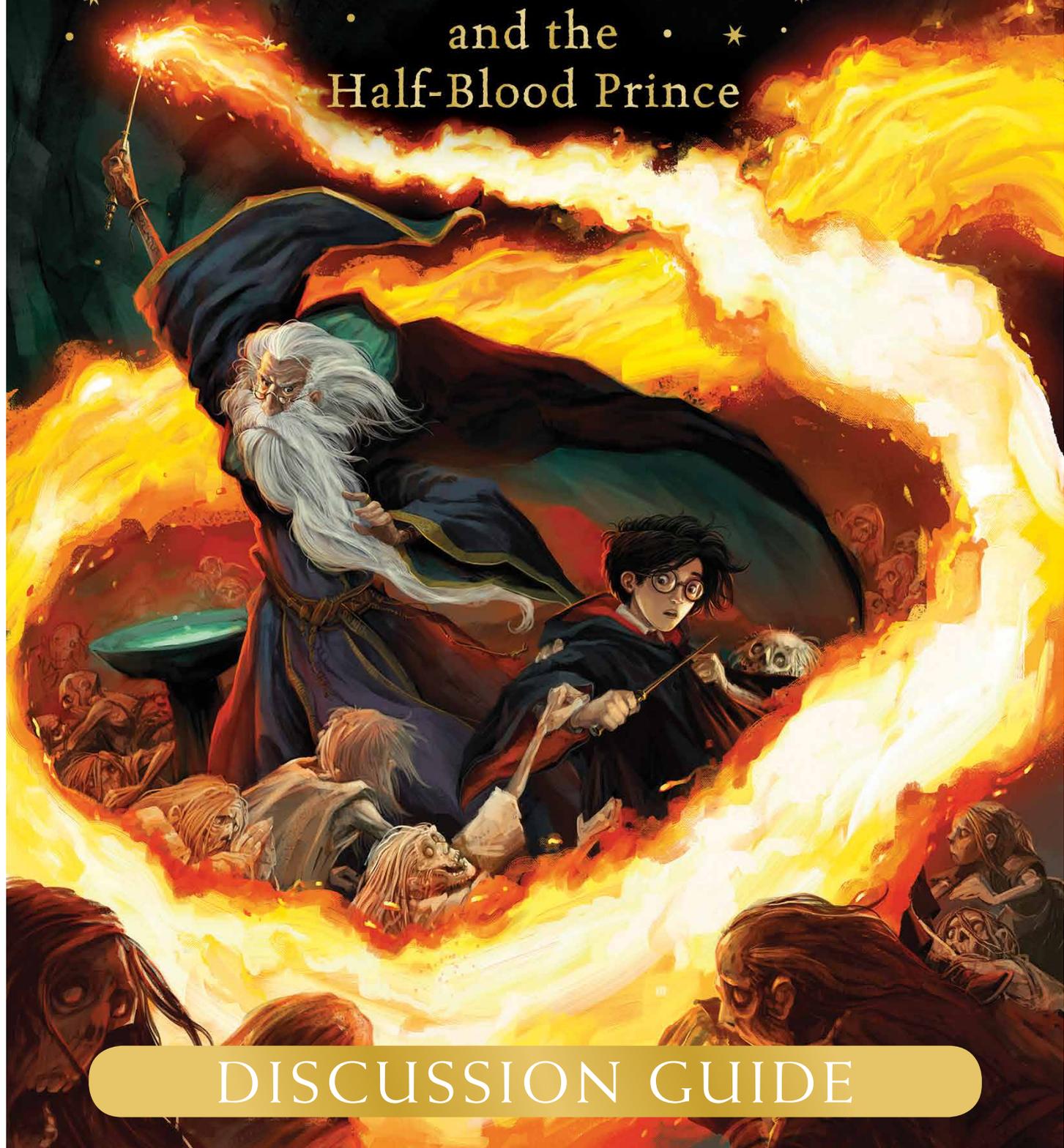


J.K. ROWLING
HARRY POTTER

and the
Half-Blood Prince



DISCUSSION GUIDE



HARRY POTTER

and the Half-Blood Prince

DISCUSSION GUIDE

ABOUT THE HARRY POTTER BOOKS AND THIS GUIDE

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books are among the most popular and acclaimed of all time. Published in the UK between 1997 and 2007 and beginning with *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the seven books are epic stories of Harry Potter and his friends as they attend Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Crossing genres including fantasy, thriller and mystery, and at turns exhilarating, humorous and sad, the stories explore universal human values, longings and choices.

