



## Mapping the World of Harry Potter: Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Explore the Bestselling Series of All Time

*Mercedes Lackey (Editor / Contributor), Leah Wilson (Editor), Adam-Troy Castro (Contributor), Roxanne Longstreet Conrad (Contributor), Elisabeth DeVos (Contributor), Richard Garfinkle (Contributor), Roberta Gellis (Contributor), Marguerite Krause (Contributor), more... Susan R. Matthews (Contributor), Joyce Millman (Contributor), Daniel P. Moloney (Contributor), Lawrence Watt-Evans (Contributor), Martha Wells (Contributor), Sarah Zettel (Contributor), James E. Gunn (Contributor) ... less*

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With up-to-date information through book six in the series, this companion volume offers a comprehensive look at the world of Harry Potter through the eyes of leading science fiction and fantasy writers and religion, psychology, and science experts.

### Mapping the World of Harry Potter: Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Explore the Bestselling Series of All Time Details

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## From Reader Review Mapping the World of Harry Potter: Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Explore the Bestselling Series of All Time for online ebook

### Carmen Maloy says

"Mapping the World of Harry Potter" is a great addition to any Harry Potter collection. The essays are diverse and hit many subjects, some obvious, like the problems of religion (or lack of) in the series. For instance, "Harry Potter and the End of Religion" targets what the author sees as a complete lack or need for religion in the books, while "It's All About God" defends the religion within, saying that the series is, indeed, spiritual in a natural sense. Another essay, "Hermione Granger and the Charge of Sexism," addresses the charges of sexism that have been leveled at the book and responds with how many of the female characters are actually strong in their own right, not dependent on men to make their decisions or succeed at their goals. In addition, "From Azkaban to Abu Ghraib" looks at the increasing amount of politics in the books, drawing parallels within Hogwarts and the wizarding world to fascism, the Third Reich and other oppressive political movements.

Of course, not all the essays have such serious subject matter. Some of the other essays are more innocent and humorous, including Mercedes Lackey's description of her own "Harry Potter" drinking game and why Harry is going to need some serious therapy if he survives.

There are fourteen essays in all, touching on many characters and aspects of the wizarding world, and an introduction by Mercedes Lackey. There's something for all kinds of Harry Potter fans in this diverse compilation, and it definitely gives you more to think about when re-reading the series. I would however limit my recommendation of this one to adult-only HP fans. Just a suggestion :)

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### Anthony says

BenBella Books has a series of anthologies out called "The SmartPop Series." The idea is that they get well-known writers (of science fiction and fantasy mostly, but there are some exceptions) to write essays about a particular pop-culture topic, and place those essays in the hands of a well-known author who acts as editor. I finished reading Mapping The World of Harry Potter last night. Edited by Mercedes Lackey, the essays run the gamut from sociological (Hermione Granger and the Charge of Sexism) to literary analysis (Neville Longbottom: The Hero With A Thousand Faces) to thoughtful ruminations on what might happen in book seven and beyond (Why Killing Harry Potter Is The Worst Outcome for Voldemort). Some fall short of the mark: The Dursleys as Social Commentary runs out of steam half-way through and seems to lose its point; Harry Potter as Schooldays Novel is just too boring and esoteric. Of the intentionally funny pieces, Mercedes Lackey's own contribution is too short by at least half (Harry Potter and the Post Traumatic Stress Counselor) while The Proper Wizard's Guide To Good Manners is dead on funny -- I had to check the byline to make sure it wasn't really written by either Neil Gaiman or Terry Pratchett, which is a compliment in my book.

I recommend "Mapping" to Harry Potter fans who would enjoy a not-so-seriously-critical analysis of aspects of the Potterverse.

## Jessica says

This book is a compilation of literary essays by authors on different aspects of the Harry Potter world. I found it enlightening and fascinating, and sometimes disturbing as far as Snape's essay. It really made me think of many aspects that previously hadn't occurred to me, and it was fun watching the authors' guesses as to the outcome of the story, since at the time of publishing, the 7th book had not been released. A definite must-read for any Potterhead!

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## Meaghan says

This was better than *Harry Potter for Nerds*. It was published between the releases of *Half-Blood Prince* and *Deathly Hallows*, which gives it an interesting perspective: I know I remember how feverishly we all speculated about what might happen in book seven, and it's fun to revisit that feeling.

