when it wanders so willingly into our midst. Good-bye friend of Hagrid.” Harry spins around to discover a solid wall of spiders towering above him just feet away. As he reaches for his wand, ready to die fighting, he hears a long note and sees a blaze of light.

Mr. Weasley’s car thunders down the slope, knocking aside spiders, to halt in front of Harry and Ron. The doors fly open and they jump in, Ron throwing Fang into the backseat. The car accelerates on its own and speeds them out of the hollow into the forest. Harry asks Ron if he is okay. Ron is unable to speak. The car stops suddenly at the edge of the forest. Fang throws himself out of the window and runs for Hagrid’s cottage. Harry gets out too, and after he regains feeling in his limbs, Ron follows. Harry pats the car gratefully before it reverses into the forest and disappears.

Harry goes to retrieve the Invisibility Cloak from Hagrid’s home. When he comes out he finds Ron being sick in the pumpkin patch. Ron says that he will never forgive Hagrid; they’re lucky to be alive. Harry guesses that Hagrid thought the spiders would never harm friends of his. Ron is shivering uncontrollably and wants to know why Hagrid sent them there. Harry explains they learned that Hagrid never opened the Chamber of Secrets.

When they return to Gryffindor Tower, Ron falls onto his bed without bothering to get undressed. Harry isn’t sleepy. He thinks about what Aragog said. The creature in the castle sounds like a monster Voldemort: Other monsters don’t want to say its name. Harry can’t see what else they can do to figure out what the monster is. As he grows drowsy, he suddenly sits upright. He wakes Ron up to share his thought: Aragog said that the girl who died was found in the bathroom. “What if she never left the bathroom? What if she’s still there?” Ron understands that Harry is talking about Moaning Myrtle.

In being suspicious of Riddle’s diary, Ron acts as his father taught him to. This is the caution that Ginny has somehow not absorbed. Harry, raised at the Dursleys, doesn’t have the same parental protection, and so reaches for the diary. Hermione has the impulses of a scientist examining the diary for empirical information. Ron is more suspicious and prejudiced. Hermione and Harry make the intellectual connection between plot points. Harry has a more intuitive relationship with Riddle’s diary. It’s possible that magic is working on him before he writes in it. Harry discovers latter that Riddle put some of himself into Harry during their attack when he was a baby. So part of him is Riddle and recognizes a connection.

Lockhart’s Valentine’s Day party is an aesthetic affront to the Gothic atmosphere of Hogwarts. The pink decorations and celebration of love make most people uncomfortable, including the professors. It also fits into the theme of impending adolescence. The girls are ahead of the boys developmentally. Ginny sends Harry a valentine. Her desire disrupts the plot, as she both writes in her diary about her crush on Harry, and her singing telegram produces the chaos that reveals the trick of the diary to Harry. Ginny’s emotions in the background provide keys to the mystery to the observant reader, as when she is terrified to see that Harry has Riddle’s diary.

Riddle’s diary works like social media, which is remarkable, since the Chamber of Secrets was written in 1999. Riddle is another unreliable narrator in the story, telling Harry only part of the truth in order to frame Hagrid. Appearances and assumptions create prejudice. Harry is inclined to believe Riddle because they share experiences in common: both are orphans abandoned in the Muggle world. Harry is also inclined to believe that Hagrid took care of the monster because of Hagrid’s sympathy for large animals. The diary also creates visual imagery that persuades Harry to believe that he is having an experience himself, when in fact what he experiences is mediated by Riddle. Harry interprets what he sees in explaining to Ron that Hagrid opened the Chamber of Secrets fifty years ago. His interpretation is wrong.

Harry makes assumptions based upon partial information: Hagrid’s love for large creatures and his history of having been expelled from Hogwarts. Hermione is better at suspending judgment. She is ultimately right that another monster is attacking people. But she is wrong that Riddle had the wrong person. He is trying to frame Hagrid. So her presumption of innocence leads to her being right. Ron is suspicious of Riddle’s intentions and alliance with the authorities. He judges him correctly to be manipulating the headmaster for his own gain, but he is more than a “squealer”—he is a liar. Harry identifies with Riddle because they are both orphans who have found refuge in Hogwarts. The three friends make a mistake in waiting to talk to Hagrid, which is also convenient to the plot. They decide to let the hope of the Mandrake cure allow them to avoid a tough conversation with their friend. This chapter offers a substantial clue to the mystery: only a Gryffindor student could have stolen Harry’s diary. What would happen if Harry reported the robbery and told what he had seen about Hagrid? His friend would get into trouble. One of Harry’s prime values is loyalty to his friends.

