



The Science of Harry Potter: How Magic Really Works

By Roger Highfield

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Behind the magic of Harry Potter—a witty and illuminating look at the scientific principles, theories, and assumptions of the boy wizard's world, newly come to life again in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* and the upcoming film *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*

Can Fluffy the three-headed dog be explained by advances in molecular biology? Could the discovery of cosmic "gravity-shielding effects" unlock the secret to the Nimbus 2000 broomstick's ability to fly? Is the griffin really none other than the dinosaur Protoceratops? Roger Highfield, author of the critically acclaimed *The Physics of Christmas*, explores the fascinating links between magic and science to reveal that much of what strikes us as supremely strange in the Potter books can actually be explained by the conjurings of the scientific mind. This is the perfect guide for parents who want to teach their children science through their favorite adventures as well as for the millions of adult fans of the series intrigued by its marvels and mysteries.

• **An ALA *Booklist* Editors' Choice** •

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

British science writer Highfield (*The Private Lives of Albert Einstein*) takes on J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series "to show how many elements of her books can be found in and explained by modern science." The result is an intelligent though odd attempt to straddle the imaginative worlds of science and fiction. Using Harry's magical world to "help illuminate rather than undermine science," Highfield splits the book in two: the first half a "secret scientific study" of everything that goes on at Potter's Hogwarts school, the second half an endeavor to show the origins of the "magical thinking" found in the books, whether expressed in "myth, legend, witchcraft or monsters." This division is an obvious attempt to duplicate the method and the popularity of his *Physics of Christmas*. Here, however, as intriguing as the concept is, the author isn't quite able to engage or entertain as he explores the ways in which Harry's beloved game of Quidditch resembles the 16th-century Mesoamerican game Nahuatlachtli or how, by using Aztec psychotropic mushrooms, Mexican peyote cactus and other types of mind-altering fungi, even Muggles can experience their own magic. While interesting, the book reads more like an obsessive Ph.D. dissertation that fails to satisfy either of its target audiences: the children who read the books or the parents who buy them and often read them themselves.

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From [Booklist](#)

"Science in the Harry Potter books?" "Yes," Highfield, science editor of London's *Daily Telegraph*, emphatically answers, approaching the topic in a thoroughly playful manner. He is dead serious, however, about using the Potter corpus as the launching pad for a wonderful foray into genetics, biology, quantum theory, behaviorism, mythology, folklore, and more, bolstered by drawing on and extrapolating from the work of a great variety of scientists and scholars. Magic, like science, he states, affords many insights into the workings of the human brain, which he designates as the greatest wizard of all. Whether dealing with flying broomsticks, Quidditch, or Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans, Highfield demonstrates how Muggle science has a leg up on many of the phenomena in Harry's world. The book's second half focuses more on the origins of magical thinking. Obviously well versed in the Potter books, Highfield deconstructs and reassembles them to make his points. Fans of such science popularizers as Gould and Asimov will certainly get a kick out of Highfield's utterly fascinating take on the subject. *Sally Estes*

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Review

"Animated by Highfield's enthusiasm for the extraordinary, *The Science of Harry Potter* is an enjoyably indirect survey of modern science."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Far-ranging . . . Enlightens Harry Potter's magical realm, but also the magic taking place in labs and classrooms in our own world."

—*Science News*

"He has interviewed the world's best Muggle scientists to identify the explanations behind everything from the Mirror of Erised to the Invisibility Cloak . . . A great introduction to a whole variety of issues."

—*Simon Singh, The Observer*

“A wonderful hook for a wonderful book . . . as one reads *The Science of Harry Potter* it is impossible not to become intrigued.”

—**Orlando Sentinel**

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ana Steadman:

Now a day people that Living in the era just where everything reachable by talk with the internet and the resources inside it can be true or not require people to be aware of each details they get. How people have to be smart in getting any information nowadays? Of course the correct answer is reading a book. Looking at a book can help individuals out of this uncertainty Information especially this *The Science of Harry Potter: How Magic Really Works* book as this book offers you rich facts and knowledge. Of course the details in this book hundred % guarantees there is no doubt in it as you know.

Matthew McDaniel:

Nowadays reading books become more than want or need but also become a life style. This reading routine give you lot of advantages. Advantages you got of course the knowledge the particular information inside the book that will improve your knowledge and information. The data you get based on what kind of e-book you read, if you want attract knowledge just go with knowledge books but if you want really feel happy read one along with theme for entertaining like comic or novel. The particular *The Science of Harry Potter: How Magic Really Works* is kind of guide which is giving the reader erratic experience.

Bonnie Camacho:

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Sue Randall:

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