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

***Chapter 7***

***Summary and analysis***

***Brief Summary:***

Oliver Wood, the Gryffindor Quidditch captain, rudely wakes Harry at the weekend. It is essential to begin training as soon as possible, since Gryffindor lost the Quidditch Cup the previous year, their worst defeat in three centuries. Harry was in hospital at the time, recovering from his encounter with Voldemort. He feels responsible for the defeat and is determined to make up for it, this year. As he makes his way to Quidditch practice, Colin, who worships Harry and wants to know everything about Quidditch and flying a broomstick, pesters him. His camera remains in his hand at all times, with Colin taking photographs of Harry at every possible opportunity.

After a long briefing, the Gryffindor team finally emerges onto the pitch to begin practising, only to find the Slytherin team coming towards them. Oliver is angry, as he has booked the pitch in advance, but the Slytherin captain has obtained special permission from Snape that overrides Oliver's booking. Another blow to the Gryffindor team is that the Slytherin team all have brand new, top of the range Nimbus 2001 broomsticks, purchased by Lucius Malfoy. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that Draco Malfoy is the latest addition to the Slytherin team, as their Seeker.

Malfoy can't resist gloating about the broomsticks and teasing the Gryffindor team, in particular Fred and George, who have very old brooms. Hermione defends her house and their ability, criticising Malfoy for buying his way onto the team. Malfoy attacks her viciously, insulting her with the worst term possible for those born to Muggles: 'Mudblood.' Ron defends her by trying to put a spell on Malfoy, but his broken wand malfunctions, accidentally enchanting Ron, making him belch green slimy slugs.

Ron is taken to Hagrid's house to wait for the spell to wear off. To their surprise, Lockhart is just leaving. Hagrid is pleased to see them and makes them welcome. He is critical of Lockhart and informs the trio that Lockhart only got the job because there was no one else to do it. Hermione defends Lockhart, believing Dumbledore gave him the job because he was the best person to do it.

On their return to school, they meet Professor McGonagall, who informs Ron and Harry that they have to do their detention that night. While Harry is doing his detention with Lockhart, he hears a voice. It is evil and threatening, dripping with venom and ice. Harry is alarmed but Lockhart doesn't hear it. Harry tells Ron about it, later that night; both of them are worried about what it might be.

***Brief Analysis:***

Abuse of power is a strong theme. Lucius Malfoy uses his wealth and power to influence Snape and the Slytherin team. Draco Malfoy uses his father's power to buy his way onto the Slytherin Quidditch team. Snape abuses his power as a professor and head of Slytherin to override Oliver Wood's legitimate booking of the Quidditch pitch. The Malfoys, Snape, Lockhart and the Slytherin team are all associated with the dark magic powers, and it seems as if evil is prevailing over good, yet these characters are the least liked and least respected characters in the novel. Characters like Harry, Ron and Hermione, who stand up for their beliefs and values, might not always be successful initially but they are valued and respected for who they are, as Hagrid comparing Harry to Lockhart clearly shows us: "Yer more famous than him without trying." Characters who symbolize good are also fiercely loyal and will do anything to defend their principles and beliefs, seen twice in this chapter through the actions of Ron and Hermione. It is highly doubtful that the characters associated with the dark side would go to the same lengths to defend their beliefs and values.

***Summary in Detail:***

Time rushes by uneventfully at Hogwarts. Harry avoids Gilderoy Lockhart and Colin Creevey as much as possible, and Ron's wand continues to muddle spells. Early Saturday morning, Harry is shaken awake by Oliver Wood, the captain of the Gryffindor Quidditch team, for a crack-of-dawn practice. Harry dresses quickly and on the way to meet the team in the locker room, runs into Colin, who eagerly asks him to explain the rules of Quidditch, which he does. The game's basic terms are this: the game is played with seven people on broomsticks, and during it the small golden Snitch flies around and must be caught by the Seeker (Harry's position) in order for the game to end. Two Bludgers fly around, trying to knock the players off their broomsticks, and two team members, the Beaters (Fred and George Weasley), try to beat the Bludgers away. Other than this, the game is similar to water polo, in that the remaining three members, the Chasers (Alicia Spinnet, Angelina Johnson and Katie Bell), aim to throw a ball, the Quaffle, through the goal posts and past the Keeper (Oliver Wood).