I liked the first essay, "Harry Potter and the Young Man's Mistake" by Daniel P. Moloney very much. It takes a look at the relationship between Harry and Dumbledore from the perspective of Dumbledore's line about it being an old man's fault if he forgets what it was like to be young, and examines what the author sees as a couple of potential flaws in Harry's character through that lens. This is probably the best essay in the book.

Other favourites include Martha Wells' piece on Neville, because I love Neville, and Adam-Troy Castro's "From Azkaban to Abu Ghraib," on Rowling's portrayal of creeping fascism, which now of course seems extra relevant.

Where *Harry Potter for Nerds* took a Christian perspective, this book does not; two essays might even be called anti-religion (or at least anti-fundamentalist). There are also pieces on Snape fanfiction, the Dursleys, feminism, the hero story, the school novel tradition, and a truly stupid thing that tries to imagine an etiquette book advising wizards on how to behave in Muggle society.

I would say three or four of the 14 essays are very good, and only two or three are complete wastes of time. The rest are at least interesting if perhaps not terribly groundbreaking.

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## ~Geektastic~ says

*Mapping the World of Harry Potter* is an anthology of essays from fantasy and science fiction authors that explore different facets of the Harry Potter series. They only cover material through *Half-Blood Prince*, so not only do they examine some crucial elements of the stories, there are some interesting hypotheses on the different ways the series could have ended as well.

I found all of them to be interesting, though in varying degrees. Some cover religion (or really the lack thereof), some look at the Cambellian hero mythos, and others cross into even stranger territory by looking at Harry's potential PTSD, fascism in the Potter universe, and even a look at fan fiction involving Severus Snape sleeping with his students. While I found something to ponder in nearly all of them, my favorite essays are those centered on Hermione: "Hermione Granger and the Charge of Sexism" by Sarah Zettel, and "Why Killing Harry Potter is the Worst Outcome for Voldemort" by Richard Garfinkle. In the first, Zettel dives into the world of Internet think pieces to debunk accusations that Harry Potter is sexist, using research

and context that the article authors didn't seem to find very necessary when forming their spurious arguments. Garfinkle's essay is a very well-crafted hypothesis of what would happen if Harry failed and Hermione stepped up to defeat Voldemort, which is perhaps too dark and convoluted for the target audience of the *Harry Potter* books, but is beautiful and terrible to behold.

If there is one essay that proved to be a weak link, it is "The Proper Wizard's Guide to Good Manners" by Roxanne Longstreet Conrad. In it, Conrad tells a humorous first-person narrative of a Muggle reading a book about the wizarding world's misguided approach to dealing with Muggles. The set up is cute, and it certainly captures the tone Rowling would have used for such a book, but it feels much more like a short story than an essay and doesn't quite fit with the rest.

Overall, anyone who loves Harry Potter, and perhaps finds they think "too seriously" about it will enjoy these essays.

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## Jeanette says

Mapping the World of Harry Potter is a collection of essays, serious and funny, about the Harry Potter books, written by a variety of Science Fiction authors. It was published in between the release of the fifth (*The Half-Blood Prince*) and final book (*Deathly Hallows*).

The essays are of differing quality and appeal and no doubt will appeal to different people differently. And of course there is the added humour of speculations on how the series will end - some way off base, others uncannily accurate. I particularly liked the Sarah Zettel's 'Hermione Granter and the Charge of Sexism', Roberta Gellis' 'The Durselys as Social Commentary,' Elisabeth DeVos' 'It's All About God'and Mercedes Lackey 'Harry Potter and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Counselling.' Most were interesting. Conrad's 'The Proper Wizard's Guide to Good Manners' did bring on some chuckles as did Lackey's Post-Traumatic Stress articl . Other's were - well tedious, repetitive or even a bit weird.

Overall, I enjoyed reading the book - even for Zettel's balanced and well argued article alone. Still relevant to read after the Harry Potter finale - but I wouldn't recommend it before finishing *The Half-Blood Prince* if you are concerned about major spoilers.

