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

***Chapter 16***

***Summary and analysis***

***Summary:***

### The Chamber of Secrets

* The next morning, Professor McGonagall announces that exams will be beginning as usual at the beginning of June.
* Seamus Finnegan asks how they can possibly have exams with all that's been going on.
* Professor McGonagall reminds him that this is a school and they're supposed to be running it as normally as possible. Why else keep Hogwarts open?
* Three days before the exams start, Professor McGonagall announces that Professor Sprout is ready to start brewing the Mandrake Restorative Draught.
* Everyone starts cheering.
* Once the Petrified people wake up, they'll be able to tell who attacked them.
* Ginny comes to sit next to Ron at the Gryffindor table.
* She looks fearful.
* She tells Harry and Ron that she needs to speak to them, but, before she can finish, Percy walks in and interrupts.
* Ron scolds Percy, but Percy tells him that it's nothing. Percy seems to think Ginny's secret has to do with him.
* Now that the Petrified people are about to wake up, Professor Lockhart doesn't think there's any point in guarding the students between their classes.
* Harry and Ron take advantage of his carelessness to sneak down to Moaning Myrtle's bathroom.
* Before they can arrive, though, Professor McGonagall catches them.
* Harry lies that they were on their way to see Hermione.
* Professor McGonagall seems moved: "Of course, I realize this has all been hardest on the friends of those who have been…I quite understand. Yes, Potter, of course you may visit Miss Granger" (16.61).
* Madam Pomfrey lets Harry and Ron into the Hospital Wing.
* Hermione clearly has no idea that they are there, though: she's frozen.
* Harry notices something in Hermione's hand.
* It's a piece of paper describing the basilisk: a giant snake that can live hundreds of years.
* The basilisk is so deadly that it can kill just by looking at you.
* Spiders run away from basilisks, "for it is their mortal enemy"; basilisks run "only from the crowing of the rooster, which is fatal to it" (16.72).
* All the pieces start to come together for Harry.
* The monster in the Chamber of Secrets is a basilisk.
* It's been using the plumbing pipes at Hogwarts to get around.
* That's why Harry's been hearing the voice through the Hogwarts walls: because he's a Parselmouth, and he's the only one who can understand snakes.
* Finally, Ron and Harry both realize at the same time that the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets must be in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom.
* Harry and Ron rush to the staff room to tell the faculty.
* They hear an announcement magically amplified from Professor McGonagall: "All students to return to their House dormitories at once. All teachers return to the staffroom. Immediately, please" (16.97).
* They hide in a cabinet to hear what is going on.
* Professor McGonagall announces to the other teachers that "A student has been taken by the monster. Right into the Chamber itself" (16.103).
* The Heir of Slytherin left a message, "Her skeleton will lie in the Chamber forever" (16.105).
* It's Ginny Weasley.
* Professor Lockhart bursts into the staff room at just this moment.
* The other Hogwarts professors tell him to go to the Chamber of Secrets and fight the monster, since that's what he's been saying he would like to do all of this time.
* Professor Lockhart tries to object, but the other professors insist.
* They really want to get him out of the way while they plan what they should do.
* The school is going to have to close down.
* The Hogwarts Express will arrive to take all of the students home the next day.
* Harry, Ron, Fred, and George sit in the Gryffindor Common Room worrying.
* Ron remembers that Ginny must have known something.
* She came to talk to the two of them at breakfast because she'd "found out something about the Chamber of Secrets" (16.131).
* That must have been why she was attacked.
* Harry and Ron are so desperate to do something that they decide to bring their story to Professor Lockhart.
* He may be useless, but they should still try to help him fight the creature.
* When they find Professor Lockhart in his office, though, he's packing his bags.
* He's running away.
* After all, Professor Lockhart didn't actually do any of the things he wrote.
* His only really talent is for memory charms.
* So he modified the memories of all of the people who actually banished banshees or saved villages from werewolves so they believed he did it.
* Professor Lockhart has been getting famous by taking credit for other people's work.
* In order to cover his tracks, Professor Lockhart tries to cast a Memory Charm on Harry and Ron.
* Harry hits him with a Disarming Charm before he gets that far.
* Harry kicks Professor Lockhart before forcing him at wandpoint to go first as they walk to the Chamber of Secrets.
* At last, in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, Harry asks her how she died.
* She is thrilled to tell the story at last.
* That day, Myrtle was hiding in the bathroom and crying because one of her schoolmates teased her.
* She heard someone speaking in a strange language.
* It was a boy, so she unlocked her stall to tell him to get out of the girl's bathroom.
* Then, she looked up into a pair of "great, big, yellow eyes" (16.173).
* And she died.
* Harry and Ron figure out that the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets is a sink with a tap shaped like a serpent.
* Harry tells the tap to open in Parseltongue.
* A large pipe opens up in front of them.
* Ron sends Professor Lockhart through the pipe first.
* They go down and down, deep under the castle.
* They land in a tunnel.
* The tunnel is littered with small animal bones.
* They eventually come across an enormous shed snake skin. The basilisk must be huge!
* Professor Lockhart tackles Ron and takes his wand.
* He raises Ron's wand to Obliviate the two of them.
* Of course, Ron's broken wand backfires on Professor Lockhart.
* He's the one who is hit by the overwhelmingly powerful memory charm.
* The force of the blast also partially collapses the tunnel.
* Harry is on the side facing the Chamber, while Ron and Professor Lockhart are on the other side.
* Harry goes on while Ron tries to clear some of the rock away.
* Harry finds a wall with two "entwined serpents […] their eyes set with great emeralds" (16.232).
* Harry commands the snakes to open.
* The wall cracks and parts, letting Harry into the Chamber of Secrets.