The Harry Potter books are compelling reading for children and adults alike; they have met phenomenal success around the world and have been translated into 77 languages. A whole generation of children grew up awaiting the publication of each book in the series with eager anticipation, and they still remain enormously popular.

The Harry Potter books make excellent starting points for discussion. These guides outline a host of ideas for discussions and other activities that can be used in the classroom, in a reading group or at home. They cover some of the main themes of the series, many of which, while set in an imaginary world, deal with universal issues of growing up that are familiar to all children. You will also find references to key moments on pottermore.com, where you can discover more about the world of Harry Potter. These guides are aimed at stimulating lively discussion and encouraging close engagement with books and reading. We hope you will use the ideas in this guide as a basis for educational and enjoyable work – and we think your group will be glad you did!



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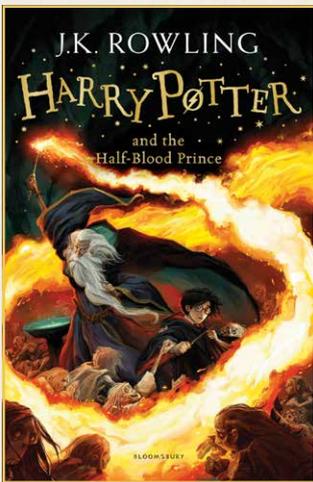


HARRY POTTER

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INTRODUCTION TO *HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE*



Dumbledore takes a more active role in Harry's education, personally retrieving him from the Dursleys' home and taking him along to recruit a new teacher for Hogwarts, Professor Slughorn. In Slughorn's Potions class, Harry acquires a second-hand textbook once owned by someone who called himself the Half-Blood Prince, and he uses the notes in the book to his own advantage. Meanwhile, Harry is convinced that Draco Malfoy has become a Death Eater with a secret mission, which he is determined to uncover. But Dumbledore gives Harry a more important task: to retrieve a memory from Slughorn that will illuminate a mystery about Voldemort's past.

Voldemort's return to power has brought about murder and mayhem throughout the country. Dumbledore tries to provide Harry with the knowledge he will need to ultimately defeat Voldemort, including glimpses into the past using the Pensieve and the awareness of the possible creation of Horcruxes that Voldemort used to contain pieces of his tattered soul. The story acquires a serious tone; it is now clear that only Harry can rid the world of this villain, as a long-ago prophecy stated: 'Neither can live while the other survives.'



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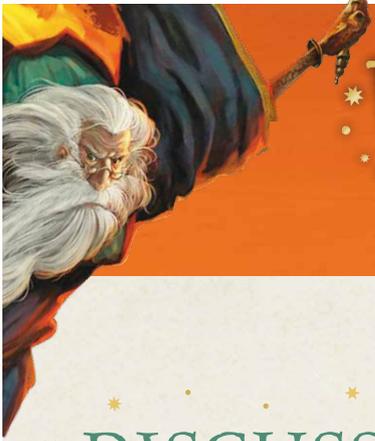
DISCUSSION POINTS FOR *HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE*

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. Why does Narcissa Malfoy insist that Snape make an Unbreakable Vow to protect Draco (Chapter 2, 'Spinner's End')? Describe the differences between Narcissa and her sister Bellatrix.
2. Why does Dumbledore take Harry with him to convince Slughorn to return to Hogwarts (Chapter 4, 'Horace Slughorn')? What is the weakness in Slughorn that Dumbledore hopes to exploit, and how does Harry's presence help recruit him? Why does Dumbledore feel it necessary to warn Harry about Slughorn's habit of 'collecting' favourite students?
3. Why doesn't anyone else share Harry's fear that Draco Malfoy has become a Death Eater? Review the enmity between Harry and Draco that has persisted since their first year at Hogwarts. Why does Harry risk sneaking into Draco's compartment on the train, and is Draco's attack on him more vicious than other attacks in the past (Chapter 7, 'The Slug Club')?
4. Discuss Harry's assessment of Snape's first Defence Against the Dark Arts class: 'It was surely one thing to respect the Dark Arts as a dangerous enemy, another to speak of them, as Snape was doing, with a loving caress in his voice?' (Chapter 9, 'The Half-Blood Prince', p. 149)