The team spends a long time in the locker room, listening to Wood explain moves. Finally, they head outside to practice and are greeted by Ron and Hermione and Colin Creevey, all watching from the bleachers. Colin is taking pictures and calling for Harry to look over and smile, and Harry is embarrassed and pretends not to know him.

Wood is beginning to grow suspicious that Colin is a spy for Slytherin. Slytherin's team enters the field, interrupting the practice and infuriating Wood, who had reserved the field already. The Slytherins refuse to leave, claiming that they must train their new Seeker. Draco Malfoy steps up, smirking and explaining that his father made a generous gift of seven top-notch broomsticks to the team. He makes several disparaging remarks about Fred and George's rather tattered broomsticks, and Hermione steps in and remarks that at least Fred and George were talented enough not to have to buy themselves onto the team. Malfoy gets angry and calls Hermione a "Mudblood," a word that causes the crowd to gasp and Ron to pull out his wand and cast a spell on Malfoy. Ron's spell reverses, causing him to belch slugs.

Hermione and Harry take Ron to Hagrid's cabin, where Lockhart is bidding adieu to a rather sullen-looking Hagrid. Hagrid cheers up when he sees the students, and he offers Ron a basin for his slug-belching, remarking cheerfully, "Better out than in." The students recount the story and Ron explains that Mudblood is a terribly derogatory term for a Muggle-born wizard. Hagrid soon changes the subject, and asks Harry for an autographed photo. Harry bristles until he realizes that Hagrid was joking. Hagrid shows off his magic-enhanced pumpkins, although Harry knows that ever since Hagrid was mysteriously expelled from Hogwarts and left to remain as gamekeeper, he is not allowed to use magic.

Harry and Ron are called to do their belated detentions for the flying car incident. While Ron is called to help the grouchy caretaker Filch polish trophies, Harry is called to help Lockhart answer his fan mail. Both boys believe they have the worst end of the deal. In Lockhart's office, as he is addressing envelopes and inserting signed photos, Harry hears a high, eerie voice murmuring, "Come to me….let me rip you….let me tear you…" and he jumps up, alarmed. He is alarmed further when Lockhart claims to have heard nothing. The thought of this chilling voice plagues Harry for the rest of the evening.

***Analysis in Detail:***

This chapter elaborates upon bigotry that is evident in the wizard world every time the Malfoys enter the scene. Pure-blood wizards are snobbish toward those who are Muggle-born, of one race or class trying to wipe out the next. Draco Malfoy turns on Hermione for her Muggle heritage and Ron Weasley for his family's meager finances, and Hermione's response that at least the Weasley twins had enough talent to play Quidditch without having to buy their ways onto the team, hits Malfoy in a vulnerable spot. He places so much pride on the fact that he can afford to lean back on his family's status and money without having to do anything to deserve it, that when Hermione points out that he does not deserve much of what he gets, he is upset. Malfoy picks on Ron for his poverty, Hermione for her heritage, and Harry for his fame. However, at different points in the story, he envies much of what they have: in chapter four, Malfoy complains to his father about Hermione's grades being higher than his, and about Harry being so famous and getting to play Quidditch. Succeeding at Quidditch, school grades, and fame requires competency, talent and a work ethic. Malfoy lacks all three, and he knows it.

The voice that Harry hears in Professor Lockhart's office is the first clue of the conflict to come. Harry hears an eerie voice that nobody else can hear, and at this point it is left to the reader to try to guess at the source of the voice. This is perhaps the first tangible sign that something is very wrong at Hogwarts.