***Brief Summary:***

This chapter opens with good and bad news for the students at Hogwarts. The bad news is that they have exams in a week's time, something that no one is prepared for because their attention has been focused on the attacks. McGonagall is determined that school life continue as normal, in line with Dumbledore's wishes and is adamant that the exams will take place. The good news is that the mandrakes are nearly mature. When they are mature, they can be used to heal the people who are petrified. The hope is then that they will be able to reveal who attacked them, and it can all be sorted out. Harry and Ron are pleased by the news but Ginny doesn't seem to share their pleasure at the good news and seems troubled. She is just about to tell Harry and Ron what's on her mind when Percy interrupts them. Ginny runs away but Percy explains it as something she knows about him that she was going to tell Harry and Ron. They aren't as sure about this but have to take Percy's word for it.

Although Harry and Ron no longer have to visit Myrtle, they decide that if an opportunity arises to talk to her before Hermione wakes up that they will take it. The opportunity does arise, as a result of Lockhart cutting corners and not escorting pupils to lessons. He believes that the culprit has been caught and sees no reason for the extra security measures. Harry and Ron make their way to Myrtle's toilet, only to be found by McGonagall, who questions their presence in the corridor. Harry quickly thinks of an excuse, explaining that they are going to visit Hermione, as they haven't seen her in some time. McGonagall is surprisingly moved by this explanation and gives them permission to visit Hermione.

Madam Pomfrey is not pleased with Ron and Harry visiting Hermione, only letting them in because they have McGonagall's permission. At first, their visit appears to be a waste of time, as Hermione is still totally petrified and unaware of their presence. But Harry notices a slip of paper in Hermione's hand. Ron blocks Harry from Madam Pomfrey's view, and he succeeds in releasing the paper from Hermione's hand. To their delight, it contains information about the creature carrying out the attacks, and from this they are able to work out what has been happening, and where the Chamber of Secrets is located.

Hermione's paper contains information about a creature called a basilisk. The basilisk is known as the King of Serpents, a huge creature that lives for hundreds of years, capable of killing humans merely by looking at them. Spiders are terrified of it but the cry of a rooster is fatal to it. They work out that none of its victims so far have looked it directly in the eye; which is why they are only petrified and still alive. On the paper, Hermione has scribbled "pipes," Harry realizes the basilisk is moving around the school through the plumbing. He can hear its voice, since he speaks Parseltongue, and he also realizes that the entrance to the chamber is in the toilets haunted by Myrtle. They decide to tell McGonagall, and go to the staff room in order to find her.

Their plans are interrupted by McGonagall's voice ringing through the corridors, instructing all pupils to return to their dormitories and all staff to the staff room immediately. Realizing there has been another attack Harry and Ron hide in the staff room in order to find out more. They learn that there has been an attack on Ron's sister, Ginny; worse, her body has been taken to the chamber. This is the most serious incident so far, and McGonagall decides to close the school the next day, sending all the pupils home until the school is safe again. Lockhart is assigned the task of finding the chamber and killing the monster, having boasted that he should have been allowed to do this from the start and that he could have solved the problem much sooner if he had been allowed to do so from the start. Lockhart doesn't seem as keen to find the monster now, and is unusually quiet.

Harry and Ron know that they have to act and act quickly. They decide to help Lockhart, and go to his office in the middle of the night. They find Lockhart packing to leave, and their worst suspicions are confirmed. Lockhart is a sham. He hadn't done any of the brave things in his books, merely stolen other wizards' stories, placing a memory charm on them and passing their brave deeds off as his own. Lockhart has no intention of finding the monster and is running away. He prepares to place a memory charm on the boys but Harry is too quick for him, whisking his wand out of his hand with an "expelliarmus" charm. Powerless to refuse, Lockhart agrees to help them find the Chamber of Secrets.

Harry and Ron's theory about the Chamber of Secrets is correct. Moaning Myrtle informs them that she was killed in the toilets while she was crying about being bullied. She heard the door open and someone speak in an unusual language. The last thing she remembers is looking into a large pair of yellow eyes; then she died. She points to where she saw the eyes. Harry and Ron notice a serpent symbol on one of the taps and realize this must be the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. Harry attempts to speak Parseltongue to open the chamber. His first try is unsuccessful but his second attempt emerges as a hiss that makes the sink move to reveal the entrance to the chamber.

The thought that Ginny may be alive motivates them. They make Lockhart approach the entrance first, then follow him into the pipes that lead to the chamber. They find themselves in a dark, slimy underground tunnel littered with skulls, their vision severely limited. They make slow progress in the tunnel and have to stop completely when they find a gigantic, green snake skin blocking the tunnel. Lockhart sees this as an opportunity to escape, tackling Ron and stealing his wand. His plan is to return to the school with a piece of skin, claiming to be the victor, with sad news of Ron and Harry's death. He prepares to perform a memory charm on them but Ron's wand backfires charming Lockhart instead. The force of the spell has caused the tunnel to cave in, separating Harry from Ron. Ron encourages Harry to go on without him. Ron will try to clear the corridor and join him. Harry continues alone. When he reaches a wall with a door in it, he tells it to open, dreading what he might find.

