

A horrible thought struck Harry, as horrible thoughts always do when you're very nervous. What if he wasn't chosen at all? What if he just sat there with the hat over his eyes for ages, until Professor McGonagall jerked it off his head and said there had obviously been a mistake and he'd better get back on the train?

When Neville Longbottom, the boy who kept losing his toad, was called, he fell over on his way to the stool. The hat took a long time to decide with Neville. When it finally shouted, "GRYFFINDOR," Neville ran off still wearing it, and had to jog back amid gales of laughter to give it to "MacDougal, Morag."

Malfoy swaggered forward when his name was called and got his wish at once: the hat had barely touched his head when it screamed, "SLYTHERIN!"

Malfoy went to join his friends Crabbe and Goyle, looking pleased with himself.

There weren't many people left now.

"Moon" ... , "Nott" ... , "Parkinson" ... , then a pair of twin girls, "Patil" and "Patil" ... , then "Perks, Sally-Anne" ... , and then, at last —

"Potter, Harry!"

As Harry stepped forward, whispers suddenly broke out like little hissing fires all over the hall.

*"Potter, did she say?"*

*"The Harry Potter?"*

The last thing Harry saw before the hat dropped over his eyes was the hall full of people craning to get a good look at him. Next second he was looking at the black inside of the hat. He waited.

"Hmm," said a small voice in his ear. "Difficult. Very difficult. Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind either. There's talent, oh my goodness, yes — and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that's interesting. ... So where shall I put you?"