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## Eric Juneau says

This was written before "Deathly Hallows" came out, so a great deal of the essays deal with now defunct speculation over "what will happen?" Even so, it's still fun to see what people were thinking and how many of their predictions were eerily accurate. For example, one suggests that Harry must fight Voldemort alone, that Harry will not die, that Harry will die, that Neville will take a larger role, that Hermione and Ron will get together, that Snape is not as evil as "Half-Blood Prince" made him out to be.

Besides the predictions, it's also great to read analysis of a literary series to see what was done right and wrong. I learned that the Dursleys have a purpose beyond comic relief, why Snape has so many creepy fan girls, the series's roots in "English boarding school" books, and not only why Dumbledore died, but that he had to die, because he's the mentor on the hero's journey. My favorite is the last essay that details a "what would happen" scenario if Voldemort does win. Basically, Hermione goes medieval. I wouldn't have minded seeing that ending either.

## Candise says

This collection of essays regarding the HP books (through book 6) is pretty hit or miss. All of the authors touched on interesting issues, but most of the essays seemed to barely scratch the surface. I think the fact that many of the pieces were in personal essay form (and not academic) made it seem like I was reading the essays or theory boards on a Harry Potter fan site, when I would have preferred a well-constructed and researched article. I found myself torn between wallowing in pure nerd-dom over the fact that this book even existed and a mild disappointment that the analysis seemed so introductory 101. I had also hoped for some critical analysis as well. Perhaps something about fat-phobia or the hidden gay agenda (just kidding about that last one).

But even with its serious shortcomings, I would recommend this collection to any diehard Harry Potter fan. The detailing of fascism in the Order of the Phoenix was well thought out and brought up many points that I had not previously considered, and the piece about Snape being the sexy anti-hero of fanfics was hilarious. Ich Bin Ein Hufflepuff!!

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## Gina Denny says

Why did no one tell me this series of books existed? Academic folks, professional writers and editors talking about the science/social sciences, history, and constructive background of books, tv, and movies??? YES PLEASE. I went to Smart Pop's website and found, like, twelve more of these that I just HAVE to read in the next year.

That all said, there are a couple flaws with this particular installment. The essays in this book were all written after Half-Blood Prince was published, but before Deathly Hallows was out (only three films were out at this point, in fact). So... it's missing some info. And there are some conclusions that are jumped to that turn out to be based on a lack of complete information (we learn a lot more about Dumbledore in book 7 than we do in books 1-6, for instance; the same with Snape).

HOWEVER.

It's still people who know what they're talking about, and they're talking about Harry Potter. Have you ever had arguments about whether or not Hermione counts as a feminist character? Or applied Campbell's Hero's Journey to Neville, instead of Harry? Or had passionate discussions about Snape and whether he counts as a villain, an anti-hero, or a Byronic love interest???

Because I definitely have, and now there's a book that helps those discussions along.

YOU'RE WELCOME.

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## Beck says

Skimmed or read:

- Harry Potter and the young man's mistake / Daniel P. Moloney
- The Dursleys as social commentary / Roberta Gellis
- To Sir, with love / Joyce Millman
- Hermione Granger and the charge of sexism / Sarah Zettel
- Harry Potter and the post-traumatic stress disorder counselor / Mercedes Lackey
- Why killing Harry is the worst outcome for Voldemort / Richard Garfinkle

Didn't have time for:

- Harry Potter and the end of religion / Marguerite Krause
- It's all about God / Elisabeth DeVos
- Neville Longbottom : the hero with a thousand faces / Martha Wells
- Why Dumbledore had to die / Lawrence Watt-Evans
- From Azkaban to Abu Ghraib / Adam-Troy Castro
- Ich bin ein Hufflepuff / Susan R. Matthews
- Harry Potter as schooldays novel / James Gunn
- The proper wizard's guide to good manners / Roxanne Longstreet Conrad

Garfinkle took it too far, if serious...or was being playful.

Conrad's format seemed silly and perhaps disrespectful.

I did want to read Wells.

Castro seemed to cover the obvious, although I didn't look very closely.

More comments later, I hope.....