***Critical Study:***

Harry is glad to reach the weekend, after spending a lot of time avoiding Professor Lockhart and [Colin Creevey](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#colin-creevey). He, Ron, and Hermione are planning to visit Hagrid. But [Oliver Wood](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#oliver-wood), Captain of the Gryffindor Quidditch team, wakes Harry up early, eager to begin training. Colin Creevey follows Harry down the stairs with a photo of Harry and Lockhart, asking for Harry’s signature, which Harry refuses to give him. When Colin learns that Harry is on his way to the Quidditch field, he questions Harry about the sport the whole way there. Harry explains that he plays the position of Seeker. His job is to catch the Golden Snitch. Creevey takes a seat in the stands to watch.

Wood gives a speech about new tactics, which the players are too sleepy to understand. He is tormented by their loss the previous year, when Harry was unconscious in the hospital for the final match. Harry goes out onto the field, finding Ron and Hermione sitting in the stands. While the Gryffindor Quidditch team begins to practice, soaring around on their broomsticks, Colin snaps pictures noisily below. The Slytherin team shows up, to Wood’s outrage, as he booked the field. They have a note from Snape with his permission to train their new Seeker, [Draco Malfoy](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#draco-malfoy). [Lucius Malfoy](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#lucius-malfoy) gifted brand new top-of-the-line broomsticks (Nimbus 2001) to the Slytherin team.

Ron and Hermione come over to see what’s happening. Draco makes fun of Ron and George Weasley’s old broomsticks. Hermione defends the Gryffindor members for getting on the team based on talent, instead of buying their way in like Draco. Draco retorts, “No one asked your opinion, you filthy little Mudblood.” His words cause an instant uproar. Ron points his wand at Malfoy. A loud bang echoes in the stadium, and a jet of green light shoots out of the wrong end of Ron’s wand, hitting him in the stomach, and knocking him backward. Ron starts belching slugs. The Slytherin team laughs at him. Harry and Hermione help Ron to Hagrid’s cottage nearby. Colin wants Harry to pose Ron for a picture along the way, but Harry brushes Colin aside angrily.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione reach Hagrid’s cottage, and hide in the bushes when they see Gilderoy Lockhart emerge, boasting loudly to Hagrid. Hagrid is happy to see them. He was grumpy when he thought they were Lockhart returning. He fetches a basin for Ron, unperturbed by his slug problem. Hagrid makes them tea, and his boarhound [Fang](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#fang) slobbers on them, while he criticizes Lockhart. He doesn’t believe Lockhart’s stories, and says that Dumbledore hired Lockhart because he was the only one who would take the Dark Arts job.

They discuss Malfoy’s insult. Mudblood is a foul name for someone who is Muggle-born, with non-magic parents. Ron explains that “There are some wizards, like Malfoy’s family, who think they’re better than everyone else because they’re what people call pure-blood...the rest of us know that it doesn’t make any difference at all. Look at [Neville Longbottom](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#neville-longbottom)—He’s pureblood and can hardly stand a cauldron the right way up.” Hagrid points out that Hermione can do anything. Ron says, “It’s a disgusting thing to call someone. Dirty Blood, see. Common blood. It’s ridiculous. Most wizards these days are half-blood anyway. If we hadn’t married Muggles we’d have died out.”

Hagrid says he doesn’t blame Ron for trying to curse Draco, but it’s probably for the best that it didn’t work, because Lucius Malfoy would have gotten him into trouble. While they eat very sticky treacle fudge, Hagrid teases Harry about giving out signed photographs. He reassures Harry that he told Lockhart that Harry didn’t need to do it, because he’s more famous than Lockhart without even trying.

Hagrid leads Harry and Hermione to the vegetable patch behind his house, where he is growing a dozen enormous pumpkins. He confesses that he’s been giving them “a bit of help.” Harry notices Hagrid’s flowery pink umbrella and thinks that Hagrid conceals his old school wand inside. Hagrid isn’t supposed to use magic. He was expelled from Hogwarts in his third year. Harry doesn’t know why. Hagrid mentions a visit from [Ginny Weasley](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#ginny-weasley) yesterday, and implies that she was hoping to run into Harry at his house.