Hermione realizes that the monster is likely a snake, since Harry speaks Parseltongue. She seeks confirmation for her hypothesis in the library. The fear and attacks lead to restrictions on the students. Riddle’s work can be read as a terrorist attack, and the aftermath as a loss of civil liberties. Gryffindor students want to expel Slytherin students. In the end, we learn that none of them are responsible for the attacks. This is an allegory for political terror.

Harry weighs whether to turn in Hagrid to keep the school open as Riddle did. He has the same desires, but makes a different choice to ask Hagrid how to get inside the Chamber of Secrets. Harry is willing to break the rules to keep Hogwarts open and safe.

Fudge acts under pressure from the governors to be seen doing something. Hagrid is arrested as a scapegoat, over Dumbledore’s protests. Fudge claims that he’s taking Hagrid not as a punishment, but as a precaution. Fudge chooses to jail Hagrid because people are afraid, and want an easy answer. Fear accelerates the school towards fascism. Azkaban is the equivalent of Guantanamo Bay. Fudge doesn’t want Dumbledore suspended. He sees that that leaves the Hogwarts students open to attack. Malfoy is willing to sacrifice Muggle children to gain control of the school.

Malfoy has successfully orchestrated a coup of Hogwarts. Does Hogwarts need Dumbledore? He represents goodness, benevolence, serenity, composure. Is he protecting the school magically? Who is now in charge? No-one: does that mean it's anarchy? Lucius Malfoy, because he controls the governors? or is it Riddle? Dumbledore and Hagrid both leave clues for Harry and Ron, foreshadowing the last third of the book. Dumbledore and Hagrid are foils for each other emotionally. Ron and Harry will act as Dumbledore and Hagrid’s proxies. They must defend the school, solve the mystery, and protect their fellow students from attack. Notably, two female characters are absent: Hermione and Professor McGonagall. In the coming-of-age narrative, this is the moment of loss of parental protectors. They become responsible for more than they should. They can’t turn to Riddle for help, because his diary is gone. And they can’t turn to Dumbledore.

The season and the atmosphere of Hogwarts are out of step with each other. The implication is that there is something natural in the normal order of Hogwarts. In the absence of Dumbledore, Draco becomes openly sadistic. Snape is not a main character in this book. But Draco’s comments raise suspicion about where his loyalties lie. Does he want to be Headmaster of Hogwarts? Ernie apologizes to Harry for suspecting him but then simply switches his suspicion to Draco. Ernie represents popular opinion, which turns out to be prejudiced and wrong. Lockhart is out of step with the community, and emotionally unaware. He is the ideal audience for Fudge’s unjust arrest of Hagrid: obsessed with appearances. The book shows that the justice system can be incompetent and corrupt.

Ron must overcome his greatest fear, spiders, in order to revive Hermione. The genre of this chapter is horror, like a 1950’s monster movie, mixed with fairy tales of the enchanted forest. Harry must make the decision between staying on the path and following the spiders. He chooses to move beyond safety. Hagrid told him to stay on the path the year before. This year he told him to follow the spiders. He has been entrusted with more responsibility, and also put at more risk. Harry and Ron face death to find out the truth. Harry has the ability to speak. Ron is a loyal companion. The monster, which we will later find out is the basilisk, is the equivalent of Voldemort to the spiders—something too terrible to name. This is the first time the two are connected. In caring for Aragog, Hagrid is protecting an outsider. Aragog is a source of information, and a friend of a friend, but is also a predator. He is personified, but not anthropomorphized. This is true of the car too, which makes them ideal antagonists. The car was enchanted by Mr. Weasley, so there is some protective parent magic in it. Aragog and Hagrid were viewed with prejudice, and falsely accused. Aragog didn’t attack the girl.

