

= The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter =

The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter : A Treasury of Myths , Legends , and Fascinating Facts is a guide to the fictional Harry Potter universe , written by David Colbert . It explores the references to history , legends , and literature in J.K. Rowling 's Harry Potter novels . Colbert conceived the idea for The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter while quizzing his nephew and nieces about the mythological references in the novels . He later wrote the book while teaching a seminar on self @-@ publishing to graduate students at the University of North Carolina . The book was published in March 2001 , without approval from Rowling , and has since received positive reviews from critics . An updated version of The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter was published in 2004 by Berkley Books .

= = Content = =

The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter explores the references to history , legends , and literature in J.K. Rowling 's Harry Potter novels . David Colbert , the author of the book , told the St. Louis Post @-@ Dispatch that the Harry Potter novels " are [...] literary treasure hunts for [Rowling 's] readers . What seem like funny @-@ sounding names and places and excursions into fantasy all have a basis in either history , myth or legend . " He added , however , that he thinks Rowling has been able to turn these elements into her own , and concluded : " A couple of times , every generation , some writer gets it exactly right and really makes it their own , and J.K. Rowling has done that . "

The 220 @-@ pages @-@ long book features 53 chapters . Colbert writes about the connections between Rowling 's novels and folklore , Greek mythology , and the cultures of Ancient Egypt , Ancient Rome , and the Aztec . For example , he explains that Rowling got the name for the character Draco Malfoy from the Latin word for dragon , draco . One of the connections to folklore that Colbert find the most fascinating is the name of the evil wizard family The Malfoys . They are named after the Latin word for " evil @-@ doer " , maleficus , which was used in medieval times to describe witches . In addition , there is a chapter in the book that explains the origins of the names of the spells featured in the Harry Potter series . Expelliarmus , for example , is a spell that disarms the opponent ; it comes from the Latin words expello and arma , which mean " to drive out " and " weapon " .

Colbert explains in the introduction of the book that one of the reasons he enjoys reading Rowling is because of these references that she hides in the novels . He comments that he believes she may have inserted them into the books to encourage readers to learn more about mythology and folklore ; " As [Rowling] said when somebody asked her in a chat about the source of one of the unforgivable curses [featured in the books] , she said , ' Look it up , a little investigation is good for a person . ' "

= = Background = =

Colbert received the idea for The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter during the summer of 2000 , when his young nephew and nieces spent their vacation at his home in Wrightsville Beach , North Carolina . During the first half of the children 's vacation , Colbert noticed their excitement for the novel Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire , which was about to be released in bookstores . When his nephew and nieces received the book , they read it for the remainder of their vacation with him .

Colbert , a historian and former head writer on the television quiz show Who Wants to Be a Millionaire ? , became interested in the books and bought the first novel in the series , Harry Potter and the Philosopher 's Stone , to see what the story was about . As he was reading , he began to notice mythological references in the book . He commented : " I almost laughed out loud when I came across the three @-@ headed dog [Fluffy] . I instantly knew it was a reference to Cerberus , the threeheaded beast which Ancient Greeks believed guarded the gates to the Underworld . " Inspired by this , Colbert continued to search the book for more references and noticed that most characters ' names are based on their personality and every magic creature is a reference to

mythology and folklore .

Excited about his discoveries , Colbert began quizzing his nephew and nieces about the references featured in the books . He started by asking them if they knew who Fluffy was based on , and when revealing that the answer was Cerberus , they " gave him a blank stare " . Soon , however , the children thought it was " cool that their hero , Harry , was encountering some of the creatures of mythology . " Colbert felt that knowing the origins of Rowling 's character and creatures increased " the books ' magic tenfold " and made the Harry Potter universe seem more lifelike . Feeling that he wanted to share this with others , Colbert spent a year researching the references in the novels and collected his discoveries for a guidebook to the magical world of Harry Potter .

= = Publication and reception = =

Colbert wrote The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter while teaching a seminar on self @-@ publishing to graduate students at the University of North Carolina . He had it self @-@ published in March 2001 and hired a company to take care of accounting , marketing , promotion , and selling . Colbert has never met Rowling and the book has not been approved by her or Warner Brothers (the owner of the film rights to the Harry Potter novels) . He was given permission to publish it as long as he noted on the cover that it had not been approved by Rowling .

The book has been met with positive reactions from critics . Margie Thomson of The New Zealand Herald commented that " it 's interesting , although light , and should keep smart @-@ alecky kids and the truly curious happy and occupied for some time . " The Sacramento Bee 's Judy Green was also positive , saying that it " comes across as smart fun just begging for a trivia game . It 's a great way to spend time with Harry while waiting for the next novel . " The Times ' Sarah Johnson said " this irresistibly dippable book gently draws children into the joys of works of reference and is also a glorious tribute to Rowling 's work . "

Despite the book not having been approved by Rowling , Marti Davis of The Knoxville News @-@ Sentinel suspected that she " would definitely approve of the wonderfully researched book which traces many of the characters , creatures and terms used in Rowling 's book to classic literature and ancient history . " The Birmingham Post 's Jayne Howarth added that the book is " fun to dip in and out of while reading the Potter stories and it illustrates just how clever these pieces of literature are . "

The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter has been praised for teaching children about literature and history . Theresa Tighe of the St. Louis Post @-@ Dispatch commented that " grown @-@ ups might like Colbert 's book , too , because it painlessly exposes youngsters to Shakespeare , Chaucer , Ovid , Flaubert and more . " In addition , Candice Nguyen of the The Oakland Tribune said " parents may actually appreciate this book more when they realize that their children are receiving subtle history lessons while they read Harry Potter books and actually enjoying it . " The Sunday Tasmanian noted that " understanding the derivatives of language , both made up and actual such as the French , can only enrich the vocabulary of children . "

Following the success of The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter , Colbert released the book The Magical Worlds of The Lord of the Rings : The Amazing Myths , Legends and Facts Behind the Masterpiece ? a guide to J. R. R. Tolkien 's The Lord of the Rings novels ? in late 2002 . An updated version of The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter was published in 2004 by Berkley Books , just before the film Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban was released . Colbert wrote and published The Magical Worlds of Narnia in 2005 , a guide to the fictional Narnia universe .