When they return to Hogwarts, Professor McGonagall discovers them in the entrance hall. She tells Ron and Harry that they will do their detentions that evening. Ron will be polishing silver with Mr. Filch, without the use of magic. Harry will be helping Prof. Lockhart answer his fan mail. Lockhart requested Harry particularly.

That evening Harry visits Lockhart’s office, which is covered in framed photographs of Lockhart. Harry addresses envelopes for hours, barely listening to Lockhart prattle on. Then he hears “a voice to chill the bone marrow, a voice of breath-taking ice-cold venom.” It says: “Come...come to me...Let me rip you...Let me tear you...Let me kill you…” When Harry jumps and yells “What?” Lockhart is puzzled and then astonished when Harry refers to the voice. He didn’t hear it. He wonders if Harry is getting sleepy, and realizes that they have been there for four hours.

Harry goes back to the dormitory and waits for Ron, who finally arrives, complaining about his detention, in which he had a slug attack all over a Special Award for Services to the School. Harry tells Ron about the voice. Neither of them can figure it out.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

After [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter)’s first week of class, he, [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley), and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) plan to visit [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid) on Saturday. But that morning, Quidditch captain [Oliver Wood](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) wakes Harry very early for practice. Harry leaves a note for Ron explaining where he’s gone. When he reaches the stairs, [Colin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) is there with the photo of him and [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart), asking Harry to sign it. Harry says no, saying that he’s in a hurry to get to Quidditch practice. Colin tags along, saying he’d like to see Harry play.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Again, Colin’s behavior forces Harry to confront how other people see him. Colin views him as a celebrity, while one of Harry’s core traits is his humility. Rowling also demonstrates how Harry becomes quickly aggravated by not being able to control how others view him, which is part of why he later becomes so dismayed by the idea that his life might be left to fate.

***Summary Part 2:***

The rest of the Gryffindor team is in the changing room, and [Wood](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) goes over some new strategies for the team so that they can win the Quidditch Cup. When [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) and the rest of the team head out to the field, he sees that [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) are sitting in the stands to watch him—and so is [Colin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters), excitedly taking pictures.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Hermione and Ron’s friendship and loyalty exists on many levels, as they show up to support Harry even for small things like his Quidditch practice.

***Summary Part 3:***

After a few minutes on the field, the Slytherin team walks up. [Wood](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) yells at the Slytherin captain, Flint, saying that Gryffindor booked the field. Flint pulls out a note from [Professor Snape](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-snape), giving them permission to practice on the field to train their new Seeker: [Draco Malfoy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy). The team also has a brand new set of brooms, courtesy of [Lucius Malfoy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/lucius-malfoy).

***Analysis Part 3:***

The benefits that the Slytherin team experiences thanks to Draco’s wealth demonstrate how prejudice becomes easily accepted by those whom it benefits. It is easy for someone like Draco, who has wealth, to criticize someone without wealth and get no resistance from the other members of his team, because his wealth benefits them too.

***Summary Part 4:***

At that moment, [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) come down from the stands to see what’s going on. [Draco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy) explains that he’s the new Seeker, and that everyone’s been admiring the new brooms [Lucius](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/lucius-malfoy) bought them. Hermione says that at least no one on the Gryffindor team had to buy their way in. Draco then calls Hermione a “filthy little Mudblood.”

***Analysis Part 4:***

True to form, Hermione and Ron come down to the pitch to reaffirm their loyalty to Harry. Hermione criticizes Malfoy for using his wealth to get onto the team rather than having talent, as Harry does. Draco’s return insult also reintroduces the prejudice that he has against Muggle-borns.

***Summary Part 5:***

The entire Gryffindor team goes into an uproar at [Draco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy)’s words. [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) points his wand at Draco, but when he tries to cast a spell, it backfires and hits him in the stomach. Ron starts belching up slugs, and the Slytherin team bursts into laughter. [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) pull Ron up by the arms and take him over to [Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid)’s hut.