***Brief Analysis:***

The tension carefully crafted by Rowling in the novel reaches a peak in this chapter. The characters work out clues as to the nature of the beast, and shock is felt at the enormity of the task ahead. It seems at this point that good will surely fail. McGonagall finally gives in and decided to send the pupils home. Hope rests with Lockhart, who has been bragging about his abilities. Rowling's use of a third-person narrator means that we know more than the characters. As a result of this, we know that Lockhart is incapable of saving the school, and this adds to the suspense.

Ron and Harry's faith remains intact, reassuring us as readers that the dark powers haven't won yet, and preparing us for an inevitable battle. Harry and Ron's loyalty is proven through their bravery in entering the tunnel leading to the Chamber of Secrets.

Through comparing Lockhart and Harry, it is clear that actions speak louder than words, and it's not what you say that matters, it's what you actually do. Lockhart has persuaded other characters of his fantastic bravery and unbelievable powers, yet when tested he is revealed to be a coward with little faith. Harry has said little about his faith or his power, yet he is clearly the more powerful and brave wizard. This also demonstrates that appearances can be deceptive and that it is important to trust your instincts, as Harry and Ron have done throughout the novel.

***Critical Analysis:***

Ron and Harry speculate about ways to enter Moaning Myrtle's bathroom and question her about her death. With no good ideas, they head to class, only to be informed by Professor McGonagall that exams would take place in a week. Nobody has studied, of course, so everybody is in an uproar. Three days before the first exam, Professor McGonagall announces that the Mandrakes are ready to be cut and used to restore the petrified victims. Everybody is delighted, and in the midst of the cheering, a very nervous looking Ginny Weasley seats herself near Harry and Ron. Harry asks her if she wants to tell them anything and Ginny nods, only to be interrupted by Percy, who takes her seat. Ron is outraged at this and declares to Percy that Ginny may have known important information about the Chamber of Secrets, and Percy blushes and says that what she was going to tell them was not about the Chamber, but about something she saw him doing. He refuses to carry the subject further.

Later that day, Lockhart is escorting his students through the corridors and complaining about the extra precautions taken, and Harry and Ron agree and kindly suggest that he leave them to escort themselves to the next class. Lockhart is pleased and leaves, and Harry and Ron dash toward Myrtle's bathroom, only to run into Professor McGonagall. They lie that they were going to visit Hermione, and miraculously she lets them go. Not wanting to get caught in their lie, the boys trudge to the infirmary and find, clasped in Hermione's hand, a piece of paper that, once wrenched out, displays a paragraph of information about the basilisk that fits right in with all of the eerie things that have happened: it lives for hundreds of years, speaks in Parseltongue and so could be the voice Harry hears, kills with its stare, is the enemy of spiders, and is killed by the crow of a rooster. Underneath this information, Hermione had written "pipes," and Harry and Ron realize that she meant the pipes in Myrtle's bathroom.

The boys dash to the staff room to show their findings to McGonagall, only to hear an announcement that another attack has occurred and teachers must report to the staff room immediately. Hiding behind a row of robes, Harry and Ron listen to the staff meeting and learn that Ginny Weasley had been taken into the Chamber of Secrets, and that written on the wall were the words, "Her skeleton will lie in the Chamber forever." McGonagall then announces that the school will be closed, the students sent home the following morning. At this point, Lockhart enters the meeting and all the teachers turn on him, challenging him to take on the monster by himself, since he is so boastful that he knows how. Lockhart titters nervously and leaves the room, and soon Harry and Ron walk to his office to help him by telling him what they know of the monster in the pipes, and they find him in his office packing his bags.

An exchange follows in which Lockhart confides that he has never fought a dark arts creature before in his life, but rather he has interviewed the people who did the things he claimed to do, and then erased their memory of the encounter before writing up their adventures as his own. He then prepares to erase Ron and Harry's memories, but Harry yells, "Expelliarmus!" as he learned how to so in the dueling club, and Lockhart's wand flies into Harry's hands. Together, he and Ron push Lockhart into Myrtle's bathroom, where they question her about her death, which was in fact caused by a pair of large, yellow eyes, and where Harry spies a small snake carved onto the taps on her sink. Speaking Parseltongue, Harry tells the tap to open and it does, revealing a large pipe into which Harry, Ron, and a reluctant Lockhart descend.

Inside the pipes, the three come upon a giant snakeskin. As they examine it, Lockhart snatches Ron's wand and tries to destroy the boys' memories, but Ron's wand backfires and destroys Lockhart's own memory, also causing an avalanche of rocks to fall, creating a solid barrier keeping Ron and Lockhart on the close- to-home side, and Harry on the other side. Harry calls to Ron to try to make a hole in the wall, while he himself trudges on alone through the tunnel. Finally he comes upon a wall engraved with glittering serpents. Harry instructs it to open, and he enters.