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## Daniel A. says

Full disclosure: I've read essays in other volumes in BenBella Books' Smart Pop series, primarily because said essays were written by friends of mine or authors I follow on Facebook or such. But *Mapping the World of Harry Potter* was the first time I've ever set out to read such a collection cover-to-cover, and I'm happy to say that most of the essays in this collection hold up to serious literary scrutiny.

When *Mapping the World of Harry Potter* came out, J.K. Rowling had only released the first six books; *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* wouldn't come out for about another two years. What makes *Mapping the World of Harry Potter* so remarkable is the precision and accuracy with which so many of the essayists in the collection made their predictions about the last *Harry Potter* novel. Whether Martha Wells' essay about the culmination of Neville Longbottom's hero's journey, Joyce Millman's about the possibility of Professor Snape's redemption, Lawrence Watt-Evans' about the ramifications of Professor Dumbledore's death, or several others, many speculations were eerily prescient. Even the essays that don't directly make predictions—such as Marguerite Krause's and Elisabeth DeVos' respective essays about religion in the *Harry Potter* series, Adam-Troy Castro's about fascism and Lord Voldemort, or Sarah Zettel's about the role of women in the books—operate as excellent literary criticism on their own merit. Perhaps the only essay that really doesn't work is Richard Garfinkle's final essay, for reasons really too elaborate to elucidate here, and that speaks well of *Mapping the World of Harry Potter* as a whole.

In some sense, a book like this defies a proper review—you either agree with the literary criticism, or you don't—but to the extent that I am able to elaborate thereupon, *Mapping the World of Harry Potter* has to be judged a success. Even as it analyzes and dissects the *Harry Potter* novels fully, it retains all the magic of the series as well, which is perhaps the greatest success of all.

## Ilaria says

Questa raccolta di saggi, opera di un gruppo di scrittori di fantasy e fantascienza, riunisce tredici diverse prospettive critiche su aspetti particolari dell'"universo Harry Potter". La fortunata serie di romanzi di J.K. Rowling viene inquadrata nell'ambito del genere fantasy, affrontando sia tematiche di ordine generale riguardo la ricezione dell'opera (Harry Potter e la religione – comprese le recenti esternazioni del papa e dei Teocon americani –, Harry Potter e la politica, Harry Potter come romanzo di formazione), sia questioni più specifiche relative a singoli personaggi: Harry e la sindrome post-traumatica da stress, la questione del sessismo nei personaggi femminili, la caratterizzazione psicologica dei comprimari.

Alcuni esempi:

"The Dursleys as Social Commentary": i perfidi zii di Harry sono i personaggi meno realistici e più caricaturali dell'intera saga: eppure, sono usati dall'autrice come fulcro della sua satira contro il pregiudizio e l'intolleranza, che è il tema centrale dei sei romanzi.

"To Sir, With Love": il fenomeno della fan fiction, cioè i racconti originali scritti dai fan, con protagonisti i personaggi della Rowling. Testimonianza di amore per il lavoro di un altro autore, talvolta però la fan fiction stravolge la psicologia dei personaggi. Perché l'odioso professor Snape [Piton] nelle mani dei fan è diventato una specie di sex symbol?

"Why Dumbledore Had to Die": i libri della Rowling devono molto alla tradizione mitologica nordica, la stessa da cui partono i libri di Tolkien. In questo saggio, Harry Potter è messo a confronto con altri miti della modernità, da Superman a Guerre stellari, alla luce delle celebri teorie di Joseph Campbell sulla natura universale del mito.

"From Azkaban to Abu Ghraib": la più famosa prigione magica e il famigerato carcere babbano: Harry Potter è un'amara e sfaccettata parodia che riflette sul mondo reale e sulle grandi questioni del nostro tempo. Terrorismo, corruzione e razzismo sono all'ordine del giorno anche tra i maghi.

Il libro è rivolto a chi ha già letto l'intera saga, ed è prevalentemente orientato a un pubblico di lettori adulti (diciamo dai sedici anni in su). Il livello di approfondimento è tale da qualificare questo libro come una raccolta di saggi di critica letteraria, e non solo una "guida agli incantesimi e ai personaggi", filone ormai ampiamente sfruttato. I testi qui raccolti, piuttosto, offrono spunti di riflessione non solo ai più sfegatati tra i fan, ma anche al lettore curioso che desidera approfondire alcuni aspetti della saga.