***Analysis Part 5:***

The friendship and loyalty among the three protagonists are on full display here. Ron defends Hermione from Draco’s slur, but when his spell backfires, Hermione and Harry likewise support Ron.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid) gives [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) a bucket while [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) explains what happened, though he admits that he doesn’t understand what [Draco](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy) called [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger). Ron explains that Draco called her “Mudblood,” which is “a really foul name for someone who is Muggle-born.” He explains that people like the Malfoys think they’re better because they’re “pure-blood,” but that most wizards understand that one’s parentage doesn’t make a difference at all. Hagrid affirms this, saying that there isn’t a spell Hermione can’t do.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Draco’s insult to Hermione parallels the racism of the real world, in which people use stereotypes and the perceived inferiority of others in order to make themselves feel more superior. Through Ron and Hagrid’s defense of Hermione—explaining that she is far more talented at magic than Draco is—Rowling argues that these kinds of prejudices are often baseless or inaccurate.

***Summary Part 7:***

[Hagrid](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/rubeus-hagrid) then tells [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) that he’s heard Harry is giving out signed photos, and wonders why he doesn’t have one. Harry refutes the idea, furious that [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart) is saying so. Hagrid admits he’s only joking—he told Lockhart that Harry doesn’t need to give out signed photos to be famous.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Hagrid’s statement demonstrates how friends can be a key component of anchoring one’s identity. Though Lockhart is spreading the idea that Harry is giving out signed photos, Hagrid knows that Harry would never do this and helps buoy Harry and reaffirm his sense of character.

***Summary Part 8:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter), [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger), and [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) return to the castle for lunch. In the entrance hall, [Professor McGonagall](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/professor-mcgonagall) stops Ron and Harry, informing them that they are to serve their detentions that evening. Ron will be polishing the silver in the trophy room with [Filch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/argus-filch), and Harry will be helping [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart) answer his fan mail.

***Analysis Part 8:***

Because Harry and Ron have to serve detentions, Rowling acknowledges that even if a person thinks that they are in the right, if they break the rules, sometimes they still have to face punishment.

***Summary Part 9:***

That evening, [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) goes to [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart)’s office. Lockhart has Harry address the envelopes while he talks about all of his fans and fame. The minutes crawl by. But then Harry hears a cold voice, whispering, “Let me rip you…Let me tear you… Let me kill you…” Harry jumps up with a start, terrified. But Lockhart says that he didn’t hear anything. Lockhart then realizes it’s nearly midnight and releases Harry.

***Analysis Part 9:***

This is the first instance of the cold, unknown voice that comes to be associated with the attacks on Muggle-born students. But more than the words themselves, the more terrifying thing is perhaps that Harry doesn’t know what the source of the voice is, that and Lockhart seems unable to hear it.

***Summary Part 10:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) leaves the office dazed, and strains to hear the voice again as he walks straight back to the Gryffindor dormitory. When [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) arrives, Harry tells him about the voice and that [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart) couldn’t hear it. Ron is confused, thinking that even someone invisible would have had to open the door. Harry lies  in bed, unsure of what to make of the incident.

***Analysis Part 10:***

The lack of information about the voice and where it is coming from is the thing that unsettles Harry the most, and is ultimately the thing that enables a series of rumors about the attacks to spread through the castle.

***Important Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

Angelina, Alicia, and Katie had come over, too. There were no girls on the Slytherin team, who stood shoulder to shoulder, facing the Gryffindors, leering to a man. (7.61)

***Explanation:***

Angelina, Alicia, and Katie are the three Gryffindor Quidditch team Chasers. Rowling's depictions of the Slytherins are uniformly awful: Here, all the guys on the team are "leering" at the three Gryffindor women. This is a description of a bunch of random, nameless guys whom we never see again, but because they're Slytherins, Rowling still takes care to emphasize that they are "leering" – an adjective with a negative connotation. We find this passage striking (even though it's so brief) because it points out something we've always wondered about the world of Harry Potter: Do you get sorted into Slytherin because you're a jerk already, or do you become a jerk because you have been sorted into Slytherin? By being sorted into a house where everyone (especially the Gryffindors) expects you to be a dangerous Dark wizard probably has a damaging psychological effect on the kids who are placed there. J.K. Rowling always emphasizes the various bad traits of her Slytherin characters, so it's hard to imagine their better qualities. Why does Rowling choose to portray the Slytherins in such dark terms, as opposed to the Gryffindors? How do you think a Slytherin would tell the story of the Harry Potter novels?