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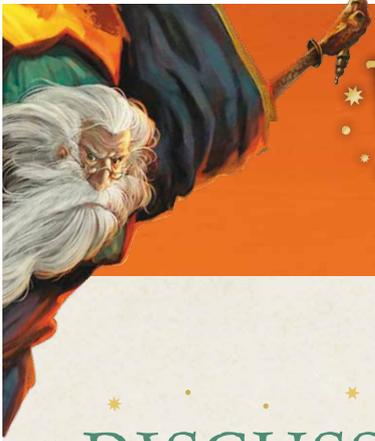
DISCUSSION POINTS FOR *HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE*

Is this an indication of Snape's true feelings about the Dark Arts, or is it Harry's past perception of Snape that leads him to ask this question? Discuss Lupin's comment to Harry that he has inherited an old prejudice against Snape from both James and Sirius (Chapter 16, 'A Very Frosty Christmas', p. 278).

5. Slughorn introduces the students to four potions that play an important role in the story: Veritaserum, Polyjuice Potion, Amortentia and Felix Felicis (Chapter 9, 'The Half-Blood Prince'). Discuss how the name of each describes its properties and how each of these potions (or the knowledge of them) affects the plot in this book. What is Slughorn's answer to why more people don't use Felix Felicis? Discuss his warning about Amortentia, that it produces not love but obsession.
6. Dumbledore's private lessons with Harry consist mainly of learning about Tom Riddle's history and background. Why is it important for Harry to have this information, even though much of it is conjecture? Compare the story of eleven-year-old Tom Riddle learning that he will attend Hogwarts in Chapter 13, 'The Secret Riddle', to Harry's similar experience in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Compare Riddle's experience of living in the orphanage to Harry's living with the Dursleys. Why was it easy for Harry to make friends at school, while Dumbledore tells him 'Lord Voldemort has never had a friend, nor do I believe that he has ever wanted one.' (p. 231)



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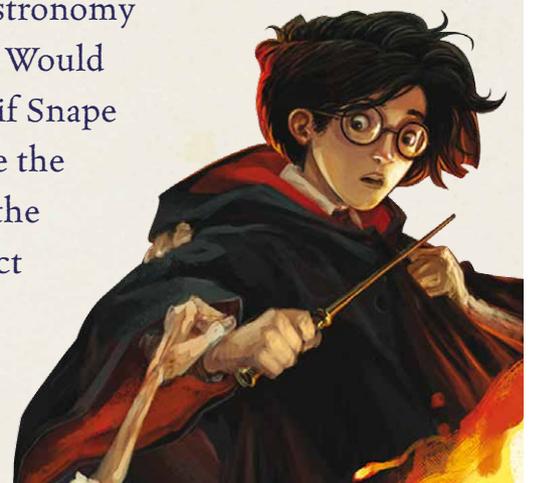
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DISCUSSION POINTS FOR *HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE*

7. Harry's borrowed copy of *Advanced Potion-Making* gives him an advantage in the Potions class, but also access to some nasty and dangerous spells. Should he be using this book? Why is Hermione so opposed to him following the notations in the book? Who did you suspect was the 'Half-Blood Prince'?
8. When he visits The Burrow at Christmas, why does Scrimgeour try to get Harry to act as if he is working with the Ministry (Chapter 16, 'A Very Frosty Christmas')? Why is Harry unwilling to do that? Why does Dumbledore also refuse to cooperate with the Ministry, instead pursuing his theories about Voldemort on his own?
9. How does Harry retrieve the important memory from Slughorn (Chapter 22, 'After the Burial')? Did he really need the Felix Felicis to get it? Discuss the concept of Horcruxes and how Tom Riddle coaxed the information from Slughorn. What effect has the creation of so many Horcruxes had on Voldemort?
10. Why does Dumbledore immobilise Harry on the Astronomy Tower (Chapter 27, 'The Lightning-Struck Tower')? Would Draco have used the Killing Curse on Dumbledore if Snape had not arrived? Why does Draco hesitate? Describe the effects on Harry of each of the deaths that occur at the ends of books four, five and six. How does each affect his resolve to be the one to finish Voldemort?