Essendo uscito nel 2005, il libro analizza solo i primi sei romanzi della serie.

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## Leeanna says

Mapping the World of Harry Potter: An Unauthorized Exploration of the Bestselling Fantasy Series of All Time, edited by Mercedes Lackey

Complete through book six, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," this collection of essays takes a look at why and how the Harry Potter series appeals or angers people. There are essays on religion, education,

politics, feminism, and more.

"Mapping the World of Harry Potter" mostly added to my enjoyment of J. K. Rowling's series; some of the essays gave me a lot to think about for the next time I reread the series.

Here is a list of the essays:

- Harry Potter and the Young Man's Mistake, by Daniel P. Moloney
- The Dursleys as Social Commentary, by Roberta Gellis
- To Sir, With Love, by Joyce Millman
- Harry Potter and the End of Religion, by Marguerite Krause
- It's All About God, by Elisabeth DeVos
- Hermione Granger and the Charge of Sexism, by Sarah Zettel
- Neville Longbottom: The Hero with a Thousand Faces, by Martha Wells
- Why Dumbledore Had to Die, by Lawrence Watt-Evans
- From Azkaban to Abu Ghraib, by Adam-Troy Castro
- Ich Bin Ein Hufflepuff, by Susan R. Matthews
- Harry Potter as Schooldays Novel, by James Gunn
- Harry Potter and the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Counselor, by Mercedes Lackey
- The Proper Wizard's Guide to Good Manners, by Roxanne Longstreet Conrad
- Why Killing Harry Is the Worst Outcome for Voldemort, by Richard Garfinkle

While "Mapping Harry Potter" was written before the publication of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," the essays are still worthwhile reading. All are authored by writers of science fiction and fantasy novels, and I plan to check out the work of several of the contributors.

I think my favorite was "To Sir, With Love," an essay on fanfiction and Professor Snape. I appreciated Joyce Millman's wit and humor, and I think I'll look up a few of the stories mentioned. I also enjoyed "Harry Potter as Schooldays Novel," which gave history on the tradition of British schooldays novels. I had heard Harry Potter referred to as that, but had no clue what it meant. Now I do, and it's a subgenre I plan to learn more about. I found "Why Killing Harry is the Worst Outcome for Voldemort" particularly clever, and something only the mind of a science fiction writer could create.

"The Proper Wizard's Guide to Good Manners" was my least favorite; I don't really see it as an essay but more fiction, and was a bit baffled while reading it.

I would recommend this for adult readers looking to expand their knowledge or thoughts on Harry, as some of the subject matter and language levels are above young fans.

4/5.

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## **Snail in Danger (Sid) Nicolaides says**

A generally well-conceived book of essays, though they are hampered by having only been written with the events through Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince in mind. (Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows hadn't been released yet.)

A while ago I read an interview with Ursula K. Le Guin where she remarked rather testily that, hello, Harry Potter is part of a long tradition of British boarding school novels, so what is all the fuss about? (I'll try to find a link if I saved one at the time. I found a not-by-me reference to it, though, so I know I didn't just

imagine it.) Anyway, one of the essays is on this topic. It's not a brilliant essay, but I'm glad that someone at least addressed it, because I was curious at the time I saw the quote but came up dry when doing a library catalogue search, and couldn't think of any other examples.

I did think that Sarah Zettel's essay on why the series was not sexist but also not feminist was brilliant.

Dates approximate.

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## **Carrie says**

i'm such a potter nerd. i think about it too much and too deeply. i'm the person who's annoyed that harry uses 'lumos' at the beginning of the third movie without getting in trouble for doing magic out of school. therefore, it was really nice to read deep, intelligent analysis of different facets of the stories. it was like talking to a smart friend who's equally obsessed. highlights were the essay about dumbledore and the 'old man's mistake', the essay about religion, wonder, the universal appeal and fundamentalist objection to the books, the investigation of sexism, and the attempt to understand the curious, widespread attraction to professor snape. i enjoyed these the most because they were subjects i had thought a lot about myself (with the exception of snape; i had no idea there was so much erotic fan fiction about him). the only downside was that i couldn't discuss with the authors my many thoughts and opinions, and i'm sure they feel the same way.

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