***Critical Study:***

Spring continues its sweep through Hogwarts, but even the loveliness outside the castle cannot take Harry's mind off the terror inside the castle. He ponders Hagrid's advice regarding the spiders and Dumbledore's about help and loyalty, but he is not sure how to proceed with either. Malfoy, meanwhile, seems delighted by the state of things. He boasts that his father has finally gotten Dumbledore out, and he suggests that Snape apply to be the new headmaster.

In Herbology class, Ernie Macmillan apologizes for having suspected Harry, since after the attack on Hermione he now that Harry would never have been responsible for hurting a good friend. Harry accepts the apology, and minutes later during this same class, he spies a line of spiders moving toward the Forbidden Forest. He whacks Ron with his pruning shears, and Ron looks doubtful at the prospect of following them. They head next to Lockhart's defense against the dark arts class, during which a confident Lockhart gleefully waxes on about the safe state of the school now that Hagrid has been removed. Ron and Harry are extremely annoyed, and after the joint events of Lockhart's accusation of Hagrid combined with a glance at Hermione's empty seat, the two agree to follow the spiders that very night.

Beneath the invisibility cloak, Ron and Harry set out into the forest with Fang scampering nearby. They soon spy a few solitary spiders scuttling deep into the forest, away from the paths, and so they follow them for a long time. Eventually, they hear something large moving behind the trees, and they are greatly relieved to see that it is Ron's once-flying car, the Ford Anglia that hit the Whomping Willow and now is running wild in the Forbidden Forest. The boys laugh at their initial fright and prepare to continue when they and Fang are met and captured by a trio of clicking, horse-sized spiders. Ron, who fears spiders above all else, is speechless with fear, and Harry himself is terrified too.

The spiders carry them into a clearing with a giant domed web, where they are met with an elderly blind spider, Aragog, who first dismisses Ron and Harry to be killed, but then speaks with them when they claim to have been sent by Hagrid. The boys learn from Aragog that the school thought he was the monster within the Chamber, but really he had been given to Hagrid as an egg and raised in captivity. They learn also that the monster in the chamber is the creature most feared by spiders, and because of that its name is not spoken. They learn finally that the creature's victim was found in the toilet, and that soon after the event, Hagrid set Aragog free in the Forest. After informing them of this, Aragog instructs his children to eat the humans and dog. For a moment Harry and Ron know that they are doomed, and then all of a sudden they hear a horn and see the Weasley's car rumbling over to them. Panicked, they open the door, shove in Fang and themselves, and flee the Forbidden Forest.

Once they say goodbye to the car and head back up to the dormitory, feeling discouraged at having found no new clues. Only once Harry is back up in his bed does it occur to him that the girl found in the bathroom fifty years back could be Moaning Myrtle.

Harry's role as a suspect finally diminishes in this chapter after Hermione is petrified, because everybody knows that Harry would never harm one of his best friends. The situation is still dire and complicated, however, and the venture into the Forbidden Forest does not make it any less so. Two vital themes are introduced during this venture, each of which addresses the narrative's attitude toward evil adversaries.

First, the community of spiders, including Aragog himself, refuses to name the creature within the Chamber. Dobby, Ron, and many other creatures and wizards cower at the sound of Voldemort's name, but Dumbledore, and Harry under his instruction, always calls Voldemort by his name, rather than the more wide- spread "He who must not be named." This is a means for humanizing the enemy, for creating a tangible name for the form that is so dangerous and frightening. By saying the name, both Dumbledore and Harry are able to see Voldemort for what he is, an ordinary wizard gone astray, and the fact that they face him with this confidence of naming is perhaps responsible for the fact that he is not able to defeat either of them. Voldemort has always been wary of attacking Hogwarts while it was under Dumbledore's care, and in the end of each book when Voldemort faces Harry Potter, who has reduced him into the bodiless form that he now is, Harry always puts up an bold, scrappy, and unexpected fight, rather than whimpering timidly at the power in front of him. The spiders have not dared to name their enemy. Therefore, they live in the woods, hidden far away from the still undefeated creature. By this comparison in the action of naming, we watch the effects of acknowledging the earthliness of one's enemy in order to triumph over it.