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DISCUSSION POINTS FOR *HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE*

IN DEPTH

1.

SACRIFICE

Harry, Dumbledore and others seem willing to make more personal sacrifices than ever to achieve their goals in this book. Look at some examples, including Harry's realisation that his struggle against Voldemort may one day cost Harry his life (Chapter 23, 'Horcruxes', p.425/6), and Dumbledore's willingness to risk his own well-being, for example in Chapter 26, 'The Cave'. What do these episodes tell us about the characters?

2.

LOVE

In Chapter 23, 'Horcruxes', Dumbledore tells Harry he is protected by his ability to love: 'The only protection that can possibly work against the lure of power like Voldemort's!' (p. 424) What do you think this means? Why does Dumbledore refer back to Harry's encounter with the Mirror of Erised in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* when he explains this to Harry? Despite all the magic powers that are on show in the series, is love the strongest defence and weapon of all? Why?

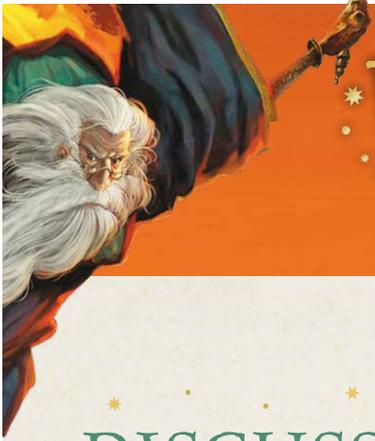
3.

JEALOUSY

Discuss the theme of jealousy which surfaces in this volume as the Hogwarts students become more aware of their emerging feelings. Why does Ron



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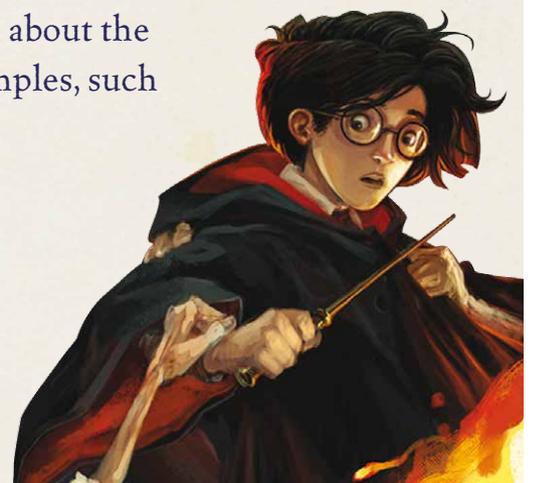
get involved with Lavender? Why does Harry hold back his growing feelings for Ginny? How do Slughorn's private parties for students lead to further feelings of exclusion? How does Harry feel about the attention he gets this year as 'The Chosen One', as opposed to his dubious reputation in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*?

4. CHANGING IDENTITIES

As the end of the series nears, discuss how the characters have changed with each successive book. How different or similar are Harry, Ron and Hermione from when they started at Hogwarts? What about other characters? How has Dumbledore developed as a character across the series? Does Snape's identity change across the books?

5. CLIFFHANGERS

Many of the chapters of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* close on cliffhangers, as they do throughout the series, leaving the reader eager to find out what will happen next. Talk about the techniques behind this, and look at a couple of examples, such as Chapter 18, 'Birthday Surprises'.



