

Synopsis Extract

Harry Potter lives with his aunt, uncle and cousin because his parents died in a car-crash — or so he has been told. The Dursleys don't like Harry asking questions; in fact, they don't seem to like anything about him, especially the very odd things that keep happening around him (which Harry himself can't explain).

The Dursleys' greatest fear is that Harry will discover the truth about himself, so when letters start arriving for him near his eleventh birthday, he isn't allowed to read them. However, the Dursleys aren't dealing with an ordinary postman, and at midnight on Harry's birthday the gigantic Rubeus Hagrid breaks down the door to make sure Harry gets to read his post at last. Ignoring the horrified Dursleys, Hagrid informs Harry that he is a wizard, and the letter he gives Harry explains that he is expected at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in a month's time. To the Dursleys' fury, Hagrid also reveals the truth about Harry's past. Harry did not receive the scar on his forehead in a car-crash; it is really the mark of the great dark sorcerer Voldemort, who killed Harry's mother and father but mysteriously couldn't kill him, even though he was a baby at the time. Harry is famous among the witches and wizards who live in secret all over the country because Harry's miraculous survival marked Voldemort's downfall.

So Harry, who has never had friends or family worth the name, sets off for a new life in the wizarding world. He takes a trip to London with Hagrid to buy his Hogwarts equipment (robes, wand, cauldron, beginners' draft and potion kit) and shortly afterwards, sets off for Hogwarts from Kings Cross Station (platform nine and three quarters) to follow in his parents' footsteps.

Harry makes friends with Ronald Weasley (sixth in his family to go to Hogwarts and tired of having to use second-hand spellbooks) and Hermione Granger (cleverest girl in the year and the only person in the class to know all the uses of dragon's blood). Together, they have their first lessons in magic — astronomy up on the tallest tower at two in the morning, herbology out in the greenhouses where the...

Chapter 1: Extract 1

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone – Chapter One: Extract One
by JK Rowling.



Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you'd expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn't hold with such nonsense.

Mr Dursley was the director of a firm called Grunnings, which made drills. He was a big, beefy man with hardly any neck, although he did have a very large moustache. Mrs Dursley was thin and



blonde and had nearly twice the usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on her neighbours. The Dursleys had a small son called Dudley and in their opinion there was no finer boy anywhere.



The Dursleys had everything they wanted, but they also had a secret, and their greatest fear was that somebody would discover it. They didn't think they could bear it if anyone found out about the Potters. Mrs Potter was Mrs Dursley's sister, but they hadn't met for several years; in fact, Mrs Dursley pretended she didn't have a sister, because her sister and her good-for-nothing husband were as unDursleyish as it was possible to be.

The Dursleys shuddered to think what the neighbours would say if the Potters arrived in the street. The Dursleys knew that the Potters had a small son, too, but they had never seen him. This boy was another good reason for keeping the Potters away; they didn't want Dudley mixing with a child like that.

When Mr and Mrs Dursley woke up on the dull, grey Tuesday our story starts, there was nothing about the cloudy sky outside to suggest that strange and mysterious things would soon be happening all over the country. Mr Dursley hummed as he picked out his most boring tie for work and Mrs Dursley gossiped away happily as she wrestled a screaming Dudley into his high chair.

None of them noticed a large tawny owl flutter past the window.

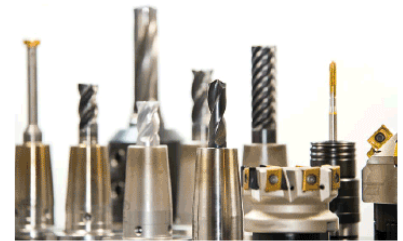
At half past eight, Mr Dursley picked up his briefcase, pecked Mrs Dursley on the cheek and tried to kiss Dudley goodbye but missed, because Dudley was now having a tantrum and throwing his cereal at the walls. 'Little tyke,' chortled Mr Dursley as he left the house. He got into his car and backed out of number four's drive.





It was on the corner of the street that he noticed the first sign of something peculiar – a cat reading a map. For a second, Mr Dursley didn't realise what he had seen – then he jerked his head around to look again. There was a tabby cat standing on the corner of Privet Drive, but there wasn't a map in sight. What could he have been thinking of? It must have been a trick of the light. Mr Dursley blinked and stared at the cat. It stared back. As Mr Dursley drove around the corner and up the road, he watched the cat in his mirror. It was now reading the sign that said Privet Drive – no, looking at the sign; cats couldn't read maps or signs. Mr Dursley gave himself a little shake and put the cat out of his mind. As he drove towards town he thought of nothing except a large order of drills he was hoping to get that day.

But on the edge of town, drills were driven out of his mind by something else. As he sat in the usual morning traffic jam, he couldn't help noticing that there seemed to be a lot of strangely dressed people about. People in cloaks. Mr Dursley couldn't bear people who dressed in funny clothes – the get-ups you saw on young people! He supposed this was some stupid new fashion. He drummed his fingers on the steering wheel and his eyes fell on a huddle of these weirdos standing quite close by. They were whispering excitedly together. Mr Dursley was enraged to see that a couple of them weren't young at all; why, that man had to be older than he was, and wearing an emerald-green cloak! The nerve of him! But then it struck Mr Dursley that this was probably some silly stunt – these people were obviously collecting for something ... yes, that would be it. The traffic moved on, and a few minutes later, Mr Dursley arrived in the Grunnings car park, his mind back on drills.



Mr Dursley always sat with his back to the window in his office on the ninth floor. If he hadn't, he might have found it harder to concentrate on drills that morning. He didn't see the owls swooping past in broad daylight, though people down in the street did; they pointed and gazed open-mouthed as owl after owl sped overhead. Most of them had never seen an owl even at night-time. Mr Dursley, however, had a perfectly normal, owl-free morning. He yelled at five different people. He made several important phone calls and shouted a bit more. He was in a very good mood until lunchtime, when he thought he'd stretch his legs and walk across the road to buy himself a bun from the baker's opposite.

He'd forgotten all about the people in cloaks until he passed a group of them next to the baker's. He eyed them angrily as he passed. He didn't know why, but they made him uneasy. This lot were whispering excitedly, too, and he couldn't see a single collecting tin. It was on his way back past them, clutching a large doughnut in a bag, that he caught a few words of what they were saying.

'The Potters, that's right, that's what I heard –'

'– yes, their son, Harry –'

Mr Dursley stopped dead.