This chapter connects many of the uncertain and unresolved situations rising in their tension throughout the book. For one, Hermione has not failed to solve the mystery that has proved so elusive to Harry and Ron; she sought knowledge in the library and found it in the form of the basilisk description she has balled into her hand. Everything fits. All of the mysteries, voices and attacks suddenly make sense. Nobody has died yet because all of the petrified victims so far have seen the basilisk through something else; Mrs. Norris, a puddle of water; Colin, his camera; Justin, through Nearly-Headless Nick; Hermione and Penelope, through a mirror. Even while she is frozen like a rock, Hermione can still be of service, and through her research is the first part of the mystery brought into light. Ron and Harry's hunch about Myrtle proves also to be correct; the information she gives regarding her death is right in line with how a basilisk would most likely attack. The pieces of the puzzle have come together, revealing everything except for the Heir Slytherin himself. This having been ascertained, Harry and Ron can proceed into the chamber with a good idea of what to expect.

The truth about Lockhart also is revealed in this chapter, when he nervously edges out of the staff room when given free rein to tackle the monster. He confirms Ron and Harry's suspicions that he is a phony when he is packing to leave so as not to face the monster, and we know immediately that the defense against the dark arts post will be left open again (in the first book of the series, the defense against the dark arts teacher has to leave for being affiliated with Voldemort). Lockhart is utterly useless and actually detrimental to Harry and Ron as they venture into the tunnels to confront the basilisk, and luckily his role in the plot is made fair when he casts a memory- obliviating charm that backfires, leaving him blithering idiotically to himself. He gets what he deserves during this scene, and his punishment fits his crime.

Finally, Ginny has been unduly frightened by the attacks over the course of the year, and Percy has been upset about her terror and nightmares. In this chapter, we see that Ginny did in fact know something about the attacks, or else she, a pure-blood young witch, would not have been taken into the Chamber of Secrets. We also learn over breakfast that Percy has something he is hiding, suggesting that he is not the perfect prefect he wants everybody to believe he is. Perhaps she could have been saved had she been given the chance to confide in Ron and Harry, or perhaps not. At any rate, Percy is absolutely distraught by her disappearance, as could be expected. When Harry and Ron set down the tunnels to rescue Ginny and save their school, the revelations caused by all of these events shape their journey.***Critical Study:***

Harry and Ron wonder how they can escape their teachers long enough to sneak into [Moaning Myrtle](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#moaning-myrtle)’s bathroom. In Transfiguration class, Professor McGonagall announces that their exams will start on the first of June, in one week. The students are shocked that there will be exams with the castle in this state of crisis. Harry wonders what he has learned so far this year.

Three days before their first exam, Professor McGonagall makes another announcement at breakfast: Professor Sprout informed her that the Mandrakes are ready for cutting. They will be able to revive the petrified students tonight. She hopes that they will be able to tell the school who or what attacked them, so the culprit may be caught. The students cheer. Draco doesn’t join in. Ron looks very happy. Harry remarks to Ron: it won’t matter that they never asked Myrtle. Hermione will have all the answers when she wakes up. But he thinks Hermione will go crazy when she finds they have exams in three days.

[Ginny Weasley](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#ginny-weasley) sits down next to Ron, twisting her hands nervously in her lap. She reminds Harry of how [Dobby](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#dobby) looks when he’s about to reveal forbidden information. Ginny mumbles “I’ve got to tell you something,” without looking at Harry. Harry asks her quietly if it’s something about the Chamber of Secrets. Before she can reply, Percy appears, tired from patrol duty, and asks for Ginny’s seat. She gives Percy a frightened look and runs away. Ron yells at Percy for interrupting them when Ginny was just about to say something important. Percy, looking very uncomfortable, says that it has nothing to do with the Chamber of Secrets. She walked in on Percy doing something, which he asked her not to tell anyone. Ron tries to get Percy to tell, but he changes the subject.

When, midmorning, Gilderoy Lockhart is leading the Gryffindors to their History of Magic class, Harry sees his chance to speak to Myrtle. Lockhart thinks that all of the security measures are unnecessary and is annoyed about having been on patrol all night. He assumes that, having arrested Hagrid, they already caught the culprit. When Harry agrees with him, Ron is surprised, then catches on, saying “Why don’t you leave us here, sir, we’ve only got one more corridor to go.” Lockhart agrees. Harry and Ron are heading towards Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom when they run into Professor McGonagall. She demands to know what they’re doing. Ron starts to stammer “we were going to go and see–” and Harry completes his sentence with “Hermione.” Harry makes up a story that they were going to sneak into the infirmary to tell Hermione that the Mandrakes are almost ready. He is amazed to see a tear glistening in Professor McGonagall’s eye. She says that she will inform [Professor Binns](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#professor-binns) where they have gone and to tell Madam Pomfrey that she has given her permission.

Harry and Ron have no choice but to go to the hospital. Madam Pomfrey lets them in reluctantly. Harry notices that Hermione is holding a piece of paper tightly in her fist. While Ron keeps watch, Harry manages to tug it out. It is a page torn from an old library book with a description of the Basilisk, King of Serpents. They learn that the snake, in addition to venomous fangs, has a murderous stare. Spiders flee before it. The crowing of the rooster is fatal to it. Underneath the passage, Hermione has scrawled the word "Pipes."