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DISCUSSION GUIDE

ACTIVITY AND PROJECT IDEAS

MAKE A HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE BOOK TRAILER

OBJECTIVE

To produce a short book trailer to promote *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* to other potential readers

UK CURRICULUM AREAS

English, Design, IT

LEARNING OUTCOMES

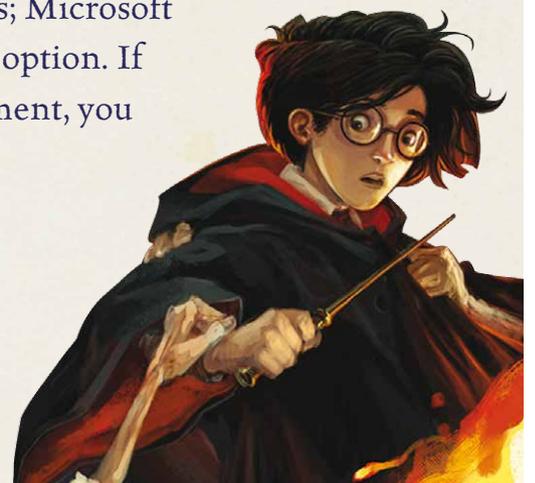
Improve scriptwriting, public speaking and video production and other IT skills

START POINT

Watching book trailers that have been produced for books in the past; www.youtube.com/user/bloomsburykids is a good place to start. Discuss what children like and dislike about them, and what they think makes a good book trailer.

MAIN ACTIVITY

1. Gather together as much suitable IT equipment as you can. A digital camera and a good video-editing software package are the basics; Microsoft Photo Story is a particularly good and user-friendly option. If you don't have access to the aforementioned equipment, you can create a storyboard for a trailer instead.
2. Divide children into groups and set them off by writing a script for the narration of their trailers based on *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*.



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Children should first work out what they would like to say about the book, and make sure they include basic information, like the title, author and publisher. Beyond that, they need to explain what the book is about without giving too much away. Work towards a two-minute trailer, which will require a script of about 200 words; this isn't very long, so it will need to be tightly focused.

3. Gather pictures. There are two ways to do this: take photos on a camera and find suitable images online. Photos children take could be of the book cover or people reading it; photos they research should be on copyright-free sites that you have checked first.
4. Add the photos to the software package you are using, and adjust the speed of the slideshow to fill two minutes. Add the narration on top, and put plenty of expression into it to grab viewers' attention. Perhaps add some background music behind it; there is copyright-free music available online.
5. Edit. Watch the trailer back to see if it flows properly and if the audio content matches the visual images. Adjust the order of pictures or the contents or tone of narration if need be.

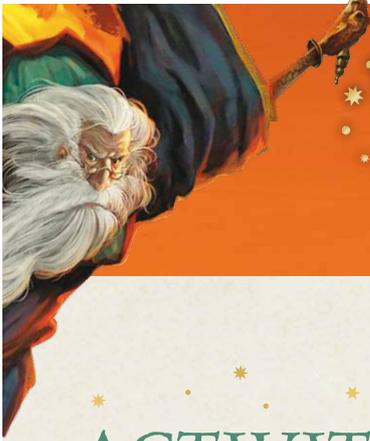
WRAP-UP

Screen the trailers at a special session and start a discussion about the process. What worked well during the production and what was challenging? Get children to vote for their favourite trailers with a show of hands. Show the best trailers at an assembly.



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ACTIVITY AND PROJECT IDEAS

FOUR MORE ACTIVITIES

1. FIND A QUOTE

The Harry Potter books are full of memorable quotes. Can your group pick one from *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*? They should look for a quote that particularly resonated with them, that serves to sum up a passage of the story or that addresses one of the big themes of the book. Collate the suggestions into a sheet of quotes. You will find a selection of quotes at harrypotter.bloomsbury.com/uk/fun-stuff/quotes/.

2. DRAW A CLASSROOM

Distribute graph paper and ask your group to draw how they imagine a Hogwarts classroom would look, for example the Potions classroom. They should include as much detail as possible and use symbols to show where things like doors, windows and desks should be. Try to draw it to scale and include this on the paper.

3. WRITE A REVIEW

Ask your group to write a review for *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. Discuss with your group what kind of issues a review of the book might deal with. Encourage them to think critically and to back up their views with examples from the book. Encourage other members of the group to offer alternative views.



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4.

IF YOU LIKED THIS ...

Having read *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, what books might the group enjoy next? Gather suggestions for titles by other authors that the group have enjoyed, and ask them to explain what they liked about them. Collate all the suggestions on a sheet that can be handed out to take to a library, bookshop or home to parents. Visit www.bloomsbury.com/uk/childrens if you need some inspiration.



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