

When Harry Met Aggies

Harry Potter craze hits students, teachers and theaters in Bryan-College Station

By BETH MULDOON
THE BATTALION

The movie version of the British literary sensation from author J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* will premiere across the country Friday, and fans and critics alike can hardly contain themselves.

David Hill, a senior history and

political science major, said he anticipates not only the movie, but the release of Rowling's next Harry Potter book.

"I'm really excited about the Harry Potter movie," Hill said. "I've also read all four books and I am hooked. I can't wait for the fifth book to be released."

The popularity of Rowling's books about the tweedy boy wizard has spread like wildfire beyond the target

audience of adolescent readers. College students, parents, teachers and professionals have picked up the books and read them in a single sitting.

Diane Palmer, a junior English major, said the Harry Potter books provide literary enjoyment for people of all ages.

"I would recommend these books for everyone," Palmer said. "Age is

not a factor in reading the Harry Potter books, whether you're 80 years old or a toddler. Everyone will enjoy these books."

Professor Dorothy Van Riper, the children's literature and adolescent literature instructor at Texas A&M, chose to include the first and second Harry Potter books in her syllabus for the fall semester.

"The books are perfection," Van Riper said. "I teach the books because readers find themselves identifying with the characters when they least expect it."

According to Van Riper, the response from her students for the Harry Potter books has been a positive one.

"They love them," Van Riper said. "It's nice to see them hooked on a book that is worth their time and to see that they have a sincere interest in the stories."

Students in Van Riper's literature classes this semester read the first and second Harry Potter books, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. There will be seven Potter books in all, but Rowling only has written and released four. The fifth book in the series is set to be released in mid to late Summer 2002.

With the movie's premiere quickly approaching, the buzz about the film is that it will be an event Harry fans will not want to miss.

An employee at the Hollywood 16 movie theater in College Station said a number of opening-day *Sorcerer's Stone* shows have already been sold

out. One customer bought two entire shows for the premiere.

With the recent tragic events in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C., the Harry Potter movie may provide a breath of fresh air in a distraught world.

For Hill, the best part about Rowling's books is the escape from reality that her stories provide.

"Rowling has created a storyline that is very exciting and fun with characters that are dynamic enough for both adults and adolescents to relate to," Hill said. "The books provide an escape from the world and at the same time, emphasize the value of good versus evil."

Other Harry Potter fans enjoy Rowling's use of imagination and magic in the stories.

"The best part of Rowling's books is her use of imagery," Palmer said. "Harry's adventures give the reader a wonderful chance to put their imagination to work, and the fact that it's easy and fun reading make it that much more enjoyable."

For teachers like Van Riper, it is always a positive thing to see children reading books that feed their creativity and imaginations.

"It's so nice to pass through an airport and see children everywhere reading Harry Potter books rather than other mindless literature," Van Riper said. "It's wonderful to finally be able to be involved in and enjoy a fad."

Most Potter fans are excited about the release of the film on Friday, how-

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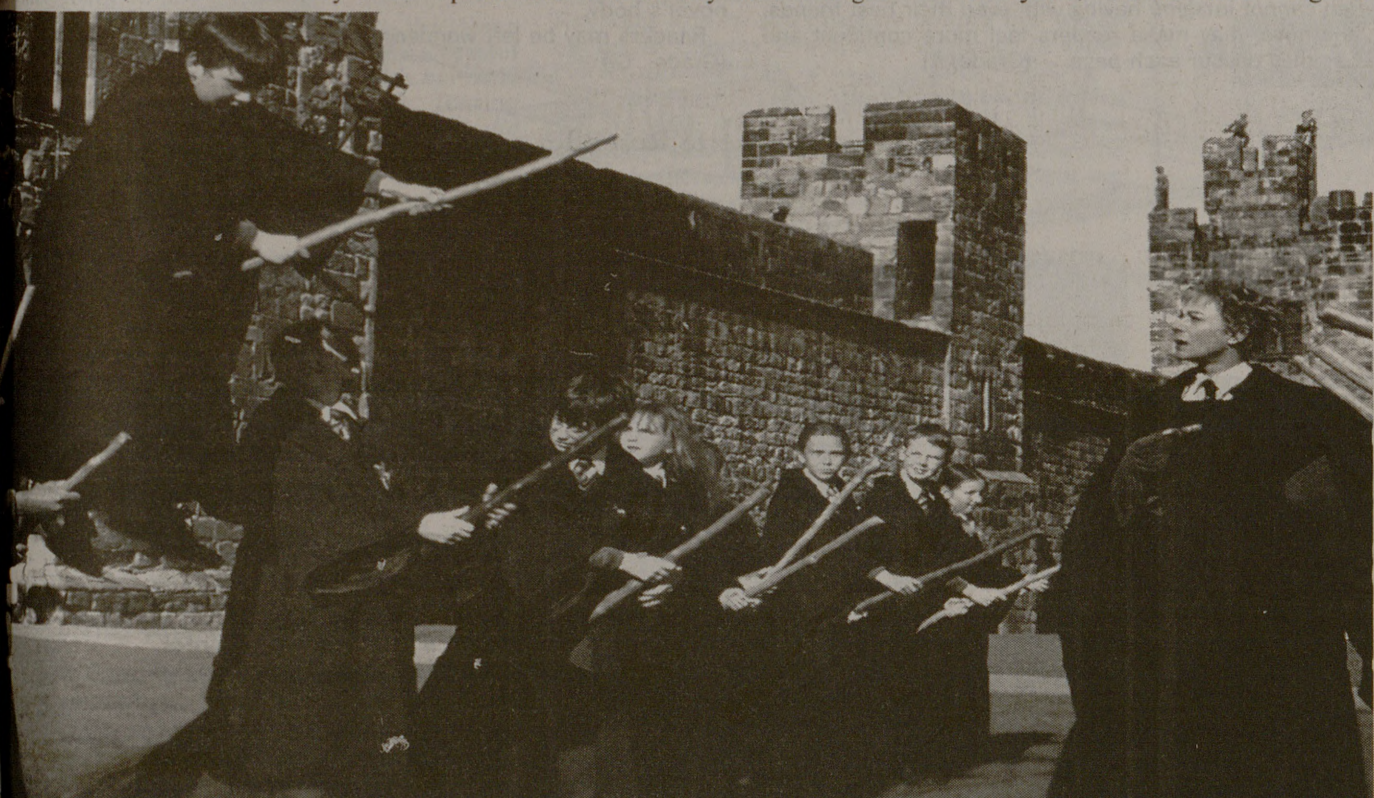


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MIKE HOSCH
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