Harry realizes that this is the answer: the monster in the Chamber of Secrets is a basilisk. That’s why he has been hearing the voice, while others haven’t: He speaks Parseltongue. He looks around at the petrified students and figures out that each looked at the basilisk indirectly, and so avoided the creature’s direct death stare. Colin saw it through his camera; Justin through [Nearly Headless Nick](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#nearly-headless-nick) (Nick did see it directly, but couldn’t die again); Hermione and Penelope saw it through the mirror found laying next to them; and [Mrs. Norris](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#mrs-norris) saw it as a reflection in the water on the floor. Harry guesses that the Heir of Slytherin killed Hagrid’s roosters to protect the basilisk. The fact that “spiders flee before it” fits with what [Aragog](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list" \l "aragog) told them. Ron wonders how the basilisk traveled around Hogwarts undetected. Harry points out the word Hermione wrote: Pipes, and explains that it has been using the plumbing. That’s why Harry has heard its voice in the walls. Ron and Harry figure out together that the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets could be in Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom. Harry also realizes that, like him, the Heir of Slytherin must be a Parselmouth, and that’s how he controls the basilisk.

Ron and Harry decide to go to the staff room to tell Professor McGonagall about their discovery when she is on break in ten minutes. They run to the deserted room and pace, excited about their news. The bell never rings. Instead, Professor McGonagall’s voice orders all students to return to their dormitories and teachers to the staff room immediately. Harry and Ron hide in a wardrobe to hear what’s going on. Professor McGonagall tells the staff that a student has been taken by the monster into the Chamber. The Heir of Slytherin has left another message under the first one that says: “Her skeleton will lie in the Chamber forever.” When Ron hears that his sister Ginny has taken by the monster he slides to the floor. McGonagall says they will have to send all of the students home tomorrow; this is the end of Hogwarts.

The staff room door bangs open and Lockhart appears, beaming, says he dozed off, and asks what he missed. The other teachers look at him with “something remarkably like hatred.” Snape steps forward, explains that a girl has been taken into the Chamber of Secrets by the monster, and “Your moment has come at last.” Lockhart blanches. Professor Sprout reminds Lockhart that he claimed to know the location of the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets. Professor Flitwick adds that he said he knew what’s inside it. Flustered, Lockhart says he doesn’t recall. Snape remembers that Lockhart said he was sorry that he “hadn’t had a crack at the monster before Hagrid was arrested,” that “the whole affair had been bungled” and that he “should have been given free rein from the first.” Professor McGonagall concludes “We’ll leave it to you, then, Gilderoy. Tonight will be an excellent time to do it. We’ll make sure everyone’s out of your way. You’ll be able to tackle the monster all by yourself. A free rein at last.” Lockhart gazes desperately around him, but no one comes to his rescue. So he agrees, stammering, and says he will be in his office getting ready, and leaves the room. After Lockhart is gone, McGonagall says “that’s got him out from under our feet.” She instructs the Heads of Houses to inform their students of what happened and to tell them that the Hogwarts Express will take them home in the morning.

Harry, Ron, Fred, and George sit together in the corner of the Gryffindor common room in silence. Percy had gone to send an owl to Mrs. and Mrs. Wesley and then shut himself up in his dorm. Gryffindor Tower, although crowded, is quiet all afternoon. Fred and George finally go up to bed near sunset. Ron finally speaks to Harry for the first time since they entered the wardrobe. He says that Ginny knew something about the Chamber of Secrets. That’s why she was taken. Ron asks Harry if he thinks there’s any chance that Ginny is still alive. Harry doesn’t know what to say. Ron thinks they should go and tell Lockhart to tell him what they know since he is going to try and get into the Chamber. They can tell him where they think it is, and that there’s a basilisk inside. Harry wants to do something, and can’t think of what else to do, so agrees. The Gryffindors, feeling miserable and sorry for the Weasleys, don’t try to stop them as they leave.

Ron and Harry go to Lockhart’s office. Harry tells Lockhart they have some information for him. When he lets them in, they discover that his office has been almost completely stripped. Harry asks him if he’s going somewhere. Lockhart replies yes, he’s had an urgent call that’s unavoidable. Ron asks, “What about my sister?” Lockhart avoids their eyes and continues to pack, saying that’s “most unfortunate” and “no one regrets that more than I.” Harry reminds him that he’s the Defense of Dark Arts teacher, and that he can’t go now, with all the dark stuff that’s happening. Lockhart says it wasn’t in the job description. Harry can’t believe that Lockhart is running away, after everything he claimed to do in his books. Lockhart says “Books can be misleading.” When Harry replies, “You wrote them!” he explains that his books wouldn’t have sold as well if people didn’t think he did those things. Those who really did them were ugly and unfashionable, and so uninteresting to the public. Harry is incredulous that he’s taking credit for what other people have done. Lockhart defends himself, saying it’s a lot of work to track people down, find out what they did, and put a memory charm on them so they forget it.

Lockhart tries to put a Memory Charm on Harry and Ron, but Harry reaches his wand first and disarms him. Lockhart is blasted backward, and falls over his trunk. His wand flies in the air; Ron catches it and throws it out the window. Furious, Harry forces Lockhart to his feet at wandpoint and marches him to Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom. Harry is pleased to see that Lockhart is shaking.

