Harry Potter AKA The Boy Who Lived

Born to James and Lily Potter, who were murdered by the dark wizard Voldemort. Lily sacrificed her life to save him, causing a protective enchantment that resulted in Voldemort’s soul being ripped from his body while leaving the infant unscathed except for a lightning-bolt shaped scar on his forehead. Harry and his scar are famous in the wizarding world because he is the only person to ever survive Voldemort’s killing curse; however, Harry is unaware of this for the first ten years of his life, believing his parents died in a car accident. Lily’s love is a powerful protective force for Harry, but his early childhood trauma makes him more susceptible to the effects of the Dementors. On his eleventh birthday Harry learns the truth about his identity and his parents’ death and that he has been accepted into Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry.

Vernon, Petunia, and Dudley Dursley

Lily Potter’s Muggle sister and brother-in-law, Petunia and Vernon Dursley, begrudgingly take Harry in and raise him after his parents’ death. They favor their spoiled son, Dudley, who bullies Harry throughout his childhood and teen years. Harry is constantly reminded that he is unwanted and unloved by the Dursleys, living in a closet under the staircase, wearing Dudley’s hand-me-down clothing, and being treated as a servant.

Voldemort AKA He Who Must Not Be Named, The Dark Lord, Tom Riddle

Born Tom Riddle, Voldemort is the last descendant of wizard Salazar Slytherin, one of the four founders of Hogwarts. His mother was abandoned by his Muggle (non-magical) father and died shortly after his birth. He was raised in an orphanage until discovered by Albus Dumbledore and brought to Hogwarts. His early childhood trauma turned into an obsession with blood purity that led him to change his name and set his aim to rid the wizarding world of Muggle heritage and to achieve pure-blood dominance. He is the leader of the Death Eaters, a group of evil wizards and witches dedicated to ridding the Wizarding World of Muggles and establishing Voldemort as its supreme ruler. Voldemort is a powerful wizard who is able to invade the minds of others, but he has never known love and his quest for immortality has led him to shatter his soul into pieces.
Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Britain’s school of magic, founded by four of the greatest witches and wizards that ever lived: Godric Gryffindor, Rowena Ravenclaw, Helga Hufflepuff and Salazar Slytherin. Founded at a dangerous time for witches and wizards, who were being persecuted by Muggles hostile to magic, Hogwarts was built somewhere in the Scottish Highlands, and concealed with numerous charms and spells. Hogwarts represents a safe haven for Harry and many of the characters in the Harry Potter series.

Albus Dumbledore

Headmaster of Hogwarts and founder of the Order of the Phoenix, a group of witches and wizards dedicated to fighting Lord Voldemort and the Death Eaters. Considered by many the most powerful wizard in the world, it is said that Dumbledore was the only wizard Lord Voldemort ever truly feared. In spite of - or perhaps because of - his own childhood trauma, Dumbledore has a deep capacity for love, frequently reminding Harry that love is the greatest magic of all.

Ron Weasley & Hermione Granger

Harry meets Ron and Hermione on the train to Hogwarts his first year, and the trio soon become inseparable. Hermione and Ron provide connection that Harry never had growing up, and they show him unconditional love and loyalty even when he tries to push them away. They neither idolize Harry for his scar nor judge him for his imperfections. Through his relationship with them Harry learns about vulnerability and asking for help.

Draco Malfoy

Harry’s nemesis, Draco is the son of Death Eaters Lucius and Narcissa Malfoy. When Harry chooses to befriend Ron (whose family is pureblood but associates with Muggles) and Hermione (who is Muggle-born), Draco takes every opportunity to taunt and insult Harry and his friends. Draco mocks those whom he perceives as weak or different and embodies those who perpetuate mental health and other stigma. When Harry is particularly affected by the dementors, Draco and his friends ridicule him. Draco is pressured by his father to become a Death Eater and appears to follow his father’s cruel tempered example for much of the series.
Dementors
Dark creatures that feed on human happiness, creating an aura of cold, dark despair. Though they are blind, they can sense and feed on positive feelings, draining their victim’s happiness and leaving them with only the worst and darkest memories and feelings. They do not discriminate and will feed on anyone in their path. Even Muggles, who cannot see the dementors, can feel their effects. The dementors are author JK Rowling’s metaphor for depression, based on her own experience.

Patronus Charm (Expecto Patronum)
One of the most powerful defensive charms known to wizardkind, the Patronus is the only spell effective against Dementors. It is a pure, protective magical concentration of happiness and hope that can only be produced by focusing on a strong and specific memory of happiness and connection.

Remus Lupin (AKA Moony)
Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher in Harry’s third year at Hogwarts, Lupin is a capable wizard who carries a dark secret – that he was bitten by a werewolf. He saves Harry and his friends from a dementor on the Hogwarts express and later teaches Harry to master the Patronus charm. Perceptive and even-tempered, his practical teaching style make him popular with the students. Lupin was a close friend of Harry’s parents, and he becomes a mentor and friend to Harry. He draws from his own experiences as someone who is ostracized to help Harry learn to fight stigma, both internal and external. After leaving Hogwarts he is an active member of the Order of the Phoenix and continues to support Harry.

Sirius Black (AKA Padfoot)
Best friend of James Potter and godfather to Harry, Sirius was wrongfully imprisoned for having betrayed the Potters to Voldemort and killing a friend of the family. An Animagus who can transform into a dog at will, Sirius uses this power to eventually escape from prison, find Harry, and prove his innocence to those who matter, though not to the authorities. While in hiding from the authorities Sirius works with the Order of the Phoenix to fight Voldemort and develops a strong relationship with Harry. As another person who has been ostracized by society, Sirius also supports Harry in fighting stigma. He embodies fierce love and loyalty to Harry, as well as a tangible connection to Harry’s parents.