

Reading Comprehension Test

Excercise no.1: Read the following article :

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone¹

"Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" is a colourful adventure movie, dripping with atmosphere, filled with the frightful and the sublime, and surprisingly faithful to the novel. A lot of things could have gone wrong, and none of *them* have: Chris Columbus' movie is an enchanting classic that does full justice to a story that was a threatening challenge. The novel by J.K. Rowling was muscular and vivid, and the danger was that the movie would make things too cute and cuddly. It doesn't. Like an "Indiana Jones" for younger viewers, *it* tells an excellent tale of supernatural adventure, where colorful and eccentric characters alternate with frighful stuff like a three-headed dog, a pit of tendrils known as the Devil's Snare and a two-faced immortal *who* drinks unicorn blood. Terryfying yes, but not too much-just in the right measure. Three high-spirited, clear-eyed kids populate the center of the movie. Daniel Radcliffe plays Harry Potter, he with the round glasses, and like all of the young characters he looks much as I imagined him, but a little older. *He* once played David Copperfield on the BBC, and whether Harry will be the hero of his own life in this story is much in doubt at the beginning. Deposited as an abandoned child on a suburban doorstep, Harry is raised by *his* aunt and uncle as a poor relation, then called to become a student at Hogwarts School, an Oxbridge for magicians. Our first glimpse of Hogwarts sets the tone for the movie's special effects. Although computers can make anything look realistic, too much realism would be the wrong choice for "Harry Potter," *which* is a story in which everything, including the sets and locations, should look a little made up. The school, rising on ominous Gothic battlements from a moonlit lake, and *its* Corridors, cellars and great hall, although in some cases making use of real buildings, continue the feeling of an atmospheric book illustration. At Hogwarts, Harry makes two friends and an enemy. The friends are Hermione Granger (Emma Watson), *whose* merry face and tangled curls give chills, and Ron Weasley (Rupert Grint), all bravery, luck and untamed talents. The enemy is Draco Malfoy

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(Tom Felton), *who* will do anything, and a lot besides, to be sure his house places first at the end of the year. The story you either already know, or do not want to know. The adult cast, mainly British actors, play *their* roles more or less as if they believed them. Watch Alan Rickman drawing out his words until *they* seem ready to snap, yet somehow staying in character. Maggie Smith plays the part of Prof. Minerva McGonagall, who assigns newcomers like Harry to one of the school's four houses. Richard Harris is headmaster Dumbledore, his beard so long that in an Edward Lear poem, birds would nest in it. Robbie Coltrane is the gamekeeper, Hagrid, who has a record of misbehavior and a way of saying very important things and then not believing that he said *them*. Computers *are* used, exuberantly, to create a plausible look in the gravity-defying action scenes. Readers of the book will wonder how the movie visualizes the crucial game of Quidditch. The game, like so much else in the movie, is more or less as I visualized it (The reason some movies don't look like their books may be that some producers don't read them.) If Quidditch is a virtuoso sequence, there are other set pieces of almost equal wizardry. A chess game with life-size, deadly pieces. A room filled with flying keys. The pit of tendrils, already mentioned, and a dark forest *where* a creature threatens Harry but is scared away by a centaur. And the dark shadows of Hogwarts library, cellars, hidden passages and dungeons, where an invisibility mantle can keep you out of sight but not out of trouble. During "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," I was pretty sure I was watching a classic, one that will be around for a long time, and make many generations of fans. It takes the time to be good. It doesn't hammer the audience with easy thrills, but cares to tell a story, and to create its characters carefully. Like "The Wizard of Oz," "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," "Star Wars" and "E.T.," it isn't just a movie but a world with *its* own magical rules. And some excellent Quidditch players.

Exercise no. 2: Find the opposites of the following words:

real	_____
filled	_____
younger	_____
classic	_____
poor	_____
everything	_____
dark	_____
long	_____
excellent	_____

Glossary:

challenge	dispute, problem
cute	nice, pretty
cuddly	kind, gentil
tendrils	each of the slender leafless shoots by which some climbing plants cling for support
whether	if, in case
merry	happy, cheeful, jovial
glimpse	a momentary or partial view
wizardry	witchcraft, magical, amazing, fascination
thrills	excitements, shivers, trembles,
frightening	scary, horrible, terrifying