Harry asks Myrtle how she died. Flattered and self-important, Myrtle relates that she died in that stall, where she had hidden because Olive Hornby teased her about her glasses. She heard a boy come in and say something in a different language. She unlocked the stall to tell him to use his own bathroom, and then she died. When Harry asks how, she has no idea. She remembers seeing a pair of big yellow eyes, then her body seized up, and she floated away. She returned determined to haunt Olive. When Harry asks her where she saw the eyes, Myrtle points towards the sink across from her. Harry finds an image of a tiny snake scratched on the side of a copper tap. Myrtle explains that tap has never worked, as Harry tries to turn it. Ron suggests that he say something in Parseltongue. Harry tries, but English comes out of his mouth first. Then he wills himself to believe that the snake is alive, and it works. With Harry’s hiss, the tap glows and spins. The sink sinks out of sight, exposing a large pipe.

Harry decides to go in, on the chance that Ginny might still be alive. Ron wants to go too. Lockhart tries to escape, but Harry and Ron point their wands at him and force him to go first. He protests, “Boys, what good will it do?” but they push him in. They rush down a long slide, deep below Hogwarts, then land in a dark stone tunnel. Harry lights his wand. They walk down the tunnel until they hear an unexpected crunch. Ron has stepped on a rat’s skull. They notice that the floor is littered with small animal bones.

Ron sees something ahead that’s huge and curved, lying across the tunnel. They discover a giant green snakeskin for a creature that must be at least twenty feet long. Lockhart falls to his knees. Ron points his wand at Lockhart, telling him sharply to get up. Lockhart gets to his feet, then dives at Ron knocking him to the ground and stealing his wand. Lockhart announces that he will take a bit of the skin back to the school, tell them he was too late to save the girl, and that Harry and Ron lost their minds at the sight of her mangled body. He tells them to say goodbye to their memories, raises his wand above his head, and yells “Obliviate!” The wand explodes, sending chunks of the ceiling to the floor. Harry covers his head and runs, finding himself a moment later staring up at a solid wall of broken rock. He shouts to see if Ron is ok. Ron replies that he’s ok, but Lockhart is not: he got blasted by the wand.

Ron asks what to do. They can’t get through; “it’ll take ages.” Harry has never tried to break apart rocks as large as these by magic. He worries that the whole tunnel could cave in if he tries now. He thinks of Ginny, who has been in the Chamber for hours. Harry tells Ron to wait with Lockhart while he goes on. Ron says he will try to shift some of the rock so they can get back through. Harry tells Ron “see you in a bit,” trying to sound confident. Harry sets off alone past the giant snakeskin. After several turns in the tunnel, Harry sees a solid wall on which two entwined serpents are carved, their eyes set with emeralds. He says “Open” in Parseltongue. The serpents part as the wall cracks open. Harry, shaking, walks inside.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) and [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) have an even harder time trying to sneak into [Myrtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/moaning-myrtle)’s bathroom, which is right next to the scene of the first attack. A few days before exams start, [Professor McGonagall](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-mcgonagall) announces at breakfast that the Mandrakes are almost ready. Once the students are revived, they can then ask those who were attacked what happened. Just as breakfast is finishing, [Ginny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ginny-weasley) comes over to Ron and Harry, looking tense and nervous. She tries to tell them something, but [Percy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) comes over and startles Ginny, sending her scampering away.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Once again, information becomes key in quelling the fear and rumors surrounding the Chamber of Secrets. Harry and Ron want to get information from Myrtle, the school wants to get information from the attacked students, and Ginny wants to provide Harry and Ron with information so that they can help free her from the fear she is experiencing at the hands of Tom Riddle.

***Summary Part 2:***

Later that morning, [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart) is escorting the Gryffindors to History of Magic, but he is complaining that teachers still have to do this when [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid) was clearly the person responsible for the attacks. [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) then convince him to leave them so they can walk the rest of the way alone. They let the rest of the Gryffindors go ahead and then sneak off to [Myrtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/moaning-myrtle)’s bathroom.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Lockhart’s statement shows that he has far too much faith in the institution of the Ministry. Harry and Ron, however, understand that the Ministry and the governors are completely wrong, and thus Harry and Ron again feel the need to break the rules in order to do the right thing.

***Summary Part 3:***

On the way, [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) are stopped by [Professor McGonagall](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-mcgonagall). Harry lies and says that they were trying to sneak off to visit [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger), and McGonagall gets quite teary-eyed and allows them to go. They then head up to the hospital wing and sit by Hermione’s side. Harry then notices that Hermione has a piece of paper crumpled in her hand.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Harry and Ron use their friendship as an excuse as to why they were breaking the rules, but this doesn’t detract from the fact that they are exceptionally loyal to Hermione. McGonagall’s reaction here shows that she too understands how meaningful loyal friendships are.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) reads the paper, which is from a very old library book. It bears information about the [Basilisk](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-monster-basilisk), which is the King of Serpents. The snake lives for hundreds of years, has venomous fangs, and anyone who looks in its eyes suffers instant death. Harry realizes that [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) had found the answer: Harry can hear the monster’s voice because it is a snake. He also realizes that no one has been killed yet because no one has looked at it directly: they have all seen it through something else—a camera lens in Colin’s case, a reflection in Mrs. Norris and Hermione’s cases, or through Nearly Headless Nick in Justin’s case.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Even though Hermione was petrified before she was able to reveal what she had found out to Harry, her reliance on information proves to be successful. Rather than giving in to rumors and suspicion, Hermione was able to piece together the mystery using rational inquirry. This information also prevented her own death because she used a mirror to navigate around the corners, knowing that she could be attacked by the basilisk at any moment.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) wonders how the [basilisk](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-monster-basilisk) has been getting around the school, and [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) points to a word that [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) had scribbled on the page: “pipes.” Ron then realizes that the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets could be in [Moaning Myrtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/moaning-myrtle)’s bathroom. They decide to go to the staffroom to tell [Professor McGonagall](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-mcgonagall) what they’ve discovered.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Using the information that Hermione discovered, Harry and Ron are able to piece the rest of the mystery together as well. This reinforces the idea that only together, through their friendship, are they able to defeat the basilisk and save the school.

