"HUFFLEPUFF!" shouted the hat again, and Susan scuttled off to sit next to Hannah.

"Boot, Terry!"

"RAVENCLAW!"

The table second from the left clapped this time; several Ravenclaws stood up to shake hands with Terry as he joined them.

"Brocklehurst, Mandy" went to Ravenclaw too, but "Brown, Lavender" became the first new Gryffindor, and the table on the far left exploded with cheers; Harry could see Ron's twin brothers catcalling.

"Bulstrode, Millicent" then became a Slytherin. Perhaps it was Harry's imagination, after all he'd heard about Slytherin, but he thought they looked like an unpleasant lot.

He was starting to feel definitely sick now. He remembered being picked for teams during gym at his old school. He had always been last to be chosen, not because he was no good, but because no one wanted Dudley to think they liked him.

"Finch-Fletchley, Justin!"

"HUFFLEPUFF!"

Sometimes, Harry noticed, the hat shouted out the House at once, but at others it took a little while to decide. "Finnigan, Sea-mus," the sandy-haired boy next to Harry in the line, sat on the stool for almost a whole minute before the hat declared him a Gryffindor.

"Granger, Hermione!"

Hermione almost ran to the stool and jammed the hat eagerly on her head.

"GRYFFINDOR!" shouted the hat. Ron groaned.