Second, the appearance of the car at the critical moment in the spiders' clutches is a trademark of J.K. Rowling's style. Ron and Harry are bold enough to enter the Forest to follow the spiders, not knowing what they will eventually find, but even this courage is not enough to fight the hungry band of giant spiders. This is where the connections made becomes important; they would have died had the car not zoomed in to save them, as in many other critical moments, other forms of help come in at the last possible moment. This recipe for triumph is central to the story: any victory is half-courage to enter, and half-help from friends. Harry and Ron had no idea that the car would save them from death by pinchers, but they remained alive as long as they could, clinging to the faith that some more powerful power would help them escape.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

With [Dumbledore](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-dumbledore) gone, everyone at the school is even more frightened. [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) thinks about his words concerning loyalty, but wonders whom he is supposed to ask for help now that everyone is terrified and confused. Harry and [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) also look out for any spiders they can find, but they all seem to have left the castle.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Dumbledore’s absence increases fear because it appears that no one is able to figure out what is happening in the school. But it also tests Harry’s own bravery and his loyalty, as he wonders what kind of support Dumbledore might have left for him.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) notes that [Draco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy) is “strutting around the school” because [Lucius](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/lucius-malfoy) was able to get rid of Dumbledore. In Potions, Draco wonders if they’ll get a decent headmaster now, one who “won’t want the Chamber of Secrets closed.” He wonders why the “Mudbloods haven’t all packed their bags by now” and says it’s a shame that [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) wasn’t killed by the [monster](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-monster-basilisk).

***Analysis Part 2:***

Draco’s words show how without a proper authority that represents kindness, respect and justice (as Dumbledore did), prejudice is allowed to flourish. Draco really takes it too far in that he openly wishes for Hermione and other Muggle-borns to die.

***Summary Part 3:***

In the next class, Herbology, [Ernie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) apologizes to [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) for suspecting him, saying that he knows that he’d never attack [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger). Ernie wonders aloud if [Draco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy) might be Slytherin’s heir, but Harry says that he doesn’t think so. Then something catches Harry’s eye: several large spiders moving in a straight line, headed toward the Forbidden Forest.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Despite the rumors that Ernie perpetuates, when he is confronted with Harry’s actual qualities (his kindness and his strong friendship with a Muggle-born student), Ernie realizes how misguided his previous beliefs were. Harry, to his credit, also refuses to play into creating rumors, even though he dislikes Draco.

***Summary Part 4:***

In Defense Against the Dark Arts, [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart) wonders why they all look so sad. He says that they’re all out of danger now because “the Minister of Magic wouldn’t have taken [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid) if he hadn’t been one hundred percent sure that he was guilty.” [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) protests, but Lockhart shuts him down. [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) passes a note to Ron, resolving to go to the Forest that night.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Using Lockhart, Rowling creates a veiled critique of those who believe in the incorruptibility of the justice system. The Minister of Magic doesn’t know that Hagrid is guilty, and Hagrid is in fact innocent. This shows that contrary to Lockhart’s belief, the institutions in charge of the rules and carrying out justice can be proven wrong.

***Summary Part 5:***

[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 down to [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid)’s hut that evening under the Invisibility Cloak and take Hagrid’s dog Fang with them to the Forest. Harry lights his wand and follows the spiders along the path through the Forbidden Forest. They walk for half an hour until Fang starts barking wildly. The boys are terrified  until they see that it’s the flying car.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Harry and Ron break the rules in this moment for very important reasons: they want to help rescue Hermione from being petrified, and they also want to find out the information that Hagrid has led them to, which they hope will help exonerate him.

***Summary Part 6:***

Then out of nowhere, something seizes [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 Fang and lifts them off the ground. They are carried into the heart of the forest until they come to a hollow that is lit enough to show hundreds of horse-sized spiders. The spiders call to [Aragog](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/aragog), who turns out to be an old spider the size of an elephant. When the other spiders announce that they have found humans, Harry says that they are friends of [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid)’s.

***Analysis Part 6:***

In this moment, Harry and Ron support each other in order to help them overcome their fears: Ron’s intense fear of spiders, and Harry’s fear of the Forbidden Forest (where he had been face to face with Voldemort a year prior).

***Summary part 7:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) explains that [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid) is in trouble because the school thinks he is setting something to attack the students. [Aragog](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/aragog) explains that this also happened years ago: the school thought that Aragog was the [monster](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-monster-basilisk) that lives in the Chamber. Aragog is not that monster; Hagrid raised him from an egg. When Hagrid was discovered, he protected Aragog and took him to the forest.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Aragog’s story demonstrates how he and the other spider have been viewed with prejudice. Despite the fact that Aragog is a large and terrifying creature, he was not the monster that attacked the students, as people assumed. Hagrid was punished for this prejudice as well, simply because he tried to protect and care for Aragog.