***Summary Part 6:***

Just then, [Professor McGonagall](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-mcgonagall)’s voice echoes throughout the corridors: all students are to return to their dormitories at once, and teachers are to go to the staffroom. [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) decide to hide in the closet of the staffroom in order to eavesdrop. The teachers assemble, and McGonagall tells them that [Ginny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ginny-weasley) has been taken into the Chamber of Secrets.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Again, Harry and Ron skirt the rules because they want to find out more information about what is going on, and because they want to do the right thing and use the information they have to help others. Ron and Harry also feel a newfound investment and urgency in the situation because they are loyal to Ginny and want to rescue her.

***Summary part 7:***

[McGonagall](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-mcgonagall) goes on to say that all the students will be sent home the following day. Then, [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart) enters, late to the meeting. The teachers explain what happened and suggest that he go to the Chamber of Secrets (since he has previously said he knows where the entrance is) to rescue [Ginny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ginny-weasley). Lockhart nervously agrees. He leaves, and then the rest of the teachers exit to tell the students what has happened.

***Analysis Part 7:***

The teachers’ suggestions quickly expose Lockhart as a fraud and reveal how he has been lying about his entire identity. All of the rumors that he has been spreading about the Chamber of Secrets (that he knows where it is and how to defeat the monster) come back to bite him here.

***Summary Part 8:***

[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) decide to go to [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart)’s office and tell him what they know. But when they get there, Lockhart has been packing and planning to run away, terrified of facing the [monster](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/symbols/the-monster-basilisk). Harry and Ron are in disbelief, especially after all of the things Lockhart described doing in his books. “Books can be misleading,” he says. Lockhart explains that he didn’t do any of the things he wrote about doing; he simply asked other people about the details of what they had done, and then wiped their memories in order to take credit.

***Analysis Part 8:***

Even though Lockhart is a terrible person, he serves as an example of how identities can be based on choices and actions rather than fate. Lockhart wasn’t fated to be great, but he chose to fabricate his persona and was able to create an identity for himself than he wouldn’t have had otherwise.

***Summary part 9:***

[Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart) then says that he will have to wipe [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)’s memories as well; he can’t let them reveal his secrets. But Harry immediately disarms Lockhart and forces him to come with them to the Chamber of Secrets. They then go to [Myrtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/moaning-myrtle)’s bathroom and ask her how she died. She says that she was crying in the bathroom when someone came in speaking a different language. She opened the door to the stall, saw a pair of big yellow eyes by the sink, and then died.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Harry, unlike Lockhart, has immense bravery and loyalty and proves it here. He also demonstrates how treating others with respect can be beneficial to oneself. He has always been kind to Myrtle (unlike most of the other students), and she in response provides him with the information that he needs in order to access the Chamber of Secrets.

***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) examine the sink and notice that one of the taps has a tiny image of a snake on it. Ron suggests that Harry say something in Parseltongue. Harry says “Open up” in Parseltongue and the sink opens up to reveal a pipe big enough to slide into. They push [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart) in first and then follow him. They slide for a long time until they land in a tunnel, miles below the school.

***Analysis Part 10:***

Once again relying on each other, Harry and Ron are able to enter the Chamber of Secrets. Their loyalty and support for each other (and for Hermione) fosters their bravery as they willingly  take on the task of facing the basilisk.

***Summary part 11:***

[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 [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart) are walking along the tunnel when Lockhart attacks Ron and grabs his wand. But when Lockhart tries to cast a Memory Charm using the damaged wand, it backfires and explodes, causing chunks of stones to fall from the ceiling and form a barrier between Harry on one side and Ron and Lockhart on the other. Harry goes forward alone to rescue [Ginny](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ginny-weasley), trying to boost his own confidence. Two snakes are carved on the wall in front of him. Harry says “Open,” and the wall parts, allowing him to walk inside.

***Analysis Part 11:***

As Harry gets deeper and deeper into the Chamber of Secrets, his true identity becomes clearer and clearer (something that has plagued him over the course of the novel, and which readers are again reminded of when Harry is able to speak Parseltongue). He is brave, loyal, and willing to sacrifice himself for others—qualities that are in complete opposition to Voldemort and Tom Riddle.

***Quotations***

***Quotation 1:***

[Professor Lockhart] didn't seem to notice that the other teachers were looking at him with something remarkably like hatred. Snape stepped forward.

"Just the man," he said. "The very man. A girl has been snatched by the monster, Lockhart. Taken into the Chamber of Secrets itself. Your moment has come at last.

Lockhart blanched. […]

"We'll leave it you, then, Gilderoy," said Professor McGonagall. Tonight will be an excellent time to do it. We'll make sure everyone's out of your way. You'll be able to tackle the monster all by yourself. A free rein at last."