***Quotation 2:***

"Now, listen here, you lot," he said, glowing at them all. "We should have won the Quidditch Cup last year. We're easily the best team. But unfortunately – owing to circumstances beyond our control —"

Harry shifted guilty in his seat. He had been unconscious in the hospital wing for the final match of the previous year, meaning that Gryffindor had been a player short and had suffered their worst defeat in three hundred years.

Wood took a moment to regain control of himself. Their last defeat was clearly still torturing him. (7.38-40)

***Explanation:***

Lucius Malfoy's principle is that Muggles are bad and wizards are awesome. Professor Dumbledore's principles seem to be all about good vs. evil, and morality. Then there's Oliver Wood, with the refreshingly simple principle that Quidditch is the Most Important Thing on Earth. He mainly seems to feel bad about Harry's hospitalization at the end of Book 1 because it meant Gryffindor lost the Quidditch Cup. Wood is like a stereotype of the serious sports fan, for whom nothing matters except the sport. Wood's presence (and Quidditch in general) lightens things up a little. Harry Potter may be caught in the battle between good and evil, but at least there's always his favorite broomstick sport. How do you compare to Wood? Do you have a sport that makes everything else seem unimportant in comparison? Do you know fans like Wood? Which sports seem to inspire this kind of loyalty among the people you know?

"Good, aren't they?" said Malfoy smoothly. "But perhaps the Gryffindor team will be able to raise some gold and get new brooms, too. You could raffle off those Cleansweep Fives; I expect a museum would bid for them."

***Quotation 3:***

The Slytherin team howled with laughter.

"At least no one on the Gryffindor team had to buy their way in," said Hermione sharply. "They got in on pure talent."

The smug look on Malfoy's face flickered.

"No one asked your opinion, you filthy little Mudblood," he spat.

Harry knew at once that Malfoy had something really bad because there was an instant uproar at his words. Flint had to dive in front of Malfoy to stop Fred and George jumping on him. (7.77-82)

***Explanation:***

Draco's introduction of the word "Mudblood" is huge in terms of the overall direction of the novel. It's the first time that we hear a real epithet about magical people born from Muggles – and it's proof that Draco is a giant bigot. All of the nasty stuff he says about the Weasleys and their poverty is awful, but it's also more familiar. Even here in the Muggle world, we have snobs who think badly of people who are poor. Still, "Mudblood" is an ugly word that we don't have in the Muggle world (of course), so we're getting into a new area of prejudice here. Clearly, the whole idea of Mudbloods and wizarding supremacy is at the core of the Death Eater movement, so this expression is key to the main conflicts of the Harry Potter series.

***Quotation 4:***

"I don't really understand Quidditch," said Colin breathlessly. "Is it true there are four balls? And two of them fly around trying to knock people off their brooms?"

"Yes," said Harry heavily, resigned to explaining the complicated rules of Quidditch. "They're called Bludgers. There are two Beaters on each team who carry clubs to beat the Bludgers away from their side. Fred and George Weasley are the Gryffindor Beaters." (7.22-23)

***Explanation:***

Moments like this one between first year Colin Creevey and Harry remind us that this is the second book of the series. For her potential new readers, J.K. Rowling has to include some exposition of all of the things she's set up in Book 1, things like the wizarding world's moving photographs or Quidditch. Of course, later on in the series, Rowling can assume that her readers are familiar enough with Harry's world not to need instruction in Quidditch. By Book 2, though, it's still early days in the Harry Potter series and all of these things we take for granted now aren't as widely known or established as they will be by Book 7. With his endless questions, Colin becomes an excellent tool for Rowling to instruct her new readers in the basic rules of Hogwarts and Harry's life, since he's (a) obsessed with Harry, and (b) a first year, so, busily absorbing the amazing world around him. Colin is both a character and a mechanism of the narrative.