***Summary Part 8:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) asks whether [Aragog](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/aragog) ever attacked a student. Aragog says no—the girl who was killed died in a bathroom, and Aragog never left the cupboard [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid) raised him in. He says that the thing that lives in the castle is an ancient creature that the spiders fear more than anything else, and they refuse to name it. At that moment, the car returns, knocking the spiders aside and allowing Harry, Ron, and Fang to escape. The car drives as fast as it can until they reach the edge of the forest, where it leaves them. Harry and Ron go back into [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid)’s hut.

***Analysis Part 8:***

The fact that the spiders refuse to name the monster in the Chamber of Secrets connects it with Voldemort (whom wizards often call “You-Know-Who rather than saying his name). This illustrates how fear can be spread simply based on reputation and rumor, and that fear only grows over time to the point where one’s name becomes so synonymous with fear that it prevents wizards from even trying to face the truth.

***Summary part 9:***

[Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) is furious with [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid) for sending them there, but [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) says that they’ve found out important info: Hagrid never opened the Chamber of Secrets. They climb back up to the castle under the Invisibility Cloak and head back to their dormitory. But just before Harry falls asleep, he realizes one more thing they learned: the girl who died was found in a bathroom. Ron completes Harry’s thought: [Moaning Myrtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/moaning-myrtle) might be that girl.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Even though Ron is upset at having to deal with the giant spiders, they have been well rewarded for their loyalty to Hagrid. They discovered key information that not only proves Hagrid is innocent, but that also allows them dispel unfounded rumors, solve the mystery of the Chamber of Secrets, and save the school from being closed.

***Quotations***

***Quotation 1:***

"I was not born in the castle. I come from a distant land. A traveler gave me to Hagrid when I was an egg. Hagrid was only a boy, but he cared for me, hidden in a cupboard in the castle, feeding me on scraps from the table. Hagrid is my good friend, and a good man. When I was discovered, and blamed for the death of a girl, he protected me. I have lived here in the forest every since, where Hagrid still visits me. He even found me a wife, Mosag, and you see how our family has grown, all through Hagrid's goodness…" (15.122)

***Explanation 1:***

Aragog loves Hagrid for his kindness. Clearly, that is the basis of Hagrid's friendship with all of the magical creatures he introduces into the castle, from Norbert the Norwegian Ridgeback dragon in Book 1 to Grawp the giant in Book 5. Still, Hagrid's kindness is often blind. He is absolutely without judgment about what is safe, so he willingly sends Harry and Ron into a hollow full of giant spiders ready to kill and eat them. Do you think the risk Hagrid takes with their lives is worth the reward? If something bad had happened to Harry and Ron, what responsibility would Hagrid bear?

***Quotation 2:***

Professor Sprout set them all to work pruning the Abyssinian Shrivelfigs. Harry went to tip an armful of withered stalks onto the compost heap and found himself face-to-face with Ernie Macmillan. Ernie took a deep breath and said, very formally, "I just want to say, Harry, that I'm sorry I ever suspected you. I know you'd never attack Hermione Granger, and I apologize for all the stuff I said. We're all in the same boat now, and, well —"

He held out a pudgy hand, and Harry shook it.

Ernie and his friend Hannah came to work at the same Shrivelfig as Harry and Ron.

"That Draco Malfoy character," said Ernie, breaking off dead twigs, "he seems very pleased about all this, doesn't he? D'you know, I think he might be Slytherin's heir." (15.19-22)

***Explanation 2:***

Honestly, we do have to admire Ernie's willingness to admit that he's wrong under such stressful circumstances. No wonder he and Harry manage to get along so well during the Defense Association/Dumbledore's Army portion of Book 5. Hufflepuff is probably the least immediately distinguishable or recognizable House of the four, but Ernie provides a pretty good model for the House trait of fair play. That said, even though he does have some excellent qualities, why does he immediately jump to blame someone else without direct evidence? Does Ernie learn a lesson from this whole episode with Harry? Why or why not? What lesson is there to learn?