Lockhart gazed desperately around him, but nobody came to the rescue. He didn't look remotely handsome anymore. His lip was trembling, and in the absence of his usual toothy grin, he looked weak-chinned and feeble. (16.114-124)

***Explanation 1:***

Throughout the book, we've remarked on the way Lockhart never, ever seems to notice how much people around him hate him. Sure, some girls are taken in by his good looks, but for the most part, he alienates everyone by being an obvious fool. Yet his bragging, insincerity, and lack of sensitivity for the people around him all come back to haunt him in this scene, now that the other Hogwarts professors are in such a good position to call his bluff. Professor Lockhart's fate is like a cautionary tale about the importance of choosing honesty and sincerity over self-importance and bragging. The problem with exaggerating your own abilities is that you might one day be asked to prove it – and you don't want to look like Professor Lockhart does here when that day comes.

***Quotation 2:***

There was a sudden movement behind them. Gilderoy Lockhart's knees had given way.

"Get up," said Ron sharply, pointing his wand at Lockhart.

Lockhart got to his feet – then he dived at Ron, knocking him to the ground.

Harry jumped forward, but too late – Lockhart was straightening up, panting, Ron's wand in his hand and a gleaming smile on his face.

"The adventure ends here, boys!" he said. I shall take a bit of this skin back up to the school, tell them I was too late to save the girl, and that you two tragically lost your minds at the sight of her mangled body – say good-bye to your memories!" (16.214-218)

***Explanation 2:***

Professor Lockhart is so frightened of what is waiting for them at the end of the tunnel that he doesn't seem troubled about leaving Ginny to become a "mangled body." As someone whose entire reputation is built on lies and Memory Charms, Professor Lockhart's whole life must also be ruled by the fear that he's going to be found out. Why might Lockhart choose to live his life with so much uncertainty? What is he getting out of this hypocrisy? What does Professor Lockhart appear most afraid of? How do Lockhart's fears shape his character in the novel?

***Quotation 3:***

Just then, Ginny Weasley came over and sat down next to Ron. She looked tense and nervous, and Harry noticed that he hands were twisting in her lap.

"What's up?" said Ron, helping himself to more porridge.

Ginny didn't say anything, but glanced up and down the Gryffindor table with a scared look on her face that reminded Harry of someone, though he couldn't think who.

"Spit it out," said Ron, watching her.

Harry suddenly realized who Ginny looked like. She was rocking backward and forward slightly in her chair, exactly like Dobby did when he was teetering on the edge of revealing forbidden information. (16.20-24)

***Explanation 3:***

Finally, just before all the events of Book 2 come to a head, Ginny plucks up the courage to try and speak to Harry and Ron. Percy interrupts her before she can tell them about the cursed diary, so it doesn't work anyway. Still, we are impressed by her courage. Ginny's slow decline throughout Book 2, as she gets more and more nervous and sensitive, demonstrates the incredible damage that holding on to secrets can cause. In fact, the whole idea of the Chamber of Secrets itself takes on a negative connotation because it's secret, hidden, deliberately mysterious. Under what circumstances might secrets be necessary or even virtuous? What examples do we have of good secrets in the Harry Potter series?

***Quotation 4:***

"We haven't seen [Hermione] for ages, Professor," Harry went on hurriedly, treading on Ron's foot, "and we thought we'd sneak down to the hospital wing, you know, and tell her the Mandrakes are nearly ready and, er, not to worry —"

Professor McGonagall was still staring at him, and for a moment, Harry thought she was going to explode, but when she spoke, it was in a strangely croaky voice.

"Of course," she said, and Harry, amazed, saw a tear glistening in her beady eye. "Of course, I realize that this has all been hardest on the friends of those who have been…I quite understand. Yes, Potter, of course you may visit Miss Granger. I will inform Professor Binns where you've gone. Tell Madam Pomfrey I have given my permission." (16.59-61)

***Explanation 4:***

Remember how the Sorting Hat confirms that Harry would've done well in Slytherin? Here's a great example. He can be sneaky when he needs to be. Harry expertly manipulates Professor McGonagall's good nature and her care for her students. It's really a pretty impressive piece of lying. So, much of Book 2 is about the ways in which Harry is or isn't Slytherin. Why is his skill with manipulation not Slytherin here? What makes his lying to Professor McGonagall OK?

***Quotation 5:***

"Books can be misleading," said Lockhart delicately.

"You wrote them!" Harry shouted.

"My dear boy," said Lockhart, straightening up and frowning at Harry. "Do use your common sense. My books wouldn't have sold half as well if people didn't think I'd done all those things. No one wants to read about some ugly old Armenian warlock, even if he did save a village from werewolves. He'd look dreadful on the front cover. No dress sense at all. And the witch who banished the Bandon Banshee had a hairy chin. I mean, come on —" (16.151-153)

***Explanation 5:***

Professor Lockhart is obviously a self-serving jerk. Still, he is also pointing out something that might be kind of true: people probably wouldn't make "some ugly old" warlock a celebrity the way Professor Lockhart has become a celebrity. Looks definitely do matter in marketing a person's image to the public. Professor Lockhart is a fraud, but he gets adoring fan mail because he is so handsome. What do you think is the link between celebrity and good looks? Does the public necessarily care what a hero looks like, if he or she has done genuinely great deeds? Can you be hideous and a hero in the public eye?